

**Wednesday
19 June 2013**

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**HOUSE OF COMMONS
OFFICIAL REPORT**

**PARLIAMENTARY
DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

Wednesday 19 June 2013

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The House met at half-past Eleven o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

CABINET OFFICE

The Minister for the Cabinet Office was asked—

Work Programme

1. **Sandra Osborne** (Ayr, Carrick and Cumnock) (Lab): What recent discussions he has had with civil society groups on the effect of the Work programme on their organisations. [160374]

The Parliamentary Secretary, Cabinet Office (Mr Nick Hurd): I have regular discussions with organisations that deliver the Work programme. I recognise that they operate in a challenging environment, but I salute their collective early success in getting more than 200,000 long-term unemployed people into work, as I am sure does the hon. Lady.

Sandra Osborne: I thank the Minister for that response. A recent report by the Work and Pensions Committee on the Work programme found that many voluntary sector organisations that are listed as sub-contractors do not consider themselves to be involved at all, leading to suspicions that specialist organisations are being used as “bid candy”, rather than to deliver services. What will the Minister do to ensure that such charities are treated fairly?

Mr Hurd: It is for the Department for Work and Pensions to respond to that report; my role is to ensure that the relevant Minister understands the concerns of the voluntary sector. We should recognise that more than 350 voluntary sector organisations in the supply chain are doing incredibly valuable work to get long-term unemployed people back into work. My other role is to ensure that we learn the lessons from that programme in forthcoming payment-by-results programmes, not least in the transforming rehabilitation and probation programme.

Andrew Bridgen (North West Leicestershire) (Con): Has my hon. Friend noted the figures from the Department for Work and Pensions that show that voluntary and community based organisations, such as Whitwick Community Enterprises in my constituency, make up the largest proportion of workplace providers under the Work programme at 47%?

Mr Hurd: My hon. Friend is right that almost 50% of the supply chain is in the voluntary sector. We all know from our experience of such organisations what

extraordinarily valuable work they do to get people ready for work and into work. We want to make the programme work.

Andrew Gwynne (Denton and Reddish) (Lab): Surely the Minister knows that New Philanthropy Capital has advised the Government not to repeat the mistakes of the Work programme. What lessons will he learn so that those mistakes are not repeated and so that third sector organisations and charities that want to help unemployed people are encouraged to do so?

Mr Hurd: I do not necessarily recognise that mistakes have been made. Payment-by-results is a tough and challenging regime, but each exercise will be different and the process will evolve. It is a better regime than paying for failure and mediocrity, which is what the Labour Government did. The next test is the probation reforms. If the hon. Gentleman looks at the detail of what the Ministry of Justice has produced, he will see that lessons have been learned on having more contracts, paying much more attention to how the supply chain is managed and investing in capacity building in the voluntary sector so that it can do more.

Anti-fraud Activities

2. **Stephen Barclay** (North East Cambridgeshire) (Con): What assessment he has made of the effectiveness of counter-fraud activities across Government. [160375]

The Minister for the Cabinet Office and Paymaster General (Mr Francis Maude): The National Fraud Authority estimates that the public purse loses more than £20 billion a year to fraud. That figure has been far too high for far too long. Last year, the Departments that engaged with the cross-Government taskforce that I chair saved an estimated £5.9 billion. However, we know that there is much more to do.

Stephen Barclay: I pay tribute to the Minister for the billions of pounds of cross-departmental savings that he has achieved. In targeting that £20 billion, I urge him to look again at the risk-averse legal advice in Whitehall that is stopping data-sharing between the public and private sectors, because fraudsters who commit fraud against the private sector often do so against the public purse.

Mr Maude: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for those remarks, for his interest in this area and, more generally, for the brilliant forensic work he does on the Public Accounts Committee to protect the taxpayer's interest. He is right about the legal advice that is often given in this complex area of law, which is a mishmash of common law and statutory provisions. There are many opportunities to share data, which would protect privacy but promote the public interest by saving money. We need to look at that area and have a rather more open approach.

Keith Vaz (Leicester East) (Lab): Will the Minister also consider the proposal to establish a register of private sector companies in receipt of public sector contracts that have been involved in fraud?

Mr Maude: I will certainly consider that. We need to get much better at sharing information about fraud and attempted fraud both within the private sector and between the public and private sectors. That has been done far too little, but we are getting better at it. There is still much to do and I am grateful for the right hon. Gentleman's thoughts.

Public Sector Contracts

3. **Andy McDonald** (Middlesbrough) (Lab): What steps he is taking to ensure that charities are able to bid for public sector contracts. [160376]

The Parliamentary Secretary, Cabinet Office (Miss Chloe Smith): It is Government policy to dismantle the barriers facing small companies, charities and voluntary organisations to ensure they can compete for contracts on a level playing field. We have taken a number of significant steps specifically to support charities and social enterprises to bid for and win public sector contracts, such as the implementation of the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012, a community right to challenge, and reforms of procurement processes that make them more open and fair to charities.

Andy McDonald (Middlesbrough) (Lab): The Foundation for Social Improvement today reports:

"Looking to the future of the commissioning process, it is clear that the current situation is not sustainable. Only around one quarter of respondents indicated that they felt they could carry on bidding for—and carrying out—local authority contracts over the next 5 years."

Is it true that the Government's plan to break open public services is merely benefiting a handful of large companies that use charities as "bid candy", as my hon. Friend the Member for Ayr, Carrick and Cumnock (Sandra Osborne) said, and as the report concludes?

Miss Smith: As the Parliamentary Secretary, Cabinet Office, my hon. Friend the Member for Ruislip, Northwood and Pinner (Mr Hurd) made clear in an earlier answer, many charitable organisations are already taking part and there are opportunities for more. What I take from the hon. Gentleman's question is his willingness to work with me and others who care about making procurement better throughout the whole public sector, and encouraging local authorities to do their bit alongside the reforms we have achieved in central Government.

Richard Fuller (Bedford) (Con): I applaud the Government's steps to encourage charities to win public sector contracts, but does my hon. Friend believe there is a threshold to the proportion of income that charities receive from the public sector, above which they stop becoming charities because they are merely agencies of the state?

Miss Smith: My hon. Friend makes an interesting point, and it may be just as much the responsibility of trustees of an organisation to look at such issues within that organisation. The Government welcome the diversity of the sector and the opening up of Government procurement to those who can do the job well for value for money.

Paul Goggins (Wythenshawe and Sale East) (Lab): The Justice Secretary is a man who appears to be in something of a hurry. The Minister may be aware of growing concern among small voluntary organisations that provide services to ex-offenders that under the Justice Secretary's plans their work will be undermined as large contracts are given to a small number of private providers. What reassurance can be given to those important small charities?

Miss Smith: The right hon. Gentleman may wish to direct that question to the Justice Secretary himself, but the Parliamentary Secretary has had many discussions with Members across Government about opportunities for the voluntary sector, and we are passionate about getting that right.

Mr Julian Brazier (Canterbury) (Con): In strongly applauding my hon. Friend's work in this area, may I suggest that it needs to go beyond the procurement process itself? The other danger is public sector bodies—both locally and centrally—taking on employees to do work that could be done more effectively by voluntary sector organisations.

Miss Smith: My hon. Friend makes a good point about the value for money that the state would seek to achieve at all levels. Alongside that, our reforms include measures to build the capability of the third sector, which I am sure we would all want to see strongly succeed.

Jon Trickett (Hemsworth) (Lab): Is it clear that not only have the Government failed to deliver more public sector contracts to charities, but after three years in office the big society project has now become a shrivelled society, except in one area—charitable activity and supporting people whom the hon. Lady's Government have driven into poverty? More than 13 million people are now in poverty, two thirds of whom are in work.

Miss Smith: I thought the hon. Gentleman would welcome the notion that more charities are getting involved and more people are volunteering. Surely that is a good thing.

Jon Trickett: It is a sad thing. In the past year, the number of people dependent on food banks tripled to almost 350,000, of whom—listen to this figure—126,889 are children. There is no doubt that the Minister is a decent human being, but did she really come into politics to increase the scale of the third sector on the back of a disgraceful rise in the number of children in poverty? Is she ashamed of that record?

Miss Smith: What I am ashamed of is the hon. Gentleman's attempt to turn an important issue into a political football. Like many others in the House, I have stood alongside excellent volunteers at food banks in my constituency. I applaud their efforts, their goodheartedness and their contribution, but I do not applaud his blindness to the notion that the use of food banks in fact soared under the previous Labour Government.

National Citizen Service

4. **Andrew Stephenson** (Pendle) (Con): What assessment he has made of the growth of the National Citizen Service. [160377]

The Parliamentary Secretary, Cabinet Office (Mr Nick Hurd): The National Citizen Service is a fantastic opportunity for our young constituents to make a difference in the community and to develop really valuable skills. Demand is growing rapidly, so we are making 50,000 places available this year and 90,000 in 2014.

Andrew Stephenson: I frequently meet with the Challenge Network, which is the principal provider of the NCS in Pendle, and I am looking forward to taking part in a “Dragons’ Den” exercise with it later this year. Will my hon. Friend say what the outcomes are for young people who have so far taken part in the NCS programme?

Mr Hurd: I thank my hon. Friend for his positive engagement with the programme. As he would expect, we commissioned independent research on its impact, and it tells us that so far we are getting £2 of value for every £1 of public money we spend. The most significant impact has been on what might be called work-ready skills: in particular, helping young people to develop confidence and teamwork, leadership and communication skills, all of which are very important in the workplace.

Julie Hilling (Bolton West) (Lab): Youth work budgets have been slashed throughout the country, but the amount the Government are spending on a six-week programme for 16-year-olds would fund a 52-week-a-year service for 13 to 19-year-olds. Will the Minister rethink the NCS and instead put the money into a year-round youth service?

Mr Hurd: I think the hon. Lady should speak to her Front-Bench team, who recently said they were not against the NCS. I think they saw the numbers on the very positive impact it has on young people, and I hope she will support that too. Youth services around the country do not have to be cut. There are lots of other options for local authorities—to mutualise, to look at other delivery models—and we stand ready to support them in that.

Quangos

5. **Stephen Phillips** (Sleaford and North Hykeham) (Con): What progress he has made on abolishing quangos. [160378]

The Parliamentary Secretary, Cabinet Office (Mr Nick Hurd): To date, the number of public bodies has been reduced by more than 240, through abolitions and mergers, and by the end of the spending review period in March 2015, the Government will have reduced their total number by a third.

Stephen Phillips: I congratulate my hon. Friend on what he has managed to achieve so far, but how will he ensure that we never see the explosion in the number of these unaccountable bodies that we saw under the last Government?

Mr Hurd: That is absolutely the right question, and part of the answer is that in the future any new proposal for creating a public body will have to get the approval of the Minister for the Cabinet Office, and I think I can reliably inform the House that the answer would likely be no. Furthermore, in the future, every public body will be subject to triennial reviews set up to justify their continued existence. It is about changing the culture that we inherited from the last Government.

Paul Farrelly (Newcastle-under-Lyme) (Lab): One set of so-called quangos that was immediately abolished were the very accountable regional development agencies, and since then regional assistance has noticeably been a pale shadow of what it was. What steps is the Cabinet Office taking to audit the effectiveness with which the subsequent bodies—the regional growth fund, the local enterprise partnerships—are delivering regeneration to areas that desperately need it, such as mine in north Staffordshire?

Mr Hurd: I am puzzled by the hon. Gentleman’s question, particularly in relation to exactly whom the RDAs were accountable to. I do not think that anyone is weeping for their absence, and I think that he should give LEPs a chance. My impression is that they are doing increasingly valuable work. We have new city deals and a whole new era of localism, with more and more decisions being taken locally and accountable to the communities they serve. I hope he will welcome that.

Co-operatives and Mutuals

6. **Jesse Norman** (Hereford and South Herefordshire) (Con): What steps he is taking to encourage co-operatives and mutuals to provide public services. [160379]

The Minister for the Cabinet Office and Paymaster General (Mr Francis Maude): The Government are committed to supporting public service mutuals in providing public services. We know that mutuals can bring significant efficiencies that benefit not only public service users and the taxpayer, but the staff who form them. Our mutuals support programme is tracking more than 120 emerging and established public service mutuals across 13 different sectors.

Jesse Norman: Does my right hon. Friend share my view that, in line with the original Rochdale principles, co-operatives should be politically neutral and not make contributions to political parties?

Mr Maude: I hear what my hon. Friend, who is extremely knowledgeable on this topic, says. He is a passionate supporter of mutuals and co-operatives, and his point deserves further scrutiny and study.

Mr Gregory Campbell (East Londonderry) (DUP): The Minister talks about supporting mutuals. What is he doing actively to encourage them to apply for public services, especially at year-end, when they do not give large bonuses to executive and non-executive directors?

Mr Maude: I do not entirely see the connection between those two phenomena. We actively encourage groups of public sector workers to come together to form new entities that continue to deliver public services,

but on a contractual basis, not a line-managed, bureaucratic basis. I am delighted to tell the hon. Gentleman that there is a lot of interest in the public sector. Many entrepreneurial leaders are looking for the opportunity to lead the service in an innovative and less-restricted way.

Jonathan Evans (Cardiff North) (Con): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the current difficulties at the Co-operative bank should in no way deflect the Government from the coalition agreement to promote greater corporate diversity in Britain?

Mr Maude: I can reassure my hon. Friend that those difficulties have in no way deflected us from that commitment. Indeed, there is a growing interest in the public sector in the process of mutualising, which can take many forms and is to be encouraged.

Chris Evans (Islwyn) (Lab/Co-op): On the Government's support of co-operatives and mutuals, what discussions have taken place with colleagues in the Department of Energy and Climate Change on support for co-operative and mutual energy in the Energy Bill?

Mr Maude: I am not aware of particular discussions, but I will pursue the hon. Gentleman's point.

Permanent Secretaries

7. **Mr Ben Bradshaw** (Exeter) (Lab): What plans he has to reform the procedure for the appointment of permanent secretaries of Government Departments.
[160380]

The Minister for the Cabinet Office and Paymaster General (Mr Francis Maude): The Government wish to strengthen the role of Ministers in permanent secretary appointments to reflect Ministers' accountability to Parliament for the performance of their Departments. We believe it sensible to allow a choice of candidates who are judged by the Civil Service Commission to be above the line and appointable. The Civil Service Commission's recent guidance is capable of strengthening the Minister's role. We will review how it works before deciding whether to seek further changes.

Mr Bradshaw: Does the Minister agree with the two recent excellent reports from the Institute of Government and the Institute for Public Policy Research, which say that for there to be proper accountability Secretaries of State must have a say in who runs their Department, albeit from a shortlist agreed in the normal way? Will he reassure us that, contrary to press reports, he is not caving in to the mandarins on this vital reform?

Mr Maude: I do not think that that is a phenomenon that would be recognised in Whitehall. The right hon. Gentleman makes a powerful point. The relationship between permanent secretary and Minister is very important. Ministers are accountable in this place for their Department, and it seems to us to make sense—it clearly makes sense to him, too—that a Minister should be given a choice of candidates, as long as they are deemed to be politically impartial and capable of doing the job properly.

Mr Bernard Jenkin (Harwich and North Essex) (Con): I commend my right hon. Friend for encouraging a lively debate on the leadership of the senior civil service, not least because senior appointments have led to a great deal of churn and discontinuity at the top of Government Departments in recent years. May I also congratulate him on publishing the IPPR report? We look forward to him coming before the Public Administration Committee to discuss it.

Mr Maude: I look forward to one of my regular attendances at my hon. Friend's Committee with barely concealed impatience. I am grateful for the interest he and his Committee take in this important area. I would like to take the opportunity, while answering this question, to pay tribute to so many hard working civil servants who do a fantastic job, and to the support that so many of them have given to the programme of reform we have set in train.

Topical Questions

T1. [160389] **Stephen Metcalfe** (South Basildon and East Thurrock) (Con): If he will make a statement on his departmental responsibilities.

The Minister for the Cabinet Office and Paymaster General (Mr Francis Maude): My departmental responsibilities include responsibility for public service efficiency and reform groups, civil service issues, industrial relations strategy in the public sector, transparency, civil contingencies, civil society and cyber-security.

Stephen Metcalfe: What steps will my right hon. Friend take to accelerate the pace of efficiency savings in Whitehall, and what further action will he take to slice out the accumulated waste of the previous Government?

Mr Maude: I was able to announce a couple of weeks ago that in the last financial year, 2012-13, we made over £10 billion of efficiency savings. It is a pity that it has taken so long to get on with this. If the present Leader of the Opposition had started on the process when he was in my position, the country's public finances would now be in a much better state.

Mr Gareth Thomas (Harrow West) (Lab/Co-op): The single biggest source of new social finance for charities and social enterprises would be a UK community investment Act that required banks to lend into areas that they are not currently lending into. Why are the Government blocking such reforms?

The Parliamentary Secretary, Cabinet Office (Mr Nick Hurd): I think that is the first Labour policy announcement I have heard in three years. In answer to the hon. Gentleman's question, this country is the acknowledged world leader in developing a new source of finance for social organisations. It is called social investment, and it was the subject of a special meeting of the G8 this week, at which everyone stood up and said that Britain was recognised as a world leader in this regard, not least because of our creation of big society capital, which has £600 million on its balance sheet, to make it easier for charities and social enterprises to access capital.

T2. [160390] **Guy Opperman** (Hexham) (Con): Too often, Government Departments exist in their own silos and fail to share services and skills. What steps is the Minister taking to address that and to ensure that that silo mentality stops?

Mr Maude: Way back in 2004, Sir Peter Gershon recommended the introduction of shared services to try to break down that silo mentality and to make efficiency savings. For eight years very little happened, but we are now breaking through and making big progress on legal services, on internal audit and on back-office, transactional, human resources and finance services. There is much more to do, however, and I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his support.

T6. [160394] **Julie Hilling** (Bolton West) (Lab): Bolton community and volunteer services have congratulated Bolton council on preserving funding for the voluntary sector, but projects are still at risk owing to rising costs, increasing demand and reduced access to funding. What will the Minister do to save community and voluntary sector projects in Bolton West?

Mr Hurd: The hon. Lady should direct her first inquiries to the council, because not all councils are cutting funding to the voluntary sector. She should be aware of the broad national picture, in which volunteering is up, giving is stable and social investment is rising. There is a whole range of Government programmes to support and strengthen civil society and help it to maintain its resilience through this very difficult period.

T3. [160391] **David Mowat** (Warrington South) (Con): In 2010, the Smith report suggested that substantial cost savings would result from moving parts of the civil service from London to the regions. It suggested a target of moving 15,000 civil servants by 2015. Will the Minister update us on progress?

Mr Maude: By last year, there were already nearly 12,000 fewer civil servants based in London. Our priority is to exit excess space and we have now exited 1.6 million square feet of office space, but there is much more that we can and will do.

T7. [160395] **Chris Evans** (Islwyn) (Lab/Co-op): In 2010, cybercrime cost the Welsh economy £974 million. What steps are the Government taking to protect online shoppers and the small and medium-sized businesses that tend to trade online?

Mr Maude: Repeated reports show that the best protection that can be given to individuals, households and businesses is basic online hygiene and safety. We have increased spending on cyber-security at a time of great financial stringency, and we are generally regarded as being well placed in the international rankings on cyber-security, but there is absolutely no room for complacency.

T4. [160392] **Kris Hopkins** (Keighley) (Con): Keighley town council is currently running a £160,000 deficit and has a liability of £1 million. Is my right hon. Friend aware that there is no accountable body for

town councils and therefore no one to protect taxpayers' money? Will he look at this issue as a matter of urgency?

Mr Maude: I am sure that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government will have taken note of the concern that my hon. Friend raises, but I have always thought that town councils were meant to be accountable to the residents of the town.

T9. [160397] **Mr Iain McKenzie** (Inverclyde) (Lab): Given recent criticism by various organisations of the accuracy of Government statistics, will the Minister advise the House on what steps he is taking to promote trust in Government statistics in future?

Mr Maude: We have appointed as chair of the UK Statistics Authority a very distinguished figure, now Sir Andrew Dilnot, who exercises his task with great rigour, which we welcome.

PRIME MINISTER

The Prime Minister was asked—

Engagements

Q1. [160318] **Damian Hinds** (East Hampshire) (Con): If he will list his official engagements for Wednesday 19 June.

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

I will also be making an announcement about a new Minister to join the Government. At the end of the year, Stephen Green, the former chair and chief executive of HSBC, will be standing down as Trade Minister, after doing a superb job refocusing the Government's efforts in key export markets. I can announce today that Ian Livingston—for the past five years chief executive of BT, one of Britain's most successful businesses—will take on this vital role. I believe he will bring huge talent to a vital national effort.

Damian Hinds: Does the Prime Minister agree that there are many pupils in excellent schools benefiting from outstanding teaching from inspirational teachers, not all of whom have necessarily been to teacher training college?

The Prime Minister: I think my hon. Friend makes an important point. There are many good teachers in our schools who have not been through the formal processes. I know that this week we have had another new policy from the Opposition banning all such teachers from such schools. As ever, although I have been busy, I have had a careful look at this policy and I note that there are such teachers—people who teach—among those on the Opposition Benches. The hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent Central (Tristram Hunt), a renowned historian, teaches in his local comprehensive schools. He is going to be banned. And of course, there is the former Member for South Shields, who enjoys doing that as well. I think this policy—another shambles—is another example of brotherly love.

Edward Miliband (Doncaster North) (Lab): Following the Parliamentary Commission on Banking, can the Prime Minister confirm that he supports its important recommendations on bonuses and criminal penalties, and that he will use the banking Bill to implement them?

The Prime Minister: Yes, I do support both those measures. Obviously we need to take time to read this excellent report, and I commend my hon. Friend the Member for Chichester (Mr Tyrie) for the excellent job that he has done. Penalising, including with criminal penalties against bankers who behave irresponsibly—I say yes. Also, making sure that for banks in receipt of taxpayers' money we can claw back and have a ban on bonuses—I say yes too.

Edward Miliband: On the specific issue of criminal penalties, I am glad that the Prime Minister supports the proposal, but will he confirm for the House on this important issue that the Government will put down the appropriate amendments to the banking Bill, which is currently going through Parliament, to make sure that this gets on the statute book as soon as possible?

The Prime Minister: We will be using that Bill to take these important steps. The key thing is that we have the opportunity, first, because we said there should be a parliamentary inquiry that could be done rapidly, rather than a public inquiry, which the right hon. Gentleman supported. If we had done that, we would just about be getting going with the inquiry. Instead, we have a good inquiry and good results, and we can have strong legislation too.

Edward Miliband: Just to be clear about this, if the Government do not put down the amendments on criminal penalties in the banking Bill, we will and we will make sure they happen.

The Prime Minister praises the Parliamentary Commission on Banking, but let us turn to one of its recommendations from last year's report. It said that the Government should legislate for a general power to break up the banks, breaking up high-risk casino banking from high street banks. We think it is right, the commission thinks it is right, but the Government are so far refusing to implement—[*Interruption.*] The part-time Chancellor is trying to give some advice to the Prime Minister. We think it is right and the commission thinks it is right, but the Government have so far refused to implement that recommendation. Why are the Government not doing it?

The Prime Minister: Let me say first that I would rather listen to my Chancellor than listen to the right hon. Gentleman's neighbour the shadow Chancellor. We remember his advice. Mortgages of 125% mortgages from Northern Rock: that is fine. A knighthood for Fred Goodwin: that is fine. The biggest banking bust in British history: that is fine. The shadow Chancellor was the City Minister when all that went on, and it is this Government who are clearing up the mess. As I have said, we would not have these results without the excellent inquiry that was commissioned by this Government, and we would not be able to legislate if we did not have the excellent banking Bill provided by this Government.

As for the right hon. Gentleman's question, we are putting a ring fence around retail banks, something which, in 13 years of a Labour Government, the right hon. Gentleman and the shadow Chancellor never got round to doing, although they were both in the Treasury.

Edward Miliband: We are really not going to take lectures from the guy who was the adviser on Black Wednesday in 1992.

The Prime Minister had no answer to the question about retail and investment banking. Perhaps he can do better on the issue of bonuses and the banks. Last week's figures from the Office for National Statistics showed that in April bonuses in business and financial services were 64% higher than they were a year ago. Why does the Prime Minister think that is?

The Prime Minister: Bank bonuses are about a fifth of what they were when the right hon. Gentleman was in the Treasury. They have been going down, not up.

If the right hon. Gentleman wants to discuss the issue of banking, perhaps he will reflect on the fact that the Labour Government's other City Minister, Lord Myners, had this to say today: "The Government of which I was a member certainly has to take some culpability for the fact that the regulatory oversight of the banks was not as effective as it should be." He went on: "To do otherwise would be to pull the wool over the eyes of the electorate." Perhaps the next time the right hon. Gentleman stands at the Dispatch Box, he will apologise for the mess that Labour made.

Edward Miliband: The Prime Minister is asking questions, Mr. Speaker. He is preparing for opposition.

Let us talk about what people were saying in 2008. We all remember the speeches, do we not, Mr. Speaker? Let me quote from "David Cameron: A Conservative Economic Strategy". In March 2008, the Prime Minister said:

"As a free-marketeer by conviction, it will not surprise you to hear me say that a significant part of"

the problems of the last decade

"has been...too much regulation".

There we have it: the Prime Minister wanted less regulation of the City.

Let us return to the question about bonuses. The fact is that bonuses in the City were up by 64% in April—and why? Because the Prime Minister has cut the top rate of income tax from 50p to 45p. People have cut their bonuses in April, and were given a massive tax cut as a result. Will the Prime Minister confirm that 64% figure, and the fact that people are being given a massive tax cut as a result of his decision?

The Prime Minister: First, let me give the right hon. Gentleman the figures. In 2012-13, City bonuses will be 85% lower than they were in 2007 and 2008, when those two were advising, or working in, the last Government, and had responsibility for regulating the City. It does not matter what the right hon. Gentleman says; he cannot get over the fact that they presided over boom and bust, the collapse of the banks and the failure to regulate. We remember what they said in 2008: they said "No more boom and bust". They referred to "a... golden age for the City".

That is what they said. They cannot hide their dreadful record, and they ought to start with an apology.

Edward Miliband: The whole House will have noted that the Prime Minister cannot deny the figures that I read out to him. He does not even know the facts. Bonuses are up so that people can take advantage of his massive cuts. Here is the truth. For all his tough talk, the reality is that the Prime Minister is dragging his feet on banking reform. Business lending is still falling, bonuses are rising, and while ordinary families are suffering, he is giving a massive tax cut to the bankers.

The Prime Minister: Just another display of extraordinary weakness! Labour had 13 years to sort out this problem and did absolutely nothing. It is this Government who have introduced the banking Bill, this Government who have introduced the ring fence, this Government who have put the Bank of England in charge of regulating credit in our economy. Instead, what we ought to be getting from the right hon. Gentleman is an apology and a thank you to us for clearing up the mess they left.

Sir Edward Leigh (Gainsborough) (Con): Occasionally, one should be grateful. May I warmly commend my right hon. Friend for being the first Conservative Prime Minister ever to commit to a referendum on Europe and for leading a Government who have done more than any other to tackle welfare dependency, to reduce immigration and to bring in academies, thereby showing that one can be Conservative, popular and right all at the same time?

The Prime Minister: I thank my hon. Friend for his question, and may I, on behalf of everyone in the House, congratulate him on his richly deserved knighthood? He has served in this House for many decades and also in the vital role of overseeing the Public Accounts Committee, which does such important work in our parliamentary system. I am grateful for what he says about the referendum and I would urge all colleagues to come to the House on 5 July and vote for this Bill.

Q2. [160320] Mr Khalid Mahmood (Birmingham, Perry Barr) (Lab): Is the Prime Minister proud of the fact that, on his watch, 300,000 more children have been pushed into absolute poverty?

The Prime Minister: I am proud that we have protected the poorest in our country by increasing the child tax credit, but the most important thing we can do to tackle poverty is to get more people into work. There are now more people in work in our country than at any time in our history. In the hon. Gentleman's own area, in the west midlands, the number of people employed is up 66,000 since the election. It is worth remembering the last Government's record, because even during the boom years, private sector employment in the west midlands went down.

Steve Brine (Winchester) (Con): I am sure the Prime Minister will want to join every Member in wishing all British players the best of luck for the Wimbledon championships, which start on Monday. Looking to the future, does he back the Lawn Tennis Association's schools tennis programme, which is now in operation in over 16,000 schools, including a number in my Winchester constituency such as the Henry Beaufort and Kings', to help find us some future home-grown and home-trained champion?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend is absolutely right to raise this. First of all, let us congratulate Andy Murray on his excellent victory at the Queen's club at the weekend, and wish him and other British players well for the Wimbledon tournament. We should commend the LTA for its work in trying to make tennis much more of a mass participation sport. I see it in the primary school that my children go to, where more tennis is being taught and played. It still has a long way to go. The LTA has to satisfy Sport England and all the funding bodies that it is doing everything it can to make tennis a mass participation sport.

Q3. [160321] Mr Michael Meacher (Oldham West and Royton) (Lab): When, according to *The Sunday Times*, just 1,000 of our richest citizens have increased their wealth since the financial crash by £190 billion while everyone else has been forced to take on average a 6% real-terms cut in income, is not the Prime Minister's policy of enriching the perpetrators and punishing the victims the very opposite of a one nation Britain?

The Prime Minister: The richest in our country are going to pay a higher percentage of income tax under this Government than they did under the last one. The right hon. Gentleman sat in that Government and had an opportunity to do something about it, but all the time he was a Minister, the top rate of tax was actually lower than it is going to be under this Government.

Mrs Anne Main (St Albans) (Con): Does my right hon. Friend agree that if a community is obliged to take a strategic piece of infrastructure, there should be agreements for payments and compensation for any blight that is caused by a nationally important piece of structure like a rail freight interchange?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend makes a very important point. That is why section 106 agreements exist. We need to keep this under active review, particularly with a view to how we are going to handle fracking and shale gas, for instance, where we might need a simpler and more direct mechanism to make sure that communities feel the real benefit of things that benefit the economy overall.

Q4. [160322] Paul Farrelly (Newcastle-under-Lyme) (Lab): On Monday, the Milburn report showed that the proportion of students from state schools at elite Russell Group universities is now lower than a decade ago. Meanwhile, another report, Project Hero, is secretly considering lifting interest rates on previous graduate loans. After £9,000 tuition fees, does the Prime Minister think such another breach of faith is more likely to encourage students from less wealthy backgrounds to apply to university, or discourage them?

The Prime Minister: I will make two points to the hon. Gentleman, because this is an important question. First, the number of children from disadvantaged backgrounds going to university is higher than it has ever been, so that is a good step forward. Secondly, if we want to get children from disadvantaged backgrounds into universities, we should be supporting things like the academies programme and free schools. We saw in Labour's announcement this week that they are now

saying that they support free schools. That is great. The trouble is they then went on to say that they are not going to allow any more of them. Then they said this, which is quite extraordinary:

“What we will have is a new academies programme including parent-led academies, really good teacher-led academies like Peter Hyman’s school in east London”.

They want more schools like that. The shadow Education Secretary is nodding. There is only one problem: that school is a free school. What a complete shambles.

Tessa Munt (Wells) (LD): What discussions has the Prime Minister held with colleagues at the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs to amend the priorities of Natural England and the Environment Agency so as to recognise the value of productive land and the need to protect farmland in my constituency from flooding?

The Prime Minister: I have conversations about this issue with the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. As I announced in the House last week, he will soon bring forward the proposal to make sure that the insurance scheme that protected households in danger of flooding is renewed. We also need to make sure we protect farmland in the way the hon. Lady says, not least because, with global populations rising, the demand for food production is going to increase, and we should make sure we have a good level of food security in this country.

Q5. [160323] **Mark Hendrick** (Preston) (Lab/Co-op): The last Labour Government took 1 million children out of poverty. Figures released recently show that one in six children in this country now lives in poverty. In my constituency, one in three is living in poverty, compared with one in 10 in the Prime Minister’s constituency. What is he going to do about it?

The Prime Minister: I have to say to the hon. Gentleman that the problem with the last Government’s legacy is you left a massive debt burden and a massive deficit, and this Government have had to take action to deal with it. As I said, the best way to get—

Mr Speaker: Order. I did not leave any debt burden. We will concentrate on the policies of the Government. Nothing further requires to be said, so we shall move on. I call Mr Graham Brady.

Q6. [160324] **Mr Graham Brady** (Altrincham and Sale West) (Con): Whatever the long-term benefits of the high-speed rail project, it is already causing serious worry for tens of thousands of home owners along the route. Will my right hon. Friend give urgent attention and consideration to the possibility of introducing a property bond, to remove that blight?

The Prime Minister: I know that my hon. Friend is concerned about this issue. It is right that he stands up for his constituents, and other MPs have discussed this issue with me. I think we should remain committed to HS2, because it will connect our cities and communities and bring many benefits, particularly to the north of England, as it is built out, but we should look at the compensation schemes available, and we are consulting and listening to the idea of the property bond.

Q7. [160325] **Mr Nick Raynsford** (Greenwich and Woolwich) (Lab): In his statement following the appalling murder of Drummer Lee Rigby a month ago, the Prime Minister announced the setting up of the Government’s taskforce on tackling extremism, and said:

“We will also look at new ways to support communities as they come together and take a united stand against all forms of extremism.”—[*Official Report*, 3 June 2013; Vol. 563, c. 1235.]

In Woolwich, our diverse communities have been working hard to do just that. Can the Prime Minister tell the House what progress has been made by the taskforce, and specifically what new ways he envisages will emerge to support communities such as ours?

The Prime Minister: First, may I commend the right hon. Gentleman on all the action he has taken in his community. I saw for myself when visiting Woolwich how strongly that community has come together to decry absolutely what happened and to build a stronger future.

The taskforce has met, and the first papers and ideas have been commissioned. One particular idea we are looking at is something I heard about when I was with the right hon. Gentleman in Woolwich: where, for instance, communities want to come together and try to drive extremist groups out of particular mosques or Islamic centres, they often need help, including help with legal advice, to do that. That is one of the specific ideas, but the action of this taskforce should cover the whole waterfront of everything we do right across our communities.

Mr William Cash (Stone) (Con): Given the need to improve recognition of the role of women in the developing world, especially in the contexts of health, education, water and sanitation, business and all other matters that affect administration in those countries, will my right hon. Friend take a positive interest in my Gender Equality (International Development) Bill, which will be introduced today? Will he note that it is already supported by a very wide range of people, including WaterAid, The GREAT Initiative and others?

The Prime Minister: I will study my hon. Friend’s Bill closely. It is not the Bill that everybody might expect—[*Interruption.*]

Mr Speaker: Order. Let us hear a bit more about Mr Cash’s Bill—I think the Prime Minister is going to tell us.

The Prime Minister: I will certainly study my hon. Friend’s Bill. It is not necessarily the Bill we would all expect him to produce, but it sounds like an absolutely excellent idea. In co-chairing the high-level panel at the UN about the future of development, I wanted to make sure that gender equality was put right up there in the replacement for the millennium development goals, and it is there. I think his Bill might be able to provide some extra ideas for how to bring this to life.

Q8. [160326] **Julie Hilling** (Bolton West) (Lab): In 2010, the Prime Minister proudly stated:

“we actually made sure that neither the budget, nor the spending round...would result in any increase in child poverty”

but in his first full year as Prime Minister, the number of children in absolute poverty rose by 300,000, and it is still rising. Will he now admit that he was wrong and that his policies are to blame?

The Prime Minister: We made a specific decision in the spending round to increase the child tax credit to protect the poorest families in our country, but we had an inheritance from the last Government of such appalling levels of debt that it has been difficult and painful to deal with them. Let me repeat the point that the best way to get people out of poverty is to see employment grow, and in the north-west, the part of the country that the hon. Lady represents, employment has risen by 6,000 this quarter, it has risen by 50,000 since the election and unemployment is down by 20,000 since the election. Those are all life chances, jobs and chances to get on which people did not have under the last Labour Government.

Mr Julian Brazier (Canterbury) (Con): May I welcome my right hon. Friend's leadership at the G8 to prevent the horrors of Syria from turning into a regional humanitarian catastrophe? May I also urge him to pursue further the support for Lebanon and Jordan, two very fragile neighbouring states, and especially to go further with the support we are providing for the Lebanese army, which is the only cross-confessional organisation in the area and a potential stabilising force?

The Prime Minister: I thank my hon. Friend for what he said about the G8. We did make some good progress on Syria, particularly on support in terms of humanitarian aid, where \$1.5 billion extra was pledged for what is now becoming one of the worst humanitarian crises we have seen in recent years. He is absolutely right to say that we need to support the neighbouring states, and we should pay tribute to the Lebanese army, which plays a very important role—we do indeed fund its activity in terms of some of the border posts.

Q9. [160327] **Richard Burden** (Birmingham, Northfield) (Lab): In response to my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr Mahmood), and indeed several times in this Question Time, the Prime Minister has said that the best way of tackling poverty is to get people into work. In principle I agree with him, but would he explain this: why is it that two thirds of the children in poverty today come from families where at least one adult is in work, and why is that figure rising?

The Prime Minister: The point I would make to the hon. Gentleman is that work is the best answer for taking people out of poverty. Yes of course we should continue to pay child benefit, which we do. Of course we should continue with the tax credits that we do pay. Indeed, one of the decisions we made when we came into office was to stop the nonsense of tax credits going to people, including Members of this House of Commons, earning £50,000 or more a year. So we are focusing the help on the people who need it most, and we have seen in the west midlands an extra 66,000 people in work.

Q10. [160328] **Stephen Lloyd** (Eastbourne) (LD): A few weeks ago, nine paediatricians wrote to me and the Care Quality Commission expressing serious safety

concerns after maternity services at the Eastbourne district general hospital were downgraded. Since then, their managers have acted in an intimidating manner. Will the Prime Minister assure me that reprisals will not be made against those doctors and that the managers implement the safety concerns?

The Prime Minister: As we have discussed before in this House, there should always be safeguards for people who whistleblow and for people who tell the truth about problems in our NHS. We have completely overhauled the Care Quality Commission from what was—and the report out today proves it—a totally dysfunctional organisation that we inherited.

Hazel Blears (Salford and Eccles) (Lab): In a few weeks' time, thousands of young people across the country, including many from my constituency in Salford and Eccles, will be graduating from university and looking forward to getting their first step on the career ladder. Unfortunately for many of them, the only option will be a long-term unpaid internship that requires them to work for free. Will the Prime Minister therefore make sure that the National Minimum Wage (Amendment) Regulations 2011 are rigorously enforced by Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs to put an end to this exploitation of our young people?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Lady is doing some important work in this area. It is a difficult area to get right, because we all know from our own experiences that some short-term unpaid internships—work experience—can be very valuable for the people taking part. On the other hand, unpaid interns should not be employed instead of workers to avoid the national minimum wage. That is the balance that we have to get right, and I commend the right hon. Lady for the important work that she is doing.

Q11. [160329] **Mike Thornton** (Eastleigh) (LD): The excellent children's heart unit at Southampton general is the best in the country outside London, yet the recent decision by the Secretary of State means more uncertainty for patients and their families in my Eastleigh constituency. What assurances can the Prime Minister give about the future of that unit?

The Prime Minister: I do not think the Secretary of State had any choice but to re-begin the whole process of looking at Safe and Sustainable in children's hospitals, including Southampton, which is twinned with the hospital that serves my constituency, so I quite understand people's frustration about the time that this is taking, but most important of all is to make sure we get the decision right.

Caroline Lucas (Brighton, Pavilion) (Green): The Government's own research shows that there is a link between the portrayal of women as sex objects in the media and greater acceptance of sexual harassment and violence against women. That being the case, will the Prime Minister join me in trying to get our own House in order and calling on the parliamentary authorities to stop *The Sun* being available on the parliamentary estate until page 3 is scrapped, and will he have a word with his friend Rupert Murdoch about it while he is at it?

The Prime Minister: I am glad the hon. Lady got her question asked after the dazzling T-shirt that she was wearing last week failed to catch Mr Speaker's eye. I am afraid I do not agree with her. It is important that we can read all newspapers on the parliamentary estate, including *The Sun*.

Q12. [160330] **Mr Marcus Jones** (Nuneaton) (Con): I welcome the Prime Minister's leadership on getting the G8 to agree a deal on tackling aggressive corporate tax avoidance. Will my right hon. Friend confirm that he will not be offering a corporate tax avoidance service, as does the Labour party?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend makes an important point. At the G8 we achieved real progress on tax transparency and cracking down on tax evasion and aggressive tax avoidance, but is it not a sad thing that, although we were doing that, the Labour party is still offering tax avoidance advice to its donors, and it has not paid back the £700,000 of tax that it owes? Let me remind the leader of the Labour party what he said:

"If everyone approaches their tax affairs as some of these companies have approached their tax affairs we wouldn't have a health service, we wouldn't have an education system."

So he has to put his hand in his pocket and give the money back.

Q13. [160331] **Mr Kevin Barron** (Rother Valley) (Lab): I wrote to the Prime Minister on 8 May and I have not yet received a reply. May I ask him now whether he has had any discussions with Lynton Crosby about the standard packaging of cigarettes or the minimum price of a unit of alcohol—yes or no?

The Prime Minister: I can tell you, Mr Speaker, that Lynton Crosby has never lobbied me on anything. The only opinions that I am interested in are how we destroy the credibility of the Labour party, on which he has considerable expertise, though I have to say that he is not doing as good a job as the Labour party.

Q14. [160332] **David Mowat** (Warrington South) (Con): Last year the Prime Minister successfully intervened in the case of newly born baby Lexie-Mai, who has eventually been confirmed as the daughter of Private Daniel Wade, who died on active service in Afghanistan. Private Wade's fiancée and her family are in the Gallery today. This whole situation would not have arisen if the Ministry of Defence routinely kept samples of DNA of soldiers on active duty. Are we making any progress on this?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend makes an important point, and he is quite right to have stood up for his constituents in the way that he did. I would like to convene a meeting with MOD Ministers so that I can

get back to him with the very best answer about the action we can take to stop these problems happening in the future.

Rushanara Ali (Bethnal Green and Bow) (Lab): The number of homeless families living in temporary accommodation rose by 5,000 in the last year. Will the Prime Minister explain why?

The Prime Minister: We need to build more houses in our country, and that is exactly what the Government are doing. We are building more social houses and more private houses, and we are reforming housing benefit so that we can better use the money. The question now is for the Opposition. They spent weeks and weeks complaining about the removal of the spare room subsidy. I do not know whether anyone else has noticed: they do not ask questions about it any more. Could that possibly be because they have not got a clue about whether they would restore it?

Mr Robert Buckland (South Swindon) (Con): With an estimated £10 billion boost to our economy, does my right hon. Friend agree that a free trade agreement with the United States represents a glittering prize for Britain and for Europe?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. It is very good news that this free trade agreement has been launched at Lough Erne in Northern Ireland. It will now take many months of very difficult and patient negotiation. It is a hugely complicated problem, because we want it to cover all sorts of areas, such as public procurement and services, and not just manufactured goods, but it is good that it is getting going, because this could mean millions of jobs right across Europe and great benefits for us here in the UK.

Mr Dennis Skinner (Bolsover) (Lab): On the subject of giving money back, which the Prime Minister has just referred to in respect of the Labour party, will he now explain to the House why when he had a windfall he decided to write down his mortgage at Notting Hill instead of writing down the mortgage on the one that he was claiming for from the expenses allowance in the House of Commons?

The Prime Minister: I think that what the hon. Gentleman needs to do is concentrate on the massive problem on his Front Bench. Every week until they pay the money back, they will get a question about the £700,000 that they owe to the British taxpayer.

Several hon. Members rose—

Mr Speaker: Order.

G8

12.32 pm

The Prime Minister (Mr David Cameron): With permission, Mr Speaker, I would like to make a statement on the G8.

The Government decided to hold the G8 in Northern Ireland to demonstrate the strength of this part of the United Kingdom. We wanted to show the success of the peace process, the openness for business and investment, and the potential for tourism and growth. I thank my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and the First and Deputy First Ministers for all they did to help with the conference, I congratulate the Police Service of Northern Ireland and all those responsible for delivering a safe and successful G8, and I thank everyone in Northern Ireland for giving everyone such a warm welcome. Northern Ireland put on its best face and the whole world could see what a great place it is.

We set a clear agenda for this summit: to boost jobs and growth, with more open trade, fairer taxes and greater transparency—what I have called the three Ts. I also added a fourth T—combating terrorism. We reached important agreements, including on support to the Libyan Government and ending ransom payments for kidnap by terrorists. Despite our fundamental differences, we also made good progress, agreeing a way forward on working together to help the Syrian people achieve the change they want. Let me take each of these points in turn.

We started with the issues that matter most to our people—jobs, growth and mending our economies. First, we agreed that each country needs to press on with sorting out its public finances. Dealing with our debts and securing growth are not alternatives. The former is an essential step in achieving the latter. In fact, the communiqué that we agreed unanimously reflects all three parts of the plan for growth that we have in Britain—not just fiscal sustainability, but active monetary policy to unlock the finance that businesses and families need, and structural reforms to increase our competitiveness so that our young people can get into work and succeed in the global race.

The UK's G8 also launched a bold new pro-business agenda to drive a dramatic increase in trade and to get to grips with the problems of tax evasion, aggressive tax avoidance and corporate secrecy. This was a distinctive British agenda to shape the way the world economy works for the benefit of everyone. We believe in free trade, private enterprise and low taxes as the best route to growth, but that is only sustainable if ambitious trade deals are agreed, the taxes owed are paid and companies play by the rules. This agenda has now, I believe, been written into the DNA of G8 and G20 summits for many years to come.

On trade, we started the summit with the launch of negotiations on the EU-US trade deal. As has recently been said, this could add as much as £100 billion to the EU economy, £80 billion to the US and £85 billion for the rest of the world. We should be clear about what these numbers mean: more jobs, more choice and lower prices in our shops, and the biggest bilateral trade deal in history, launched at our G8.

On tax, the Lough Erne declaration that leaders signed yesterday sets out simple, clear commitments: tax authorities around the world should automatically

share information so that those who want to evade taxes will have nowhere to hide; companies should know who really owns them; and tax collectors and law enforcers should be able to obtain this information easily, for example through central registries, so that people cannot escape taxes by using complicated and fake structures. In a world where business has moved from the offline and the national to the online and the international but the tax system has not caught up, we are commissioning the OECD to develop a new international tax tool that will expose discrepancies between where multinationals earn their profits and where they pay their taxes.

The declaration also makes it clear that all that action has to help developing countries too, by sharing tax information and building their capability to collect taxes. Crucially for developing countries, we agreed that oil, gas and mining companies should report what they pay to Governments and that Governments should publish what they receive so that natural resources are a blessing, not a curse. Charities and other non-governmental organisations have rightly campaigned for years for action on these issues, and for the first time they have been raised to the top of the agenda and brought together in one document.

The agreements on tax made at the summit are significant, but it is also worth noting what has happened on this front since I put the issue to the top of the agenda. On 1 January there was no single international standard for automatic exchange of information. Now there is such a standard, and over 30 jurisdictions have already signed up, with more to follow. After years of delay, the European Union has agreed to progress the sharing of tax information between member states. The UK's overseas territories and Crown dependencies have signed up to the multilateral convention on information exchange and agreed automatic exchange of information with the UK and action plans for beneficial ownership. Taken together, all the actions agreed with the overseas territories and Crown dependencies will provide over £1 billion in revenue to the Exchequer, helping to keep taxes down for hard-working families here in Britain.

People around the world also wanted to know whether the G8 would take action to tackle malnutrition and ensure that there is enough food for everyone. The pledges at our nutrition and hunger summit earlier this month will save 20 million children from stunting by 2020. Crucially, our G8 also took action on some of the causes of these problems. That is why the work we did on land, extractive industries, tax and transparency is so important.

Turning to the fourth T—terrorism—we agreed a tough, patient and intelligent approach: confronting the terrorists, defeating the poisonous ideology that sustains them and tackling the weak and failing states in which they thrive. The G8 leaders reached a groundbreaking agreement on ransom payments for kidnap by terrorists. In the last three years alone ransom payments have given al-Qaeda and its allies tens of millions of dollars. These payments have to stop and this G8 agreed that they will.

We also discussed plans to begin direct talks with the Taliban. Britain has long supported a peace process in Afghanistan to work alongside our tough security response, so we welcome this step forward.

We also discussed support to Libya. I believe that we should be proud of the role we played in ridding Libya of Colonel Gaddafi, but we need to help that country

[The Prime Minister]

secure its future. So we held a separate meeting with the Libyan Prime Minister, which included President Obama, and European nations have already offered to train 7,000 troops to help Prime Minister Zeidan disarm and integrate the militias and bring security to the whole country. More contributions will follow from others. Let me be clear that the Libyan Government have asked for this and will pay for it.

Finally, let me turn to Syria. It is no secret that there are very different views around the G8 table, but I was determined that we should use the opportunity of this summit to overcome some of these differences and agree a way forward to help the Syrian people achieve the change that they want. This did not happen during just one night in Lough Erne; the talks between Secretary Kerry and Foreign Minister Lavrov have been vital.

In the weeks before the summit, I flew to Sochi and Washington, and I met again President Putin and President Obama in the hours before the summit began. These conversations were open, honest and frank, but we were all agreed on what must be the core principle of the international approach to this crisis. There is no military victory to be won and all our efforts must be focused on the ultimate goal of a political solution.

Together with our G8 partners, we agreed almost \$1.5 billion of new money for humanitarian support. This is an unprecedented commitment from Lough Erne for Syria and her neighbours. We agreed to back a Geneva II process that delivers a transitional governing body with, crucially, full Executive authority. So a core requirement for success that had been called into doubt in recent weeks has now been reasserted unanimously, with the full authority of the G8.

We pledged to learn the lessons of Iraq by making sure that the key institutions of the state are maintained throughout the transition and that there is no vacuum. This sends a clear message to those loyalists looking for an alternative to Assad. The G8 also unequivocally condemned any use of chemical weapons and, following an extensive debate, we reached for the first time a united position, including Russia, that the regime must immediately allow unrestricted access for UN inspectors to establish the full facts on the use of chemical weapons by regime forces, or indeed by anyone else. All these agreements are absolutely fundamental to saving lives and securing the political transition that we all want to see.

Let us be clear on what is happening in Syria and what we are trying to achieve. We are faced with a dramatically escalating humanitarian disaster with more than 90,000 dead and almost 6 million people having had to flee their homes. There is a radicalisation of terrorists and extremists who will pose a direct threat to the security of the region and also the world. There is a growing risk to the peace and stability of Syria's neighbours and the long-standing international prohibition on chemical weapons is being breached by a dictator who is brutalising his people.

None of this constitutes an argument for plunging in recklessly. We will not do so, and we will not take any major actions without first coming to this House. But we cannot simply ignore this continuing slaughter. Of course it is right to point out that there are extremists among the Opposition. There are, and I am clear: they

pose a threat not just to Syria but to all of us. The G8 agreed that they should be defeated and expelled from their havens in Syria.

I also understand those who fear that whatever we try to do could make things worse, not better. Of course we must think carefully before any course of action, but we must not accept what President Assad wants us to believe—that the only alternative to his brutal action against Syria is extremism and terrorism. There are millions of ordinary Syrians who want to take control of their own future, a future without Assad. That is why I made sure that the G8 agreed that the way through the crisis is to help Syrians forge a new Government who are neither Sunni, nor Alawite, nor Shi'a.

We are committed to using diplomacy to end this war with a political solution. This is not easy, but the essential first step must be to get agreement between the main international powers with influence on Syria. That is what we have done at the G8 in Lough Erne. We must now work to turn these commitments into action, and I commend this statement to the House.

12.43 pm

Edward Miliband (Doncaster North) (Lab): I am grateful for the Prime Minister's statement. Let me start by commending him on holding the summit in Northern Ireland. Fifteen years ago, holding a G8 summit in Enniskillen would have been unthinkable. Peace has transformed Enniskillen, and the location of this summit alone is testament to what can be achieved through politics and dialogue. It is a credit to all the people of Northern Ireland.

Let me take the G8 issues in turn. On hunger and nutrition, it is completely unacceptable that there is enough food in the world for everyone, yet 1 billion people still go hungry and 2.3 million children die every year from malnutrition. I therefore welcome the agreements and commitments made during the hunger summit. The task must now be to ensure that these commitments will be delivered. Does the Prime Minister agree that we are right to stick by our pledge of 0.7% aid as a proportion of national income and does he further agree with me that we should be using all the moral force that we gain from that position to urge others to follow suit?

On trade, we welcome and support the launch of negotiations on a free trade agreement between Europe and the United States. Will the Prime Minister confirm that he will tell all his colleagues, including the Cabinet, that this is a timely reminder of the importance for jobs and prosperity of staying in the European Union?

On tax havens, the Prime Minister said that one of his goals was to make sure that there will be public registries of who owns companies and trusts. What blocked getting agreement on that at the G8? Will he clarify whether the agreement reached by rich countries on information sharing, which he mentioned in his statement, will from the outset apply to developing countries? As the IF campaign has said,

"a summit focussed on transparency can't justify keeping this information secret"

from poorer countries.

Let me turn to the devastating situation in Syria. It was right for the Prime Minister to prioritise this crisis and make it the focus of this week's talks. We welcome

the announcements of additional humanitarian relief, in particular the doubling of UK aid. However, as the Prime Minister has said, the answer to this humanitarian crisis is a political solution. All of us recognise the scale of the challenge of bringing together an international community that has been deeply divided on this issue, and there are no easy options.

The Prime Minister said yesterday that it was “a strong and purposeful statement on Syria”.

Although we welcome the centrepiece of that statement being a commitment to the Geneva II conference, will the Prime Minister explain why there was no agreement on its starting date? It is being reported that the conference is now being pushed to July or even later in August. Based on his discussions this week, could he now tell us when he expects the conference to take place?

On the substance of Geneva II, the Prime Minister has spoken today about the importance of the agreement in Enniskillen on a transitional governing body with full Executive authority, based on the maintenance of key institutions of the state and an inclusive political settlement. Does he accept, however, that every one of those commitments featured in the Geneva I communiqué back in June 2012? The Prime Minister spoke of this G8 providing a moment of clarity on Syria, but will he set out how in concrete terms yesterday’s statement moves us closer to a political settlement?

On arming the rebels, the Prime Minister now says that it is not his policy to do so. Given that the Geneva conference has already been delayed, is he able to envisage any circumstances in which he would seek to arm the rebels before the conference takes place?

Given the limited nature or the progress achieved this week, does the Prime Minister still maintain that focusing so much time and effort in the days and weeks preceding the summit on lifting the EU arms embargo was the right way to spend political capital and energy?

The reality is that we did not witness the long-hoped-for breakthrough on Syria at the G8 summit, and we need to be candid about that. None of us should doubt the difficulties of the choices that confront this Government and all Governments around the world. The Prime Minister knows that, on the steps agreed this week to tackle terrorism and on the issues of Afghanistan and, indeed, Libya, I have given him my full support. May I urge him in the months ahead, however, to proceed with the greatest possible clarity on his strategy and purpose and to seek to build the greatest possible consensus across this House?

The Prime Minister: First of all, I thank the right hon. Gentleman for what he said about holding the conference in Northern Ireland. That was not without its difficulties and questions were asked, but not only was it a very successful and very well-managed and well-run conference—I pay tribute to everyone who was involved in it—but I think it was also one of the most peaceful G8s in terms of demonstrations. It was rumoured that one of the six tents in the place where all the tents were going to be put up belonged to some Dutch folk who happened to be on holiday. I also read this morning that one of the hopeful shopkeepers in Enniskillen had stocked up on vegan meals only to find that the protesters did not turn up in large enough numbers, so he now has

a large supply going spare. It is a remarkable part of our country and it was good to bring the G8 to County Fermanagh.

I thank the right hon. Gentleman for what he said on the aid pledge. It is right that Britain has made and kept its promises, and we use that to bring others up to the mark. Of course, the G8 always publishes an accountability report. A lot of these communiqués are impenetrable, but this is very simple and straightforward on who has promised what and whether they have kept that promise. We should go on publishing those reports. I say to any sceptics that for every pound they pay in tax, only 1p of it goes to overseas aid. I think that that is a good investment in the future of the world.

I thank the right hon. Gentleman for what he said about the trade issue. It is good that we have made a start on EU-US trade and disappointing that we have not completed the Canada negotiations. He mentioned the single market. Of course, it is of benefit to Britain that we are in the single market as a trading nation and able to take part in deals with other parts of the world.

The right hon. Gentleman raised the issue of public registries of beneficial ownership and asked why we had not achieved public registries everywhere. For many G8 Governments and leaders, this is a new issue at the top of the agenda. I am absolutely convinced that central registries of ownership are vital if we are to cut out corruption and corrupt payments from developing countries, and if we are to get to the bottom of tax evasion. We put that on the agenda, and every G8 country has agreed to an action plan, and some have committed to immediate registries. We must keep pushing on that agenda because it is so vital. We will consult on whether our registry should be public—I look forward to the consultation getting going—but no one should underestimate the importance of having a registry so that the tax authorities can get to grips with those problems.

The right hon. Gentleman talked about tax information change—yes, it will be open to poorer countries, but we must help them to take part and carry on with the programmes we have to help poorer countries to collect their taxes.

On Syria, the date of a conference was discussed, but the decision was taken that the most important thing is to get the substance right on the role of the transitional authority, its powers and such like, rather than set too quick a date, which might set us up to fail. Obviously, there is a real sense of urgency and we all want to see it happen in the weeks ahead.

The right hon. Gentleman asked about the differences between Geneva I and the position we are now in. I would make two points to him on that. The Russians were backing off the idea of a transitional authority with full Executive powers, but have now fully reaffirmed it. That is important because no one wants to take part in negotiations that are for negotiations’ sake—they must be about something—and a transitional authority will not work unless it has full Executive power, including over the armed forces. As I said in my statement, the language and approach on chemical weapons is new, as is the language on humanitarian aid. Those new things were achieved at the G8.

I appreciate the fact that the right hon. Gentleman has tried to provide consensus on issues of foreign policy—we should always try to do that, and I hope we

[The Prime Minister]

can re-forge that consensus in the months ahead—but the point I would make to him is this: I think that lifting the arms embargo in the EU was right. It sent a powerful signal that there is not a moral equivalence between Assad on the one hand and the official opposition, who want a democratic Syria, on the other. That has helped to add to the pressure. There is a huge danger that people will fall into the trap of believing Assad's argument, which is that the only alternative to him is terrorism and extremism. We should stand for something else in the House and in this country—we should stand up for people who want democracy, freedom and the sorts of things we take for granted right here.

Sir Peter Tapsell (Louth and Horncastle) (Con): I fully share my right hon. Friend's horror at the situation in Syria, a country that I first visited when I was 19, and where I have had good friends, but may I urge him not to propagate the myth that progress can be made only by the killing, or removal in some way, of President Assad, because the Syrian presidency is something of a family business, and President Assad has a number of extremely tough and ruthless individuals around him. They are probably tougher and more ruthless than he is. If President Assad is removed, one of them will instantly take over his position, and will be just as determined to prevent the Alawites from being massacred by the Sunni as is President Assad. If Geneva II is to make any real progress, I strongly recommend that President Assad should be invited to attend it, together with a representative of the new Iranian Government, who need to be brought back into the comity of nations.

The Prime Minister: I have huge respect for my right hon. Friend, but I do not agree with him that, somehow, President Assad can continue. When a leader has used chemical weapons against his own people and presided over such an appalling slaughter, he cannot have a place in the government of his country. I agree with him that, clearly, the aim must be to bring forward a transitional Government that includes Sunni and Alawite representatives, and representatives of the regime and opposition, because we need a Government in whom everyone in Syria can have confidence.

Mr Peter Hain (Neath) (Lab): I welcome the Prime Minister's statement that there can be no military victory in Syria. In his search for a political solution, may I caution him on his apparent insistence on a precondition? Northern Ireland shows that preconditions do not work. He and I share exactly the same view of Assad's barbarism, but if he insists that Assad cannot come to the conference or play any subsequent role, I caution him that the conference might never happen.

The Prime Minister: We are insisting that a proper conference must include representatives of the regime and representatives of the opposition, and that it should lead to a transitional Government. The UK Government have a clear view that neither of those stages can involve President Assad, for the reasons we have given, but that should not stand in the way of the transition that is necessary, and the transition that everyone in the G8, Russians included, believes is right.

Sir Menzies Campbell (North East Fife) (LD): Is my right hon. Friend aware that there are persistent reports that, in the course of the discussions on Syria, Russia made it clear that it would no longer insist that any final settlement should include a role for President Assad? If that is true, it represents a substantial step forward, if not a breakthrough, and merely emphasises the importance of continuing dialogue and discussion with Russia, which has such an important part to play in the solution we all seek.

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to my right hon. and learned Friend for his question. Obviously, it is important that the Russians are allowed to speak for themselves about what they did and did not say, and what they agree and do not agree with. I found in the discussions that the reason we were able to go ahead with the seven points I laid out at the press conference yesterday was that the conversations were constructive—we did not dwell on the areas where we have disagreed and continue to disagree; we dwelled on those areas where we can agree. I agree with what he says about engaging with President Putin. That is why, in addition to inviting President Putin here before the G8, I flew to Sochi this year—I was the first Prime Minister to visit Russia for many years.

Glenda Jackson (Hampstead and Kilburn) (Lab): I thank the Prime Minister for highlighting his commitment to ending world hunger as such a central part of the G8, and for highlighting many of the underlying causes, but he will be aware that a third of the most malnourished children in the world live in just four countries—India, Nigeria, Pakistan and Bangladesh—so will he continue to use his best offices to ensure that those countries give their wholehearted commitment to ensuring that their children do not go to bed hungry every night?

On Syria, two days after America has agreed to sit down with the Taliban, surely it is better to bring everyone around the debating table. We do not want 12 more years of civil war in Syria.

The Prime Minister: On the Taliban, I have said many times that I welcome a political process. It is worth noting that the Taliban said in their statement that they wanted an Afghanistan that no longer caused instability, death or trouble in other countries. That is significant.

On hunger, the hon. Lady is absolutely right that it is not enough for us just to pass resolutions, or for this country alone to commit to aid programmes. We must engage other countries, which will do a lot of the heavy lifting in dealing with malnutrition. I am confident that, having held our summit at the Olympics last year, with the sort of top-up this year and the Brazilians co-chairing another summit at the Olympic games there, we have achieved a lot in terms of getting other countries to pledge action on hunger.

Richard Ottaway (Croydon South) (Con): I commend the Prime Minister and the G8 for addressing the key challenges of the day. On Syria, the situation is becoming increasingly complex as the rebels become increasingly fragmented. Does he agree that the solution lies in a negotiated settlement, but—it is an important “but”—that cannot be achieved without him firmly setting out where his red lines lie?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend is right. Everyone wants a negotiated solution and a peace process. We must think about what things will make a peace process and peace settlement more likely. Obviously, international agreement at the G8 is one of them, but we must also ensure that Assad feels he is under some pressure and cannot achieve what he wants by military means alone. That is where there is such unity of purpose between President Obama, President Hollande, myself, Angela Merkel and Stephen Harper. This is an important point to make to those who have concerns. They cannot think of President Obama as someone sitting in the White House dreaming up ways to start a new engagement or war in the middle east. That is not what Barack Obama is about. He knows that we need a peace process, but he also knows we need to present a tough and united front to President Assad in the process.

Mr David Winnick (Walsall North) (Lab): The Syrian Government have brought their troubles on themselves. There is no doubt that they are a corrupt and brutal regime. Although the Prime Minister was keen to lift the arms embargo, there was no enthusiasm in this House for doing so and very few Members have stood up and said that they are in favour of sending arms to the Syrian opposition. The sooner we have a debate on this subject, the better.

The Prime Minister: We are debating it right now and we should go on debating it. We have not made a decision about arming the rebels. However, the fact that we are working with the opposition to help and advise them, along with the French, the Americans and our Gulf allies, is helpful in making sure that Syria has a legitimate opposition who want democracy, freedom and a pluralistic Syria. At the same time, we should have no hesitation in condemning extremism. We must work with everyone to say that the extremists on all sides, including Hezbollah, which is working for the regime, should be expelled from the country.

Jane Ellison (Battersea) (Con): I thank my right hon. Friend for raising the case of my constituent, Shaker Aamer, with President Obama during the G8. Will he update the House on that discussion and on what progress has been made towards Mr Aamer's release from Guantanamo Bay?

The Prime Minister: I pay tribute to my hon. Friend's efforts on behalf of her constituent and his family. I have received moving letters from them. I raised the case with President Obama directly and will be writing to him about the specifics of the case and everything that we can do to expedite it. We need to show some understanding of the huge difficulties that America has faced over Guantanamo Bay. Clearly, President Obama wants to make progress on this issue and we should help him in every way that we can with respect to this individual. I will keep my hon. Friend and the House updated on progress.

Dr William McCrea (South Antrim) (DUP): I am sure that the Prime Minister was honoured to showcase to his fellow world leaders one of the most beautiful regions of the United Kingdom, Northern Ireland and the lakelands of Fermanagh, and to bask in the glory of one of the most peaceful G8 summits in history. Will he

assure Members of Parliament from Northern Ireland that he will do everything in his power to build on that summit and bring economic prosperity to Northern Ireland? Will he also ensure that all company taxes that are due to the UK coffers go to them, instead of to the Irish Republic?

The Prime Minister: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his question. Each of the G8 leaders mentioned how pleased they were to be in Northern Ireland and how impressed they were by the progress of the peace process. The advertising or, as I put it yesterday, infomercial for Northern Ireland was priceless. I ensured that the leaders were all sent off with a bottle of Bushmills to enjoy when they got home.

We discussed the tax issue. It is important to recognise that as well as the issues with the rate of corporation tax, there are issues with how tax authorities handle companies. We must ensure that they do not turn a blind eye to bad practices. That is an important part of the debate.

Mrs Caroline Spelman (Meriden) (Con): The Prime Minister was right to take a lead on the EU-US trade deal, which could increase car exports by a further 25%. Does he agree that another very big prize, through the mutual recognition of regulations, would be the ability to set standards globally?

The Prime Minister: Yes, my right hon. Friend is absolutely right. That point highlights what a complicated and difficult deal it is. We sometimes think that trade deals are just about taking down tariff barriers and then letting the market decide. Modern trade deals are much more about agreeing common standards and recognition of each other's standards, and opening up things like services and procurement. The deal will be difficult and complicated, but it has started with good will on all sides, which is the right way to kick it off.

Mr Michael Meacher (Oldham West and Royton) (Lab): The automatic transfer of tax information and the provision of registers of beneficial ownership appear to be no more than a wish list, since the communiqué says that countries "should" do those things, rather than "will". What sanctions or pressures will be exerted against countries that refuse or fail to comply, given that that could unravel the whole objective?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman has a long track record of campaigning on these issues. I urge him to read the Lough Erne declaration, because we tried to put down in simple terms something that everyone would understand about publishing information, about companies saying where they pay their taxes and about what extractive industries pay to developing countries. People write and campaign to all Members of the House on that agenda, and we all feel passionately about it. Getting the leaders to sign their name under that declaration means that it will become part of the G8 process. Every time we meet, we will discuss what progress has been made and what fresh agreements have been made. In the end, all countries are sovereign and make their own decisions, but it was remarkable how much progress was made so quickly at the G8 in getting countries to sign up to these things and do them.

Mr John Baron (Basildon and Billericay) (Con): The Prime Minister is right to stress the importance of a political settlement in Syria. Does he understand that excluding Iran from the forthcoming talks simply because we do not agree with it is an admission of political and diplomatic failure? It is precisely because we do not agree with it that we should be talking to it. Will he revisit that decision and approach his international partners in the hope that there can be a change of view?

The Prime Minister: I make two points to my hon. Friend. First, Iran has never accepted the premises of Geneva I, so it has not even crossed the threshold into considering what a transition would look like. Secondly, when we are trying to put together a group of individuals to negotiate at a peace conference, the most important thing is that there are a limited number of people from the regime and a limited number of people from the opposition who represent the people of Syria. We must focus on that more than on anything else.

Keith Vaz (Leicester East) (Lab): May I ask the Prime Minister about the fourth T in his tieless summit: the issue of counter-terrorism? I welcome what he said about the agreement on ransom moneys. However, we must consider not only the discussions of the leaders, but the follow-up. What additional resources or powers will he give the Roma-Lyon group that traditionally follows up on the counter-terrorism agenda from G8 summits? In the end, the most important part of the summit meeting is what happens afterwards. The Prime Minister has seven months as president. Will he ensure that there is an effective structure?

The Prime Minister: The communiqué pays tribute to the Roma-Lyon group and says that it must have what is necessary to take action so that we can co-ordinate better after dreadful events such as that at in Amenas. In the discussion at the G8, we tried to agree on the drivers of terrorism and extremism across north Africa, and on what more the countries around the table could do so that we do not duplicate our efforts, but divide up what needs to be done. For instance, Britain could do more to help Nigeria, France could do more to stabilise Mali and the United States could work with key partners in the region. We tasked our national security advisers with continuing to work out how to adjudicate who should do more of what. It was encouraging that President Putin agreed to take up that work when he chairs the G8 next year.

Dr Julian Lewis (New Forest East) (Con): Does the Prime Minister agree that the gravest threat to western interests and safety would be al-Qaeda getting its hands on Syria's stocks of chemical weapons of mass destruction? Does he think that arming the rebels would make that outcome more or less likely?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend is right to point to the danger of having extremists in Syria who have weapons and the intent to get hold of chemical weapons. We must ask ourselves how we have got to that point because they already have weapons and that intent. The extremist element of the opposition has become too strong, so our aim should be to reduce its strength. That

is why we agreed at the G8 that part of the programme must be to expel extremists on all sides from Syria—that is the absolute key.

I say to those who see dangers, quite rightly, in engaging in any efforts to help Syria that we have got to the point of extremists having arms, ill intent and the desire to get hold of chemical weapons while there has been a deficit of engagement from countries that want Syria to take the right path rather than the wrong path. As I have said, we have not decided to arm the rebels, but are working with the opposition in the ways that I have described. We are working with the Americans and the French. I am sure that being engaged and being positive about what Britain can achieve with its partners is the right approach to reducing the dangers, rather than increasing them.

Ms Gisela Stuart (Birmingham, Edgbaston) (Lab): I welcome the statement on taxation, international transparency and commissioning the OECD to develop new international tools, but has there been a recognition that the big accountancy firms have not always been as benign an influence on that transparency? Unless they too play a part in developing international standards of transparency, we will not succeed.

The Prime Minister: The hon. Lady is absolutely right and we will never solve that issue just through Governments reaching agreements, either nationally or internationally. We need a debate about this in every boardroom and business in the world, and we also need lawyers and accountants to think about their responsibilities, as well as the bottom line. I do not think that is an unreasonable thing to do. A positive suggestion made by the French and Americans, with my support, was that we ought to be asking accountants and lawyers to do more to help developing countries with their tax systems. Otherwise, there is an unequal struggle between businesses armed to the teeth with corporate lawyers and—this was one example given—a country where the entire budget of the department dealing with the company was far smaller than that of the army of lawyers sent to deal with it.

Martin Horwood (Cheltenham) (LD): I welcome the G8 pledges on Syria and fairer taxes worldwide, and particularly the Prime Minister's closing remarks at the summit when he said:

"If Britain weren't in the EU you would not directly benefit from an EU/US trade deal".

Is it right that Europe means jobs?

The Prime Minister: The point I was making—I hope the hon. Gentleman will quote me in full—is that if Britain were not in the European Union we could reach our own trade agreements with different parts of the world, but I believe we benefit from being part of the single market, and obviously part of bigger negotiations where we have a huge amount of heft in delivering these deals. The EU-Korea deal has been positive, and I think the EU-Canada deal will be positive and completed very shortly. The EU-US deal obviously has more potential than all the others put together.

Stephen Doughty (Cardiff South and Penarth) (Lab/Co-op): I have listened with interest to a number of the Prime Minister's answers on tax. The IF campaign said that although there has been progress, the G8 tax deal left major unfinished business, particularly on information

exchange in relation to poor countries. What assurances can the Prime Minister give thousands of campaigners up and down the country about when and how he will finish that business?

The Prime Minister: The IF campaign has done an excellent job in raising the profile of that issue and all the other issues around hunger, and in its response to the outcome yesterday it made a number of fair points. We have made good progress and the issue is far higher up the agenda than it has ever been. Lots of tax agreements have been made and lots of revenue recovered for this country. We have done a huge amount to help the poorest countries in the world. At the lunch meeting yesterday the African leaders said that this is absolutely the agenda they want us to focus on, but there is more to do and I am happy to keep on with that work.

Angie Bray (Ealing Central and Acton) (Con): I congratulate my right hon. Friend on making progress on Syria at the G8 summit, although there is clearly more to do. President Putin reminded us that among the Syrian rebels are those of the same kind that murdered Lee Rigby. What more can we do in this country to stop young British men going to Syria and coming back seriously radicalised?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. There is a danger of young people from Britain taking part in this conflict, just as there has been in Afghanistan, Mali and elsewhere. We should do everything we can in the UK to try to crack down on those centres of radicalisation. It is clear to me, as I said during Prime Minister's questions, that we need to do more to throw extremists out of mosques and confront the radicalisers and hate preachers, and we must do more to throw those who are not British nationals out of the country. This is a huge programme that goes right across Government, and we must do everything we can to deliver it.

Mr Barry Sheerman (Huddersfield) (Lab/Co-op): The Prime Minister will know that my constituents and people around the world will be positive about much that has come out of the G8 conference, although the hard-headed and cynical press are always ready to say it is pie in the sky. What assurance can he give me and my constituents that jobs and growth are a priority, and how do we know he will follow this through so that it makes a real difference to a world looking for a new deal in employment?

The Prime Minister: I completely understand people's cynicism about these great international gatherings because they produce long communiqués, lots of talking, and one has to ask afterwards, "Well, what did you actually agree?" On this occasion, we can point to one or two really concrete things—an agreement not to pay ransom for kidnap by terrorists, which is good, and all the agreements in the run-up to the G8 conference which have delivered an extra £1 billion of revenue, just from Crown dependencies and overseas territories, that can help to keep tax rates down. I think the Lough Erne declaration is the clearest statement yet to come out of an international body about what needs to be done on tax, transparency and extractive industries, and frankly it is now a guide for NGOs to hold Governments to account and make progress on that vital agenda.

Conor Burns (Bournemouth West) (Con): May I echo the strong words of the Leader of the Opposition, and thank my right hon. Friend for bringing the G8 to Northern Ireland, and through that, showing the world how far it has come from the dark and dangerous place I remember from my childhood? Before the conference, the Prime Minister alluded in a newspaper interview to his frustration with the diplomatic vagueness of communiqués. This one was a big step forward, and he has a list of real and tangible declarations on tax and transparency. What more will we do to get that excellent list—reproduced in full in today's *Belfast Telegraph*—to the British people?

The Prime Minister: I commend the *Belfast Telegraph* on the fact that it has not joined the mass of the cynical and hard-bitten, and has actually said, "Hold on, this is an important breakthrough on the issues that people really care about." We must now hold all those countries to their commitment and ensure that everybody delivers on the action plans for beneficial ownership, so that we can see who owns what company. We must ensure that the international exchange of tax information can involve every country in the world. In that way we can get fairer taxes and help the developing world at the same time. We need follow-up on all these issues.

Ms Margaret Ritchie (South Down) (SDLP): Will the Prime Minister assure the House that there will be no unilateral military intervention, including the supply of weapons and other arsenals to the rebels in Syria, and that Britain's role will be confined to an international peace plan? I was, of course, pleased that the G8 came to Northern Ireland.

The Prime Minister: I thank the hon. Lady for praising the decision to hold the summit in Northern Ireland, and let me say again how well I think the authorities did in making it work. On Syria, the Government have clearly stated their approach. We want an international peace conference and a transitional Government, and we want a peace settlement. We believe, however, that we should be helping the Syrian national opposition. We have recognised—not just us, but America and countries across the European Union—that the opposition are legitimate spokespeople for the Syrian people. We should decry Assad—frankly, I hope the Labour party and all its allies in the Social Democratic and Labour party and elsewhere will decry Assad—[*Interruption.*] and continue to do so. We should also decry the use of chemical weapons. It cannot be said often enough what a brutal dictator this man is.

Jesse Norman (Hereford and South Herefordshire) (Con): I warmly congratulate the Prime Minister on the achievements of the G8. On tax transparency, will he comment a little more on the timetable that might be stretching in front of us for making that happen?

The Prime Minister: In terms of UK domestic action, we will publish shortly our consultation on whether to make a register of beneficial ownership public, and we can get on with that rapidly. The international exchange of tax information is progressing all the time throughout Europe and the rest of the world, and we need to keep pushing that.

Mike Gapes (Ilford South) (Lab/Co-op): The Prime Minister is aware that 30 years ago, a United States President and a British Conservative Prime Minister decided to arm the mujaheddin in Afghanistan, with consequences that are still with us today in belated talks directly with the Taliban. The Prime Minister mentioned Mali. I was there two weeks ago and we are aware that arms that came out of Libya led to al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb almost taking power in that country. What guarantee can he give the House that if he decides to arm elements of the Syrian opposition, we will not be dealing with the same problems in this country and the rest of the world in 30 years' time?

The Prime Minister: We have not made that decision and let me say that on Libya, I think it was right to work with others, including the French. There was cross-party agreement to do that and get rid of Gaddafi. Of course, that work is never done, but that should not be an argument for never doing anything anywhere. If we take action, as we do in Libya, we must do everything we can to help the successor regime that is democratically elected get weapons out of Libya, and that is what we are doing. Those are all arguments for engagement and working with partners—not putting our soldiers at risk or taking steps we are not capable of, but working with others to try to get good outcomes.

Andrew Selous (South West Bedfordshire) (Con): Was any progress made on international development issues in terms of trying to establish a land registry in Africa and other developing countries, as this would be hugely helpful in enabling people to have security when they lend to boost agricultural and industrial production?

The Prime Minister: That was discussed at the lunch held yesterday specifically on tax, transparency and trade, and the Lough Erne declaration covers the important issue of land transparency. The point was made that not only do we now have these declarations, but with all the capabilities of satellite mapping and digital technology, it should be easier to take these steps forward in the future.

Jeremy Corbyn (Islington North) (Lab): The talks that the Prime Minister reported on between the Taliban and the west are obviously welcome, and one hopes that they bring about a long-term resolution and peace in Afghanistan, but can he not draw a parallel from that and recognise that a political settlement in Syria must involve Iran as much as Russia and all the other countries? Will he turn his attention to a political settlement, a date for the conference and wide participation, and get off his hobby horse about supplying arms to fuel a civil war within a civil war that can only bring about greater destruction to an already disastrous situation?

The Prime Minister: I would make two points. First, the Iranians have not accepted what was discussed at Geneva as a basis. Secondly, it is not right to say that the British Government have had a single fixation. After all, it was my decision to fly to Sochi to have the discussions with Vladimir Putin and to invite him back here in order to try and find common ground. When I sit down with him, there are obviously big disagreements—I take a totally different view from him about Assad and the use of chemical weapons—and there is no point

hiding that. It is right to engage, however, and to discuss where we can find common ground, and that is exactly what we have done.

Geoffrey Clifton-Brown (The Cotswolds) (Con): I congratulate my right hon. Friend on his energy in trying to resolve the dreadful humanitarian crisis in Syria and I warmly welcome his statement today that he is emphasising the diplomatic route. In that connection, may I press him gently, as the hon. Member for Islington North (Jeremy Corbyn) just did, on the need to bring in everyone who can influence the situation? Is it not a good idea to talk to the new Iranian President?

The Prime Minister: Of course, we should have discussions, as we are, with the Iranians over the nuclear issue, and perhaps those discussions can get a greater pace with the new Iranian President. We have to remember, however, why we do not have an embassy in Tehran—it was invaded and trashed by the Iranians. We should remember that. On the issue of how wide to take the discussions, of course in the end we need to involve all partners and neighbours—the more people who buy into a process, the better—but it is important that we do not make that a substitute for the real action that is needed, which is to get the Syrian regime and the Syrian opposition, with encouragement from the Russians and Americans, to name the people who need to sit round the table to hold those talks. That is where the leaders need to apply pressure on everybody, because otherwise one can get into an endless, tortuous process.

Luciana Berger (Liverpool, Wavertree) (Lab/Co-op): While it was regrettable that climate change was not on the official G8 agenda this week, the communiqué described it as one of the foremost challenges we face. What is the Prime Minister doing to meet this challenge and secure a new global climate change agreement?

The Prime Minister: This issue was dealt with not only in the communiqué, but in the vital preamble, which is the part that most people look at to see what the conference discussed. My judgment was that it was right to talk with the G8 countries about, in particular, the issues of trade, tax and transparency, because I thought that that was where we could make the greatest progress. Had we had a long conversation on climate change, there would have been basic agreement among most of the participants around the table. We already know one another's positions, and without some of the developing countries and larger countries, such as China and India, it would not have been a vital agenda-shifting discussion. I chose the subjects we spent the most time on, but there is an important reference to climate change, as the hon. Lady said.

Simon Hughes (Bermondsey and Old Southwark) (LD): The Prime Minister is to be warmly commended for taking the initiative and for the first time in recent years putting tax, transparency and justice in the developed and developing worlds on the agenda at the G8 and on making progress. In order that it be not the end, but only the beginning, of the process, will he undertake to take that agenda to the EU, the Commonwealth and the G20, so that by the end of the Parliament our Government can deliver on transparent ownership of companies, for example, and ensure that multinationals are seen to pay tax in all the countries where they work?

The Prime Minister: My right hon. Friend is absolutely right. Obviously, the G8 includes a limited number of countries, but it can play a leadership role. Now we have this agenda and a simple and straightforward declaration, we can run it through the G20 and the Commonwealth. The EU has already started to address this issue with the ground-breaking deal on tax exchange between EU members, which for many years the Austrians and Luxembourgers have held up. So yes I want the British Government to drive this through all its multilateral bodies.

Naomi Long (Belfast East) (Alliance): At an IF campaign event in Belfast last Saturday, I heard at first hand from Bangladeshi community workers about the impact that land grabs have had on people there, with the poorest farmers having been displaced and agricultural land being destroyed for more than a generation, so I very much welcome the Prime Minister placing land on the G8's agenda for the first time. What will he do throughout the rest of our presidency of the G8 to ensure that G8 companies involved in aggressive land acquisition are tackled on this matter?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Lady is absolutely right. Point 7 of the declaration states:

"Land transactions should be transparent, respecting the property rights of local communities."

That is the commitment, and we now need to engage with Governments beyond the G8 and businesses to ensure that it is put in place.

Mark Pritchard (The Wrekin) (Con): Is it not the case that the speed of events on the ground in Syria vis-à-vis chemical weapons potentially falling into the hands of the wrong opposition groups might move quicker than the Westminster parliamentary process? May I encourage the Prime Minister not to be deterred from making immediate national security decisions, if he needs to do so?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend makes an important point. Clearly, it is a concern, because Syria has very large stockpiles of chemical weapons, and I think we have to focus on both dangers: the danger that the regime could use them again—as we have said, we believe they have been used on 10 occasions, so we have to beware of that danger, and President Obama has sent a clear message about that—and the danger that these stocks could fall into dangerous hands. We have to be alert to both dangers. He is absolutely right to say that we make a big commitment to come to the House, explain, vote and all the rest of it, but obviously Governments have to reserve the ability to take action swiftly on this or other issues.

Mr Ronnie Campbell (Blyth Valley) (Lab): When the tax avoiders find the first loophole in the Prime Minister's current plan, will he come straight back to the House or the G8 and close it, or will I have to ask that question of my right hon. Friend the leader of the Labour party, because he will be the next Prime Minister?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman is absolutely right that no sooner do we make one change to the tax system than another loophole opens up that we have to attack. Prime Minister Harper in Canada said that he

had taken about 72 tax avoidance measures in recent years. This is continuing work; it never ends. As for the second half of his question, I think I will leave that.

Nadhim Zahawi (Stratford-on-Avon) (Con): I commend my right hon. Friend for his position vis-à-vis Syria. One of the lessons from Iraq, Libya and Lebanon is that some of these extremist groups thrive not only with the bomb and the bullet, but by distributing food aid and using other ways to aid the communities that they invade. What are we doing to help the official Syrian opposition do that sort of work with the communities in the areas they control?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend makes an important point. It was a huge issue in Somalia, where we have seen real progress in recent years. What matters is funding humanitarian relief through the best mechanisms we have. At the moment, that means working a lot with non-governmental organisations and the UN to ensure that they deliver what they can. He is absolutely right, however, about ensuring that it gets to parts of the country held by the Syrian opposition.

Kate Hoey (Vauxhall) (Lab): Hosting the G8 in Enniskillen was a practical way of showing that Northern Ireland was an integral part of the UK, and I want to add my congratulations to the Prime Minister on taking it there. Is he aware of the concern, however, that the Libyan Prime Minister was in Enniskillen, just a few miles from the site of a terrible atrocity involving semtex from Libya, but was not able to meet those concerned—they got very late notice—and then went and met someone who used to be in the IRA?

The Prime Minister: First, the hon. Lady is absolutely right to say that Libyan semtex played an appalling role in the violence and destruction in Northern Ireland. For all we know, Libyan semtex may still be in the hands of dissident republicans, so this is a serious and live issue. Let me commend the Libyan Prime Minister for wanting to settle all these issues with the United Kingdom. He knows how important it is to communities in Northern Ireland and elsewhere to do so. My sense is that he wants to deal with these issues, not least because he knows that Britain played such a key role in getting rid of Gaddafi. Let us not forget that he was the person who provided the semtex in the first place.

Mr Ben Wallace (Wyre and Preston North) (Con): I thank the Prime Minister for choosing Northern Ireland to host the G8 conference. It looked very different on the television screens from when I was there some 19 years ago. Many internet providers exploit the global nature of the worldwide web to ensure that they avoid their fair share of tax. I congratulate the Prime Minister on reaching an agreement to commission the OECD to consider what tax regime can ensure that providers are taxed where transactions take place, not where they declare their profits. Will he let us know the timetable?

The Prime Minister: We commissioned the OECD to help us. The simple principle is that there should be a tool to enable a country to see how much revenue, profit and tax a company is paying in each jurisdiction. Sometimes non-governmental organisations and others have asked for full disclosure of every piece of information, but,

[The Prime Minister]

frankly, boxfile after boxfile of information does not necessarily get us the high level tax tool we need to see whether there is a problem, to share information with other tax authorities and to find an answer. This is the right approach for the reasons I have just given.

Fiona O'Donnell (East Lothian) (Lab): The Prime Minister has in the past supported the public disclosure of ownership of companies, so why is he hesitating now, rather than seizing the opportunity to show leadership again and committing the UK to a public register in its action plan?

The Prime Minister: As I said, we will set up a central registry and consult on whether it should be public. There are strong arguments for it to be public, but let me make two points. First, the point at which one says one's own registry will be public, one gives up rather a lot of leverage over other countries we might want to encourage to do that at the same time. Secondly, it is important to take the business community that believes in responsible behaviour with us on this journey of greater transparency and fairness. To be fair, the CBI has been supportive of this agenda, so there is nothing to fear from a consultation where we try to take people with us on this important progress.

Mr Stephen O'Brien (Eddisbury) (Con): I warmly welcome the clear commitments from the G8, led by my right hon. Friend, which I would characterise as growth with responsibility—growth for all citizens and responsibility for the most vulnerable. None of that can happen without responsibilities. Does he share my hope that the groundbreaking agreement on ransoms will not be lost in all this? I have seen this menace with my own eyes in the Sahel. It drives so much of the instability that we can now conquer by cutting it off at the source.

The Prime Minister: I thank my hon. Friend for his comments. There is no doubt that paying ransoms to terrorists has been immensely damaging. Tens of millions of dollars in countries such as Mali, Niger and elsewhere in the region he knows so well, can buy a huge amount of arms and power. The countries have all signed up to this. What matters now is that we hold each other's feet to the fire and make sure we deliver on it. I pay tribute to President Hollande, Prime Minister Letta and others, who all willingly engaged in this agenda and signed this important declaration.

Chris Bryant (Rhondda) (Lab): I fear that the Prime Minister's strategy on Syria is completely misguided, but I want to ask him about the EU-US trade deal. Of course I support it, but we should not be naive. The Motion Picture Association is one of the best funded lobbying organisations in the world. It has always campaigned against any state subsidy of any kind for making movies in this country or anywhere else in Europe. Should there not be an exemption for cultural services?

The Prime Minister: What the hon. Gentleman will see if he looks at it closely is that the European starting position is that there will be an exception for audiovisual services, which has been in place for all free trade

agreements we have made as a European Union with countries around the world. Uniquely, there is an opportunity, if we want it, to add it back in. Personally, I think that the British film and television industry is immensely strong and I do not think that our tax credit system is in any way an unfair subsidy. We should be proud of collaborations between Britain and Hollywood. This subject was much discussed, including which member of the G8 liked what French film.

Duncan Hames (Chippenham) (LD): I congratulate the Prime Minister on securing agreement on land in the declaration he cited earlier this afternoon. Will he support measures to increase the transparency of land deals done around the world by companies based in the United Kingdom, thereby getting our own house in order?

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his question. Clearly, the register of beneficial ownership will help with this issue, because companies will have to declare who owns them. That will be one way that tax authorities in developing countries, for example, will be able to ensure that bribes are not paid and so on. That is part of the point of the register.

Jonathan Edwards (Carmarthen East and Dinefwr) (PC): The Prime Minister said that the tax evasion provisions in the G8 agreement would raise £1 billion per annum for the Exchequer. What about the other £29 billion that is lost each year illegally, according to Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs?

The Prime Minister: If we look at all the things the Government have done, the Swiss deal raised billions of pounds and I have mentioned the Crown dependencies and overseas territories. The more countries that sign up to these multilateral exchanges and the automatic exchange of information, the more money we will be able to recover.

Damian Hinds (East Hampshire) (Con): May I, too, commend the Prime Minister on focusing the eyes of the world on beautiful county Fermanagh, and for his leadership towards an EU-US trade deal? Will he help to put that in context in terms of its value to this country relative to other trade deals?

The Prime Minister: The figures I gave are £85 billion benefit to the US and £100 billion as a whole to the EU. With the UK being, I think, 13% or 14% of the EU, one can, as it were, do the math. Britain benefits from freeing up services, particularly financial services, so it will perhaps be of particular benefit to Britain to reach good agreements in those chapters of the deal.

Mr Andrew Love (Edmonton) (Lab/Co-op): I listened very carefully to the Prime Minister's response to my right hon. Friend the Member for Oldham West and Royton (Mr Meacher) and other hon. Friends on tax transparency. Is not one of the weaknesses of the Lough Erne declaration that there is no means of holding countries to account? The nightmare scenario will be that we will be back next year, the next year and the year after that, with little progress being made.

The Prime Minister: I would not be so depressed about it. One of the good things about the G8 is that the accountability report is simple and straightforward. It has always been about aid volumes and aid promises. I hope that future accountability reports will be able to address some of these issues in the declaration, too. If we do that and hold leaders' feet to the fire, there is no reason why we should not make real progress on this agenda.

Neil Carmichael (Stroud) (Con): In giving a strong welcome to the EU-US trade negotiations launched at the G8, does the Prime Minister agree that the process itself could be a catalyst towards creating a more open and more modern Europe, and that that is entirely consistent with his ambitions for Europe and demonstrates that Britain's influence in Europe will be positive?

The Prime Minister: I thank my hon. Friend for his point. The process, going through chapter by chapter trying to open up areas to greater trade and competition, will be good for Europe as a whole. There are always those countries that fear this process. We tend to be in the vanguard of thinking that it is a good thing, so I hope this engagement will have the effect that he says it will.

Steve McCabe (Birmingham, Selly Oak) (Lab): Were the reports before the summit that the Prime Minister had committed his Government to making public registries of beneficial ownership wrong? Is his commitment only to holding a consultation?

The Prime Minister: Our commitment is what we said it is, which is to have a central register of beneficial ownership and to have a consultation about whether it should be public. As I said, I think there are strong arguments for public registers of beneficial ownership all over the world. Let us be clear about the end point: every country having a register of beneficial ownership so that we can see who owns every single company. That is the goal. The question is: how can we accelerate progress towards it? I think we have really put the foot on the gas for this declaration. We now need to work out how to use our next steps to increase the leverage on others.

Several hon. Members rose—

Mr Speaker: The moment has arrived for the hon. Member for Bristol West (Stephen Williams), who need no longer look downcast in any way.

Stephen Williams (Bristol West) (LD): Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. All my colleagues thought that I was going to be left out. When I used to read double tax treaties, they were written in a bygone age and mentioned quarrying, forestry and the signatory powers of overseas agents. Will the Prime Minister use Britain's position in the OECD to ensure that those treaties are brought up to date, particularly in regard to e-commerce, where so much international tax avoidance is done?

The Prime Minister: That is a very important point. We must also try to make them less impenetrable, but they need to cover every area. E-commerce is a real challenge for the tax authorities, because so much business has gone online.

Paul Flynn (Newport West) (Lab): May I congratulate the Prime Minister on proving once again the remarkable persuasive powers of parliamentary questions? As recently as 25 February, the Under-Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills, the hon. Member for East Dunbartonshire (Jo Swinson) told me in response to a question on the Crown dependencies that

"the Government currently has no plans to require disclosure of the beneficial ownership of UK property."—[*Official Report*, 25 February 2013; Vol. 559, c. 301W.]

Now they do. Will he further prove his flexibility in this area by persuading his right hon. Friend Lord Blencathra to end his work as a lobbyist for the Cayman Islands?

The Prime Minister: Let me take this opportunity to pay tribute to Members of the House who put pressure on the representatives of the Crown dependencies and overseas territories. We should also pay tribute to those representatives. They came willingly to London, they sat round the Cabinet table and they committed to a series of steps that some but not all of them had committed to before. We should now stand up for them and say that other jurisdictions that do not have this sort of transparency now need to do what they have done. It is important that we pay tribute to the work they have done. As for the other part of the hon. Gentleman's question, I am not sighted of it so I shall have to have a look at it.

Bob Stewart (Beckenham) (Con): As we went into Afghanistan as a direct result of a threat to our own country and our own people, will my right hon. Friend honour all those soldiers, sailors and airmen who have died or been hurt in Afghanistan by ensuring that those who negotiate with the Taliban somehow get an agreement from them that they will never make a threat against our country or encourage others to do so? Thus can we honour those people who have given their lives in support of our country.

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend is absolutely right to speak as he does; he speaks with great authority on this matter. If we cast our minds back to 2001, we will remember that one of the reasons we went into Afghanistan was that the then Taliban regime refused to give up or condemn al-Qaeda. The whole point of the action was to get al-Qaeda out of Afghanistan and to stop them launching attacks from there on our soil. We should pay tribute to the more than 400 service personnel who have given their lives and to the many more who have been wounded. We should pay tribute to the incredible work they have done. They have helped bring us to a point at which Afghanistan is now taking responsibility for its own security through the highly capable Afghan national security forces. The Taliban have said in their statement that they do not want to see Afghanistan being used as a base for attacks on other countries.

Jim Shannon (Strangford) (DUP): I thank the Prime Minister for his statement today. I welcome the distinctive British agenda for the G8 summit in Enniskillen, the PR for the Province and the two days of sunshine—although I am sure that he had no control over that last element. He referred to talks with the Taliban. Will the conditions for starting such talks include a cessation of violence or a ceasefire prior to the start of the process?

The Prime Minister: As the hon. Gentleman suggests, the two days of sunshine were a bonus, and not one that I was expecting. The point about the discussions with the Taliban is that they are taking place against the background of a statement by the Taliban that—I am paraphrasing—they do not want to see Afghanistan being used as a base for attacks on other countries. That is the right basis for them to start from, but clearly the whole aim of the process is to give people who thought that they could achieve their goals through the bomb and the bullet an opportunity to achieve them by political means. That is, I suppose, a parallel with the very painful process that was gone through in Northern Ireland.

Mr David Nuttall (Bury North) (Con): May I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister on hosting such a successful meeting of the G8? Given the UK's special relationship with the United States of America, however, does he not think that we could have made more progress on negotiating a free trade deal with America had we not left the matter up to the EU for the last 40 years?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend makes an important point. Of course, if Britain wanted to leave the European Union, we could do so and we could then make trade deals with every country in the world. Obviously that path is open to us. The argument that I would make is that, as part of the European Union—the world's largest single market—we have the opportunity to drive some quite good deals. Clearly we sometimes have to make compromises with EU partners with whom we might not agree, but I would argue that, on balance, membership of the single market brings clear benefits, as does the negotiating heft that we have. The whole point is that we are going to be able to debate and discuss this, not least in the run-up to a referendum by the end of 2017.

Mark Durkan (Foyle) (SDLP): The Prime Minister will understand that some of us are still seeking assurance that the outcomes from the G8 summit will be as thoroughly welcome and significant as its arrival in Northern Ireland. The Lough Erne declaration contains 10 points, which contain 13 “shoulds” and not a single “shall”. The “G8 action plan principles to prevent the misuse of companies and legal arrangements” provides eight principles containing 17 “shoulds”, one “could” and no “shall”. The provisions will be subject to a process of self-reporting against individual action plans. The UK individual action plan, which was helpfully published here yesterday, sets out 10 points offering standards, most of which should or could have been reached under existing laws and Financial Action Task Force requirements. What confidence can we have that the Prime Minister will ensure that the commitments made yesterday will go the distance?

The Prime Minister: This is a journey, and the question is: how far down the road are we? I would argue that we have taken some serious steps down that road by setting out clearly what needs to be done on beneficial ownership, on automatic exchange of information and on international tax standards. If we look at what Britain has done—with the Crown dependencies and overseas territories, for instance—we can see real progress. Is there a lot more to do? Yes. Do we need international reporting on it? Yes.

Has the G8 lifted this issue? Frankly, tax transparency and beneficial ownership were academic issues that were discussed in lofty academic circles, but they are now kitchen table issues that are being discussed by the G8 leaders, who have pledged to take action on them.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Mr Speaker: Order. The Chair is minded to take all remaining colleagues on these extremely important matters. The Prime Minister is helpfully providing pithy replies, which of course now need to be matched with comparably pithy questions.

Dr Sarah Wollaston (Totnes) (Con): I congratulate the Prime Minister on the progress made at the G8 and on his commitment today to come to the House before taking major action on Syria. Will he confirm that that would include an opportunity for the House to vote before any arms were sent to Syria?

The Prime Minister: I have made it clear that we have made no decision to arm the rebels. As has been said, these things should be discussed, debated and indeed voted on in this House—with the proviso of the answer that I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for The Wrekin (Mark Pritchard).

Mark Lazarowicz (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab/Co-op): The agreements on tax transparency are welcome, and I give credit to the Prime Minister for that achievement. He will know, however, that tax transparency is only part of the issue because, although it will stop excesses, there will still be tax havens to which people can have recourse. Does he agree that the next step is to ensure that companies and individuals pay tax in the countries in which they earn their income? Will he make that a priority for the next year, before the next G8?

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his question; I know that he has spoken a lot about this in the past. That is the point of the high-level international tax tool. I have been searching for a better description for it than that, but it is none the less what we want the OECD to provide to countries so that we can see at a glance what a company earns, what its profits are and how much tax it has paid. In that way, we shall be able to see whether there is a problem, and whether further investigation is required. The register of beneficial ownership will also help, because it will enable us to hunt down the true owners of companies that are being registered under different nominee ownerships. These things all go together, and I think they can work.

Andrew Stephenson (Pendle) (Con): Hope Technology in Barnoldswick, which the Prime Minister visited in April, was delighted to hear my right hon. Friend use it as an example of a great British exporter in a keynote speech ahead of the G8 summit. I warmly welcome what he has said today about the focus on jobs and growth. Will he say more about the positive impact that decisions taken at the G8 will have on manufacturers such as Hope Technology in Barnoldswick?

The Prime Minister: I will not forget my visit to Hope Technology in Barnoldswick, because it was impressive to see a manufacturing business making cycle accessories,

parts and bicycles here in the UK, when so often people think that all this sort of manufacturing has gone offshore. No, it has not: some of the highest-quality production is right here. Obviously these trade deals make a difference for manufacturing industries, but we also need to do everything else, including keeping our tax rates low, which is what this Government are doing.

Rushanara Ali (Bethnal Green and Bow) (Lab): Now that the Prime Minister has had some time to reflect on his earlier remarks about the Labour party and the Assad regime, will he consider withdrawing his remarks and apologising? Everyone in this House is united in being opposed to the Assad regime and the brutal killings of thousands of people, but we have genuine questions about his stance on arming the Syrian rebels. The first question is—

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dawn Primarolo): Order. Just one question.

Rushanara Ali: Sorry. Can the Prime Minister give a guarantee that humanitarian access will not get worse, and can he explain—

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order.

The Prime Minister: As I have said many times, we have made no decision to arm the rebels. The point I was making was simply that, whenever we talk about these issues, we should put out there, front and centre, how much we abhor this form of dictatorship, brutalisation and use of chemical weapons. It cannot be said often enough and it needs to be said by everybody, all the time. That is the point I was making and I certainly will not withdraw it.

Sarah Newton (Truro and Falmouth) (Con): I warmly welcome the significant progress that the Prime Minister has made on issues that really matter to my constituents and, I am sure, those the length and breadth of the country. Will he confirm that at the forthcoming Geneva II talks, a limited number of representatives of civil society and the refugees who have been displaced in neighbouring countries will be involved?

The Prime Minister: What matters is that the regime and the opposition nominate a limited number of people to discuss how to put together a transitional Government who can represent all the Syrian people. I do not want to put too many strictures on it, because speed and simplicity are of the essence.

Mr William Bain (Glasgow North East) (Lab): The activities of companies engaged in secret mining deals and salting profits away in tax havens are, in the words of Kofi Annan,

“like taking food off the table for the poor”

in Africa. What specific commitments has the G8 made to ensure mandatory country-by-country reporting of what companies pay in tax?

The Prime Minister: This issue—on which I applaud Kofi Annan’s work—is covered in the declaration: that companies should report what they pay and that Governments should report what they receive, because often there has been a discrepancy between the two. Obviously the more countries that join the extractive

industries transparency initiative—several promised during the course of the G8 and the Italians, the French, and ourselves before the G8—the higher the international standards will be.

Rehman Chishti (Gillingham and Rainham) (Con): On Syria, may I refer the Prime Minister to paragraph 87 of the communiqué, which deals with chemical weapons and a United Nations mission going to Syria to inspect whether there are any chemical weapons there? For clarification, will Russia, having been a party to this, accept the findings of that mission and, following on from that, will Russia accept any action that the United Nations proposes should be taken if there are any specific findings on those matters?

The Prime Minister: Obviously my hon. Friend’s second two questions are matters for the Russians, which they will have to answer for. I am clear about the information I have been given about the use of chemical weapons. Clearly there is a disagreement between what I believe and what President Putin believes, but what matters about paragraph 87 is that it says that the UN should be allowed in unhindered and that the regime must allow that to happen, and I think it is significant that the Russians agreed that.

Ian Paisley (North Antrim) (DUP): I welcome the statement by the Prime Minister and the distinctly “British agenda” set in Fermanagh. I am very happy that the dreary steeples of Fermanagh and Tyrone have given way to a new dawn. I congratulate the Government on setting the G8 in Fermanagh and I look forward to other G8 summits coming there in future, when the British Government are back in charge—perhaps they could be in North Antrim.

May I turn to the part of the Prime Minister’s statement where he said, “We will not take any major actions”—on Syria—“without first coming to this House”? Can he confirm that that includes arming the rebels?

The Prime Minister: Yes, I can, and I have said that very clearly. Let me be clear: although I know the saying, there was nothing dreary about the steeples of Fermanagh. The sun was shining and the countryside looked magnificent.

Margot James (Stourbridge) (Con): The talks between the EU and the US on trade are welcome for economic growth, covering, as they will, 50% of global trade. Will my right hon. Friend use his influence to ensure that those tasked with negotiations on the EU side maintain relentless energy on the removal of non-tariff barriers, such that services trade should blossom?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend is absolutely right to raise this issue. It is not just that officials have to be relentless and engaged on this, but where there are blockages and problems, that needs to be elevated to politicians and Ministers, so that we can try to drive forward the agenda. Otherwise, these trade talks get bogged down in difficult areas.

Jonathan Ashworth (Leicester South) (Lab): Everybody in the Labour party abhors the Assad regime, but on the question of Iran, given the Iranians’ traditional influence over the Syrian regime and given the election results, is

[Jonathan Ashworth]

the Prime Minister absolutely sure that we do not now have a window of opportunity to try to engage Iran in helping us to find the political solution in Syria that we all want to see?

The Prime Minister: I think we should certainly engage with the fact that Iran has elected a relative moderate. I think that is a positive sign and we should look for opportunities; but as I said, really, if we are going to put so much weight on the Geneva process and the Geneva principles, it is important that everybody, Iran included, signs up to them.

Nick de Bois (Enfield North) (Con): The Prime Minister's attempts on the world trade agreement will be warmly welcomed by many, and rightly so, but does he agree that the prize could be even bigger if we could genuinely open up the EU single market to services? Some 71% of EU GDP is in services, yet only 3.2% is intra-EU trade, so much more could be done to help our economy.

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. This requires action by Governments and countries across the board, including traditionally quite free trade countries such as Germany that have sometimes had quite a lot of restrictions around particular professions. We therefore need action in the EU and then between the EU and the US in order to capture the full benefits of these changes.

Geraint Davies (Swansea West) (Lab/Co-op): On the sharing of tax information, was there agreement in principle that multinationals should pay their tax where they make their profits and if so, when will that happen, given that there will be winners and losers, with different countries resisting?

The Prime Minister: The key point in the Lough Erne declaration is that we should stop companies trying to artificially shift profits from one jurisdiction to another. I believe in fair tax competition. I am a low-tax Conservative: I think it is right to have low tax and then to ask companies to pay that tax. I think what is unacceptable is when processes and procedures are gone into not to shift the activity—that is a company's right—but to shift where companies are trying to take the profits. That is the point.

Jason McCartney (Colne Valley) (Con): Having served on the effective no-fly zone over northern Iraq in the 1990s, may I ask my right hon. Friend whether there were discussions at the G8 about the introduction of a no-fly zone over Syria?

The Prime Minister: There were no specific discussions at the G8. Obviously I had a series of conversations with Barack Obama about all the things that we should be doing to put pressure on President Assad, but we do not have any plans to take those steps.

Debbie Abrahams (Oldham East and Saddleworth) (Lab): Will the Prime Minister confirm that the NHS is exempt from the EU-US trade negotiations?

The Prime Minister: I am not aware of a specific exemption for any particular area, but I think that the health service would be treated in the same way in

relation to EU-US negotiations as it is in relation to EU rules. If that is in any way inaccurate, I will write to the hon. Lady and put it right.

Kris Hopkins (Keighley) (Con): Yesterday my right hon. Friend commented on the possible route to a political solution in Afghanistan following the opening of talks between the United States and the Taliban. May I encourage him to offer our resources to those who are beginning to tread that very difficult path, and to share our experience of peace talks in these islands with them?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend has made an important point. I agree that we have relevant experience and that we should share it, and we do so. The fact that the First Minister and Deputy First Minister of Northern Ireland are working together is a tangible example.

Sheila Gilmore (Edinburgh East) (Lab): May I press the Prime Minister further on the precise wording of his statement? He said, "We will not take any major actions without first coming to the House." Can he offer us a definition of "major"?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Lady is tempting me. I think that I would repeat what I said in my statement about major action, but add the proviso that I issued in replying to my hon. Friend the Member for The Wrekin (Mark Pritchard). As the hon. Lady will recall, in the case of Libya and other such action it has sometimes been necessary to act very swiftly in defence of the national interest. The same applies to, for instance, terrorist kidnap, and not supplying information to those with whom one is engaged. Obviously, however, one would come to the House very swiftly after that and explain, as I did in the case of Libya. I think that those are well-known approaches, and I do not think that there is anything to be surprised about.

James Morris (Halesowen and Rowley Regis) (Con): I congratulate the Prime Minister on his approach to Syria at the summit, and particularly on his approach to an international peace conference, but may I urge him to be very cautious about calls for Iran to be involved in such a conference? After all, the Iranian regime has been funding its proxy Hezbollah in Syria, and has been responsible for and complicit in many of the atrocities committed by the Assad regime.

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend has made an important point, but the most important point is that if countries are to be engaged in any way, they must sign up to the Geneva process.

Alun Cairns (Vale of Glamorgan) (Con): The G8 tax agreement opens the way to an international tax settlement that is simpler and more transparent. Does my right hon. Friend agree that it has the potential to benefit countries that have reduced their corporation tax rates, such as the United Kingdom?

The Prime Minister: I think my hon. Friend would agree that, while low tax rates are good for business and there is nothing wrong with healthy tax competition, when we set a low tax rate we should then say to

businesses, “We have a low tax rate; now you must pay the tax.” I believe that the G8 agenda will help us in that regard.

Guy Opperman (Hexham) (Con): People in the north-east will especially welcome the agreement on tax transparency and tax-dodging. Will the Prime Minister say more about the effect that that will have on future Government tax receipts and the war on poverty?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend is right to ask that question. Dealing more effectively with tax evasion, which is illegal, and with aggressive tax avoidance, which, as I have said many times, raises serious moral issues, while at the same time garnering more revenue, can help us to keep down taxes on hard-working people who do the right thing. That is what should drive our whole agenda. As I said earlier, we have recovered a lot of money from territories and bank accounts, and we should continue to do so.

Stephen Metcalfe (South Basildon and East Thurrock) (Con): I thank my right hon. Friend for making his recent pre-G8 “ambition” speech at London Gateway port in my constituency. Does he agree that that investment will assist our global export aims, stimulate world economic growth, encourage free trade and, above all, demonstrate that under this Government, Britain is a great place in which to do business?

The Prime Minister: I commend my hon. Friend for standing up for his constituency so vigorously, and for that extraordinary investment. I urge Members who have not seen the giant port that is being built on the Thames estuary to go and look at it. When you are there, you think that surely this must be happening in Shanghai or Rio, but it is actually happening right here in the UK—a massive investment that will cut costs for consumers and will really benefit our country. *[Interruption.]* Opposition Members may chuckle. They do so because they do not care about the important things that are happening in our country.

Mr Robin Walker (Worcester) (Con): I congratulate the Prime Minister on the progress made on extractives transparency at the summit, and, in particular, on the leadership shown by the UK and Canada in signing the EITI before it.

The Prime Minister: I thank my hon. Friend. The EITI is important, and I think it right for countries such as Britain to sign it themselves as well as asking developing countries to do so. We should then try to help developing countries to meet its requirements, because it imposes a number of obligations on them which they cannot always fulfil. I think the fact that so many advanced countries have signed it is a good step forward.

David Rutley (Macclesfield) (Con): I welcome the Prime Minister’s leadership in pressing for stronger relationships between the EU and the United States—that is vital—but does he agree that it is critically important for us to press for an unrelenting focus on driving British exports in growth markets such as China, India and Russia in the years ahead?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend is absolutely right about the need for us to win this global race and to back our exports. At the beginning of Prime Minister’s Question Time, I announced that Ian Livingston, who has run BT so effectively, would join the Government as Trade Minister at the end of the year. Having first secured the services of Stephen Green, who led HSBC, one of the world’s strongest and best banks, we have now secured those of someone who has run a successful business here in the UK, but who also has a presence in about 78 markets overseas. I think that is great for Britain and great for our exports, and I am sure that it will be widely welcomed by Members in all parts of the House.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dawn Primarolo): I thank the Prime Minister very much. Some 70 Back Benchers took part in questions on that important statement.

Care Quality Commission (Morecambe Bay Hospitals)

2.6 pm

The Secretary of State for Health (Mr Jeremy Hunt):

I wish to make a statement about today's independent report on the Care Quality Commission's regulatory oversight of University Hospitals of Morecambe Bay NHS Foundation Trust. What happened at Morecambe Bay is, above all, a terrible personal tragedy for all of the families involved, and before saying anything else, I want to apologise on behalf of the Government and the NHS for all the appalling suffering that those families have endured. In that context, I know that the whole House will wish to extend our condolences to every single one of them.

Joshua Titcombe's tragic death was one of 12 serious untoward incidents, including five in the maternity department. His family and others have had to work tirelessly to expose the truth, and I pay tribute to them for that, but the fact is that they should not have had to go to such lengths. As we saw in the case of Mid Staffs, a culture in the NHS had been allowed to develop in which defensiveness and secrecy were put ahead of patient safety and care. Today I want to explain to the House what the Government are doing to root out that culture and ensure that that kind of cover-up never happens again.

The independent report was commissioned by the new chief executive of the CQC, and the members of the new team that is running it have made it clear that there was a completely unacceptable attempt to cover up the deficiencies in their organisation. The report lists what went wrong over a period of many years. There were unclear regulatory processes, a report was commissioned and then withheld, key information was not shared, and there were communication problems throughout the organisation. Most of the facts are not in dispute, and all of them are unacceptable. They have compounded the grief of the Titcombe family and many others.

The role of the regulator is to be a champion for patients, to expose poor care and to ensure that steps are taken to root it out. The regulator must do that without fear or favour, but it is clear that at Morecambe Bay, the CQC failed in that fundamental duty. We now have a new leadership at the CQC, and we should recognise its role in turning things around. David Behan was appointed chief executive in July 2012, and one of his very first acts was to commission the report that we are now debating. David Prior was appointed the new chairman in January this year, and has rightly insisted that the report be published as soon as possible. Those two outstanding individuals have never shrunk from addressing head-on the failings of the organisation that they inherited, and are wholly committed to turning the CQC into the fearless, independent regulator that the House would like to see. While I do not underestimate the challenge, I have every confidence in their ability to undertake it.

David Prior will now report back to me on what further actions the CQC will take in response to the report, including internal disciplinary procedures and other appropriate sanctions. The whole truth must now come out, and individuals must be accountable for their actions.

With respect to Morecambe Bay itself, an independent inquiry led by Dr Bill Kirkup started work earlier this year. More broadly, following the Francis report into the tragedy at Mid Staffs, the Government are putting in place far-reaching measures to put patient care and patient safety at the heart of how the NHS is regulated.

The CQC is appointing three new chief inspectors—of hospitals, social care and general practice. This will provide an authoritative, independent voice on the quality of care in all the providers that it regulates. The commission has already announced the appointment of Professor Sir Mike Richards as the new chief inspector of hospitals, and on Monday, the CQC launched a consultation, "A new start", which outlines its much tougher regulatory approach. This includes putting in place more specialist inspection teams with clinical expertise. It will include Ofsted-style performance ratings so that every member of the public can know how well their local hospital is doing just as they do for their local school.

The Government will also amend the CQC registration requirements so that they include an emphasis on fundamental standards—the basic levels below which care must never fall, such as making sure patients are properly fed, washed and treated with dignity and respect. Failure to adhere to these will result in serious consequences for providers, including potentially criminal prosecution. The revised registration requirements will also include a new statutory duty of candour on providers that will require them to tell patients and regulators where there are failings in care—a failure clearly identified in today's report.

Finally, we are putting in place, through the Care Bill, a new robust single failure regime for NHS hospitals. This will provide a more effective mechanism to address persistent failings in the quality of care, including the automatic suspension of trust boards when failings are not addressed promptly.

The events at Morecambe Bay, Mid Staffs and many other hospitals should never have been covered up, but they should never have happened in the first place, either. To prevent such tragedies we need to transform the approach to patient safety in our NHS.

The Prime Minister has therefore asked Professor Don Berwick, President Obama's former health adviser and one of the world's foremost experts on patient safety, to advise us on how to create the right safety culture in the NHS. He and his committee will report later this summer.

In addition, later this year we will start to publish surgeon-level outcomes data for a wide range of surgical specialties. Most of all, we need a culture where, from the top to the bottom of NHS organisations, everyone is focused on reducing the chances of harming a patient in the course of their care, and a culture of openness and transparency to ensure that, when tragedies do occur, they are dealt with honestly so that any lessons can be learnt. Our thousands of dedicated doctors, nurses and health care assistants want nothing less. We must not let them down, or any of the families who suffered so tragically in Morecambe Bay. I commend this statement to the House.

2.12 pm

Andy Burnham (Leigh) (Lab): I thank the Secretary of State for his statement and for early sight of it, and I welcome what he has just said. Today's report will have

left people stunned. The Secretary of State began with an apology and we on the Opposition side echo it. It is a sad fact that mistakes will be made in any walk of life, even in the NHS. What is never acceptable is when people or organisations try to hide those mistakes. As Professor Sir Liam Donaldson, the former chief medical officer, says:

“To err is human, to cover up is unforgivable, and to fail to learn is inexcusable.”

Sadly, that is precisely what appears to have happened in this case.

The report covers a four-year period from autumn 2008 to autumn 2012. It details failures in regulation, but also subsequent attempts at a cover-up. It was published only because of the efforts of James Titcombe and his family. Like the Secretary of State, I pay tribute to them today, as does my hon. Friend the Member for Barrow and Furness (John Woodcock), who has supported the family. As he rightly said, that family's suffering has been intensified by the actions of the NHS—something that should never happen. It is now essential that they and all the other Cumbria and Lancashire families affected get all the answers they are looking for—and I fully commit the Opposition to making sure that happens.

The most shocking revelation in this report is that, in March 2012, an instruction was given by a member of senior management at the CQC to “delete” the findings of a critical internal review. Let me remind the House of the context in which that March 2012 instruction was given. At that time, we were midway through a major public inquiry into the terrible failings at Mid Staffs. This was two years after the completion of an earlier independent inquiry—also led by Robert Francis, QC—following which all parts of the NHS had committed to full openness and transparency. It also came after failings at other trusts—most notably Basildon and Thurrock—which led me to request an in-depth look at all hospitals so that problems could be flushed out and a system put in place to ensure that people had a comprehensive picture of local standards. That was the context in which this instruction was given, and it explains why today's revelations beggar belief and are hard to comprehend. The report raises questions for the CQC and the Department; I will take each in turn.

The new chief executive, David Behan, commissioned this report and we pay tribute to him for doing so. The chair has said today that he now wants to draw a line under this issue, but does the Secretary of State agree that it will be possible to do that only when further questions raised by this report are answered?

On hospital regulation, there is a recognition on all sides that it has not been good enough for too long. While we note the important work of Don Berwick, should we not also be getting on with the job of implementing the recommendations of the three-year Francis report in this regard? The Secretary of State mentioned a duty of candour on providers, but he will know that Robert Francis recommended that that should extend to individual clinicians, too. Will the right hon. Gentleman work with the Opposition to implement that recommendation as soon as possible?

On the cover-up, paragraph 1.17 of today's report says that the order to delete

“may constitute a broader and on-going cover-up.”

Will the Secretary of State address that point directly and tell the House whether he is confident that this cover-up is no longer happening? Is he satisfied that the CQC has taken all appropriate steps, and does he have full confidence in it going forward, or does he believe a further process of investigation is necessary?

More specifically, is anybody who was involved in the decision to delete still working at the CQC or elsewhere in the NHS? If they are, people will find that hard to accept and they will want answers on that specific point. Given that accountability is essential, does the Secretary of State agree that people will find it hard to accept if data protection laws stand in the way of that accountability, and will he therefore review the decision to shield the identities of those involved? Today's report makes it clear that the “deleted” report still exists. Should it not now be published?

Now let me turn to the Department of Health. Was the decision to delete taken solely by senior management at the CQC or is there evidence that anyone outside the CQC was either involved in the decision or aware of it? Was anyone in the Department of Health aware of the internal report being produced, and did any contact take place between the CQC and the Department running up to the decision to delete it?

Unfortunately, this matter does not end with deletion of the report. The Prime Minister said earlier that there should always be support for whistleblowers, and he was right, but there are serious doubts about whether that has happened in this case. Concerns about the CQC were raised by an internal whistleblower who was on the board. We know there was an attempt to remove her from the board and to question her character. Has the Secretary of State looked into these issues and considered whether appropriate support was provided—by both the CQC and the Department—to the individual who raised these concerns? The same whistleblower told the CQC today that she had raised issues internally first, then within the Department and then directly with the former Secretary of State in a meeting. Will the Secretary of State provide details of that meeting and publish a minute of it? What actions were taken by Ministers subsequent to that meeting? Were Ministers consulted about the decision to remove her from the CQC board, and did they support that decision?

Finally, the only real answer to all of these deep-rooted problems that go back a long way is for both sides of the House to recommit to full openness and transparency in the national health service. Will the Secretary of State join me today in restating that commitment and together sending the clearest and most unambiguous signal we can to the rest of the NHS?

In conclusion, there are difficult questions here for people at every level of the system. If we are to restore confidence, it is essential that they are answered and that people are held accountable for their actions. Learning from this failure and others, this House must deliver a regulator that the public can trust, one that puts patients before its own interests. We will support the Government in that process and not stop until it is completed.

Mr Hunt: I welcome much of what the right hon. Gentleman says, but let me say this: he talks about getting on with implementing the Francis report, and that is exactly what has been happening. The report came to the House on 6 February. A new chief inspector

[Mr Jeremy Hunt]

of hospitals was appointed by 31 May, and the new inspections will start towards the end of this year. That will mean that many of the things talked about in the Francis report as being fundamentally important will start to be looked at independently and rigorously for the very first time.

I can confirm that there will be a duty of candour in the new Care Bill. We are looking at the extent to which it should apply to individuals, but we want to wait until Professor Berwick produces his report, because it is important to create a culture of openness, and we do not want to pass a measure that might inadvertently mean people clam up when they see a potential safety breach. We need to encourage an atmosphere where everyone talks openly about any concerns they have.

David Prior will be looking in his response to today's independent report at whether anyone still working in the NHS, or, indeed, the CQC, may have been responsible for some of the shocking things that have been revealed. He will pass that report to me within the next two months. As I said in my statement, there will be full consideration of any sanctions or appropriate disciplinary procedures. In our response to the Francis report, we have said we want to introduce a new barring scheme to make sure that managers who have been found guilty of behaving in a bad way do not get jobs in another part of the NHS.

With respect to what the right hon. Gentleman said about my colleague, my right hon. Friend the Member for South Cambridgeshire (Mr Lansley), I gently say to him that it was not my right hon. Friend or myself or this Government's Ministers who rejected 81 requests for a public inquiry into what happened at Mid Staffs. My right hon. Friend was the person who called the public inquiry into Mid Staffs. He is the person who changed the management of the CQC. He is the person who put clinicians in charge of budgets in the NHS, precisely to make sure these kinds of safety issues do not arise.

Finally, the right hon. Gentleman talks about accountability. If the Opposition really wanted to give confidence that they take the issues raised today seriously, they would recognise that it was fundamentally wrong to set up an inspection regime that was not carried out by specialists, and where the same person was inspecting a dental clinic, a slimming clinic, a hospital or a GP practice, perhaps in the same month. That may have contributed to the CQC's decision in 2009 not to investigate the maternity deaths at Morecambe Bay, and to its decision in April 2010 to register the hospital without conditions.

When it comes to accountability, the right hon. Gentleman needs to explain to the House why the former head of the CQC, Barbara Young, said in her evidence to the Francis inquiry:

"We were under more pressure...when Andy Burnham became minister, from the politics."

Is it the case that the head of the CQC felt under pressure not to speak out about care issues?

On the substantive policy point, the right hon. Gentleman continues to criticise the appointment of a chief inspector of hospitals and continues to criticise me when I single out hospital management who coast when it comes to

raising standards. Just how much evidence will it take for the right hon. Gentleman and the Labour party to realise that when it comes to NHS policies, they really need to change?

Eric Ollerenshaw (Lancaster and Fleetwood) (Con): As Member of Parliament for Lancaster, which is covered by the Morecambe Bay trust, may I reassure the Secretary of State and the House in general that thousands of my constituents are receiving a good service from hundreds of hard-working NHS doctors and nurses at the Royal Lancaster Infirmary? Does he think the problems began with the setting up of the CQC on 1 April 2009, and its being appointed as an independent regulator and being expected by the previous Government to inspect and register 378 NHS trusts within 12 months, by April 2010, which was an impossible target for any system to cope with?

Mr Hunt: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. That regime was utterly flawed, and as far as we can tell, inspectors looking at hospitals and care homes had targets of inspections they had to complete in a way that was totally counter-productive to the concept of a rigorous, thorough, independent inspection where people speak out without fear or favour when they find problems.

I also thank my hon. Friend for the other point he makes: that the people who work at the University Hospitals of Morecambe Bay NHS Foundation Trust are working extremely hard and under great pressure. I think they are doing a very good job by and large, but there are clearly very severe problems with the trust that we need to get to the bottom of, and it is very important that we recognise that if we are going to create a safety culture in the NHS, we need to back the people on the front line. They did not go into the NHS to have to deal with these terrible breaches in health and safety; they went into the NHS because they care for people and they want to do the best for people at their most vulnerable.

John Woodcock (Barrow and Furness) (Lab/Co-op): May I first thank the Secretary of State and the shadow Secretary of State for those words of apology to the Titcombe family and other families who have long been pressing for an inquiry and this kind of day of reckoning for the CQC? It is hard to imagine what it must be like to lose a child, but then to be faced with an almost impenetrable wall of bureaucracy, with one organisation and one group of people passing them over to another group, and with all of them ultimately washing their hands of accountability, is truly shocking. That has been laid bare in this report, and I commend its authors for bringing it to the attention of the public.

What the Secretary of State says about the staff in this trust is very important, because these are front-line people who have been failed by poor leadership and a poor inspection regime, which absolutely has to change.

The report says the particular issue here "may constitute a broader and ongoing cover-up."

Is the Secretary of State satisfied that that is not the case? If he is, how can he be? What can he do to look more widely than just at the CQC itself when looking into this allegation?

Mr Hunt: First, may I say I agree with what the hon. Gentleman says, and commend him on his work with his constituents and local families who have suffered so terribly from what happened? He is absolutely right to say we have created a system that is a nightmare for families who identify problems, and the real problem is a lack of clarity as to where the buck stops: where the buck stops in terms of the decision to say that a hospital is safe or not safe, and where the buck stops in terms of sorting out a problem when it is identified. Those are the areas where we are putting through big changes this year, as a result of the Francis report.

I completely understand why the issue of whether there is a continuing cover-up is a concern. All I can say is that I have total confidence in the new leadership of the CQC. They are on the side of the public. They understand that the CQC's job is to be the nation's whistleblower-in-chief. They absolutely get that, but changing the culture in the broader NHS takes more than the appointment of two new individuals at the CQC; it takes a complete change in the leadership so that people on the front line always feel supported if they want to raise safety concerns. That is a much bigger job. I do not want to pretend that we are going to be able to solve it overnight, but that is the big change we have to make.

Tim Farron (Westmorland and Lonsdale) (LD): My constituents can be forgiven for wondering whether, when the watchdog chooses to muzzle itself, it is time to put it to sleep. The report shows that the CQC discovered the truth about the deaths of babies at Furness General, but chose to suppress the truth, and to seek to subvert the Freedom of Information Act—and this morning I have asked the police to investigate that point.

Grieving families like the Titcombes deserve to know who made these decisions, so will the Secretary of State agree to ensure the removal of anonymity for those guilty of putting institutional convenience ahead of the lives of mothers and babies?

I completely agree with my right hon. Friend about backing those on the front line, but we have a culpable ex-chief executive of the trust on a £200,000 payout while the excellent nurses and doctors in the trust are struggling under immense pressure, so will he agree to work with me and all colleagues across Morecambe Bay to help the trust recover, which includes agreeing not to now demand that the trust make £25 million-worth of savings by March, as that would further threaten the pursuit of patient safety?

Mr Hunt: I agree with much of what my hon. Friend says. He is absolutely right that accountability for what went wrong is crucial in this. I know that the CQC wanted to publish the report in full today, including the names of the individuals involved, but was given legal advice that it would be against the law to do so. However, the CQC is keen to have maximum transparency as soon as possible and is looking into how it can make sure that happens. There should be no anonymity, no hiding place, no opportunity to get off scot-free for anyone at all who was responsible for this. This is the problem we have to address in the NHS: all too often, people are not held accountable for what went wrong. However, the system also bears responsibility. This is not just about bad apples and how we root them out

more quickly; it is also about creating a system that brings out the best in people—that plays to the decent instincts that got people to join the NHS in the first place, rather than making them think that targets at any cost matter more than the care and dignity of the patients in their trust.

Mr Ben Bradshaw (Exeter) (Lab): The CQC's chairman said on the radio this morning that he could not publish the names of those responsible for this scandal because of the Data Protection Act, but there are clear and explicit exemptions to the Act when it comes to

“protecting members of the public from dishonesty, malpractice, incompetence or seriously improper conduct, or in connection with health and safety”.

Will the Secretary of State please challenge the CQC's interpretation of the Act and, if necessary, ask the Information Commissioner to rule on this flawed decision?

Mr Hunt: I can reassure the right hon. Gentleman that neither the chairman of the CQC nor I have any interest whatsoever in keeping these names secret. He did receive legal advice telling him that he could not publish them, but I will go back to him with what the right hon. Gentleman says. I know that the CQC chairman would like to be as transparent as possible. The choice he had, on the basis of the legal advice, was either not to publish the report or to publish it without the names. I think he took the right decision, given the advice he had, but I will ask him to consider what the right hon. Gentleman says.

David Morris (Morecambe and Lunesdale) (Con): It is appalling what has come out in the press today and it is appalling what has been suppressed in the past. It is alleged by Lady Barbara Young, a former CQC chair, that under the previous Labour Government she was leant on by Labour Ministers not to criticise the NHS under their tenure. In her Mid Staffs inquiry evidence she stated:

“There was huge government pressure, because the government hated the idea that...a regulator would criticise it”.

She also alleges that the right hon. Member for Leigh (Andy Burnham), the then Health Secretary in the last Labour Government, needs to answer these very serious allegations, especially given what has happened in my local NHS trust.

Mr Hunt: That is the big culture change we need to see; we need to see Governments who are prepared, in all circumstances, however difficult and however politically inconvenient it is, to recognise that when there are safety issues, when there are terrible failures in care and compassion, we need to support the people who want to speak up, because if we do not do that, we will never root out these problems.

Barbara Keeley (Worsley and Eccles South) (Lab): I support the comments made by my right hon. Friend the Member for Exeter (Mr Bradshaw). A real concern is being expressed by Members on both sides of the House, because a person committed this cover-up by deleting this report and we really want to know—there should be an investigation—whether they are currently working for the CQC or working in the NHS anywhere. It is vital to know that.

[Barbara Keeley]

Today, the CQC's chair has said that it is not currently capable of carrying out hospital inspections. The Health Secretary has talked about putting in place more specialist inspection teams, and I, of course, support that. However, CQC inspectors have had access to specialists for a long time—they have talked about it before the Health Committee—so if they are not using them, that is an issue to address. What measures will the Health Secretary put in place to ensure that from this day onwards—not at some future point—we can have the CQC competently carrying out inspections?

Mr Hunt: When the CQC was set up in 2009, it was decided, with full ministerial approval, to go for a generalist inspection model—a model where inspection was not carried out by specialists; the same people would inspect dental clinics, GP practices, hospitals and slimming clinics. That was the wrong decision to take. Making sure that we have enough specialist inspectors in place, with appropriate clinical expertise, takes time—it is a very big recruitment job—and that is what the new chief inspector of hospitals, Professor Sir Mike Richards, is now setting about doing. It is also expensive—it costs money—but he has said to me that when his teams are in place he will start those inspections before the end of this year. So we are going as fast as we possibly can to try to put these problems right.

Mr Ben Wallace (Wyre and Preston North) (Con): My wife gave birth to all three of our children at Lancaster royal infirmary, which is part of the University Hospitals of Morecambe Bay NHS Foundation Trust. Although the midwifery care was excellent, when we had complications with the third my wife received such neglect and ill treatment, at about the same time as Joshua Titcombe's death, that the trust resorted to lying to us. No one should have to endure that treatment.

I have with me a litany of complaints, ignored by the management, the non-execs, and the Department of Health, going back to 2005. Constituents were lied to and nothing was done—no one came to help. I support the Secretary of State's attempt to reform the CQC, but may I urge him to sort out governance at a more local level? Unless we improve the non-execs and the chairs of these trusts, none of these reforms will make a difference. Unless we improve clinical leadership, as well as managerial leadership, it will all be for nothing.

Mr Hunt: My hon. Friend speaks extremely wisely, and I know that the whole House will want to say how sorry we are to hear about the personal problems he had with that trust. All the international safety studies say that if we are to transform safety culture, it has to come from better leadership. It has to come from leadership that really cares; that frees up people on the front line to raise safety concerns in a way that they do not feel will be career-threatening; that encourages them to rethink procedures to minimise the risk of harm to patients; and that encourages the open and transparent approach that has enabled hospitals such as Salford royal to become one of the safest in the country, because of the inspirational leadership of David Dalton. That change in leadership is fundamental, but having a chief inspector who goes without fear and favour and says where we have that leadership and,

more importantly, where we do not have it, will be vital to ensuring that we start to get the changes that my hon. Friend is concerned about.

Mr Stephen Dorrell (Charnwood) (Con): Does my right hon. Friend agree that in the long litany in this report of events that were inexplicable and completely unacceptable, one of the most inexplicable and unacceptable things it lays bare is that at the same time as concern was being expressed to the CQC about the quality of maternity services delivered in the trust, to which the CQC did not respond, the trust itself commissioned a report into the future of maternity services and did not see fit to report the existence of the Fielding review to the regulator to which it was responsible? Will my right hon. Friend make it crystal clear that that is completely inconsistent with any concept of duty of candour for health care deliverers?

Mr Hunt: I could not agree more with my right hon. Friend. What happened beggars belief, and I very much agreed with his comments on that on the radio this morning. The point about duty of candour is that there will be a criminal liability for boards that do not tell patients or their families where there has been harm and that do not tell the regulator; boards will have a responsibility to be honest, open and transparent about their record. That has to be the starting point if we are going to turn this around.

Dr Sarah Wollaston (Totnes) (Con): The public will be horrified, but probably not surprised, to hear that Ministers were leaning on the CQC not to criticise NHS hospitals. Leadership has to start at the top, so will the Secretary of State confirm that he will be fearless in standing up for whistleblowers and those protecting patients in the NHS? [Interruption.]

Mr Hunt: I thank my hon. Friend for that. She is absolutely right to say that the biggest responsibility Ministers have when faced with such tragedies to be open and transparent about the scale of the problems; otherwise, they will never be addressed. Let me put it this way: people who love the NHS and are proud of it are the people who most want to sort out these problems when they arise. That is why it is incredibly important that we are open and candid. [Interruption.] The right hon. Member for Leigh (Andy Burnham) has stood up and criticised me in the media every single time I have given a speech drawing attention to some of the problems facing the NHS. He needs to be very careful every time he does that, because I will continue to do this, and I do it because I want the NHS to get better and believe it can be better.

Stephen Barclay (North East Cambridgeshire) (Con): James Titcombe this morning spoke of ministerial pressure on the CQC. Further to the statement by the right hon. Member for Leigh (Andy Burnham) about full transparency and the fact that data protection should not be an impediment, will the Secretary of State have discussions with him as to whether, within the very narrow remit of the Department's dealings over Morecambe Bay with the CQC, he will apply full transparency to his involvement in this issue?

Mr Hunt: I will absolutely do that, yes.

Charlotte Leslie (Bristol North West) (Con): I echo the sentiments of the right hon. Member for Exeter (Mr Bradshaw) and ask the Secretary of State to look urgently at the application of the Data Protection Act if accountability is to mean anything at all. I urge him also to look at the lessons that a change of leadership effected in the CQC and the era of transparency that that heralded. There is a cover-up which is not just about Morecambe Bay; it is about Mid Staffs, and I suspect that, sadly, other stories may emerge of other such horrors. Does my right hon. Friend think there should be an inquiry into the culture of lack of transparency and cover-up that involved senior managers, and will he consider a change of leadership in order to herald a proper culture change in the NHS?

Mr Hunt: My hon. Friend has campaigned with great assiduity and distinction on this issue. The report about the culture of cover-ups and secrecy was the Francis report, and my job now is to do what is necessary to bring forward the change so that we move on and have a culture of openness and transparency. That means, yes, openness and transparency in this place and among Government Departments and regulators, but it also means creating a culture for front-line staff where they feel that they can raise concerns. We do not do that as well as we should, and it is even more important.

Mr Jamie Reed (Copeland) (Lab): I share a great deal of the sentiments that the Secretary of State has expressed. He said at the Dispatch Box that the involvement of lay inspectors in the CQC was a problem, yet the Keogh review, which I comprehensively support, is involving significant numbers of lay inspectors. Does the Secretary of State agree with that approach? Is it the right or the wrong way forward?

Mr Hunt: As I understand it, the terms of reference, the way it is conducted and the timetable for the review happening at the moment are being set independently, but we should give every support to the people doing that review to make sure that they have access to the clinical expertise they need.

Dr Phillip Lee (Bracknell) (Con): I very much welcome the Secretary of State's desire to see published appropriately contextualised surgical outcome data for each surgeon. Those surgeons, however, have to work within structures created by managers, so in the interests of transparency would he support the publication of each manager's performance so that the public can see where failure is taking place? First, that could prevent the merry-go-round of jobs, Cynthia Bower being the classic example. Secondly, appropriate financial penalties can be applied to the said managers if they fail, as they clearly have done in Morecambe.

Mr Hunt: My hon. Friend speaks extremely wisely. One of the key issues raised by the Francis report was the fact that we have a form of accountability for doctors and nurses—it does not always work as well as it should—through the possibility of being struck off by the GMC and the Nursing and Midwifery Council, but there is no equivalent accountability for managers. In a way, that is what the chief inspector is going to do. That is why I was so keen that as well as looking at whether a hospital is safe or not, the chief inspector

should rate hospitals with Ofsted-style rankings, which look clearly at the quality of leadership in every organisation. The score that a hospital or a trust gets from the chief inspector will ultimately be the determinant of whether or not an organisation is well led. That is why I think it will give the public vital information about leadership, which they do not have at present.

John Stevenson (Carlisle) (Con): As the Secretary of State knows, there have been issues about patient care in the North Cumbria University Hospitals NHS Trust. I therefore fully support the introduction of a more robust CQC regime than the one that previously existed. What does the Secretary of State intend to do to ensure that failing trusts are taken over in a timely and efficient manner so that new leadership and new management may be put in place as soon as possible?

Mr Hunt: My hon. Friend speaks well. Even under the current system, when problems are identified they seem to fester without being properly addressed. Under the new single failure regime for hospitals, when failure is identified there will be a maximum period of one year to sort it out or the board's trust will be suspended. There will be a cut-off which does not exist at present to make sure that the local NHS, the trust board and, in the end, even Ministers bite the bullet when there are problems so that we do not allow them to continue.

John Pugh (Southport) (LD): After Francis, after the Health and Social Care Act 2012, are we not asking a deeply dysfunctional and damaged organisation to shoulder additional responsibilities? Is not that in itself risky? In the Secretary of State's statement he mentions "potentially criminal prosecution" of providers. Exactly who will be prosecuted? Managers? Clinicians? Board members? And exactly on what charge?

Mr Hunt: The criminal sanctions apply to boards for withholding information about safety breaches at their trust, and as I mentioned earlier, we are considering whether those sanctions should apply below board level. We want to wait for Professor Berwick's advice on that, because there is a balance between proper accountability for mistakes and the need to create that culture of openness, where people report mistakes that they might see a colleague making, which might not happen if they were worried about criminal prosecutions. I want to take the advice of an expert on that.

Andrew Stephenson (Pendle) (Con): I and the people I represent are rightly proud of our NHS. However, from Morecambe Bay to Mid Staffordshire we have had a series of scandals. Can the Secretary of State reassure patients that the previous Government's culture of secrecy and neglect will now be torn apart and replaced by a new, transparent, accountable health service that treats patients with dignity, rather than as numbers?

Mr Hunt: The big challenge of our times for the NHS is to make that culture change, and it is a huge organisation. With 1.3 million people, we will do this only if we tap into and harness the desire that they have to do their jobs to the highest standards of patient safety, treating people with dignity and respect. That will be the key to unlocking success.

Mark Pritchard (The Wrekin) (Con): The Secretary of State rightly said that individuals must be held accountable for their actions. To what extent does he think some former Labour Ministers were complicit in this disgraceful cover-up?

Mr Hunt: They need to explain why Barbara Young made the comments that she did. I think there was a general desire to talk up the NHS and not to talk about some of the very deep-seated problems that have now come to light. It is our duty in all parts of the House to make sure that we have a more mature discussion about the NHS when problems arise, and that we do not always seek to throw party political stones but recognise when problems arise. We should talk about them, not cover them up.

Margot James (Stourbridge) (Con): I attended a presentation given by the CQC in early 2011 and I was shocked at the low calibre of what I heard. In particular, I found the CEO at that time to be out of her depth. My right hon. Friend will know that the individual concerned was previously CEO of the West Midlands strategic health authority between 2006 and 2008, at the time of the scandal of Mid Staffs. Will my right hon. Friend say a little more about what he plans to do to improve the appointment process for senior positions in the wider health service to ensure that proper scrutiny of people's prior performance takes place?

Mr Hunt: That is a very good question from my hon. Friend. We need to make sure that we have absolutely the right people in place. One of the lessons that we have learned from Ofsted, which has been an extremely successful regulator in the education sector, is that what works is having people who are prepared to speak truth to power—who are prepared to say uncomfortable things even to the people who have appointed them. I have had this conversation with Mike Richards, because I have the highest opinion of Mike, and I also know that he will say things while I am Secretary of State that will make me deeply uncomfortable. We have to understand that part of the way that we will make sure that the NHS is and continues to be one of the very best health services in the world is having that rigour in the inspection process.

Mr David Nuttall (Bury North) (Con): Many families in Bury, Ramsbottom and Tottington in my constituency will have elderly relatives living in care homes, which they will have chosen on the basis of CQC assessments. Can my right hon. Friend reassure them that these care homes, inspected and approved by the CQC, are in fact up to standard?

Mr Hunt: We have not talked very much about care homes during these questions, but anyone who saw the horrific "Panorama" programme earlier this week on the BBC will know that there are some appalling problems in some of our care homes. We need that same independent, rigorous inspection in care homes as well. That is why, alongside the chief inspector of hospitals, we are appointing a chief inspector of social care who will once again—it is a great shame that we stopped doing this—rate care homes on the quality of care that they give and speak without fear or favour, so that we can reassure my hon. Friend and his constituents.

Greg Mulholland (Leeds North West) (LD): Last week and this week, the Secretary of State has made bold and helpful statements in the interests of NHS accountability, and I commend him for doing that, but does he accept that we have a real problem in the structure of democratic accountability in the NHS? As he knows, there has been great leadership, including from some of his Back Benchers, and will he commission a review now so that we can all have confidence that there is a proper democratic structure of accountability to oversee all parts of the NHS?

Mr Hunt: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his comments, and I hope that he will bear with me as the profound changes that we are introducing this year are rolled out. The most important element of democratic accountability is making sure that the public have the same information as the experts, so that they know whether their local hospital, GP surgery and care home are doing well. That is one of the biggest imbalances and that is why I am putting a lot of emphasis on the new chief inspectors, who will have the status, authority and resources to make those judgments, so that the public know what sometimes only the system has known. Then we will help to address some of the issues that he raised.

Point of Order

2.50 pm

Mr William Cash (Stone) (Con): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is it a point of order to insist on our having a debate on the Francis report? It was issued as long ago as February, but we still have not had a debate.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Lindsay Hoyle): The hon. Gentleman is right; that is not a point of order, but it is certainly a question for business questions tomorrow, and no doubt he will be in attendance.

BILLS PRESENTED

EUROPEAN UNION (REFERENDUM) BILL

Presentation and First Reading (Standing Order No. 57)

James Wharton, supported by Sir Tony Baldry, Guto Bebb, Graham Brady, Mr William Cash, Mr Nigel Dodds, Mr Stephen Dorrell, Jackie Doyle-Price, Dr Liam Fox, Zac Goldsmith, Sir Gerald Howarth and Sheryll Murray, presented a Bill make provision for the holding of a referendum in the United Kingdom on the United Kingdom's membership of the European Union.

Bill read the First time; to be read a Second time on Friday 5 July, and to be printed (Bill 11).

HIGH COST CREDIT BILL

Presentation and First Reading (Standing Order No. 57)

Paul Blomfield, supported by Heidi Alexander, Tracey Crouch, Yvonne Fovargue, Andrew George, Rebecca Harris, John Healey, Julie Hilling, Damian Hinds, Stephen Lloyd, Mr Robin Walker and Nadhim Zahawi, presented a Bill to make provision for regulating high-cost credit arrangements and providers of such arrangements; to provide for controls on advertising, information and communications associated with such arrangements; to make measures to address the cost and affordability of such credit arrangements and their associated charges; to regulate matters concerning repayments under such arrangements; to make provision on advice and advice services in relation to debt arising from such arrangements; and for connected purposes.

Bill read the First time; to be read a Second time on Friday 12 July, and to be printed (Bill 12).

CITIZENSHIP (ARMED FORCES) BILL

Presentation and First Reading (Standing Order No. 57)

Jonathan Lord, supported by Richard Fuller, Kris Hopkins and Sir Paul Beresford, presented a Bill to make provision in connection with applications for naturalisation as a British citizen made by members or former members of the armed forces.

Bill read the First time; to be read a Second time on Friday 13 September, and to be printed (Bill 13) with explanatory notes (Bill 13-EN).

DEEP SEA MINING BILL

Presentation and First Reading (Standing Order No. 57)

Sheryll Murray, supported by Dr Matthew Offord, Andrew Bridgen, Oliver Colville, Paul Maynard, Caroline Nokes,

George Eustice and Dr Thérèse Coffey, presented a Bill to make provision about deep sea mining; and for connected purposes.

Bill read the First time; to be read a Second time on Friday 6 September, and to be printed (Bill 14) with explanatory notes (Bill 14-EN).

HOUSE OF LORDS REFORM (NO. 2) BILL

Presentation and First Reading (Standing Order No. 57)

Dan Byles, supported by Andrew George, Mr David Blunkett, Mr Jack Straw, Jeremy Lefroy, Sir Nick Harvey, Kris Hopkins, Margaret Beckett, Margot James, Rory Stewart, Dr Thérèse Coffey and Thomas Docherty, presented a Bill to make provision for retirement from the House of Lords; and to make provision for the expulsion of Members of the House of Lords in specified circumstances.

Bill read the First time; to be read a Second time on Friday 18 October, and to be printed (Bill 15).

PRIVATE LANDLORDS AND LETTING AND MANAGING AGENTS (REGULATION) BILL

Presentation and First Reading (Standing Order No. 57)

Sir Alan Meale, supported by Mr Nick Raynsford, Mr Brian Binley, Ian Swales, Caroline Lucas, Jim Shannon, Jim Sheridan, Graham Evans, Mark Durkan, Bob Stewart, Naomi Long and Jim Dobbin, presented a Bill to establish a mandatory national register of private landlords; to introduce regulation of private sector letting agents and managing agents; to establish a body to administer the national register and to monitor compliance with regulations applying to letting agents and managing agents; to require all tenancy agreements entered into with private landlords to take the form of written agreements; and for connected purposes.

Bill read the First time; to be read a Second time on Friday 25 October, and to be printed (Bill 16).

APPRENTICESHIPS AND SKILLS (PUBLIC PROCUREMENT CONTRACTS) BILL

Presentation and First Reading (Standing Order No. 57)

Andrew Gwynne, supported by Alan Johnson, Mr David Blunkett, Catherine McKinnell, Mr Jamie Reed, Dan Jarvis, Barbara Keeley, Tom Greatrex, Bill Esterson, Robert Halfon, Andrew George and Caroline Lucas, presented a Bill to require certain public procurement contracts let by public authorities to include a commitment by the contractor to provide apprenticeships and skills training; and for connected purposes.

Bill read the First time; to be read a Second time on Friday 1 November, and to be printed (Bill 17).

DELIVERY SURCHARGES (TRANSPARENCY FOR CONSUMERS) BILL

Presentation and First Reading (Standing Order No. 57)

Mike Crockart on behalf of Sir Robert Smith, supported by Sir Malcolm Bruce, John Thurso, Mr Alan Reid, Mr Frank Doran, Dame Anne Begg, Mr Charles Kennedy, Mr Mike Weir, Mr Angus Brendan MacNeil, Mr Andrew Turner and Dr Eilidh Whiteford, presented a Bill to require online retailers to declare to consumers at the start of the retail process the existence of surcharges for delivery to certain addresses in the UK; and for connected purposes.

Bill read the First time; to be read a Second time on Friday 13 September, and to be printed (Bill 19).

DRUG DRIVING (ASSESSMENT OF DRUG MISUSE) BILL

Presentation and First Reading (Standing Order No. 57)

Graham Evans, supported by Sir Alan Meale, Mr David Nuttall, John Mann, Tracey Crouch, Fiona Bruce, Gavin Barwell, Alex Shelbrooke, Conor Burns, Charlie Elphicke, Mike Freer and Sir Bob Russell, presented a Bill to provide for the assessment of drug dependency or propensity for drug misuse of persons who, in the course of investigations for certain driving offences, have provided blood or urine samples that reveal the presence of certain drugs; and for connected purposes.

Bill read the First time; to be read a Second time on Friday 18 October, and to be printed (Bill 20) with explanatory notes (Bill 20-EN).

COMMUNICATIONS (UNSOLICITED TELEPHONE CALLS AND TEXTS) BILL

Presentation and First Reading (Standing Order No. 57)

Mike Crockart, supported by Alun Cairns, Sir Andrew Stunell, Jackie Doyle-Price, Katy Clark, Mr Mike Weir, Dr Julian Huppert, Simon Wright, Steve Brine, Fiona Bruce and Martin Vickers, presented a Bill to reduce the incidence of unsolicited telephone calls and texts received by consumers; and for connected purposes.

Bill read the First time; to be read a Second time on Friday 1 November, and to be printed (Bill 21).

GRADUATED DRIVING LICENCE SCHEME BILL

Presentation and First Reading (Standing Order No. 57)

Justin Tomlinson, supported by Mr Robert Buckland, Sir Nick Harvey, Mark Pawsey, Kelvin Hopkins, Roger Williams, Andrew Percy, Fiona Bruce, Sir Andrew Stunell, Rosie Cooper, Mr John Leech and John McDonnell, presented a Bill to make provision for a graduated driving licence scheme; and for connected purposes.

Bill read the First time; to be read a Second time on Friday 25 October, and to be printed (Bill 22).

CHILD MALTREATMENT BILL

Presentation and First Reading (Standing Order No. 57)

Mr Mark Williams, supported by Jessica Morden, Roger Williams, Mr Robert Buckland, Neil Parish, Dan Rogerson, Geraint Davies, Paul Goggins, Annette Brooke and Jonathan Edwards, presented a Bill to make provision about the physical and emotional welfare of children; and for connected purposes.

Bill read the First time; to be read a Second time on Friday 12 July, and to be printed (Bill 23).

COMMUNICATION SUPPORT (DEAFNESS) BILL

Presentation and First Reading (Standing Order No. 57)

Mr Mark Williams on behalf of Sir Malcolm Bruce, supported by Stephen Lloyd, Rosie Cooper, Richard Ottaway, Mr Michael McCann, Tim Loughton, Sir Robert Smith, Dame Anne Begg, Mr John Leech, Mr Robert Buckland and Mr Mark Williams, presented a Bill to establish a body to assess provision of communication support for Deaf people and to make recommendations; and for connected purposes.

Bill read the First time; to be read a Second time on Friday 25 October, and to be printed (Bill 24).

PROPERTY BLIGHT COMPENSATION BILL

Presentation and First Reading (Standing Order No. 57)

Mrs Caroline Spelman, supported by Dan Byles, Sir Tony Baldry, Mrs Cheryl Gillan, Jeremy Lefroy, Mrs Anne Main, Andrew Leadsom and Fiona Bruce, presented a Bill to require the Secretary of State to amend legislation to improve the system of compensation for property blight caused by major national infrastructure projects; and for connected purposes.

Bill read the First time; to be read a Second time on Friday 18 October, and to be printed (Bill 25).

EDUCATION (INFORMATION SHARING) BILL

Presentation and First Reading (Standing Order No. 57)

Andrew Selous, supported by Harriett Baldwin, Steve Brine, Margot James, Charlie Elphicke, Nigel Mills, Martin Vickers, Julian Sturdy, Graham Evans, Sir Bob Russell, Jim Sheridan and Michael Connarty, presented a Bill to make provision about the disclosure and use of information relating to persons who are or have been in education or training.

Bill read the First time; to be read a Second time on Friday 12 July, and to be printed (Bill 26) with explanatory notes (Bill 26-EN).

PRISONS (DRUG TESTING) BILL

Presentation and First Reading (Standing Order No. 57)

Margot James, supported by Harriett Baldwin, Steve Brine, Dr Thérèse Coffey, Ben Gummer, Chris Kelly and Andrew Selous, presented a Bill to make provision about the drugs for which persons detained in prisons and similar institutions may be tested.

Bill read the First time; to be read a Second time on Friday 13 September, and to be printed (Bill 27) with explanatory notes (Bill 27-EN).

GENDER EQUALITY (INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT) BILL

Presentation and First Reading (Standing Order No. 57)

Mr William Cash, supported by Sir Malcolm Bruce, Pauline Latham, Mr Bernard Jenkin, Keith Vaz, Jeremy Lefroy, Meg Hillier, Hugh Bayley, Margot James, Sarah Newton, Mr Brooks Newmark and Zac Goldsmith, presented a Bill to promote gender equality in the provision by the Government of development assistance and humanitarian assistance to countries outside the United Kingdom; and for connected purposes.

Bill read the First time; to be read a Second time on Friday 13 September, and to be printed (Bill 28).

UNITED KINGDOM CORPORATE AND INDIVIDUAL TAX AND FINANCIAL TRANSPARENCY BILL

Presentation and First Reading (Standing Order No. 57)

Mr Michael Meacher, supported by Ann Clwyd, Ian Mearns, Caroline Lucas, John Mann, Stephen Pound, Fabian Hamilton, Mr Frank Doran, Kelvin Hopkins, Simon Hughes, Mr George Mudie and Paul Blomfield, presented a Bill to require disclosure of various financial information by large companies; to provide for disclosure of beneficial ownership; to require banks to disclose to Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs the identity of certain companies holding bank accounts; to require

the publication of the tax returns of individuals with an income of more than a certain level and the largest two hundred and fifty UK companies; and for connected purposes.

Bill read the First time; to be read a Second time on Friday 6 September, and to be printed (Bill 29).

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (RELIGIOUS ETC. OBSERVANCES)
BILL

Presentation and First Reading (Standing Order No. 57)

John Stevenson on behalf of Dr Matthew Offord, supported by John Stevenson, Gavin Shuker, Mr Gary Streeter and Jim Dobbin, presented a Bill to make provision about the inclusion at local authority meetings of observances that are, and about powers of local authorities in relation to events that to any extent are, religious or related to a religious or philosophical belief.

Bill read the First time; to be read a Second time on Friday 18 October, and to be printed (Bill 30) with explanatory notes (Bill 30-EN).

Opposition Day

[3RD ALLOTTED DAY]

Arts and Creative Industries

2.56 pm

Ms Harriet Harman (Camberwell and Peckham) (Lab):
I beg to move,

That this House notes the importance to the UK of the arts and creative industries, with art and culture enriching the lives of individuals, reinforcing a sense of local community, and being vital to the economy, generating more than £36 billion a year and employing 1.5 million people; calls on the Government actively to support the arts by developing a strategy for the arts and creative industries; believes that this should include putting creativity at the heart of education, ensuring that creative industries have access to finance and funding, protecting intellectual property, supporting the arts and creative industries, including museums and galleries, in all nations and regions of the country, not just London, and attracting inward investment and providing support for exports; recognises that it is not only right in principle that the arts should be for everyone but that the arts thrive when they draw on the pool of talent of young people from every part of the country and all walks of life; and believes that a strong Department for Culture, Media and Sport with a Secretary of State standing up for the arts is crucial.

This debate is an opportunity for the whole House to express support for our arts and creative industries and to assert their great importance to this country. In this House, we often debate health, education and the economy, and we should recognise that the arts contribute to all of those. It is right too that we talk about the intrinsic value of the arts—how they move us and challenge us, and the great joy that arts and culture bring to our lives. Yes, the arts make money for this country, but they are never just a commodity. From the parents watching a school play to the nation watching the Olympic ceremony, the arts enrich our lives and all our communities. Therefore, we should have no hesitation in standing up for them and declaring their importance to individuals, communities and our economy.

We are a country that produces some of the greatest creativity on the planet, whether it is music, fashion, film, theatre, broadcasting, design, art, our libraries or our museums. Our cultural creativity is admired and envied around the world, and it was that belief that led the Labour party when it was in government to step up support for the arts, including massively strengthening the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, bringing in free entry to museums and galleries, and trebling the budget for the Arts Council. But let us be clear: public support for the arts is repaid over and over. For example, there was a £5,000 public subsidy to support the stage production of “The Woman in Black”. Since then, the production company has paid back more than £12 million in tax to the Treasury.

Public subsidy allows for the willingness of the arts to take risks, like the hugely successful “Matilda”, which the Royal Shakespeare company says would just not have been possible without public seedcorn funding. For some, subsidy has become a dirty word, but there is a false dichotomy between the public and the commercial. They are inextricably linked. Public investment gives the space for commercial success. The Arts Council calculates that for every pound of Government spending invested in the arts, the British economy gets £4 back.

Ms Karen Buck (Westminster North) (Lab): Apart from the wider values that my right hon. and learned Friend has spoken about, in London alone the arts and cultural sector generates 400,000 jobs and returns £18 billion to the economy. Does she therefore share my disappointment that Westminster city council, at the heart of the west end, has chosen to cut its entire arts and culture budget, leaving it the only local authority in Britain with no targeted arts support at all?

Ms Harman: I absolutely agree. For Westminster city council to make cuts of 100% is dangerously like killing the goose that lays the golden eggs.

Ms Gisela Stuart (Birmingham, Edgbaston) (Lab): Does my right hon. and learned Friend accept that in the west midlands alone the regional theatres contribute around £264 million to the economy and that it is therefore not just a question of culture, but of economic development in the regions, which has to be underpinned by the cultural contribution?

Ms Harman: My hon. Friend is absolutely right, and tourism is also important.

Mr Jim Cunningham (Coventry South) (Lab): Following what my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Edgbaston (Ms Stuart) just said, I am sure that my right hon. and learned Friend will be aware that the west midlands is famous for its arts. Importantly, the cuts currently being made to subsidies are affecting the arts, particularly the Belgrade theatre in Coventry, where many famous artists started out.

Ms Harman: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. That is why I will be in Coventry tomorrow—I will say more about that later—working with councillors to ensure we do what we can to protect the arts in this difficult time.

Public money provides the basis of the mixed economy that supports the arts. It provides the foundation on which philanthropy and other funding schemes can then build. We should recognise the role of the arts in regeneration, as in my constituency of Camberwell and Peckham. Joe Anderson, the mayor of Liverpool, has said that the arts have been the rocket fuel for his city's economy. The leader of Birmingham city council, Sir Albert Bore, has said that without the arts and culture, our cities would be deserts. The same is true across the country.

Our belief is that the arts are a public policy imperative because they must be for everyone. Without the active support of public policy, there is a real danger that the arts could become the privilege of the few. That is wrong in principle, because the arts and culture must be a right for all. It is also wrong in practice, because creativity needs to draw on the widest pool of talent. Talent is everywhere in this country, in people from all walks of life. Look at Lee Hall's "Billy Elliot", Opera North and Bournemouth symphony orchestra. We can all see the massive success stories. One need only look around at any award ceremony in the world; Britain's creativity is always right up there in lights. While we celebrate that success, we must not let it mask the reality that the arts are facing a difficult time, especially smaller organisations and those outside London.

Rushanara Ali (Bethnal Green and Bow) (Lab): My right hon. and learned Friend will be aware of the phenomenal impact the arts and the creative sector have had in my constituency and across east London, but one of the major challenges has been the sale of Henry Moore's sculpture, *Draped Seated Woman*. Up and down the country, local authorities are selling public works of art. One of the big worries is that by the end of this Session we will be not only economically bankrupt, but culturally bankrupt, and the Government need to address that issue more generally, rather than specifically.

Ms Harman: I absolutely agree. It is incredibly short-sighted, because once something is sold, it can never be regained. In relation to my hon. Friend's borough of Tower Hamlets and the other east London boroughs, I pay tribute to the Barbican for the outreach work it does with school children in east London. While the headlines trumpet our success, behind the scenes there is an arts emergency, especially in the regions.

Caroline Nokes (Romsey and Southampton North) (Con): The right hon. and learned Lady has referred repeatedly to the regions, but does she not agree that in places such as Hampshire there are fantastic arts organisations, such as the Test Valley Arts Foundation, doing exactly what she has highlighted: outreaching to young people and community groups?

Ms Harman: Absolutely, and I pay tribute to those small community organisations, whether they are in Hastings or the hon. Lady's constituency. Perhaps she will have an opportunity to speak about the importance of the arts in her community, because we know that there is genuine support across the House for arts and creativity, and we want to be able to show that support.

The Arts Council, which provides funds for the arts all across the country, has already been cut by 35%, and it is expecting even more cuts. Local government are having their budgets slashed by a third. That is really important, because for most arts organisations, especially those outside London, most public funding comes not from central Government, but from local government.

Andrew Gwynne (Denton and Reddish) (Lab): My right hon. and learned Friend makes a very important point. So many of our arts institutions, such as Manchester's Hallé orchestra and the Manchester Camerata, which do fantastic work with local schools in my constituency, including Denton community college, get a large amount of their funding from the Association of Greater Manchester Authorities, which is made up of the 10 councils around Greater Manchester. Sadly that is just no longer sustainable, given the cuts that the Government have forced on those councils.

Ms Harman: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. The truth is that outside London it is much more difficult for such organisations to get philanthropic support. The reality is that there is a very uneven distribution of philanthropy. I pay tribute to him for his support for the arts, and also to Sir Richard Leese and Manchester city council for the important support they give the arts. Local authorities are struggling.

Geraint Davies (Swansea West) (Lab/Co-op): I am sure that my right hon. and learned Friend will want to congratulate Swansea on reaching the shortlist to be

city of culture in 2017. In Swansea and elsewhere we should be aware of the enormous growth of tourism from China, India and other developing countries. We should invest in the infrastructure of culture and the arts and take advantage of more and more visitors, rather than cutting them.

Ms Harman: Indeed, and I hope to say something about the importance of our work overseas to highlight our arts. In the meantime, I add my congratulations to Swansea bay on being shortlisted for city of culture in 2017, and I also congratulate Leicester, Hull and Dundee.

Even in such difficult times for local authorities, when they are having to grapple with how to care for the elderly and protect vulnerable people, it is important that they do all they can to support the arts, as is happening in Manchester, which is protecting the arts to protect its future success as a city.

Nadhim Zahawi (Stratford-on-Avon) (Con): The right hon. and learned Lady mentioned the play “Matilda”. She will know that in Stratford-on-Avon the Royal Shakespeare Company, the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust and the Orchestra of the Swan are all important cultural assets. She talks about local authorities. Of course, the average spend of a local authority is about £385,000, yet some authorities, such as Newcastle city council, have £50 million in reserves. The shadow Chancellor has already called for almost £45 billion of extra borrowing and spending. Will she confirm whether any of that money would go towards the arts under a Labour Administration?

Ms Harman: The shadow Chancellor has said that we have to invest in jobs and growth in the future, and I think the hon. Gentleman would agree that future jobs will come from the creative industry as well as from investments in infrastructure. I pay tribute to him for his support for the arts and to the Royal Shakespeare Company in his constituency.

To support councillors across the country who are facing such difficult choices, we have set up a network of local councillors to come together to discuss the challenges facing them and the importance of the arts in local communities and to share best practice. There are many things that local authorities can do, and are doing, to support the arts, over and above the provision of public money, for example sharing back-office functions, granting licences and offering public spaces for arts events. I am delighted that tomorrow I will be in Coventry’s transport museum meeting our creative councillors network from across the country. We are thinking in imaginative and innovative way about how to help the arts, even in these difficult times.

Damian Collins (Folkestone and Hythe) (Con): The right hon. and learned Lady is right that it is a question of getting priorities right for local authorities. Does she think that rather than giving £250,000 a year to the trade unions in subsidies, Newcastle city council should invest that money in the arts instead?

Ms Harman: The hon. Gentleman should look at Newcastle city council’s innovative culture fund, which not only shows its backing for the arts but provides a platform for bringing in outside commercial and philanthropic investment. We need to support and pay tribute to just such innovative thinking.

Alex Cunningham (Stockton North) (Lab): I know that my right hon. and learned Friend is a bit of an angel herself, but does she recognise that the Angel of the North has not just become a world icon, but helped to drive tens of millions of pounds of investment in the north-east? Its legacy is now very much in danger.

Ms Harman: I absolutely agree. The Angel of the North is not just a proud landmark for the north; the whole country admires it. We wish we had an angel of similar height and scale in Peckham.

The truth is that if we want the arts to thrive in future, they need to survive now. It takes years to build them up, but they can be destroyed at the stroke of a pen. The situation is so difficult that we have to forge a survival strategy for the arts. That is work for a broad-ranging coalition, including the Arts Council, local government, the arts community and central Government—not just the Department for Culture, Media and Sport but, crucially, the Department for Education, the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, the Treasury and the Department for Communities and Local Government.

The Culture Secretary must take the lead and stand up for culture—the clue is in her title. That means not letting the Communities and Local Government Secretary squash arts in the regions, not letting the Business, Innovation and Skills Secretary slope off to Europe to water down copyright and not letting the Education Secretary sweep creativity out of the curriculum.

Hywel Williams (Arfon) (PC): Does the right hon. and learned Lady share my concern about the uncertainty over funding for S4C, the Welsh language television channel? BBC funding is guaranteed until 2017, but Department for Culture, Media and Sport funding may disappear in 2015.

Ms Harman: I do share that concern. I recognise the umbrella and the opportunity for many independent producers that the channel provides.

Alison McGovern (Wirral South) (Lab): My right hon. and learned Friend is making an important point about survival. Does she agree that, although the economic case for the arts is well made, in the regions we also need our identities to survive? That is what local authorities, in partnership with the Government, should be able to do through the arts. In the city region of Merseyside where I grew up, we did not have much but we did have the Everyman theatre and Walker art gallery, which meant so much to our identity. That is exactly the kind of survival that we need right now.

Ms Harman: I absolutely agree. The spark that was lit in my hon. Friend is carried through to her support for the arts in her constituency to this day.

The Culture Secretary should be working with the arts and creative industries to develop a clear, confident strategy and make sure that it is delivered. We must be sure that the opportunities are there for young people to experience and participate in the arts—at school, at college and through apprenticeships—so that they can make their way into earning their livings in the arts.

Fiona Mactaggart (Slough) (Lab): On the point about schools, does my right hon. and learned Friend share an anxiety of mine? On 28 February 2012, the Government announced that they would immediately establish a new ministerial board between the Culture and Education Departments and immediately produce a cultural education strategy, and we have not yet seen either.

Ms Harman: We have yet to see those, but we have seen a fall in the number of school pupils taking exams in creative subjects. There has also been a fall in the number of students applying to do creative subjects at university.

We must be sure that artists and arts organisations have the right infrastructure for funding, which includes a mix of public subsidy, philanthropy and other innovative sources such as crowd funding.

Damian Collins *rose—*

Ms Harman: I have already given way to the hon. Gentleman, so I will carry on.

Britain's creative talent is a precious natural resource and must be protected, so the Government must get off the fence and rigorously enforce intellectual property rights. The arts situation is different outside London from how it is here in the capital, so there needs to be a specific, separate focus on the English regions, Scotland and Wales. *[Interruption.]* Indeed, support for tax credits is important across Scotland and Wales as well. *[Interruption.]* There are a number of arts organisations, such as the BBC, which are important in the arts in Scotland and Wales as well as in England. The Under-Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, the hon. Member for Wantage (Mr Vaizey) ought to know that.

British creativity is recognised all around the world, so we must have co-ordinated work that includes BIS, UK Trade & Investment, the Foreign Office and the British Council to showcase the best of British. Finally, running through any culture strategy must be a fundamental principle: the arts must be a right for everyone, not the preserve of a privileged elite. That is not only important in principle; to carry on as world leaders, we need to continue to draw on the widest possible pool of talent.

Susan Elan Jones (Clwyd South) (Lab): I am grateful for my right hon. and learned Friend's steadfast and continuing support for Welsh language broadcasting by S4C. Does she not agree that the arts are extremely important for international and community cohesion? The Llangollen international musical eisteddfod in my constituency was set up at the end of the second world war, to bring nations and cultures together. That is another vital facet of the arts.

Ms Harman: Absolutely. One of the things that is so distinctive and admirable about Wales is its people's love of culture and the eisteddfod tradition. I pay tribute to that.

We cannot accept the Government amendment. Although it details some of the important work that the Department is doing, it is complacent and totally out of touch with what is happening on the ground. It asks us to welcome

"the continued strong lead given by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport",

but the truth is that no one in the arts thinks that such a lead is being given. It is what the arts need, but not what they have.

A heavy responsibility falls on the Secretary of State. This is a difficult time for the arts, which is why at this point it would be disastrous to dismantle the Department. Britain's arts and creative industries are important for our future. They must have unequivocal backing from the Government and a strong Secretary of State with a seat at the Cabinet table. I look forward to speeches from hon. Members on both sides of the House in support of the arts and I call on them to stand up for the arts and vote for the Opposition motion.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Lindsay Hoyle): I advise the House that Mr Speaker has selected the amendment in the name of the Prime Minister.

3.17 pm

The Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport (Maria Miller): I beg to move an amendment, to leave out from "House" to end and add:

"welcomes the Government's support for the arts and creative industries; notes the increase in Lottery funding for the arts which will mean that some £3 billion will be provided for the arts from the National Lottery and in Grant in Aid over the lifetime of the present Parliament; notes that there has been further support for the arts from the Government, including the introduction of lifetime giving, catalyst funding and the maintenance of free admission to the UK's national museums; welcomes the first ever national music plan for education, and looks forward to the imminent publication of the national cultural plan for education; further notes the Government's support for the creative industries, including tax credits for film, television and animation; looks forward to the introduction of a tax credit for video games; notes the establishment of a Creative Industries Council; and welcomes the continued strong lead given by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport in these areas."

I am absolutely delighted to have the opportunity to debate such an important subject. As all Members know, the arts are one of Britain's crown jewels. We are known across the world for our cultural and creative prowess.

We heard a lot of warm words from the right hon. and learned Member for Camberwell and Peckham (Ms Harman), but she was a bit short on policies. A closer reading of the Opposition motion shows, all too clearly, that the Opposition have not kept up to date with the work that the Government have been doing for the past three years in supporting this vital sector.

Britain is already a world leader in the arts and the creative industries, and I want to give the right hon. and learned Lady and all Members the opportunity to show their positive support for what has already been achieved. I hope that she will be able to support the Government's amendment.

The country undoubtedly faces difficult economic times. As I think Labour now accepts, that calls for discipline in public spending. However, the right hon. and learned Lady sounded as if she was calling for more spending. What is it—more spending or iron discipline? I am still not sure.

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

Maria Miller: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will clarify that when he intervenes.

Paul Farrelly: The motion mentions leadership. Since the 2010 general election, the Department has taken on more responsibilities, including, notably, telecoms, so the creative industries are not the only ones looking to the Department for leadership. Will the Secretary of State therefore categorically confirm that, given all the planned cuts, the Department will still be in existence at the next general election in 2015?

Maria Miller: Yes, and I think that the right hon. and learned Member for Camberwell and Peckham would be able to elaborate on that and say that she has heard that from the Prime Minister himself.

The House should be focusing on the important issue of the future of our creative industries. I gently suggest that if the right hon. and learned Lady and other Opposition Members looked a little closer, they would see that the Government have increased lottery funding to the arts by £100 million a year; developed the catalyst fund to encourage organisations to build endowments for the first time; introduced lifetime giving and the cultural gift scheme; maintained free access to museums in the toughest economic climate for almost a century; launched a national music education plan; developed a national cultural education plan; introduced tax credits for film, television and animation; announced tax credits for video games; and established Creative England and the creative industries council. This is practical action that is being taken now, despite the difficult economic situation we face, to support the arts because of how important they are.

Ms Gisela Stuart: What the arts need is proper co-ordination. Some really good work is being done between the British Museum and Birmingham art galleries. It is not so much a question of money as of central co-ordination. It looks to me as though that co-ordination is about to be lost. Will the Secretary of State assure us that that is not the case?

Maria Miller: The hon. Lady is right to raise the importance of co-ordination and regional funding. That is why we have put so much focus on it, particularly on the Arts Council's work in the creative people and places programme, the strategic touring programme and grants for the arts. Hundreds of millions of pounds are going into the sorts of regional activities that many hon. Members have mentioned.

Neil Carmichael (Stroud) (Con): Will the Secretary of State remind the House of her splendid visit to Stroud on a cold February night, where she saw at first hand the Stroud valley art project and a number of other fantastic arts and crafts activities? That rams home the point that arts and crafts in my constituency are alive and well, with the support of this Government.

Maria Miller: My hon. Friend raises a really important point. In his constituency I saw first hand how this commitment to the arts is being translated into industry and jobs in the heart of his constituency. That sort of relationship between the arts and the creative industries means that we have some of the very best creative industries in the world. As the recent survey of theatre workers by Creative & Cultural Skills demonstrated, the relationship between cultural organisations and the creative industries is fluid and vital, and underpins the £36 billion a year that the creative industries are worth.

Barbara Keeley (Worsley and Eccles South) (Lab): May I take the right hon. Lady back to free entry to museums? There is chaos in the regions, because our excellent museums, such as the Museum of Science and Industry in Manchester, are fighting a rear-guard action against threatened 10% cuts. Tens of thousands of people are terribly worried—there is a campaign in the local paper—that Government cuts will force such excellent museums to close. Will the right hon. Lady clarify that not only will free entry to museums be maintained, but that there will be no swingeing cuts, which would cause our excellent museum to close?

Maria Miller: I am sure the hon. Lady will have followed the settlement we have achieved for the arts and museum sector and that she will be delighted that there is absolutely no reason why such a closure should happen. A 5% reduction in funds will obviously be a challenge for the sector, but it has welcomed it and I hope the hon. Lady welcomes it, too.

Our cultural offer is intrinsic to our nation's success in tourism: 40% of people who come to our country cite culture as the most important reason for visiting and eight out of 10 of our top visitor attractions are museums. Hon. Members from all parties know that this is not just a London story, as Liverpool can testify, having received almost 10 million extra visitors during its year as European city of culture.

The arts are, as the right hon. and learned Member for Camberwell and Peckham said so powerfully in her opening remarks, of immense social value, too. They define who we are and what we stand for as a nation. They also help us understand where we come from and they support and shape our communities.

Harriett Baldwin (West Worcestershire) (Con): Will the Secretary of State clarify that one of this Government's first acts was to increase the amount of lottery funding for the arts? Am I correct in understanding that it was the Labour party that in 2004 cut the percentage from 20% to 16%?

Maria Miller: My hon. Friend is, of course, right. That meant a significant reduction in lottery funding for the arts. I will come on to that in more detail in a moment.

It is for all the reasons that hon. Members have already raised in their interventions that I and my Department fought so hard to protect spending on the arts and culture during the recent spending round. Despite doing our bit as a Department and playing our part in tackling our crippling deficit, the reduction in the funding of the arts and museums in 2015-16 will be just 5%.

Hywel Williams: Given the happy news about the Department's future survival, will the Secretary of State report on the prospect of DCMS funding for S4C after 2015?

Maria Miller: The hon. Gentleman will know that there is a clear obligation to make sure that there is sufficient funding. I am aware of this issue and will talk to colleagues and, no doubt, the hon. Gentleman about it. He will know, however, that I am not able to give him any future details at the moment, because they are subject to the spending review.

[*Maria Miller*]

In the context of the difficult financial climate, the settlement our Department has achieved clearly demonstrates the Government's recognition of the economic and social value of culture. This is an important settlement for the arts in a very challenging spending review.

I would be interested to hear from those on the Opposition Front Bench—I think we would all be interested to hear this—whether or not they will commit to the same level of funding and spending, or will the arts be one of the areas covered by the shadow Chancellor's iron discipline on public spending, or will the Opposition promise to increase spending on the arts? It is not clear what their policies are or where their funding would come from.

Robert Flello (Stoke-on-Trent South) (Lab) *rose*—

Neil Carmichael *rose*—

Maria Miller: I will give way to the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent South (Robert Flello) and then to my hon. Friend the Member for Stroud (Neil Carmichael).

Robert Flello: I am grateful to the Secretary of State for giving way. She has mentioned regional theatre. Will she explain why it is that of the 696 organisations regularly funded through Arts Council England's national portfolio programme, there is only one in the whole of Staffordshire, namely the New Vic in the neighbouring constituency, that of my hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme (Paul Farrelly)? It does amazing and fantastic work, employs about 90 individuals and contributes nearly £12 million to the local economy, but why, out of the 696, is it the only one in the whole of Staffordshire?

Maria Miller: The hon. Gentleman may or may not know that I was born in Staffordshire. I understand his desire to ensure that Staffordshire has strong cultural representation. The Arts Council funds 179 theatre organisations and groups. Those decisions are made at arm's length from the Government by the Arts Council, which I am sure listens carefully to his remarks.

Fiona Mactaggart *rose*—

Neil Carmichael *rose*—

Maria Miller: I had promised to give way to my hon. Friend the Member for Stroud first, but then I will give way to the hon. Member for Slough (Fiona Mactaggart).

Neil Carmichael: The investment the Government are providing for broadband in my constituency is a huge advantage to the creative industry, especially in areas beyond our towns, where people need access to broadband for their design and technology work. Does the Secretary of State feel inclined to commit to ensuring that broadband is provided for most of my constituents by the time of the general election?

Maria Miller: Having visited my hon. Friend's constituency and heard his constituents' comments directly, I know how important the Government's superfast broadband project is to such constituencies. It will

ensure that not only our creative industries are supported, but cultural organisations, whether galleries or libraries. Broadband can support and help their work so much.

As well as managing the reductions in grant in aid I have mentioned, the Government have made important changes to the national lottery to ensure that arts and culture are properly supported, as my hon. Friend the Member for West Worcestershire (Harriett Baldwin) has said. As she pointed out, one of the first things this Government did was reverse Labour's lottery cuts. In 1998, the Labour Government cut lottery support for the arts—their cuts took £600 million out of the sector. The coalition has restored the proportion the arts receive, meaning an extra £100 million goes to the arts each year. When the hon. Member for Barnsley Central (Dan Jarvis) responds to the debate for the Opposition, will he commit to maintaining the current proportion of lottery funding to the arts, or will Labour cut it again?

Fiona Mactaggart: In the Secretary of State's list of achievements she mentioned the announcement of the cultural education strategy. That happened 16 months ago. Where is it?

Maria Miller: The hon. Lady will know that we have done an incredible amount in that area, whether for the Youth Dance Company or the other organisations that are part of the plan we are developing—[*Interruption.*] She will have heard the Under-Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, my hon. Friend the Member for Wantage (Mr Vaizey), say from a sedentary position that further details will be announced next month.

Hon. Members on both sides of the House will want to know that the Government's commitment to the arts will mean that more public money in cash terms will go to the Arts Council under this Government than under the previous one. Why, therefore, do the Opposition constantly posture about funding cuts rather than propose their own plans? It is no good the right hon. and learned Member for Camberwell and Peckham sitting there just criticising. People are listening to the debate, and want to know what she and her hon. Friends want to do differently. What do they want to do differently, and how will she fund it?

Mike Weatherley (Hove) (Con): I thank the Secretary of State for coming down to Brighton and Hove to visit NCSoft and others in the software industry, and the music industry in the Brighton Institute of Modern Music. Does she agree that the Government have done significant amounts for the software industry and the music industry? They have raised live licence numbers from 100 to 200—it will shortly be 500.

Maria Miller: I pay tribute to my hon. Friend's work on supporting those parts of the creative industries. It was fantastic to go along and speak to the students in his constituency who are doing so much to support the future of the music industry. We should applaud his work in that area.

The Government's action means we can maintain spending on grants for the arts, which provide funding for 3,700 organisations up and down the country, and support the Arts Council's £45 million touring programme, which is hugely valuable for the regions. The Arts

Council announced just last week further touring grants of nearly £2 million. The Government's action also means we can pump money into areas where the arts are under-represented, which the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent South mentioned. The Arts Council's £37 million creative people and places fund will focus on parts of the country in which involvement in the arts is significantly below the national average.

Steve McCabe (Birmingham, Selly Oak) (Lab): I acknowledge some of the Secretary of State's achievements, but is she satisfied that the distribution is fair? Does she believe that areas such as the midlands get a fair share of arts funding in relation to their populations?

Maria Miller: The hon. Gentleman makes an important point. It is vital that we ensure that the money available goes to the places that need it most. The Arts Council, as an arm's length body, makes those decisions independently of the Government. We must take into account the importance of ensuring that the money gets to those areas, and particularly to rural areas, which can find it difficult to have sustainable arts programmes.

Chris Heaton-Harris (Daventry) (Con): I must declare an interest as chairman of the Northampton Theatres Trust, which has a £7.5 million turnover. We receive Arts Council funding, for which we are eternally grateful. We all love regional theatre and the culture that it brings to towns across the country. I know that the Arts Council is an arm's length body, but why should it fund two national opera companies in London, when if it funded just one, there would be plenty of money for regional theatre across the country?

Maria Miller: I understand my hon. Friend's frustration, but the national institutions that are located in our capital city do much to support regional organisations both by supplying them with talented people and by training people from the regions. He makes the important point that regional culture, and theatre in particular, needs the right level of funding. I hope that he supports the work that we are doing to ensure that that happens.

Nadhim Zahawi: Does my right hon. Friend recognise the input that the arts have in schools? In my constituency, the Orchestra of the Swan, the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust and, of course, the Royal Shakespeare Company do great work in schools. The RSC also developed "Matilda" over seven years with Arts Council funding, which has gone around the world, has won Tonys and Oliviers, and is a great British export.

Maria Miller: My hon. Friend will know about the support that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education gives to the work of the Royal Shakespeare Company. My hon. Friend brings out the critical role that cultural organisations can have in underpinning the understanding of the arts and culture among the children of this country. That is important work.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Maria Miller: If I may, I will make a tiny bit of progress before I take further interventions, because I know that a lot of Members want to speak in this debate.

The regional support that I have outlined illustrates how important we consider regional arts to be. I reinforced that point when I spoke recently at the British Museum. That is why the funding settlement that we have achieved is so important. It means that we can continue to fund projects in the Lake district, Leicester, Newcastle and Newquay.

The Government's achievements do not stop at public funding. We have made great strides on philanthropy. We recognise that that is a way in which many organisations can diversify their funding streams. We have developed the catalyst scheme with the Arts Council and the Heritage Lottery Fund, which has allocated £110 million to arts and heritage organisations in match funding, meaning that it will unlock at least as much again from private donors. We have simplified gift aid and introduced a reduced rate of inheritance tax for those who leave 10% or more of their estate to charity. We recently launched the cultural gifts scheme. I am sure that many hon. Members would like to join me in thanking the donors who already contribute almost £700 million to the arts and heritage sector every year. That support should not go unnoticed by this House.

We have been working closely with our colleagues in the Department for Education on cultural education plans. We have published the first ever national plan for music education, which has ring-fenced funding of £171 million up to 2015. Our national plan for cultural education will be launched next month, as the Under-Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, my hon. Friend the Member for Wantage, said. Sadler's Wells has already been selected to form the new national youth dance company. English Heritage is receiving £2.7 million from the Department for Education to establish heritage schools, which schoolchildren can visit to be inspired by our rich island story. Our 10 regional museums and schools partnerships have been awarded a total of £3.6 million funding until 2015 through the museums and schools programme.

Ian Mearns (Gateshead) (Lab): I am grateful to the Secretary of State for being so generous with her time. Unfortunately, the Department for Education cut the creative partnerships programme for schools, which was a £30 million programme designed to get young people involved in creative and artistic activities. Was that not a great shame?

Maria Miller: We are now putting more funding into cultural education through our work with the Arts Council. The hon. Gentleman should look at that before he draws too many conclusions about the effect that any changes will have on our schools. We have all agreed that cultural organisations in our communities do a huge amount, and no Member of this House would suggest otherwise.

Having worked in the creative industries for 17 years, I have first-hand experience of the importance of culture and the arts in supporting what I believe is a world-class sector, and the work we have done will help ensure that our creative industries stay world-beating. It is clear to me that a symbiotic relationship exists between culture and the arts and the creative industries, and that view is reinforced time and again when I go on regional visits, whether to Bury, Bristol or—as I did recently—to Brighton. It sings out loud and clear.

Caroline Lucas (Brighton, Pavilion) (Green) *rose*—

Mr David Lammy (Tottenham) (Lab) *rose*—

Maria Miller: I will, of course, give way to the hon. Lady from Brighton.

Caroline Lucas: I thank the right hon. Lady for having visited Brighton and Hove and spent time looking at some companies in my constituency. Those businesses are rightly proud that our city has won £3.3 million of investment for ultrafast broadband, but they are worried about a potential story coming from Labour that about half the super-connected cities budget could be cut to concentrate on access in rural areas. Does she agree that the speed versus access debate is not helpful because both are essential for different reasons? We need basic internet access for social inclusion, but ultrafast capacity is essential if we are to enable our UK cities to be at the cutting edge of international creative and digital innovation.

Maria Miller: The hon. Lady would be right to be deeply disappointed if anybody—let alone those on the Opposition Front Benches—suggested we should cut investment into one of this country's most important current infrastructure projects. I join her in asking Labour Members to make their position clear on that issue in their later comments.

Mr Lammy *rose*—

Maria Miller: I will give way to the right hon. Gentleman, and I apologise that I did not do so earlier.

Mr Lammy: Of course the 5% cut is welcomed by the sector, but the right hon. Lady will recognise that it comes on top of 5% last year and 29% the year before. Is it not premature to paint a rosy picture when arts organisations are waiting for decisions by local authorities? I appeal to her in tone not to give the impression that all is rosy when we know that education programmes are being cut and that links to arts organisations are diminishing.

Maria Miller: From his previous role, the right hon. Gentleman has a great deal of experience in dealing with the difficult choices that I and colleagues have to make. Equally, if he feels that the decisions the Government are making are not right, he must explain to the House what decisions his party would take and where the additional funding would come from. We are trying to take tough decisions fairly, and ensure that we encourage organisations to come and work together in new ways. Earlier, the right hon. and learned Member for Camberwell and Peckham mentioned budget cuts being an innovation. I like to talk plainly, and I acknowledge that we are in a difficult position economically. We are making tough decisions, but I think we are making them fairly.

We must recognise the importance of being transparent with people, and I was disappointed at the failure to recognise the importance of being straightforward in the recent intervention by the shadow Culture Minister, the hon. Member for Barnsley Central (Dan Jarvis), about the Labour council's decision in Newcastle to cut funding. Indeed, it was suggested that the council would cut its entire arts budget last December. Perhaps if he had understood that point more clearly, the shadow Culture Minister would have instead suggested—my

hon. Friend the Member for Stratford-on-Avon (Nadhim Zahawi) made this point—that the council dip into its £50 million of reserves, rather than waiting for his boss, the right hon. and learned Member for Camberwell and Peckham, to overrule him.

I am pleased that we have made huge strides in providing support for our creative industries, which have an enormous impact on our economy and up and down the country. In 2011 the Government formed the Creative Industries Council to help drive growth in the UK's creative industries and ensure that the UK remains a global centre of excellence for those industries.

Pete Wishart (Perth and North Perthshire) (SNP): The right hon. Lady will know that the success of our creative industries, which she is right to applaud, depends on the firm foundations of intellectual property rights and copyright protections, so why is she not getting on with the Digital Economy Act 2010 and why is she pursuing copyright exceptions?

Maria Miller: The hon. Gentleman will know that we inherited a difficult situation around the implementation of some of the provisions—provisions that were unfortunately rushed through by the previous Government and which we now have to deal with in practical reality—and we are working through them carefully.

Creative England, established in 2011, looks at investments in creative ideas, talent and businesses in film, television, games and the digital media. Along with the Creative Industries Council, it is an important way of sensibly supporting the creative industries. Our existing film tax relief has helped raise more than £1 billion in inward investment into British film, while additional tax reliefs targeted at animation, high-end television and video games were announced in last year's Budget. These are all practical and tangible ways of helping to grow a successful creative industries sector in this country, underpinned by strong and world-leading cultural organisations.

Kerry McCarthy (Bristol East) (Lab) *rose*—

Simon Wright (Norwich South) (LD) *rose*—

Maria Miller: I will give way first to the hon. Lady and then to my hon. Friend.

Kerry McCarthy: On a point of clarification, the Secretary of State's recent speech was interpreted to mean that she thought that the priority was continued public funding where there was a direct economic impact—in other words, that we should only support art that makes money. Will she place it on the record that that will not be the criterion for her Department's allocation for funding, and that although the economic impact of the arts is great, there are many more benefits to arts funding?

Maria Miller *rose*—

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dawn Primarolo): Order. It might help, Secretary of State, if I could explain to the House that more than 30 Members wish to take part in this debate. There is already a severe time limit, and it will get even shorter at this rate. You have been incredibly generous, Secretary of State, but I wonder if I could encourage you to be a little less generous, so that we can get some Back Benchers in.

Maria Miller: I thank you for your intervention, Madam Deputy Speaker, but I feel that I should give way to my hon. Friend the Member for Norwich South (Simon Wright); otherwise I will fall into his bad books.

Hon. Members: Answer the last question.

Simon Wright: Norwich University of the Arts in my constituency is creating a digital centre for innovation. It has come as a result of national funding and support from the new Anglia local enterprise partnership and, of course, of the world-class innovation shown by the university itself. Will the Secretary of State look at this model and how she can work with others in government to promote the best from our world-class universities and create jobs in our communities?

Maria Miller: Of course, I will answer the question from the hon. Member for Bristol East (Kerry McCarthy). I just did not want my hon. Friend not to get the opportunity to talk as well. She is right to pick up on her point, but had she read my whole speech, rather than just an extract, she would have seen clearly that the Government absolutely recognise the intrinsic value of arts and culture. The point I was making—I think, very clearly—in that speech was that there was a powerful economic argument to be made as well. As somebody who has worked in the creative industries for almost 20 years, I know that having a strong culture and arts sector, as we do in this country, means that we can also have a strong creative industry, which has an economic benefit. That is the argument I have used—persuasively, I think—with the Treasury, and perhaps that is why we have achieved such a strong result for the sector.

On the intervention from my hon. Friend the Member for Norwich South, I would be delighted for the Under-Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, my hon. Friend the Member for Wantage, to have a further discussion with him. I am sure he would be delighted to do that too.

I shall take your guidance, Madam Deputy Speaker, and make a few closing remarks. Our international reputation for arts and culture and the easy transfer of people between the cultural sector and the creative industries are based on the enormous talents of the people who work in the sector. We recognise that we need to invest for the future, however, and thanks to our sector skills councils, more than 3,500 people have either completed or are currently doing apprenticeships in the creative industries. The Arts Council's creative employment programme will support up to 6,500 new apprenticeships, pre-apprenticeships and paid internships across the sector, and the Government are investing up to £8 million each year over the next two years to support skills development in the UK digital content sector. That is important investment in people for the future. It is ensuring that our creative industries have the sort of skilled work force that we need to innovate and compete globally.

We work closely with UK Trade & Investment, the British Council and others to explore ways to promote creative industries globally, too. We are using the GREAT campaign to underpin not just those efforts, but our economic ambitions more generally. The arts and culture, including our museums and galleries, have a key role to play. They act as our flag bearers, helping to develop interest in Britain and allowing us to build the relationships

that mean we can do the trade deals of tomorrow. It is this kind of relationship marketing that helps UKTI to fly the flag for British goods and services, and to attract the investment that will drive jobs and opportunities here at home. It opens doors for UK plc and makes it easier for businesses to export and to expand.

If we look at what is actually happening, rather than the rhetoric from the Opposition, we see huge success up and down the country. We see new libraries opening in Birmingham and Liverpool, new regional museums in Margate and Wakefield, and refurbished and regenerated theatres in Bristol and Liverpool. Today, my Department announced a shortlist of four cities that will go forward to compete to be UK city of culture in 2017. While I—I am sorry, but the right hon. and learned Member for Camberwell and Peckham does not announce these things—commiserate with the seven bidders that were not shortlisted, I congratulate all 11 for their ambition and the belief that they share with me that arts and culture are a powerful force for good socially and economically, both at home and abroad.

I take this opportunity to applaud those who lead the arts and cultural institutions in our country for their vision and hard work. Above all, I thank them for their passion and innovation, and for ensuring that Britain remains a pre-eminent cultural force that is well regarded and respected all around the world.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dawn Primarolo): Order. Mr Speaker has put a six-minute time limit on all Back Bench contributions.

Several hon. Members rose—

Madam Deputy Speaker: Are we all waiting to leave the Chamber? [*Laughter.*] I just thought that maybe hon. Members knew something that I did not. Given the shortage of time, it may be necessary to review the time limit and reduce it further, but we will start with a six-minute limit and see how we get on.

3.52 pm

Hugh Bayley (York Central) (Lab): I am fortunate to represent the beautiful historic city of York. It is a vibrant centre for the arts, science, craft skills, technology and the creative industries. It is important to realise that they feed off each other—we cannot silo the arts away from science and think that the one does not affect the other. We have apprentice stonemasons being trained at York Minster and wood carvers. The York Glaziers Trust is restoring the biggest mediaeval work of art in the world, the great east window of York Minster, in a £30 million project. Exhibition designers have just installed the new York Minster Revealed exhibition in the undercroft below York Minster, which combines Roman remains with interactive computer-driven displays, so that people can imagine what life was like almost 2,000 years ago. We have software engineers who have designed some of the world's most popular computer games. I could talk about all these things, but instead I want to talk about one thing only: the Science Museum Group, which includes the National Railway museum in York.

On 5 June, the director of the Science Museum Group, Ian Blatchford, said:

"If an additional 10% cut is made when the spending review is announced at the end of the month, there would be little choice other than to close one of our museums."

[Hugh Bayley]

Following that statement, I tabled two parliamentary questions to ask the Under-Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, the hon. Member for Wantage (Mr Vaizey) whether free admission to national museums would be retained—he answered yes, and I thank him for that—and whether sufficient funding would be made available to keep open all of the Science Museum Group's museums. I got an equivocal answer at that time, but when I was on Radio York with the Minister yesterday morning, he gave a clear answer, saying that he believed sufficient funding was being made available to the Science Museum Group to keep all its museums open.

Helen Goodman (Bishop Auckland) (Lab): As my hon. Friend knows, Shildon in my constituency is home to one of the branches of the National Railway museum. It is immensely successful. Last year, it had 200,000 visitors, brought £6 million into the regional economy and trained 100 young people. Does he agree that, as railways made Britain great and that these are among the most popular of our national museums, free entry is absolutely essential?

Hugh Bayley: It is absolutely essential.

I take it that the Minister's comment on the radio in Yorkshire yesterday applied to all the sites—to Shildon as well as to the York branch of the National Railway museum.

I also tabled a parliamentary question to ask about the Government's funding for the Science Museum Group. The Minister replied yesterday, for which I am grateful. He told me that if the funding were pooled for the Science museum, which includes the York, Shildon and Bradford museums, the Museum for Science and Industry in Manchester, which was funded separately until recently, and the National Coal Mining museum, one would see that the total had fallen from £48.25 million in 2009-10 to £42.25 million this year. That is a reduction of more than 15% after inflation is taken into account.

We are told that the Department for Culture, Media and Sport secured a reduction of only 5% in its funding settlement. If the Science museum received a further cut of 5%, its structural deficit would increase from about £2 million a year to £4 million a year. Nothing has been said yet about the capital funding of between £2 million and £2.5 million. If that is not provided, the deficit will of course increase further, because revenue money would have to be used to repair the roof of the museum and for other capital works. If the Science Museum Group does not receive capital money in addition, the deficit will rise and, even though the doors of the museums will stay open, the greater the deficit, the less money there will be for preserving and conserving their artefacts, for research, for public education and outreach and for collecting new assets. It is odd that a Conservative Government should be doing significantly less to conserve our national heritage than was being done before. We face the real danger of our museums being hollowed out. It is not just me saying that; the directors of our national museums are saying it, too.

Our museums, including the National Railway museum, have some of the most valuable artefacts in the world. We have George Stephenson's original engineering drawings

for the Rocket. We have the Mallard, which won the world speed record for a steam locomotive 75 years ago. This year, the museum has assembled the other five remaining Gresley class locomotives in York, probably for the first and last time in history. I once took the US Senator Paul Sarbanes, who is a bit of a railway enthusiast, to the National Railway museum in York. He represented the state of Maryland, which includes Baltimore, home of the US's biggest railway museum, but he was completely knocked out by our museum. It is in a class of its own, internationally.

The artefacts in our national museums in Bradford, Manchester, South Kensington, York and Shildon are some of the most important and valuable cultural assets in the world. They are like fantastic flowers in a garden. I put it to the Secretary of State that if we do not keep feeding their roots, those flowers will wither and die. There is a danger that, by taking millions and millions out of those museums each year, they will no longer have the resources to keep their collections up to date, conserved and available to the public, now and for future generations.

The Science Museum Group attracts 5 million visitors a year—2 million of whom visit the northern museums—and another 20 million visitors online. It has a diverse range of visitors, with more black and minority ethnic visitors than any other national museum and more from lower socio-economic groups. Also, 60% of its visitors are from outside London and the south-east. The northern museums are not regional museums; they are national and international institutions. The majority of people visiting the National Railway museum in my constituency come from outside Yorkshire and the north of England.

If the Government want to promote growth, they need to inspire more young people to take an interest in engineering, science and technology, which is what the Science Museums Group does. It is no accident that my son, now a railway engineer, was a frequent visitor to science museums in his youth. The Government need to keep these museums alive, and I beg that they do just that.

4 pm

Mr John Whittingdale (Maldon) (Con): I very much welcome this opportunity to debate the arts and creative industries. Although I of course support the amendment in the name of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, in the spirit of consensus that the Select Committee on Culture, Media and Sport always tries to achieve, I have to say that I can find nothing in the motion tabled by the Leader of the Opposition that I disagree with.

As a believer in free markets, I am not normally a supporter of public subsidy. However, I am convinced of the benefits of public subsidy in the case of the arts—not just the economic benefits, which the Secretary of State quite rightly spelt out in her speech. The arts are hugely important to people's quality of life in this country, as the right hon. and learned Member for Camberwell and Peckham (Ms Harman) said, and many other benefits flow from that in education, health, community cohesion and so much more.

Under the previous Government, the arts enjoyed years of plenty; under this Government, we are facing lean years for the arts. That is absolutely inevitable. This Government have the higher priority of trying to clear

up the enormous mountain of borrowing and debt that we inherited, and it would be wrong to exclude the arts from having to play a part in that. However, when we on the Select Committee looked at funding of the arts immediately after the election, we said that it would result in some difficult decisions and that some institutions would probably close as a result. I am delighted to hear from the Secretary of State that she has done well in her debate with colleagues in the Treasury for this year's spending settlement, but I understand from what I have read and what she has said that we can anticipate still further reductions. That means that more institutions will probably have to close, which will be a tragedy.

That means that we need to look at other means by which we can find funding for those institutions. The Government have already done a lot in trying to encourage philanthropy and, as has been mentioned, to increase the money going from the national lottery. In that respect, I would suggest that what the shadow Secretary of State described as the arts emergency might mean that we can consider—perhaps on only a temporary basis—the flexibility of national lottery funding. It has always been the principle that national lottery funding is there for capital investment projects and not for meeting ongoing costs, but if the consequence is that we can build new buildings while existing ones close, that would not necessarily seem to be a sensible use of resources. That is something that we might consider, if only for a limited period.

I was also interested to see what Dr Simon Thurley said recently about how it is hard to justify spending £35 million on a single painting by an Italian artist when so many buildings in Britain—5,000—are on the at-risk register. That, too, is something we might just look at.

I want to turn quickly to the creative industries, where one has to say that the picture is much brighter. The figures—in terms of employment and economic growth—for the huge contribution that the creative industries make in this country are well known. The success of the music industry and the film industry are well known, but it is also important to look at the others, such as electronic games, publishing, design and advertising.

Paul Farrelly *rose—*

Mr Whittingdale: If the hon. Gentleman will forgive me, I have six minutes and I would like to continue.

One of the most striking things from the Select Committee's recent visit to California—I will remember this for a long time—was the look on the face of the hon. Member for Paisley and Renfrewshire North (Jim Sheridan) when he saw thousands of zombies overcoming Philadelphia. He said, "That's Glasgow." Of course, it was Glasgow. Indeed, that film alone brought £90 million into this country. That could not have come without the tax break which the previous Government introduced but which this Government have maintained and extended to cover high-end TV drama, animation and electronic games.

The one note of warning I would sound is that the success of all those creative industries depends on one thing: a strong framework of intellectual property rights. We tinker with that at our peril. Yes, there may be a case for modernising it, but we must be very careful not to

pursue questionable and illusory benefits at the price of putting at risk the huge economic benefit to this country from the success of all our creative industries. I ask the Secretary of State, and also Ministers in the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, to think very carefully about introducing such things as private copying exception and some of the other Hargreaves proposals. I know that we shall be debating that, but the Secretary of State will be aware of the considerable alarm that is being expressed throughout the creative industries about the damage that could be done unless the matter is handled very carefully.

We also need to do more to tackle online piracy, which is still doing huge damage to the creative industries. The Digital Economy Act 2010 was an extremely good first step: it is not perfect, but it is nevertheless a matter of great regret that none of its provisions have yet been enacted. Things are being done—the City of London police are doing extremely good work, and I strongly support their new initiatives to pursue online intellectual property crime—but a very strong signal would be sent if letters could be written to serial file-sharers who are in breach of copyright law, telling them that what they are doing is not only wrong, but jeopardising the success of the creative industries on which we depend so much.

4.6 pm

Jim Sheridan (Paisley and Renfrewshire North) (Lab): Let me begin by telling the hon. Member for Maldon (Mr Whittingdale) that the film "World War Z"—or zee, to the Americans—involved actors. It was not people in Glasgow who were walking about as zombies.

I must admit that I am a repentant son to the creative industries. When it was announced that the Select Committee would be looking into the whole issue of the creative arts, mine was a very luddite approach. I took the view that inquiries of that kind were for arty-farty types—and I am certainly not one of them. However, as I have said, I am now repentant. I was wholly mistaken. Since the inquiry I have learnt how much the creative industries have benefited the UK economy, and I now realise that "arty-farty types" could not be further from the truth of what today's creative industries look like. People in the creative industries are dynamic, innovative and, more important, young. We must continue to encourage those young people and allow them to thrive, because without them we would lose a great part of our economy and a beacon for British culture.

Paul Farrelly: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Jim Sheridan: I will take one intervention.

Paul Farrelly: Does my hon. Friend agree that it is important for education, particularly arts education, to be available to everyone across the spectrum? Evidence given to our Committee expressed great concern about the originally proposed EBacc, which would have narrowed choice in state schools and hence narrowed the background of people going into the creative industries. Does my hon. Friend agree that we must be ever vigilant in reining in the over-eager Secretary of State for Education, so that in his enthusiasm he does not do unintended damage that we might all come to regret?

Jim Sheridan: My hon. Friend is right. Perhaps he saw my speech in advance, because I was going to say something about that. He is an extremely important and valued member of the Committee.

May I issue a plea to the Secretary of State? Regional television companies, especially commercial companies such as Scottish Television, feel that their profiles are not as high as those of public sector broadcasters, and that their priorities do not receive the same attention. At the same time, in the light of the additional funds that will be needed to finance the forthcoming referendum and, indeed, the Commonwealth games, there is genuine concern about the fact that a public sector broadcaster, BBC Scotland, is not receiving the resources that it ought to be receiving.

I chair the Unite group in Parliament. Unite represents a number of people who work in print, publishing, the arts and tourism. It may not surprise Members that the first issue that I want to raise in that connection is the sheer number of jobs involved. The creative industries employ about 1.5 million people, and, according to Government statistics, employment in the sector is increasing at twice the rate of the economy. This is not a sector that we want to stifle, as it is one of the only ones that is actually managing to create jobs.

We must also ensure that we remember all the different jobs that these industries entail. Unfortunately, we have a habit of focusing on the stage talent and sometimes forget those who work backstage, who are the engine behind the industry. Their involvement is just as crucial; when we talk about job creation, we must talk about boosting jobs in those areas as well. I mentioned earlier that young people drive the industry, but in talking about jobs we must address the desperate need to encourage and support those who want to follow such a path. Owing to the Government's education policy, there has been a downgrading of the arts and other subjects that lead towards the creative industries. More importantly, there are few opportunities for young people to train on the job in apprenticeships and paid posts. I fear that those who cannot afford to work in such posts, or to go to university to gain the additional qualifications—they may not even want to do so—are at a disadvantage in the industry.

Unfortunately, the industry also disadvantages those who cannot undertake an unpaid internship. We hear stories of young hopefuls running around film sets or recording studios desperate to gain experience and contacts, but those people can afford not to be paid; they can afford to live in London, Manchester or Glasgow with no wages. That is not a reality for many young people, so we inevitably lose some of our best talents to those practices. More must be spent on apprenticeships and on giving all young people the chance to work in these important industries.

When we were in government, we introduced the future jobs fund, which in one programme alone provided 800 paid work placements for young people, and 71% of those who participated went into employment, education or training afterwards. This Government, as we know, have abolished that fund. These industries not only provide jobs, but have a much wider impact: they are the third biggest export industry in the UK and worth something in the order of £36 billion a year.

The wide-ranging impact of investment in the creative industries can be felt across the local economy. As I said

previously, we can see that in Glasgow. The film "World War Z" is being shown for the first time in Glasgow tonight, following its premier in London. It brought £3.3 million into the city's economy during the 17 days when the film was shot there. Overall, Hollywood films boosted the economy last year by £20.5 million. "Cloud Atlas" and "Under the Skin" were also filmed in the city. In 2011, 225 productions were shot in Glasgow, and those of us in and around the city are keen to keep encouraging the industry, to help boost others that are struggling during the recession.

In order to survive, the creative industries are crying out for a better solution. I am sure that there are people more in tune with corporate issues than I am and are able to cover that more extensively. These industries cannot attract investment because investors are not confident that they can get the returns that they deserve. Why would anyone invest in music or films to generate money when there is no guarantee of a return?

I am conscious of the time. I am delighted that the Culture, Media and Sport Committee embarked on an inquiry into the creative industries and their impact on the economy.

4.13 pm

Mr John Leech (Manchester, Withington) (LD): I am grateful for the opportunity to take part in this debate. The arts and creative industries are one of the UK's biggest success stories, outperforming most of our more traditional sectors of the economy and exporting talent across the globe. They are one of the main reasons why the UK is a prime destination of choice for so many foreign travellers. Unfortunately, we do not often get the opportunity to talk about its successes or to debate some of the potential challenges ahead, which is why I welcome this opportunity.

There is little doubt that the subject of this Opposition day debate was chosen in the light of questions being raised about the future of some of our finest museums in the north—in Manchester, Bradford and York—but the unequivocal response from the Minister that the museums are not going to close, and the tough negotiations by the Secretary of State, which have resulted in a much better settlement for our museums, have rather ruined the Opposition's opportunity to criticise the Government. This has resulted in a fairly benign motion, which the Government could quite easily have agreed to, and I certainly agree with the comments of the Chair of my Select Committee, my hon. Friend the Member for Maldon (Mr Whittingdale).

The arts and creative industries are vital to communities and the economy throughout the country, and we must nurture the next generation of talent if we are to continue to grow. The need to do that was highlighted in the report of Ian Livingstone and Alex Hope, whom the Minister commissioned in 2010 to review the skills needs of the UK's video games and visual effects industries and to make practical recommendations as to how they can be met.

The UK had slipped from third to sixth in the global development ranking, and there was a clear recognition that more needed to be done, so I am a little disappointed that the Government did not simply accept the motion, but political rules tend to dictate that Oppositions always oppose Governments—we have had a fair bit of

that over the past three years—and Governments always reject anything put forward by Oppositions. I suppose it could be argued that the Opposition's motion questions the leadership of the Department, but I want to put on record my support for the ministerial team in recognising the importance of the creative industries and for the Secretary of State's determined negotiations with the Treasury to put in place funding that will secure the future of our museums.

Barbara Keeley: The hon. Gentleman has been a supporter of the Museum of Science Industry in the past, although judging by the tone of his speech, that might be changing. Will he comment on the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for York Central (Hugh Bayley) about the structural deficit that is building up because of the cuts, which will reach 20% even with just the 5% cut now? Is he concerned that even if there is only a 5% cut, our museum—MOSI—will still have a fight on its hands to maintain the extensive number of buildings?

Mr Leech: If the hon. Lady gives me a little more time, I will talk about that.

The Department has protected the future of our museums at a time when it would have been far easier for the Government to have cut deeper into the DCMS budget, so I will certainly be supporting the amendment.

Concerns had been raised that museums in Manchester, York and Bradford were under threat of closure. Ian Blatchford, head of the Science Museum Group, warned about the possible need to close one or more of the museums in the north if the spending review resulted in a 10% cut in the budget, or at least to start charging to make up the predicted increase in the deficit from £2 million to £6 million. That resulted in huge campaigns to protect our museums, including the Save MOSI campaign led by the *Manchester Evening News*, which received over 30,000 signatures in the first 24 hours.

It is always difficult to gauge how real a threat of closure there actually was, but the Department could not have been clearer in showing its commitment to our national museums in the north, and in fighting its corner in budget negotiations. We must recognise, however, that there is still a lot of work to do to ensure that museums are put on a secure financial footing for the long term.

What I am certain about is that we must not go down the road of charging for entry. The previous Government should be applauded for ending charging at state-funded museums in 2001. In Manchester that resulted in an increase in patronage from 288,000 in the last 12 months of charging to over 833,000 last year. MOSI is Manchester's No. 1 attraction, but it is more than that: it is a science and industry museum located at the heart of the industrial revolution, and it is a destination for learning. Most children across Greater Manchester will visit the museum at some point in their school career.

Overall, there were 5 million visitors to the group's four museums in the last 12 months. Even with the "doomsday" scenario mooted by Ian Blatchford, that means the SMG would need to generate only £1.20 extra from visitors coming through the doors to wipe out the £6 million deficit.

Charging an entry fee is not the answer. We know what charging does to visitor numbers. Currently eight of the top 10 UK visitor attractions are free DCMS-sponsored national museums, and there are about 18 million annual visits to museums and galleries that used to charge an entrance fee. It would also have an impact on foreign tourism. According to VisitBritain, Britain's major museums and galleries earn the country £1 billion a year in revenue from overseas tourists. A recent report on Britain's culture and heritage showed that museums and galleries are a key motivator for many international visitors to Britain, with free world-class national museums and art galleries a particular draw. Given the importance of the tourism industry to the UK economy, charging must be ruled out.

The Culture, Media and Sport Committee intends to carry out an inquiry on the future and funding of the national museums. The two Front-Bench teams could do worse than to follow the example set by the Committee, as the hon. Members for Shipley (Philip Davies) and for Bradford South (Mr Sutcliffe) and I all supported having an inquiry into how we could secure the future of our museums. We took a proper cross-party approach. Rather than playing party politics, the Committee will take a proper look at ways in which additional sources of income can be found, at a time when state funding will, obviously, remain under pressure for years to come.

The Opposition motion also rightly recognises the importance of the creative industries to the economy; they make up in excess of 7% of the economy and continue to show strong growth at a time when many sectors have stagnated or retracted. One great example is the UK games development sector, which is the largest in Europe. However, there has been disagreement recently on whether or not high-tech creative companies, such as those in the games industry, should be included in the measurement of the creative industries.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Lindsay Hoyle): Order.

4.21 pm

Mr Gerry Sutcliffe (Bradford South) (Lab): It is a great honour to be involved in this debate and to follow the hon. Member for Manchester, Withington (Mr Leech). I am a bit dubious about the football team he supports, but that was the first time I have heard him congratulate the previous Labour Government. Will he put that in writing so that we have it for future reference?

This is an important debate, for the reasons that have been outlined by many of my colleagues on the Culture, Media and Sport Committee, whose Chairman has said what it is trying to do. My hon. Friend the Member for Paisley and Renfrewshire North (Jim Sheridan) was a bit hard on himself in saying that he was not fully involved with the thought patterns on what needs to happen. He, like me, has certainly learned that the creative industries are vital parts of this country's lifeblood. They are also important to cities such as Bradford.

I know the House will forgive me for talking about the plight of Bradford's media museum, but before I do that I wish to mention something that was being talked about long before the prospect of its closure: the rebranding of the city. We were discussing a city with a strong literary and cultural history, and people will know that of Bradford. It is the home of the Brontës, J. B. Priestley,

[Mr Gerry Sutcliffe]

David Hockney, the Black Dyke Mills Band, Kala Sangam and, more recently, Zayn from One Direction. It is also the birthplace of the British film industry and is the first UNESCO city of film. The Minister, and the Education Secretary, whom we are delighted to see in his place, will be pleased to know that next month Bradford college will launch the international film school. That brings together Bollywood and international film makers from around the world to teach the youngsters of Bradford about film. Of course, as I said, Bradford is also the home of the National Media museum.

We were not just involved in a marketing or rebranding exercise; it was about rethinking our future economy in Bradford and cities like it. Bradford is very close to Leeds, the regional centre, and we wanted to find a way to examine the job and economic prospects for Bradford for the future. We want to sell ourselves as a city of culture, media and sport—we have the heritage. That is why the announcement saying that the National Media museum may close came as a bit of a blow. I think that there has been some inverted snobbery over many years. I am old enough to remember when we first got the National Media museum from London in the late '80s, at a time when the then Government were trying to make sure that everything was not concentrated around London and that things would go out to the regions. We were proud to have the National Media museum in Bradford, but there has been snobbery in the past, as people have, year after year, been trying to get the museum back to London from Bradford. So it is great news that the Minister said what he did to the group of Bradford MPs and said publicly yesterday that there is no reason why the media museum should close. It is great news that the Department has been able to reduce a 10% cut to a 5% cut, but it is still a cut. My hon. Friend the Member for York Central (Hugh Bayley) spoke about the accumulation of problems that we face.

I hope the Minister can tell us about the capital programme and the issues that science museums may face in relation to the capital project. That will be important to the future of the museum. It is not just about saving the northern museums; it is about putting investment in and making sure that they are places where people want to go. Our museum has been run down over the past few years. I do not care whose fault that is. We need to look at new partnership arrangements to make sure that we can invigorate that museum. We can do that through the local authority, the local college and the local university coming together, and businesses in Bradford looking to see what they can do philanthropically to protect the future of the museum. I am grateful to the Minister, who said at the meeting on Monday that he would use his good offices to bring people together to try and make sure that we have a workable solution to what needs to happen in Bradford.

The debate is about more than museums in Bradford, important though those are. It is about the creative sector. Copyright is a major concern, as the hon. Member for Maldon (Mr Whittingdale) said. The Government need to take heed of bodies such as ALCS, which the Minister knows well. It is not about alcoholics, as he tried to explain yesterday when he talked about Barbara Hayes and Janet Anderson spending their time in Strangers Bar. The Authors Licensing and Collecting Society

looks after the copyright proposals that are before the Government now. It is important that the creative industries are confident about copyright protection.

The creative industries are important to the economy. They are the new manufacturing, in terms of the opportunities that they present. In Bradford we have a growing young population. We have the opportunity to have technicians involved in the film industry and in the games industry in our great city. We want to have film studios. I notice with interest that the Warner Brothers planning application has been turned down. If Buckinghamshire does not want it, we will have it in Bradford and in Yorkshire. We must ensure that the sector in the UK remains a world-leading sector. We may have our political knockabout, but the sector is important to us as a country and we need to make sure that we develop it in our own best interests.

4.27 pm

Justin Tomlinson (North Swindon) (Con): I shall take this opportunity to try to cover two subjects, the video games industry and libraries. I am the chair of both all-party parliamentary groups.

Starting with the video games industry, I work very well with the trade representatives, UKIE, the Association for UK Interactive Entertainment, and TIGA, which have done an incredible job in helping to shape Government policy and promote an industry that is growing at an incredible rate. In the UK alone the video game consumer market is worth £2.9 billion, with year-on-year growth of 4%. That makes up 40.2% of the entertainment market. There are about 33.6 million games in the UK, evenly split between males and females. The UK is the third biggest consumer market for the video games industry, after Japan and America. PricewaterhouseCoopers estimates that the global market will be worth \$87 billion by 2017.

Game development is popular in the UK, with 56 universities providing 141 video games specialist courses throughout the UK. There are 9,224 creative staff working in studios, with 16,864 jobs indirectly supported by those studios. The sector's contribution—this is always music to politicians' ears—to the UK gross domestic product was around £947 million in 2012. Crucially, 95% of our game developers export their product.

The first of the three points that I want is that the UK games tax relief is hugely welcome news. It will be a major shot in the arm to our industry and will allow us to keep up with the international competition and the huge potential for growth in the sector. For those Eurosceptics in the Chamber, I have to say that Europe is being particularly difficult. I urge the Government to stand up, as they do on many other issues relating to Europe, and make sure that Europe does not cheat our games developers out of the incentive to proceed.

Secondly, the radical changes to computer science in schools are also crucial. On a number of occasions I have visited a local studio called Neon Play, which is expanding at an incredible rate and producing fantastic games. It tells me that its biggest challenge is getting skilled people. People have the degrees and qualifications, but they almost have to start again because their education has been broad brush rather than specialising in, for example, 3D programming, design, music or a particular

segment of a game, which would make a huge difference. I saw how it can inspire young people. I was fortunate enough to be able to take a child from a local organisation called SMASH, which helps children from challenging backgrounds, and he was given an opportunity to be inspired in a career that ultimately, on average, pays £34,000 a year, which is definitely worth aspiring to.

Finally, we need to consider the problem of the lack of females in the video games industry. I went to an event organised by a fantastic charity called Lady Geek. Within the industry, 90% of jobs are taken by males, and only 4% of game developers are female. Lady Geek is doing a fantastic job to promote and encourage as many females as possible to take this up, and I have recently written to the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport to ask her personally to meet representatives of the charity, and I very much hope that she will.

Libraries provide an important starting point for many people who ultimately go into the creative industries. I was formerly the lead member for libraries within my local authority and we built a number of new libraries, including a £10 million central library on time and on budget, and made some changes. I want to make a quick whistle-stop tour of things that I would like to see within the library service, and I am sure that the shadow Minister will be taking lots of notes, as this is an area that he often follows me on.

Modern library buildings are key. In a modern bookshop such as Waterstones, one expects a certain quality of service, but I am afraid that too many of our libraries are in need of refurbishment. Local authorities must utilise section 106 moneys, the new homes bonus and the opportunities within the Localism Act 2011 to leverage bits of funding. When they spend that money, they need to look at sharing best practice. Too often, local authorities reinvent the wheel, start again and spend huge sums doing things that Waterstones would do for a fraction of the price.

We must also consider measures such as shared usage. Our Old Town library was due to close. I was part of the team that campaigned to keep it, and across the road we had a fantastic refurbished arts centre. We transferred the library into that, and it extended its core 20 hours to cover the entire time that the arts centre was open. The council had to pay only one set of rent and rates, and usage went through the roof.

Libraries must be at the heart of the community. We should display usage and membership figures in all libraries for the community to see. Library managers should be empowered to be responsible not just for the physical building but for the community that they serve, taking library services out there.

Tristram Hunt (Stoke-on-Trent Central) (Lab): Will the hon. Gentleman therefore condemn the views of the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government who said that those who are interested in saving their libraries were just “a bunch of luvvies”?

Justin Tomlinson: I have worked with library campaigners throughout the country and I always challenge them to make sure that local authorities understand the importance of libraries, and in particular to make sure that they are being well used. I have been incredibly impressed with my local authority's attempts to do outreach work,

encouraging the summer reading programme that all MPs support every year. We have a brilliant officer in Ellen Carter, who does fantastic things in the community, encouraging people of all ages to use the libraries.

We also need to make sure that the library service matches modern expectations. Swindon took a bold decision—we are always at the cutting edge—and opened a library on a Sunday because it was next door to the Asda Walmart, and it is now its busiest day, so we need to adapt and change.

Volunteers are a controversial subject in the library world. Some local authorities decided that they could do away with professional librarians and replace them with volunteers. My view is that volunteers should be encouraged to enhance library provision, which could be by extending opening hours, providing additional activities, entertainment and events, and fund-raising.

Guy Opperman (Hexham) (Con): Does my hon. Friend agree that flexibility is absolutely key if libraries are to continue, co-locating and co-working with other public utilities?

Justin Tomlinson: My hon. Friend is spot on. Like any sector, things change, and libraries must also keep up. Every community is different, and it is important that the centre is not prescriptive. Each local community can shape and influence their own service.

We need to ensure that volunteers promote the library within the community, taking the library service to people who cannot reach the libraries. They need to produce newsletters, promote things on Facebook, and make sure that the library is at the heart of the community.

We must also look at library budgets. It is staggering that even today only 7.5% of a typical library budget is spent on book stock. I regularly ask people about that, and most think that the figure is probably about 50%. We must ensure that money is spent on the front line, not the back office. Obviously the Government will have to make a decision on how we take forward e-reading.

In summary, I am keen to see local library managers empowered and volunteers encouraged in order to improve the library service. We must ensure wherever possible that we deliver value for money within a service that is much loved by our communities.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Lindsay Hoyle): Order. We will now hear a maiden speech. I remind the House that, as a courtesy, Members do not intervene in a maiden speech. Hopefully they will not intervene too much afterwards, if we are to get everybody in.

4.35 pm

Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck (South Shields) (Lab): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, for allowing me to make my maiden speech in this debate. I am deeply honoured not only to have been chosen by the people of South Shields to represent them as their Member of Parliament, but to be the first woman to do so. Shields has boasted a Labour MP in every election since 1935. It gives me tremendous pride to represent one of the most discerning electorates in the country.

[Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck]

I would first like to pay tribute to my predecessor, David Miliband. David was a passionate and brilliant public servant, both as a constituency MP and a Cabinet Minister. He was highly regarded by the local community, not least for presiding over the dramatic transformation of our schools. His record in government, beginning as schools Minister, then a Communities and Local Government Minister, then Environment Secretary, and finally Foreign Secretary, is proof of the determination and vigour with which he pursued his role. I know that Members on both sides of the House share my admiration and respect for him and wish him well in his new role.

Shields is a town defined by its geography, standing as it does on the mouth of the River Tyne and facing out to the North sea. As a port, it has welcomed seafarers from far-flung locations. Its magnificent coastline and award-winning beaches are one of the north-east's great natural spectacles. Each year we host one of Britain's greatest human spectacles, serving as the finishing line for the tens of thousands of runners who participate in the great north run.

It is a town with a proud history of political organisation and vibrant community and trade union activity. It is a town that knows the dignity and reward that work brings and understands the duty we each have to provide not just for ourselves and our families, but for the world around us. It is a town enriched by a diversity of outlooks and traditions, dating back to the days of the Roman empire but continually refreshed by the arrival of foreign traders and settlers. I hope that my contribution to the House will reflect those virtues and do credit to the community I represent.

As the constituency's first woman MP, and the first MP to have been born within its boundaries, I feel that I am something of an innovation. But the people of Shields have always been great innovators. My great-great-grandfather, William Wouldhave, was the inventor of the lifeboat. The constituency is also home to Souter lighthouse, the first to use alternating electric current. We have Britain's oldest daily newspaper, *The Shields Gazette*, first published in 1849. We have one of Britain's first mosques, in Laygate, and for over a century the constituency has been home to a significant Yemeni population. They have been joined by Bangladeshi and Indian communities, who have become part of the fabric of our town and continue to make important contributions.

Work is underway on a £100 million regeneration of the town centre, which will include a new cinema, library and arts centre. That will add to our already vibrant creative industry, comprising the South Shields museum and the Customs House. Since the 1800s, the Customs House has developed into a premier arts venue, with a theatre, cinema and gallery. Through its chartered programme, the Customs House, under the fantastic leadership of Ray Spencer, known locally as "Tommy the trumpeter", offers what is at the core of today's debate: an opportunity for all people to engage and learn from the arts. That opportunity is strongly valued by my right hon. and hon. Friends.

The port of Tyne continues to thrive, providing employment and vital trade links to Europe and beyond. It thoroughly deserves its recent accolade of north-east business of the year 2013. Our young people are achieving

their highest ever GCSE results. Despite challenging financial times, South Tyneside college and its world famous Marine school continue to play a part in offering first class vocational education to students of all ages.

South Tyneside district hospital, where I was born, continues to provide vital services for our community against a backdrop of cuts and reorganisation. South Tyneside Homes has won the training and development category of the "Best Companies to Work For" awards run by *The Sunday Times*. In the last financial year, almost 3,000 council homes across the borough were improved and the number of apprentices that we boast is increasing steadily. It is little wonder that the Labour-controlled South Tyneside council was commended by *The Municipal Journal* as one of a handful of best achieving councils nationally and that Shields has recently been singled out as one of the country's 30 best places to live by the sea.

Notwithstanding that, Shields continues to suffer one of the highest unemployment rates in the country. We need investment in infrastructure and industrial and commercial development. It makes no sense economically to allow my constituents' potential to go unrealised; a skilled and knowledgeable work force give far more back to the country than they cost to train.

I put myself forward for election to represent the people of Shields at Westminster so that I can fight our corner during these difficult times. I know that I am only one person, but I am the voice for everyone in my constituency. I will make sure that those who voted for me are proud that they did. I will try to win the confidence of not only those who did not vote for me, but the people who did not vote at all. I will work to give them confidence not just in me, but in this House.

4.41 pm

Sarah Newton (Truro and Falmouth) (Con): As one who represents a port, it gives me great pleasure to welcome the hon. Member for South Shields (Mrs Lewell-Buck) and congratulate her on a first class maiden speech. Like seafarers across the nation, many people in my constituency owe a great debt to the hon. Lady's grandfather. We can all be proud of the invention of the lifeboat and the subsequent lifeboat service, which has saved countless lives around our shores.

Given the passion with which the hon. Lady spoke, about her ancestors and the place from which she comes, I am sure that she will proudly represent her community. Her great sense of history, place and public service shone through her speech. She must be particularly pleased to be the first woman to represent her seat. As a woman Member of Parliament, I am pleased to welcome other women, whatever side of the House they sit on. Having more women Members of Parliament can only be a force for good. Finally, I congratulate the hon. Lady on what will undoubtedly be the most difficult speech that a Member of Parliament makes; I assure her that all subsequent speeches will be much easier. Well done.

I turn to the subject of the debate. Like the Secretary of State, I believe passionately in the intrinsic value of the arts, which are a fundamental expression of our human nature and important for our sense of health and well-being. As the Secretary of State rightly pointed out, arts and the creative industries are also important

to our economy. In the south-west, the creative economy is worth more than £1 billion and the region employs more than 94,000 people in the sector.

In the limited time available, I want to share the terrific success story of creative arts in Cornwall and my constituency in particular. Cornish people are naturally creative and innovative, as well as self-reliant, and we are used to working in partnership. Despite the difficult economic times, we are very much rising to the challenge; I refute the “gloom and doom” scenario introduced by Opposition Members.

I am grateful for the personal support of the Minister, my hon. Friend the Member for Wantage (Mr Vaizey), who has made positive interventions in respect of the National Maritime Museum and Royal Cornwall Museum in my constituency. I am happy to report that both are alive and kicking and have positive plans for the future. They are joined by the Hall for Cornwall in Truro, which has ambitious plans to go from strength to strength and create the national theatre of Cornwall. I could not make this speech without mentioning the award-winning Falmouth art gallery. Despite the Opposition’s dreadful picture of doom and gloom, I can report on organisations that are alive and kicking and going from strength to strength.

The Government’s introduction of beneficial tax arrangements for the film industry means that Cornwall is now being used as a site for a lot of extremely good films, especially by crews from overseas. The Cornish writer Rosamunde Pilcher is a firm favourite with Germans and film crew after film crew has pitched up in Cornwall to make films of her popular books. This is exciting for us in Cornwall and it is producing a lot of very welcome jobs. If hon. Members have not seen the film “Summer in February”, which was shot in Cornwall, I urge them to do so, because it shows Cornwall at its best.

Damian Collins: Does my hon. Friend agree that that type of commercial investment from the film and television industry—similar to that from philanthropists in the arts—is creating a vibrant cultural scene not just in central London, but right across the country?

Sarah Newton: Absolutely. I am happy to back up that point. As far west as we are in Cornwall, that is a very important part of our economy and our quality of life.

In the couple of minutes I have left, I want to draw the House’s attention to another way in which the Government are supporting the creative industries. We are extremely proud that Falmouth has just gained university status. Falmouth university has an international reputation for excellence in art, design, media and performance. It has 4,000 students and employs people. Far from the doom and gloom of the Opposition, it is seeing increased applications and full rolls. Over 100 hundred years, the institution has provided a great deal of people and skills for our creative industries. It has had more than £100 million of investment over the past 10 years, supported by successive British Governments and the European Union. The merger with Dartington college of arts in 2008 brought a wealth of new opportunities for students and secured the future of Dartington’s internationally renowned portfolio of performance courses.

All of that investment means that a lot of graduates are not only going on to be employed in our vital creative industries, but setting up businesses themselves. Falmouth graduates do not simply get jobs; they make jobs for themselves and others. Recent investments by the university, working in partnership with Cornwall Council, have led to innovative projects, such as the academy for innovation and research and the innovation centre, where graduates and undergraduates work with local businesses, using their creativity to help grow even more jobs. A target for 2015 is to support 185 companies, which should create 122 new jobs and generate £18 million for the local economy.

Creative industries in Cornwall, the south-west and around the country have enormous potential to help contribute to the rebalancing of our national economy. We are creating and developing things, and creating more jobs in the private sector for export all around the world. We should be proud of these industries and celebrate their continuing innovation to put the “Great” back into Britain.

Several hon. Members rose—

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Lindsay Hoyle): Order. We have to reduce the time limit to five minutes. [HON. MEMBERS: “Aww!”] Well, it could be four, if you wish.

4.48 pm

Richard Burden (Birmingham, Northfield) (Lab): May I add my welcome to my hon. Friend the Member for South Shields (Mrs Lewell-Buck) and congratulate her on her maiden speech? The innovation that she talked about in her constituency is similar in many ways to the passion for innovation that fired my city of Birmingham in the early days. It is there to this day and it is changing. Many of the traditional industries are still there, although they are different in the 21st century.

In addition, our creative industries are really interesting and dynamic, focusing on such things as design—from designing cars to fashion design. We see innovation in small and medium-sized enterprises in the Custard Factory area in Digbeth and in firms such as Maverick, which is a dynamic independent company working in film and TV. We see it in Birmingham’s Symphony Hall and the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, which Sir Simon Rattle made his own all those years ago, and in the Birmingham Royal Ballet and the Hippodrome theatre, which attracts more than 500,000 visitors a year to the city.

We also see it in the development of community arts. My constituency of Northfield is not normally regarded as a hotbed of the arts, but I can tell hon. Members that one of our city’s foremost poets, Spoz Esposito, a former Rover worker, is today nurturing young talent in slam poetry in schools there. There is also an arts forum in the area which this summer will provide an open-air theatre for young people aged 16 to 25.

Another name—the BBC—should be not only part of the list, but on top of it. There are good news stories. The Drama Village is the centre for the “Doctors” TV programme and other programmes might be in the pipeline. However, there is a “but”, and it is a big “but”. One of the BBC’s six public purposes is to represent different nations, regions, communities to the rest of the

[Richard Burden]

UK. What does that mean in practice? The midlands region, which has 16% of the UK's population, receives just 2% of the BBC's programme making. No other nation or region of the UK receives as little. Where are the midlands voices and characters on our TV screens? That is why there are legitimate calls from the Campaign for Regional Broadcasting and others for the midlands to receive its fair share.

We have heard words before—the previous Conservative leader of the council came out with a lot of words, as did the previous director-general of the BBC. However, we must go beyond words and into action. We must have investment in our people—in the writers and crews, in Equity members; actors and production talent, in our Drama Village and beyond.

We have a strong heritage—everybody still talks about the great days of Pebble Mill in the midlands—but the fanfare that accompanied the BBC's relocation to the Mailbox has not been followed through with action. My hon. Friends the Members for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Steve McCabe), and for Birmingham, Edgbaston (Ms Stuart), and I met the director-general of the BBC to say, “Things have got to change.” The early signs have been positive, but they must lead to action.

Birmingham is one of the youngest and most diverse cities in Europe. If the BBC and other programme makers are looking to where broadcasting needs to be in the next decade, they need to look at Birmingham's population, and at what our young people are saying today, tomorrow and next year. That means action to commission and produce more programmes in Birmingham.

It also means action from the Government. I hope that they talk to the BBC, but they must also end the growing disparity between regional investment and investment in the capital. They must also think again about the impact of their cuts to Arts Council funding and to local authorities. I want young talent to be nurtured, not snuffed out. I want the Government to help our creative industries to live up to Hamlet's call to the arts to

“hold...a mirror up to nature”.

That means fostering our cultural ecosystem, not undermining it by neglect. Unless the Government change course, I fear the latter will happen.

4.53 pm

Chris Heaton-Harris (Daventry) (Con): I begin by associating myself with what the Chairman of the Culture, Media and Sport Committee, my hon. Friend the Member for Maldon (Mr Whittingdale), said on the Opposition motion, which I did not have an issue with, and with what he said on the need to maintain our strong position on intellectual property.

The debate takes place at a time when “austerity” is the buzz word. Austerity is not a bad policy, but rather the result of previous bad policies. I therefore congratulate the Secretary of State on the funding settlement she managed to achieve. Many people from the arts to whom I have spoken are, like the rest of British society, fully aware that money is tight, and that they need to do their bit to help to eliminate the deficit.

I should declare some interests. I am the vice-chairman of the all-party group on dance. I have a specific dance style—it is a bit like a spider trapped in a sink—but I will be appearing in “Strictly Daventry” on 5 July, should any hon. Members wish to come and see said style. Tickets are available online or from me afterwards.

I am also the chairman of the Northampton Theatres Trust and will spend the rest of my contribution talking about regional theatre.

The Northampton Theatres Trust has the huge Royal and Derngate theatre complex, which contains two theatres and a cinema that is just about to open. In fact, “Summer in February” will be on tomorrow as its first show. The Royal, an old-fashioned theatre, has a 583-seat capacity. The Derngate has a capacity of 12,000 seats and is a multi-purpose auditorium that can be configured for a variety of events, including theatre, opera, live music, dance, fashion and sports. Like many regional theatres, it is abuzz; it is alive with talent and fantastic creativity.

I want to demonstrate how important the theatres are to the local economy. Not long ago, in 2005, the theatres were closed for an 18-month, £14.5 million redevelopment, which saw the merging of the two venues. I reiterate that it is a fantastic complex. While the theatres were shut, the local economy of the area suffered, including the restaurants and even the local council because of the lack of parking revenues. Everybody suffered because the knock-on effect of the theatres on the local economy is so large. We must take that into account when we talk about regional theatre.

From 2006 to 2013, we had a fantastic regional artistic director in Laurie Sansom. We now have an even better one in James Dacre. To prove how important regional theatre is, in 2012-13, the Royal and Derngate presented 767 performances and welcomed 236,000 audience members, which is up a couple of thousand on the previous year. Of those, 89,000 were young people, which is up from 50,000 in the previous year. We delivered activities in schools, from drama and dance workshops to residencies by the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, which reached 10,000 young people. We work closely with the university of Northampton and hope to do more with it in the future. We employ 58 full-time staff and 99 part-time staff. We are part of the big society, with 127 volunteers providing 9,228 hours of voluntary support.

The income of the theatres is £7.6 million, so this is not an insignificant business. Of that income, 73% is earned income—something we want to improve—14% comes from the Arts Council and 11% comes from the local authorities, which are doing their bit. I want to thank Northampton borough council and Northamptonshire county council very much. Only 2% of our income comes from sponsorship, trusts and individual donations, which is something else that we want to improve.

We need to talk about balance and culture, but many fantastic things are going on in regional theatres up and down the country already. We should not knock them and should always be there to praise them. It has been said that there are not many decent actors from the midlands. Well, Alan Carr, who may not be an actor but is a very good comedian, and Matt Smith are just two of the people who come from Northampton. I am sure

that there are millions more people like them across the midlands. That is why we need strong regional theatres in which they can perform.

4.58 pm

Mr Ben Bradshaw (Exeter) (Lab): I congratulate my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Camberwell and Peckham (Ms Harman) on choosing this subject for an Opposition day and on the timing of the debate, given the important decisions that are about to be made in the comprehensive spending review.

For the Government, arts and culture must never be a fluffy, luxury add-on, but should be central to our industrial and economic policy and to our health and well-being policy, as well as being celebrated in their own right for their unique power to inspire and speak to what makes us human. They are sectors in which Britain excels. They are our biggest export after precision engineering and financial services. No other country in the world has a bigger creative sector as a proportion of its GDP.

During the Labour Government's years in office, the creative industries grew at more than twice the rate of our economy as a whole and they continued to grow through the global financial crisis. They were central to the industrial strategy that that Government published in response to the crisis. As we have heard from many Members, British culture benefits from our unique combination of a mixed economy of public and private support, respect for artistic freedom and innovation, and the natural creativity of the British people. I see such things daily in my constituency where, in spite of the tough climate, Exeter's Labour council has sought to maintain support for the arts because it recognises their vital contribution to the city's economy and quality of life.

With the help of the previous Government, Exeter invested big sums in the redevelopment of our Victorian municipal museum, and was criticised by some at the time for doing so. Last year, that museum won the prestigious national art fund prize for the best museum in the country, and we have seen a huge increase in visitor numbers and spend as a result. Just in the past few months, the museum's new global reputation helped attract national portrait and wildlife photography competition works on tour, as well as the wonderful British Museum touring exhibition, *Warriors of the Plains*. Exeter sustains a brilliant edgy theatre scene, an annual theatre festival, galleries, arts cinema, as well as food and cultural festivals to celebrate the city's diversity. All that cultural capital makes Exeter an attractive place to live and work, provides training, boosts jobs, and helps keep talented and creative people in the city, rather than losing them to Bristol or London.

I believe the Culture Secretary recognises and understands all of that, and if the reports that she fought hard to minimise the next onslaught from the comprehensive spending review are true, I congratulate her on standing up for her Department. That makes a welcome contrast to her predecessor, who almost seemed to take pride in the fact that he offered the Treasury one of the biggest cuts in the last spending review, and that he was one of the first Cabinet Ministers to settle in that review.

May I tell the Culture Secretary, through her Minister, that there are three more important battles that she must fight and win? The first is for the survival of her

Department—I hear what she said today but I tell her, through the Minister, that the philistines will come back. The Minister knows the arguments; we cannot have a Cabinet without a strong voice for arts and culture around the table. When colleagues, and others, come back and try to abolish his Department, I recommend he suggests that there are several other Departments it would make more sense to abolish before the Department for Culture, Media and Sport.

Secondly, the Culture Secretary must go to battle with the Education Secretary because of his apparent desire to destroy cultural and creative subjects in our education system. We are already seeing evidence of the impact that his changes to the curriculum and performance measurement systems in schools are having on arts subjects—a worrying and dramatic decline. Will the Culture Secretary please tell the Education Secretary that a student who leaves school at 16 with two arts qualifications is more likely to get a job by the time they are 19 than one who leaves with two science qualifications? Britain's fantastic creative economy is built on an education system that has allowed and encouraged creativity and the arts to flourish. If we lose that, we lose everything else we have talked about in this debate.

Finally, the Culture Secretary must get tough on copyright. We know what needs doing; we legislated for it collectively in the House three years ago but the Government have still not implemented those measures. Copyright theft loses the creative industries billions of pounds a year, and if it is not tackled it will have a lasting, damaging effect on our culture and economy. I do not believe that the Secretary of State or the Minister wish to leave such a legacy behind them.

5.3 pm

Damian Collins (Folkestone and Hythe) (Con): My direct personal experience of the creative industries was shaped during the 10 years I worked in the advertising industry. Anyone who has worked in that industry is well aware of the famous remark, attributed to Lord Leverhulme, that he knew that 50% of his advertising was working but did not know which 50%. Anyone who looks at the arts and creative industries across the country can see they bring huge economic benefits, and we have heard a lot about that today.

However, the creative industries do not exist just for the economic benefit they bring but because they have intrinsic worth in their own right. There is nothing wrong with celebrating art for art's sake. Art and creativity allow us to express ideas in a way that adds more meaning than words can simply allow. We will see that later this year when the Royal Opera House puts on the Wagner opera "*Parsifal*", dealing with complex issues of sacrifice and hope. At the first Folkestone triennial arts festival in my constituency, the poignant sculpture by Tracey Emin, "*Baby Things*", dealt with the difficult issues of teenage pregnancy and single parenthood in coastal towns around the country. One also thinks of Hogarth's masterpiece, "*A Rake's Progress*", which is about the dangers that can befall someone who spends recklessly, beyond their means and with no hope of supporting themselves.

The reason that my hon. Friend the Member for Daventry (Chris Heaton-Harris), like my hon. Friend the Member for Maldon (Mr Whittingdale), the Chairman

[Damian Collins]

of the Culture, Media and Sport Committee, could agree with much of the Opposition's motion was that the motion misses out the key component of the argument being advanced by Opposition Members. Labour Members, particularly the shadow Secretary of State, talk principally about money, insinuating that there should be more money for the arts and that cuts are damaging the arts, so people following this debate might be surprised to notice that money is not mentioned at all in the motion. The nearest we get to it is where it states that the Government should ensure that the creative industries have access to finance and funding. No one is saying that funding should be cut, but Labour is not saying how much funding. Should it be more? Should cuts be reversed? Should it be extra money? There is no mention of that at all. People following the debate will wonder, "What are they getting at?"

Listening to speeches today, I was reminded of some of the works on display at the fantastic, record-breaking Damien Hirst exhibition at Tate Modern last year during the Olympic games. I was reminded, however, not of the beautiful butterfly paintings or the shark in formaldehyde, but of the striking giant ashtray filled with a lifetime's supply of cigarette butts generated by a smoker—a large vat of ash and butts. Instead of the cigarette butts, however, it could be the spending commitments and promises made by Labour Members in defence of projects that, as they well know, they have absolutely no means of paying for or supporting.

I am not one to disagree in public with the Under-Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, my hon. Friend the Member for Wantage (Mr Vaizey), but he announced today his decision on the shortlisted cities for the city of culture programme, and I congratulate the final four that made it on to the shortlist. Despite the wonderful Folkestone triennial arts festival, the wonderful new Turner Contemporary gallery in Margate, Kent and the wonderful new Marlowe theatre in Canterbury, alas the east Kent bid did not make the final four. I can only imagine that he thought that east Kent was already such a towering beacon of arts and creativity in this country that it would have been unfair to give it yet another accolade. As many towns and cities have done, I am sure that we will use the experience of putting the bid together to bring together arts organisations and investors in the creative industries in our area to strengthen them all.

I congratulate the Opposition on bringing the arts and the creative industries together in the same motion, because they exist within a delicate web of business. Film studios and television production companies, which benefit from the production tax credits, also employ, directly and indirectly, other artists and creative people, be they set designers, costume makers, photographers or film makers. We see that in how the advertising industry works, not just in London but around the country, by drawing in that same wealth of talent. So, yes, support and funding for the Arts Council and from local authorities is important, but so too is having a vibrant industry of creative people working in businesses, producing and making things, generating jobs and income for this country and giving a massive boost to creativity and the arts.

5.8 pm

Tristram Hunt (Stoke-on-Trent Central) (Lab): It is a great pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Folkestone and Hythe (Damian Collins). His was a masterclass in how to get ahead in advertising.

It is even more of a pleasure to follow my right hon. Friend the Member for Exeter (Mr Bradshaw), who is no longer in his place, because last year his constituency won the museum of the year award. I must declare an interest in that I sat as a judge on the museum of the year award this year. We visited the great Narberth museum, the great Horniman museum, close to the constituency of my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Camberwell and Peckham (Ms Harman), and the William Morris gallery, in the north of London, the latter winning with a great display of excellence, scholarship and curatorial skill—and this was a museum that was threatened with closure in 2007 on the grounds that William Morris had nothing to offer the modern, multicultural, urban community of Walthamstow. How wrong they were!

Arts for all is the Labour tradition. As William Morris put it in 1877:

"I do not want art for a few, any more than education for a few, or freedom for a few."

What we achieved in government was for the many: we increased visits by children to museums and galleries by more than 2 million; provided a solid funding infrastructure for both national and regional arts organisations; supported creativity in education through creativity partnerships; and established the spectacularly successful UK city of culture, which my hon. Friends from Liverpool will no doubt explore in greater detail.

Ian Mearns: Rather than doom and gloom, we need to celebrate the previous Government's achievement in the arts. I remind the House that the Conservative party visited the Sage Gateshead, and that the Northern Sinfonia was last week granted the title "Royal" by Her Majesty the Queen.

Tristram Hunt: I thank my hon. Friend for his intervention. One had only to read Bagehot in *The Economist* last week to know of the great economic impact of the arts in the north-east, exactly on the template that Richard Florida has explained for urban economies.

Sadly, much of that achievement has been undermined by the current Government. Their assault on the British economy—stripping out demand and growth and fomenting unemployment—has hit the arts hard. They have cut the Arts Council budget by 35%, condemned philanthropists as tax dodgers and abolished the future jobs fund, which did so much to bring new talent into the arts. Meanwhile, their assault on local authority budgets has been passed down to the arts, libraries and galleries.

It is a question not just of funding, but of ethos. We have a Government who give a direct subsidy to local authorities to ensure that they can empty dustbins rather than keep galleries and libraries open—it is garbage not galleries under this Government. We have a Government who think libraries are only for luvvies and that those who are campaigning to save them are somehow misguided. What we also have is a dramatic and, frankly, Stalinist

purge of personnel in the arts community. Sadly, we know that the Prime Minister has a terrible problem with women. We have seen the purge of Liz Forgan from the Arts Council and Baroness Andrews from English Heritage. Many of us now worry about the future of Jenny Abramsky at the Heritage Lottery Fund, who has done a great job.

Ms Harman: Or the Secretary of State.

Tristram Hunt: Indeed. We are seeing a massive loss of talent and skills from our arts sector on the back of a purge led by the Prime Minister. The lists go into Downing street and the names are struck off. Meanwhile, the poor Minister with responsibility for the arts has to trawl around the clubs and back streets of London trying to find prospective trustees for the arts community. We know that the Conservatives' interest in the arts is a limited gene pool, and we will have deep problems in managing our arts and galleries in the future.

Another element to the philistinism of the Government has been the assault on creativity in the classroom. We in the Labour movement have always supported rigour and excellence in our classrooms, but we are a creative nation and that comes from a young age, which is why Singapore and South Korea are interested in our educational system, to foster exactly the kind of creativity that feeds into the creative arts. What we have seen from the Secretary of State for Education is an undermining of that creativity in our schools. Since the Government came to power, we have seen a fall in GCSE entries of more than 5% in design and technology, more than 6% in drama, 3.5% in music—I could go on. They have abolished the creative partnerships initiative and cut the ring-fenced school music funding by nearly 30%, and their disastrous higher education policy has seen applications for creative subjects fall by 16%.

It is not all doom and gloom, however. In north Staffordshire there is a ray of hope, and it exists in the great city republic of Stoke-on-Trent. I thank the Minister for his hard work in the past two years in trying to keep the Wedgwood museum open. We are also grateful for the support of the Victoria and Albert museum, as we try to find a way through to keep that world-class institution open. I also pay tribute to Stoke-on-Trent city council's great achievement in winning a silver medal in the Chelsea flower show. No doubt the Communities and Local Government Secretary would regard that as a grotesque waste of money, but it was a great display of the creativity and excellence that the soil of north Staffordshire has been producing since the age of Spode and Wedgwood in the 1760s and 1770s.

Let me end with an advert. Early next year, the Potteries museum and art gallery will be opening a wonderful new exhibition on the empire of ceramics: the story of the place of Stoke-on-Trent in the history of the British empire and how its ceramics went right around the world to Melbourne, Bridgetown, Bombay and Boston, shaping global culture from north Staffordshire. That is the kind of creativity that will happen under a Labour Government.

5.14 pm

Eric Ollerenshaw (Lancaster and Fleetwood) (Con): I am pleased to follow the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent Central (Tristram Hunt), but I must remind him that,

under Labour, education and creativity were too often seen as the functions of failing schools and failing children who found strictly academic subjects to be a challenge—[*Interruption.*] That was what went on in his constituency and others. Unfortunately, he missed the point of what was going on in this debate. There has been a lot of cross-party agreement, and, as the right hon. and learned Member for Camberwell and Peckham (Ms Harman) said, we all recognise the contribution of the arts.

I do not want to repeat what others have said, but I must point out that a good part of the arts and the creative industries is non-subsidised. In my own town of Lancaster, I can see the cross-cultural relationship between the subsidised and non-subsidised sectors. We have three theatres. The university theatre, the Nuffield, and the Dukes theatre are subsidised by the Arts Council, but the oldest theatre, the Grand, is still commercially run and receives no subsidy. Many of the artists who flow out from Lancaster and its great university do not ask for subsidies and do not get them. Instead, they make a contribution, and we underestimate that at our peril.

To be fair to Opposition Members, most of them have made positive contributions to the debate, but some have underestimated the success of the Secretary of State and the Minister in achieving the return that they have done, and in working behind the arts. I fully support the amendment, although I would also have mentioned the support that we have given to superfast broadband, which will add a great deal to the creative industries.

I want to make a couple of points about the Arts Council. I know that Ministers inherited the previous Government's funding of the Arts Council. I want to ask some questions as a northern Member of Parliament. The southern average per capita funding from the Arts Council is £7.93, the midlands average is £5.78, and the northern average is £4.66, yet the London average is £21.42. I accept that London has great theatres such as the National Theatre and the Royal Opera House, but the Arts Council must be questioned about the continuation of this historical funding. The Labour Government did nothing to challenge it during all their years in office.

The per capita funding for the north-west is £3.50 and the funding for Lancashire is £1.45, and we wonder why there are suggestions of a north-south divide. There seems to be an historical north-south divide in the arts as well. Lancaster has seen a decline in Arts Council funding from £674,000 to £462,000 in recent years. Most of us in Lancaster accept austerity, however, and acknowledge that we have to pay for the grand schemes that Labour attempted to pay for by borrowing in previous years.

The hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent Central defended the leadership of the Arts Council. I tabled a number of questions to the Minister, in which I asked how much lottery funding the Arts Council got. I was told that it received £152 million in 2010-11, but spent £123 million, leaving £29 million in its pocket. Where did that money go? In 2011-12, its lottery funding was increased to £182 million, of which it spent only £115 million. That left £67 million unspent while groups in my area such as Ludus Dance, the Dukes theatre and the Nuffield theatre were suffering cuts. I know that the Arts Council is an independent, arm's length body, but I have to ask the

[*Eric Ollerenshaw*]

Minister some serious questions about the Arts Council's management and the regional balance of its funding, given that, over those two years, it could afford to underspend by £96 million.

5.19 pm

Pete Wishart (Perth and North Perthshire) (SNP): It is a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Lancaster and Fleetwood (*Eric Ollerenshaw*). If he is looking for something to have a go at Labour about, there is only one thing he needs to refer to: the calamitous Licensing Act 2003, which introduced the disastrous three-in-a-bar rule. That came from the Labour Government.

I want to talk about the drift of the current Government. I was concerned about the response to the hon. Member for Bristol East (*Kerry McCarthy*) when she talked about the first major speech that the Secretary of State gave on culture and the arts, in which the right hon. Lady seemed to give the clear impression that arts spending and investment would be predicated on economic growth and would have to demonstrate an economic return for the money given. When we are talking about nations and regions, which the Labour motion mentions, thank goodness that arts management and cultural organisations are devolved in Scotland and that we will not be part of that, because we take a contrary view. We recognise the intrinsic value of the arts and heritage, and we reject the idea that the return on investment in the arts somehow needs to demonstrate economic growth. I am glad that we refuse to do that.

We have our own cultural body in Scotland: Creative Scotland. It has had a few difficulties, as I think the Minister will have noticed—we lost our first chief executive officer. We have had a healthy debate about what economic growth means when it comes to the arts, but we have resolved that. We now respect the sacrosanct value of art for art's sake, and we have been able to combine that with economic growth, because we have to. It is essential that we get the terrain right to grow our creative sector and ensure that our cultural businesses continue to grow, and it is the job of Government to provide that.

Other speakers have mentioned this, but here in the UK we have a fantastic creative sector, whether it is music, film, television or design, but the success of these creative industries does not exist in a vacuum. There are important but fragile pillars supporting them, and that comes down to support for intellectual property and copyright protection. If we are to continue to grow those sectors, we have to ensure that that is nurtured. We are the largest producers of content in Europe and the second largest in the world after the United States. By head of population, we probably create more content than any other nation in the world. One would think that practically all our effort as a Government would be about ensuring that those industries can continue to grow, but not a bit of it. Sometimes this Government actively work with other nations that have a contrary interest on these issues. Let me say to the Minister that we have to get behind the sector.

When those in the industry turn up to speak to the Minister, they always get a positive response—they always seem to enjoy the experience of seeing him—but sometimes they are almost casually dismissed. When

they present their case, it is almost as though they are engaged in some form of “lobbynamics”. When the Government ask for evidence, those in the industry produce it, even when, in the case of the Hargreaves report, some of the evidence supporting some of the Government's proposed copyright exceptions was something approaching bunkum.

Sometimes it seems that the artist—the creator—and those who are prepared to invest in that talent have become a massive inconvenience that must be grudgingly accommodated and managed. The idea of the inventor or creator as the owner of important intellectual property rights is sometimes barely recognised, while it seems that whatever rights they wish to assert must be collectivised for the greater good. The creative industries are often even told that they do not understand the business environment in which they are working. They ask for protection in intellectual property when there is evidence to inform the Government, but what they get is the Government pursuing further exceptions.

We need to take a look at who has the Government's ear when it comes to being informed on these issues: self-serving, self-appointed digital rights champions and those with extreme libertarian agendas when it comes to online issues. Practically everything that the Government do is predicated on support for, and a desire to please, massive, multi-billion dollar west coast United States companies, particularly those such as Google. I do not know why Google has such access to the Government, but it certainly does, and nearly everything the Government do to support intellectual property is predicated on their view of Google.

This is a huge industry. We have to do what we can to continue to grow it. We are brand leaders when it comes to creative sectors and some of the cultural industries that support them, but the industry is fragile. The Minister should do what he can to ensure that the measures in the Digital Economy Act 2010 are put through. That is the one thing that the Government can do. It is three years since the Act was passed, by a vast majority in this House. We have waited for it. All the legal issues are resolved and the internet service providers have been taken care of. The Minister should just get on and do it. That is the one thing that he could do to ensure that the sector is supported.

We need to ensure that we grow the sector. That could lead to re-industrialisation thanks to the imagination, talent and creativity of the people of our country. Let us do it. Let us make sure we continue to grow the sector and do what we can to support our industries.

5.24 pm

Caroline Nokes (Romsey and Southampton North) (Con): It is a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Perth and North Perthshire (*Pete Wishart*). I pay tribute to him for his comments about copyright, which is a very important issue. It is also good to see that the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent Central (*Tristram Hunt*) is still in the Chamber. I suggest that, when he is next touring museums and judging them on their qualities, he should visit SeaCity museum in Southampton; I strongly recommend it. It is just a shame that neither Southampton nor Portsmouth succeeded in their bids to become city of culture.

As an executive member for culture on Test Valley borough council, I spent 10 years championing arts and culture throughout the borough, and I vividly recall how important they were to its residents. Perhaps we in Hampshire are lucky to have—in the main—local authorities with a real commitment to the arts, and a thriving voluntary sector which ensures that a wide range of activities are available, not necessarily funded by the public purse, but brought together by the community. We have the brilliant Test Valley Arts foundation, which has a community outreach programme encouraging young artists, and in Romsey we have the Plaza theatre. There is a genuine appreciation of the arts in every form, and, dare I say, a love of them.

I do not want to portray the Plaza theatre as the domain of luvvies, for it is not. The Plaza theatre youth group has been one of the fastest-growing youth groups in the area, and is determined both to keep up with demand from young people and to put on an exceptionally high-quality programme of activities. The Plaza has launched an ambitious Plaza Future campaign, which is raising funds to increase the capacity of the 230-seat theatre, which already sells 10,000 tickets a year, to install a new revolving stage, and to bring the facilities of the 1930s art deco building up to the standards of the 21st century. The campaign is supported by Sir Ian McKellen and honorary patron Mark McGann. The Plaza demonstrates how a community theatre, operating with no subsidy from the local authority, can work successfully and provide a focal point for the arts in a relatively small town.

However, it is not just one theatre that provides the cultural heart of a community. In Hampshire, the arts have long been supported by town, borough and county councils. The Romsey arts festival, which is held every three years, is a great example of that, as is Rum's Eg, a community interest company. Rum's Eg has set up an arts and crafts gallery in Romsey, which promotes the crafts of Hampshire artists and others in the region. It has been supported not just by local authorities but by Waitrose's community fund, which has brought private money into the arts sector. It is a great example of mixed funding, of which we have heard much this afternoon and which enables the arts to have a viable future.

Of course, Hampshire is very lucky. Formerly on the county council and now working with the Minister as national adviser on public libraries is the wonderful Yinnon Ezra, who is also one of my constituents. Perhaps it is no surprise that we have such commitment to the arts and culture in our little part of Hampshire. The pioneering Discovery Centre programme has brought major changes to the library service, and has served as a flagship in showing how to attract new audiences to libraries and bring them up to date. If we are all in this together—and I believe that we are—we should note some fantastic examples of community-run libraries in Hampshire, such as the one in North Baddesley in my constituency.

However, it is not easy, at local or national Government level, to decide on priorities and make the difficult choices when it comes to how best to spend limited resources. I was saddened by the reaction of the main opposition party on Hampshire county council to the council's allocation of £250,000 to restore one of only two remaining first world war gunboats. HMS M33, a

Monitor gunboat, is berthed in dry dock in Portsmouth, and, in the centenary year, provides a real link for today's generation with the great war. Surely that is one example of exactly what a cultural budget should be spent on: projects that can link us to our history, particularly in the great naval city of Portsmouth.

Culture and the arts mean different things to different people, and what appeals to some does not necessarily float the boat of others, but there is real value in the arts, whatever form they may take. In the remaining minute available to me, I want to comment on the play, later film, "War Horse". In my constituency, it has led to a fantastic community project involving young people making their own clay model horses. The War Horse project will hopefully provide a memorial for the town's remount depot, which provided 120,000 horses for the great war. It is another example of a community coming together and using arts and culture to provide a lasting memorial for the future.

I could, in my remaining 20 seconds, talk about all the other fantastic examples in Hampshire. Let me, however, commend them to the Minister and, indeed, to the Secretary of State, who is from the same county as me, and who knows full well that a thriving arts and cultural sector requires mixed funding, community involvement, volunteers and seedcorn funding from the Government.

5.29 pm

Jonathan Reynolds (Stalybridge and Hyde) (Lab/Co-op): I would like to talk about the key ways in which our cultural institutions and the creative industries that feed off them are crucial to our economy, our standing abroad and the education of our children. I believe that nowhere provides a better example of the importance of these industries than Greater Manchester, in which my constituency lies.

The late Brian Redhead, editor of the *Manchester Evening News* and presenter on the "Today" programme, once said:

"Manchester...is the capital, in every sense, of the North of England, where the modern world was born. The people know their geography is without equal. Their history is their response to it".

Greater Manchester's history and its future are both inseparable from its culture. The same city that hosted the largest ever art exhibition anywhere in the world in 1857 is still the thriving cultural capital of northern England today—although I appreciate our neighbours to the west may dispute that at times.

More than 20,000 people are employed in cultural businesses in Greater Manchester, the city region containing the nation's largest concentration, outside London, of jobs in the media and creative industries. Art and creativity are woven into our economic fortunes as much as they form our city's culture.

The value of the arts, however, is more than just a crude measure of gross domestic product. Let me provide the example of the Cornerhouse, a contemporary arts centre and independent cinema in central Manchester, which is run by my constituent, Dave Moutrey. Alongside its contemporary visual art exhibitions and the 30 titles it screens each month by independent, international and avant-garde film and documentary makers, it is also a hub for budding creative talent. Through a

[Jonathan Reynolds]

programme known as “micro-commissions”, the Cornerhouse has helped 60 budding creatives to launch their artistic careers over the last three years, with small commissions for work that get them an audience and allow them to make their first step in the industry. It is institutions such as Cornerhouse that are important both economically and culturally—not just to our city, but to our country as a whole.

Andrew Gwynne: As part of a £25 million investment in the arts, the Cornerhouse is going to be located with the Library theatre on a new site at First street in the city centre. Is that not a real testament to Manchester’s investment in the arts and in particular to how much Manchester values the Cornerhouse?

Jonathan Reynolds: Absolutely. I am as delighted as my hon. Friend and, indeed, everyone in Greater Manchester is at this exciting development, which will ensure that this site, building and institution go from strength to strength.

Culture can attract people to an area—I know that, because as a shy, young 18-year-old, the crucial factor that led me to choose to study in Manchester over anywhere else was probably my deep love of the Stone Roses, and Manchester is also home, of course, to The Smiths, Oasis, Joy Division and New Order. I could go on, but I fear I would lose some of the more venerable Members of the House!

Kelvin Hopkins (Luton North) (Lab): Would not my hon. Friend like to mention the Hallé orchestra as well?

Jonathan Reynolds: Absolutely, but I do not have time to mention all of Manchester’s cultural attractions and would probably get into substantial difficulty if I tried to fit them in.

According to research by YouGov, young people from other countries are substantially more likely to be interested in work and business opportunities in the UK if they have been exposed to British art or cultural activities in some way. Our culture reaches investors and overseas markets that our diplomats and trade envoys cannot, boosting trade and encouraging foreign investment.

There is an even greater example of Greater Manchester’s cultural wealth, which until yesterday seemed to be at risk of closure. I refer, of course, to our beloved Museum of Science and Industry—MOSI—and I echo the previous remarks about it. It is a huge, universally recognised success. With between 600,000 and 800,000 visitors each year and more than 100,000 school visitors, its popularity reflects its quality. Anyone who has never been there is losing out. It is a museum for anyone who is interested in our nation’s history—anyone fascinated by stories of the extraordinary people whose remarkable feats built the Britain we know today and forged a revolution that would shape the world. It is a place of learning, inspiration and pride in our city’s—and our nation’s—industrial revolutionary past.

My favourite section of the museum, the Cottonopolis exhibition, tells the story of the cotton industry. It contains many original pieces of equipment from the

mills, but MOSI is not just about the past, as it is also about inspiration for the future. It inspires people to remember a time of invention and technological breakthrough and the tremendous social change that followed it—and, indeed, our response to it. Every recess, I take my daughter to MOSI, and I can see a spark of inspiration in her eyes. She loves it, and so do I, and the idea of closing it down is simply unconscionable. The soul of our city is wrapped up in that museum, so it is no surprise that 40,000 people have already signed a petition organised by the *Manchester Evening News* to save it from closure. I absolutely welcome what the Minister said yesterday, but for me there is still some uncertainty about those remarks. Will he specifically address the situation of the northern museums and assure us all that they are safe from closure?

Our cultural institutions are invaluable educational resources and powerful economic multipliers. We must not overlook the value of museums like MOSI in the difference they make to the education of our children and the inspiration they give to greatness. We must protect the cultural hubs in our regions—the museums, the galleries, the music venues—because they are the breeding grounds of the cultural icons who become global adverts for our country, its economy and the opportunities within it. They spark the imagination of our children, foster the talents of our creative people and capture the attention of the whole world. We must not allow those opportunities to wither on the vine.

5.34 pm

Mike Weatherley (Hove) (Con): First, I draw the attention of Members to my declared interests.

The creative industries are our lifeblood. This is the third largest sector after manufacturing and financial services, but manufacturing is in decline, as we know, and financial services could move elsewhere at the drop of a hat. We are magnificent at the creative industries. They employ 1.5 million people and add £36 billion to the UK economy, and 10% of UK exports derive from the creative industries, but they are under threat from weak intellectual copyrights.

Let me explain. A Member of the other place once said to me he considers it to be the patriotic duty of every person who creates music to put it on the internet for free within two weeks. At the Vilnius UN Internet Governance Forum, which the Pirate party attended, many people said, “The internet is too complicated. Let’s just give everything away for free.” We must not do that; we must resist all attempts to do that. Instead, we must strengthen intellectual copyrights.

There are three steps to doing that. The first is the carrot. We need to change the business models. Kids will pay if they have the opportunity to do so, but if we make it too difficult, they will go elsewhere, to the free sites. The second step is education. Members may be aware of my competition, Rock the House. Over 300 constituencies are now involved in it, and the finals are next week. It educates MPs and the public at large. They see young bands putting forward their music, and they understand that those contributions need protecting. The Intellectual Property Office has a programme for extending education about intellectual property around the country, but I urge the Government to beef it up to give it more importance and make it more dynamic.

Thirdly, if the carrot and education fail, we must resort to the stick. I ask the Government to push forward with the proposals in the Digital Economy Act 2010. No matter how hastily it was pushed through under the last Government, we should still be looking to implement its good parts.

There are things we can do in respect of credit cards, too. One publishing company has all its product copied in an eastern European country, and people can pay for it through a monthly £10 subscription via a credit card, but the company does not see a penny of it. The credit card companies must be held accountable. Search engines must also be held accountable, and if internet service providers have been told they should block a certain site and they do not do so, they must be accountable, too. The stick must be a final resort, but it must be used if necessary.

I ask the Government to look at the practicality of the copyright extension measures. I was chatting to someone at Universal Music who said that the rules are impractical given the way that some of them are being implemented. I also ask them to consider secondary ticketing rules, which have been admirably championed by the hon. Member for Washington and Sunderland West (Mrs Hodgson), and urge swifter progress with the Digital Economy Act proposals.

However, having said all that, I do think the Government are basically on the right track and have made good progress on the creative sector. I mentioned live music in licensed premises earlier, and how the maximum attendance figures are being increased from 100 to 200 and up to 500. That is good; it will support pubs in our communities and live music in the creative sector. We are on the right track, therefore, so I will support the amendment.

5.39 pm

Tom Greatrex (Rutherglen and Hamilton West) (Lab/Co-op): I am sure the Minister is aware that today is the first day of the Edinburgh international film festival, which is just one of a number of film festivals around the UK. The Edinburgh festival will this year have 146 films from 53 countries. That serves to demonstrate the interest there is in film across the UK. Film festivals are important, and they drive that interest in film in the UK.

I want to speak briefly about a different film festival in Scotland—the Glasgow film festival. It is not a rival to the Edinburgh film festival, which is largely industry-driven, as Glasgow's is a strongly, and highly successful, audience-led festival which has taken place over the past 10 years—I believe next year's will be the 10th. Fortunately for me, the festival has coincided exactly with the February recess in the past couple of years, which has meant that I have been able to enjoy a number of its films.

Mr Tom Clarke (Coatbridge, Chryston and Bellshill) (Lab): I welcome what my hon. Friend is saying. I know that he is a keen supporter of the Glasgow film theatre, as am I, because I was involved when it was opened and when I was assistant director of the Scottish Film Council. Does he feel that the renaissance of the British and Scottish film industry owes a great deal to the former Chancellor and Prime Minister, my right hon.

Friend the Member for Kirkcaldy and Cowdenbeath (Mr Brown), who rightly judged the need for tax concessions?

Tom Greatrex: Of course, my right hon. Friend is too modest to mention his own role in that as a distinguished former film Minister during that period. I hope to get time to make a point about the enduring nature of that support and the importance of its continuing into the future.

First, I wish to make a couple more remarks about the Glasgow film festival. My hon. Friend the Member for Paisley and Renfrewshire North (Jim Sheridan) talked about the contribution of film making to the city of Glasgow. At last year's festival, I saw "Cloud Atlas" and it was interesting to see streets just three or four blocks away from where I was sitting being represented as 1970s San Francisco. That demonstrates the ability and technical expertise in the film industry. The Drovers Inn, on the A84, where I have spent many a Hogmanay, was also in that film. It was not the greatest of films, but it was interesting to see. Those things are an indicator of the ability of Glasgow as a city, and as a city region in the west of Scotland, to drive that interest and investment in film, and of the greater contribution that film development makes to the wider economy. A number of people are in the city centre when some of these films are being made, just to see that happening. People came in during the early hours of the morning, when the streets were being shut off and the American taxis were around George square. It was amazing, and it really caught the interest and imagination of people.

The Glasgow film festival is a regional one and it has applied for lottery funding, to which the Government amendment refers. I place on the record that that support is very valued and I know it has been heavily oversubscribed. I am sure that the announcements are due soon and I hope that Glasgow will be successful. The film festival brings in very many people. It brings in not only people from in and around Glasgow, such as myself, but people from outwith Glasgow, from more widely in the UK and from overseas. The boost that that brings to the wider economy in terms of tourism and the hospitality industry is tangible and recognised, and it has helped to generate some sponsorship to go alongside the funding that the festival needs. It does need funding to be able to continue to bring that festival to life each year. I pay huge tribute to Jaki McDougall, Allison Gardner, Allan Hunter, Seonaid Daly and all the others who have been involved in the film festival over the past few years and have built it up to be the fastest-growing film festival in the whole UK. It certainly does deserve the support of lottery funding and the British Film Institute because of its approach.

For those reasons, I wanted to touch on the BFI-commissioned report by Oxford Economics indicating the very real contribution that film brings to the wider economy. This debate is about the economic contribution, and a huge amount comes to the UK through the film industry. We are talking about: 117,000 jobs; British film's 15% share of the worldwide box office; the £1.7 billion in royalties in 2011 from British films shown overseas; and £2.1 billion in visitor spend in the UK from film tourism. So the industry has made a huge contribution, and it has been successful largely because of policies that developed over time—policies from the previous

[Tom Greatrex]

Government that have so far been continued. My right hon. Friend the Member for Coatbridge, Chryston and Bellshill (Mr Clarke) made that point very well. That has happened because of that support, which must continue. The wider economic and cultural benefits are clear to see. I want to see many more representations of Glasgow as San Francisco and actors as zombies, to repeat the clarification that my hon. Friend the Member for Paisley and Renfrewshire North (Jim Sheridan) made earlier, so that I do not offend any of my constituents. Those benefits can come about only with sustained and continued support for the film sector. It is vital. It brings so much culturally and economically, and many are concerned that in the drive to reduce support for arts, the film industry will suffer, although it provides a great deal that we should all be hugely proud of.

5.45 pm

Steve Rotheram (Liverpool, Walton) (Lab): Thank you, Mr Speaker, for your indulgence. I had to pop out of the Chamber at the beginning of the debate for a long-standing parliamentary engagement.

Given the time constraints, I shall make three quick points about why Liverpool has kept its clear commitment to the cultural sector, despite the unacceptable budgetary pressures foisted on it by this coalition Government. First—I speak from the unique perspective of having been the Lord Mayor of Liverpool during our year as the European capital of culture—it is evident that the creative industries and tourism continue to drive economic well-being at a time when the ability of public bodies to spend money on the sector has, unfortunately, been significantly reduced.

Secondly, during 2008 I saw at first hand arts and culture used as a catalyst for the creation of tangible benefits across the city, which included its physical transformation, infrastructural improvement and economic regeneration. In so doing, the creative industries brought about a civic pride and a renewed collective confidence that engaged people and inspired them to participate in imaginative activities. I do not mind admitting that I had never truly appreciated Gustav Klimt, for instance, until an exhibition of his works at the Tate gallery in Liverpool opened my eyes. I, like many hundreds of thousands of people, had their appetites whetted and to this day we are seeing record numbers of visitors in our museums and galleries across the city. I think we are the only city in the UK to build a brand-new museum in the past 80-odd years, with the development of the purpose-built museum of Liverpool on the world-famous banks of our waterfront. The net result was that culture in its widest sense helped draw disparate sections and generations of our community together and provided a focus for creativity, education and health and well-being.

But the progress that we have made is in severe danger, and this is my third point. The arts in the regions are under threat and they will remain in a critical condition until the Government outline a clear strategic vision of how they intend to support the arts and creative sector across the whole country. Unfortunately, there remains uncertainty about whether the arts in the regions will be able to sustain themselves and in some cases even survive, let alone expand their visitor offer. This is not simply an arts question that can be dismissed

by the Minister and nonchalantly passed over to the Arts Council to deal with. I agree with arts for all, but this is a fundamental economic question about the role of individual cities and organisations within those cities, that both provide jobs and attract inward investment to places outside the capital.

We have seen today that it is only the Labour party that is making the economic, business, educational and council-led argument for the sector. The acute danger for Liverpool and the whole of England, which the Government must begin to address, is that the scenario in which large swathes of city centres could become devoid of theatres, galleries and other cultural institutions is becoming ever more real. The Government must establish and promote a clear vision for the role of culture and creativity in UK cities and recognise that London is the world leader in the field—we do not argue with that—and its ability to generate money through philanthropic contributions is far greater than cities such as Liverpool. In fact, philanthropy remains one of the killer ingredients in the funding cocktail for regional arts organisations. According to the latest arts and business private investment in culture survey, which was released last month, more than 90% of all private giving goes to arts organisations in London. By anyone's standards, that is phenomenally disproportionate. It is time for leadership for the regions, and it is time for the three Ministers, all representing seats in the south-east, to think again about the regional implications of their cuts before large parts of the cultural sector in cities such as Liverpool are lost forever.

5.50 pm

Lyn Brown (West Ham) (Lab): I will not talk about the wider economic benefit of regeneration by the use of culture, which I hope will be demonstrated in my constituency and which is admirably demonstrated by many other places around the country, particularly in Gateshead. I am particularly impressed by how it has used cultural services to regenerate an area. Instead, I want to focus my remarks on libraries. Any debate about the arts and creative industries worth its name must include a focus on libraries, contributing as they do so fundamentally to social mobility, literacy and skills development, creative and cultural activity, building economic capacity and helping to safeguard intellectual property. Sitting at the heart of our communities, public libraries are for everyone. They enrich lives and support the wider arts and creative industries, and our economic well-being.

I want to give three examples of why I believe that libraries are so important and why I am absolutely passionate about them. First, they are a gateway for personal development. They fuel aspiration and creativity and they contribute to economic capacity. Secondly, they bring people together in a way that other institutions simply cannot do. They are a safe space where people can congregate. They build the fabric of our communities. They are a real communal space that is free for all. Thirdly, they are a means to reduce social exclusion, which in itself carries an economic benefit for our communities.

Mr Steve Reed (Croydon North) (Lab): My hon. Friend makes a powerful defence of public libraries. Does she share my concerns about Croydon council,

which is not only proposing to privatise its libraries, but to hand them over to the bidder that offered the worst value for money of the three bids that it received?

Lyn Brown: I am sad to hear that about Croydon libraries. I visited Croydon libraries in my role as a Local Government Association libraries spokesperson and I thought that they were rather good. That they are being privatised is distressing, especially given that the previous Tory Government did not go that far with its compulsory competitive tendering. It is a real shame that Croydon feels that that is where it needs go.

Libraries make such a contribution to our economy and society that spending on them should be seen as an investment. They host job clubs and Open university access. They provide computer training and internet access for families and micro-businesses that would otherwise be excluded. They provide literacy and numeracy classes that help combat disadvantage and allow people to thrive. All of that is at the grassroots level, at the heart of our very community.

Yet libraries are under more stress than ever before. On top of library closures, surveys uncover reduced hours, higher charges and less outreach to schools. School holiday activities are being cut and volunteers are replacing trained, skilled library staff, as if a librarian is like someone at a checkout counter at Asda or Morrisons. Being a librarian is so much more than just giving out a book.

But my main focus today is to talk to the Minister about how libraries might be developed and safeguarded in the future, in the context of a strategy for the arts and creativity. Libraries absolutely deserve leadership, attention and support, and I am concerned that they are not getting them.

Ministers will recall breaking up the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council. I must say that I did not mourn the passing of that organisation, but I am disappointed that the Government reduced the libraries budget that was transferred to Arts Council England and think that they missed a trick. I believe that they should have followed the approach widely advocated in the sector at the time by establishing a development agency. It would have been quite realistic to do that within the available financial envelope and would have made a better and more effective use of the moneys that previously went to the MLAC.

Indeed, it has been argued that such a development agency could provide the leadership that would enable local library services to make the necessary savings or to demonstrate their contribution to the wider social good in a way that allowed councils to understand their economic and social value. I want to see a development agency created because I think that we need confident leadership of our libraries in order to secure future library evolution, the development of our libraries and the success of a modern library service in England.

I think that there are indications that the Minister shares my analysis of the problem. In a recent speech he talked about the Government appointing a specialist adviser on libraries to work with local authorities and Arts Council England to consider different approaches to library service provision and new ways of thinking about sustainability. I believe that a development agency would have delivered on that for him. Forgive me for saying it, but appointing a recently retired head of

service on a part-time basis, however good he might be, will hardly address the leadership vacuum that continues to bedevil the public libraries sector. Furthermore, I understand that Arts Council England is about to be restructured, with the result that it will have not a single post focused solely on libraries. That is massive disappointment and can lead only to the dilution of libraries.

5.56 pm

Barbara Keeley (Worsley and Eccles South) (Lab): Arts and culture enrich everyone's lives and, importantly, enable our children to learn and develop their potential, and they bring communities together. We heard about an excellent example in the speech made by my hon. Friend the Member for Stalybridge and Hyde (Jonathan Reynolds), who talked about how the history of Greater Manchester is embedded in its arts and music venues, although I was slightly surprised that he did not include the Hacienda.

One of the best examples of all those benefits is the Museum of Science and Industry in Manchester, which was mentioned earlier. The museum, like others in the Science Museum Group, has been under threat of closure due to a proposed 10% cut in the group's funding. The threat has been countered by a great campaign run by the *Manchester Evening News*. As my hon. Friend the Member for Stalybridge and Hyde said, tens of thousands of local people came out to support the museum.

What I want to discuss is the impact on Greater Manchester's communities if we lost the Museum of Science and Industry. Free access to museums, introduced when Labour was in government, had a dramatic effect on visitor numbers at the museum. In fact, the annual visitor total grew from 289,000 in 2000-01 to 833,000 in 2011-12. Visitor numbers could grow further, because refurbishments will mean that the museum could support 1 million visitors annually, making it not just an important regional museum, but a national museum, which is what it is.

It is not just about numbers. As we heard earlier, those of us who visit museums with young family members—I have visited them with family members under five—know that they get a great deal out of a visit, both in fun and in learning. Of over 800,000 people who visit the museum annually, 100,000 are children, and 22,000 children visit its workshops. The workshop events and resources are provided up to key stage 4 in history and science, but there are also science-themed workshops for the under-fives to enjoy. The museum is a major centre for the Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics Network—STEMNET. Some 70% of Greater Manchester's schools have benefited from expertise in STEMNET subjects, and that is an important link for our schools. The museum also established the Manchester science festival to inspire and engage people in science. Indeed, in 2011 the festival reached 113,000 people, with 200 events in 50 venues. Supporters of the museum have been clear about the impact of closure. Dame Nancy Rothwell, president of the university of Manchester and one of Britain's most esteemed scientists, said that the museum had an international reputation and, importantly, that it

"can also help inspire young people...to become enthused by science" and engineering.

Andrew Gwynne: My hon. Friend is absolutely right about the museum's value to young people across Greater Manchester in respect of how we proceed with the area's economic development. Greater Manchester is the home of the world's first passenger railway station—the Liverpool and Manchester railway opened in 1830 and is now the base of the museum—and has seen the development of graphene and future technological advances. The museum is at the heart of that and education is key to its success.

Barbara Keeley: Absolutely. My hon. Friend echoes the words of Dame Nancy Rothwell. She thinks the museum is responsible for making young people consider careers in science and engineering. Her views are echoed by Tim O'Brien, the astrophysicist from Jodrell Bank observatory, who said:

"Museums like Mosi play a vital role in celebrating modern day science as well as our industrial heritage...I have no doubt at all that these places make future scientists and engineers and are vital to our future productivity."

The museum is free, so everyone can visit. The growth in visitor numbers that I mentioned shows that we must maintain that. Part of the threat coming from the 10% cut has been a discussion about introducing some form of charging. Two-thirds of the 800,000 visitors to the museum came in family groups. Many of the parents supporting the campaign to save the Museum of Science and Industry have made it clear that turning up as a family to the museum if it charged, as it used to, would make for a very expensive day out.

Given MOSI's importance to families and the future students of science and engineering in our region, it is vital for me to seek reassurance that it is not under threat of closure. I am sure that my hon. Friend the Member for Manchester Central (Lucy Powell) would say the same if she were here; I am very much putting forward points that she would have made in this debate had she had the opportunity.

I understand that the Minister has told the BBC that the Science Museum Group is not to receive 10% cuts. Will he confirm that in this House? It is all right to make those points to the BBC, but they should be made here. If there are announcements about the funding of important museums such as the Museum of Science and Industry, we should, frankly, hear about them first in this House—that, of course, is a point that we Opposition Members are always making.

We have also heard in this debate that the Science Museum Group has a large and growing structural deficit. Will the Minister also address not just the immediate threat of the 10% cuts but how MOSI and other museums in the group can maintain their buildings and connections? The Museum of Science and Industry is truly part of the fabric of the city that was the birthplace of the industrial revolution. We have to maintain and develop it.

6.2 pm

Alex Cunningham (Stockton North) (Lab): The people of north-east England hold a tremendous passion for the arts. Since the late 1990s, the region has developed a budding significance in the creative industries, spurred by finances made available under the last Labour Government, as well as from the EU and the national lottery.

The placing of the now-iconic "Angel of the North" welcomed in a new era for the region.

Ian Mearns: Does my hon. Friend recognise that we owe a debt of gratitude to the people of Hartlepool, where the "Angel of the North" was made? Last weekend marked the sculpture's 15th birthday.

Alex Cunningham: My hon. Friend is also an angel; I congratulate him and my hon. Friend the Member for Hartlepool (Mr Wright)—who personally constructed the angel, if we are to believe some of the stories that I have been hearing.

During the decade that followed the erection of the "Angel of the North", some £350 million was invested in new and established arts venues, which saw the beginning of an under-recognised British success story. It has provided a major boost to the regional economy and resulted in the creation of not hundreds but thousands of jobs across the culture and tourism sectors. The result of that clever combination of investment and foresight is that the north-east, often one of Britain's poorest and most deprived areas by many other measures, has established some of the finest creative arts infrastructure in the entire country.

We can boast of not only international attractions such as the Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art and the Sage Gateshead concert hall, both in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Gateshead (Ian Mearns), but national and regional establishments such as the ARC in Stockton and the Middlesbrough Institute of Modern Art.

Kelvin Hopkins: I am not from the north-east myself, but it strikes me that this is being driven by many visionary Labour councillors in the area.

Alex Cunningham: That is very much the case, none more so than in the work of the leader of Gateshead metropolitan borough council.

A huge variety of other events and festivals grace our region every year, such as the Stockton international riverside festival, and we celebrate some of the largest-scale street festivals in the world. The Billingham international folklore festival, which also takes place in my constituency, will mark its 50th anniversary in 2014.

It is a colossal failure that the Government do not grasp the importance of the sector to the regions. They are missing an opportunity to integrate cultural programmes into the agendas of multiple Departments to safeguard the legacy that previous investment has produced. Culture and the arts not only enhance our lives and promote the ability to achieve our potential; they also support a creative sector that was forecast to grow by 31% by 2020. The additional cuts to the DCMS budget will therefore come at a huge cost, threatening to kill growth stone dead and denying many the opportunity to access the artistic and cultural experiences that shape individuals and help define communities.

The basis for the severity of the cuts is framed in a simple economic argument—that spending on the arts is difficult to justify—yet last week the Arts Council published independent economic analysis by the Centre for Economics and Business Research that found that the sector currently makes up 0.4% of GDP compared with just 0.1% of investment. For every pound of subsidy

provided to the arts and culture industry, the sector returned a £7 contribution to GDP. That is a higher return than that from the health and wholesale and retail industries, and it blows the economic viability argument out of the water.

Stockton, at the heart of my constituency, is renowned for delivering a host of arts and culture events with great success. Audiences at events such as the riverside festival and the Stockton Weekender continue to grow year on year. The riverside festival—which this year features “Prometheus Awakes”, a model that is almost as high as this Chamber, and various other performances by local, national and international participants—was central to bringing the Cultural Olympiad to the north-east. Some 80,000 people flocked to the town to experience the events.

It is important, however, to see beyond the obvious economic benefits. The impact of the sector can be seen in many ways, not least in the increased involvement in the arts. ARC arts centre in my constituency is a case in point. Since opening 13 years ago, ARC has developed into a flagship, multi-purpose cultural venue, hosting hundreds of events a year, from music and dance to theatre, film and comedy. As a direct result, engagement has increased substantially. ARC hosted 230 professional performances, as well as 80 community performances, last year alone and this attracted more than 100,000 visitors. It is of real benefit to our economy.

Similarly, more than 100 artists are employed to provide 1,000 creative learning opportunities, enjoyed by more than 14,000 people. That has provided professional development and training opportunities for more than 200 artists and practitioners. With evidence showing that emerging partnering between creative industries and schools has the potential to improve the productivity and learning and earning potential of young people, our future would be markedly bleaker without proper access to the arts.

Just across the River Tees, at the Middlesbrough Institute of Modern Art, 18,000 people took part in formal and informal programmes last year, and it delivered a series of creative workshops in conjunction with Teesside university occupational therapy students for dementia patients and their carers. That highlights perfectly the level of innovation that the creative industries can generate, ensuring significant benefits and stronger communities.

To hammer home the case for Stockton and everywhere else, and in case naysayers have any doubt, recent figures suggest that ARC now generates about £4.5 million annually for Stockton’s local economy. If that does not signify value added—both socially and culturally, as well as economically—I do not know what does.

The arts are a valuable commodity—this much is true. Their real value, however, lies in the wealth of other benefits that they bring. Support for our creative industries is key to encouraging and nurturing the talents and appreciation that were unearthed only relatively recently. Slashing funding to the Arts Council and local government while sidelining creative education is not the way to do that.

6.9 pm

Luciana Berger (Liverpool, Wavertree) (Lab/Co-op): I am delighted to participate in the debate. I am a passionate supporter of our arts and creative industries,

not just because I love them, but because the sector employs 1.5 million throughout the country and is worth £36 billion a year. National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts research estimates that the sector could generate up to 9.7% of UK gross value added. Many hon. Members have made vibrant contributions in the past couple of hours—we have heard inspiring stories of great British imagination, ingenuity, creativity and design.

The social contribution that our regional arts and creative industries make is tremendous. They bring communities together, enable us to express our identity, assist people with health and well-being, and help people to fulfil their potential in so many ways. Nowhere do our arts and creative industries make more of an impact than in Liverpool, where we have such a rich, vibrant and dynamic cultural hub, which has deep historical roots. Liverpool was awarded capital of culture in 2008, which my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Walton (Steve Rotheram) mentioned, and has gone from strength to strength.

Liverpool city council has a portfolio of 47 cultural organisations, which between them receive an annual core grant. They include the big seven Liverpool Arts Regeneration Consortium organisations: Bluecoat; the Foundation for Art and Creative Technology; the Liverpool biennial, which is the second largest visual arts festival in Europe; the Liverpool Everyman and Playhouse theatres; the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, which is the oldest in the country; and Tate Liverpool. In 2011-12, they delivered 1,278 performances, exhibitions and events, sold half a million tickets, supported more than 1,000 people in full-time jobs in the Liverpool city region and gave opportunities to 881 volunteers. As a group, they are involved in specific programmes to educate young people within the city region, and to support the vulnerable, including work with veterans. They promote health and well-being, and improve and support aspiration.

The other 40 organisations in the hub include many of our annual festivals—I am looking forward to celebrating and enjoying Africa Oyé this weekend. Not a weekend goes by in Liverpool when we do not have a festival or something to celebrate and enjoy. We have had the river festival and music on the waterfront. We had the Liverpool Calling event just last weekend. Those events bring people together, provide education and make people feel good. They are crucial when many people up and down the country are having a difficult time.

Our local music industry is vibrant. The Liverpool Sound City event brought 40,000 people together. More than 360 artists performed on 25 different stages. Liverpool is perhaps the only city that has its own music awards, which we had back in November. We also have a vibrant film sector. Hon. Members might have seen the most recent “Fast and Furious” film, much of which was filmed in Liverpool. Many BBC dramas are filmed there—most recently, “Good Cop”.

In my constituency, our video games sector includes the fantastic Sony, which is developing many games that people play daily. I should also mention the dance sector and the Merseyside dance institute. Many organisations—I cannot do them all justice—do so much fantastic work, but they do so despite the onslaught from central Government. Liverpool has had a cut of £1,250 per person. As my right hon. and learned Friend

[Luciana Berger]

the Member for Camberwell and Peckham (Ms Harman) said in her opening speech, that fantastic work is testimony to the leadership of Joe Anderson, our mayor, and the cabinet lead, Wendy Simon, who have done their best to maintain the support those organisations receive. As my right hon. and learned Friend said, the sector is the rocket fuel of our economy. I implore the Government to consider seriously what more they can do to support the sector, which is so important for us locally within Liverpool and throughout the country.

The Secretary of State talked a lot about philanthropy. I welcome the generosity of so many people, but 70% of that philanthropy is in London. I therefore urge the Government again to consider seriously what more they can do to support our arts, culture and creative industries in the regions.

Barbara Keeley: The Secretary of State made a point about the national lottery, which supports projects in the Westminster constituency some 300 times more than it supports projects in my constituency. I am sure the situation is the same for her constituency. That is a key factor.

Luciana Berger: I thank my hon. Friend for that contribution. That is the reason for the debate that we are having. Although there have been fantastic contributions from Members from Greater London, we need to look beyond London and the south-east and think about how we can support creative industries across the UK.

I have one specific question that I hope the Minister will respond to at the end of the debate. He will know that the International Festival for Business is coming to Liverpool next year. That is a national event that is supported personally by the Prime Minister and is receiving a lot of financial resources from the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills. Will the Minister consider and share with the House what support he can extend to that event on the cultural side? There is concern that although Liverpool is well equipped to provide a fantastic cultural offer to support the event, which will do a lot to attract inward investment to the country, that offer will not be possible without the support of the DCMS.

6.15 pm

Mr Iain Wright (Hartlepool) (Lab): I will focus on the industry part of the creative industries. The creative industries should be a key part of any industrial strategy. They employ 1.5 million people in this country, generate more than £36 billion for the UK and account for a 10th of all UK exports. I will go through the different sectors.

The British film industry directly employs 44,000 people and generates £2.1 billion of foreign sales every year. Like other hon. Members, I welcome the Government's continuation of Labour's film tax relief, which provides long-term certainty to investors and allows the filming of international blockbusters to take place in Britain. I particularly welcome the fact that "Star Wars: Episode VII" will be shot in the UK. I hope that it will be more like "The Empire Strikes Back" than "The Phantom Menace".

The UK music industry is also an astonishing international success story. My hon. Friend the Member for Stalybridge and Hyde (Jonathan Reynolds) stole my thunder by mentioning the Stone Roses, who I went to see at Glasgow Green on Saturday night, as well as Joy Division and New Order. Given that I follow my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Wavertree (Luciana Berger), perhaps I should mention that yesterday was Sir Paul McCartney's 71st birthday. Why he is not yet Lord McCartney of Penny Lane baffles me.

Our strength in music is not confined to the Beatles or even to the Stone Roses and New Order. British artists had 13.3% of global album sales last year, which is the highest on record. British music accounted for one in seven of all artist album sales in 2012, which is again the highest share ever recorded. UK artists have claimed the spot of the world's No. 1 selling album for five of the last six years. Last year, five of the top 10 global sellers were by British artists. British music leads the world.

Paul Farrelly: Does my hon. Friend agree that our creative industries, especially music and film, are under severe threat from piracy? On Google, the top sites for music downloads are pirate sites. Does he agree that we must encourage Google to make greater efforts and be more co-operative in the fight against piracy?

Mr Wright: My hon. Friend makes a fair point. If I have time, the central part of what I want to say is that a strong and stable intellectual property regime, with protection for copyright, is vital.

Our publishing industry is the fifth largest on Earth. More than two-fifths of the revenue from the publishing sector is generated from export sales, which is more than in any other nation. The video games industry is one of the fastest growing parts of the world economy and Britain is seen as the pioneer in games design and innovation.

Mr Steve Reed: My hon. Friend is making a great case for the strength of the cultural and creative industries in the UK, and the music industry in particular. Will he join me in congratulating the BRIT school, which is located in the constituency that I have the pleasure to represent, for the great contribution that it has made to the music industry, not least through artists such as Amy Winehouse and Adele?

Mr Wright: My hon. Friend makes an important point. One of the themes that I hope to get to in my contribution is that there must be co-ordination in Government policy to support our leading industrial sectors.

The creative industries are complementary to our manufacturing sector. In many ways, modern British manufacturing has a leading edge because we emphasise the importance of design and innovation. Jaguar Land Rover is able to sell its cars around the world because the UK company is designing beautiful well made and engineered cars. Our publishing industry both reflects and fuels our country's strong scientific research and university base. A vibrant film and TV industry facilitates engineering and production skills and jobs. The emergence of 3D printing will unleash creativity on an unprecedented scale, emphasising even more the importance of great design and innovation combined with bespoke manufacture.

I went to see MakieLab, a firm in Shoreditch that manufactures personalised dolls using 3D printing. The company's computer programmers and designers have fine arts degrees. In 21st-century global manufacturing, those countries able to combine design and creativity with manufacturing and engineering will have the competitive edge. Britain is well placed to take advantage of that combination as we traditionally enjoy skills in those fields, but it needs a proper industrial strategy, backed by a Government who are committed to growth in our leading sectors such as the creative industries.

Just as business policies should not merely reside in the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, so cultural industries cannot be the sole preserve of the Department for Culture, Media and Sport. Co-ordination across Government, with an emphasis on helping our leading sectors such as the creative industries, should be the Government's priority although I see precious little evidence of that. The Government's education reforms are not helping creativity with their emphasis on learning by rote, and changes to things such as the design and technology curriculum work contrary to the country's economic strengths and the skills needed to compete in the modern, technologically literate age.

The Government's policy on intellectual property is misguided, and I am pleased it is referenced explicitly in today's Opposition motion. Britain has always succeeded best when it has embraced innovation and originality, from the industrial revolution to the internet. We have never rested on being copycats, but that originality and innovation requires a stable and strong IP regime. An incoherent or ad hoc framework for intellectual property, made on the hoof, prevents investment and jobs from coming to these shores, undermines competitiveness and inhibits innovation. Sadly, we have exactly that approach from this Government. For example, the manner in which they are dealing with exceptions to copyright has undermined certainty and deterred investment in this country. The provisions recently published by the Government propose forbidding the contracting over of exceptions, which fundamentally alters contract law, almost as a casual consequence of the secondary legislation, and that will put off even further potentially hundreds of millions of pounds of investment.

It is important that the Government view the creative industries not only as socially and culturally significant, but increasingly as a means to pay our way and define ourselves with the rest of the world. That requires recognition of how important the industry is, and a co-ordinated approach across Government. I think we lack that with the present Government, and our competitiveness is being undermined as a result.

6.22 pm

Jim Shannon (Strangford) (DUP): I am pleased to contribute to this debate as a Northern Ireland MP, and I congratulate the Backbench Business Committee on tabling this motion—[*Interruption.*]

I am blessed that less than a minute's walk from my constituency office in Newtownards is the Ards Arts Centre in our historic town hall. Within that centre are some of the most unique and I believe magnificent expressions of art—from people all over Northern Ireland, but more specifically from my constituency. If someone

takes the time to wander through that area, they will experience all the emotions that the artists intended, which is a beautiful thing.

There is a difference of opinion in the Chamber about how funding for the arts and creative industries will continue, but we have a commitment from everyone on the importance of the arts in their constituencies. I know that schools in Northern Ireland—in particular many grammar schools—may have a compulsory art class, but there is more emphasis on science, technology, engineering and maths than on artistic subjects. There is nothing wrong with that, because it is important to have job opportunities, but it is also essential that funds are available for after-school and community clubs.

In my constituency the local council pays for artists to go to community groups and help people learn how to express themselves through art and the creative industries. I am aware that the Eastend residents association in Newtownards in my constituency had a project with its women's group that saw the ladies crafting butterflies and other animals. Those butterflies were exquisite by themselves when the ladies showed each individual piece, but when shown as a collection they were stunning. In that art project a clear message was given: an individual can be enhanced by being an intricate part of a community—in other words, part of a team.

In order to achieve such results and allow people who felt they had no artistic talent to learn that they could be part of creating something visually pleasing, those programmes must have funding, which is why I support the motion. Those who are ill and not able to work should be reminded that they can create and do something precious with their time. That building up of self-esteem can change lives.

There are, of course, economic benefits to be had from the creative industries, but we have not yet fully realised their potential. Nick Livingston, director of strategic development at the Arts Council of Northern Ireland, recently said that a growing number of local businesses were recognising the benefits that the creative arts could bring to their organisations. It is encouraging that in the past year Arts & Business Northern Ireland has invested more than £170,000 in supporting such partnerships via its investment programme, which, through the Arts Council and supported by the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure, has invested £1 million over the past five years. In addition, there has been funding to support businesses of more than £5.2 million.

There must be more of that kind of investment to unleash the potential and enable people to realise what they can achieve through the arts. The Culture, Arts and Leisure Committee in the Northern Ireland Assembly recently produced an interesting report on the creative arts in Northern Ireland stating that within

“this Inquiry report, the Committee has illustrated its awareness of the close economic relationship between the Creative Industries and other sectors including tourism, hospitality, museums and galleries, heritage and sport, and the social economy and community and voluntary sectors. As a result of these links the Committee has been very specific in calling for increased co-operation between Executive Departments, their arms-length bodies, agencies etc., and local government, industry, educational bodies and the community and voluntary and social economy sectors.”

It says that we must all work together, which Departments have shown a willingness to do.

The regions of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland have a vast range of cultures: the

[Jim Shannon]

Scots have theirs, the Welsh have theirs, and in Northern Ireland we have ours in the Ulster Scots culture, and there is also the Irish influence from the Republic. The Northern Ireland film industry is growing. “The Game of Thrones”, which I hope many in the Chamber watch, is an example of that. Many film companies are shooting in Northern Ireland—a different sort of shooting from what we are used to in Northern Ireland. It is the sort of shooting we want to see; the sort of shooting that creates prosperity through the film industry without creating the pain there was in the past. The creative industries are active in my constituency—in jewellery, books, tourist gifts, clothing and ceramics, all of which are encouraged by the Arts Council and supported by the local council and the Northern Ireland Assembly. Jobs have been created and opportunities have been made available, resulting in a boost to the economy from the money generated.

There are benefits to be reaped, but we must first sow the seeds, and I believe that that should begin and continue. If it does, the harvest will be significant.

6.26 pm

Geraint Davies (Swansea West) (Lab/Co-op): It is a great privilege to speak on the day that Swansea was shortlisted for the city of culture 2017. People will know Swansea Bay city from people such as Richard Burton, Sir Anthony Hopkins, Catherine Zeta-Jones, R. T. Davies, who wrote “Dr Who”, the people from “Gavin and Stacey”—the list goes on. Of course, Dylan Thomas was born in Swansea 100 years ago next year, so there will be a great celebration there then. I spoke with the Minister yesterday about the need to amplify that globally. We will have a reception to which ambassadors will be invited.

We hope that Swansea Bay city will be open for business now and into the future to celebrate literature, music and dance. There is enormous cultural momentum in Swansea. People will be aware of the beautiful sands of the Gower beaches and of its sporting excellence—Swansea city are now in the premier league, which means that billions of people will now know about Swansea. To that known name, we are attaching these cultural brand values. We also have thriving universities at the cutting edge of various technologies. People have mentioned 3D printing, but there is also Tata Steel, which is working with multi-layered steel that insulates new buildings in a way that creates heat. On top of that, we have an enormous amount of tourism. It is a hub of cultural activity. The second university, the Met, is at the forefront of 3D animation, computer graphics, glass staining and so on.

That enormous amount of activity underlines how huge are the opportunities to invest in culture and creativity. We are in the middle of a political struggle over growth and cuts to get down the deficit. Over 10 years, the last Labour Government increased British GDP by 40% and doubled the gross value added of the creative industries—as people have mentioned, it is now worth £36 billion.

Gloria De Piero (Ashfield) (Lab): Lottery funding is a crucial part of how we fund our arts and culture. My hon. Friend will know that the national lottery provides

constituency breakdowns for where the cash is spent. I would also like to see constituency breakdowns for where tickets are purchased, so that we can see whether areas such as Ashfield are getting their fair share of the cash.

Geraint Davies: That is a critical point. When I was a member of the Public Accounts Committee, the National Audit Office published figures that showed that the poorest areas pay for the richer areas who have cricket clubs and so on. Middle-class communities put in bids and take the money from people who are investing elsewhere. There should be progressive redistribution from the lottery. I hope there will be more bids to the heritage lottery to support initiatives to celebrate the Dylan Thomas centenary, but the point is well made.

The so-called middle classes, as measured by the OECD, are growing at an enormous rate in developing countries. In China, they have grown from 3% to 20% of the population; in India, they have grown from 2% to 10%. With that growth, we see much greater visitor numbers. The amount that visitors are spending has gone up by 30% in the past five years. It seems strange that we are not investing in marketing and infrastructure to maximise these opportunities, but are penny pinching instead.

On the film industry, my hon. Friend the Member for Paisley and Renfrewshire North (Jim Sheridan) mentioned that a scene from the film “World War Z” was filmed in Glasgow. “Da Vinci’s Demons” is being filmed in the Swansea Bay city region, and is providing an enormous number of new jobs. Filming “The Hobbit” in New Zealand led to a 40% increase in visitors, and there was a 17% increase in average spend due to the “Lord of the Rings”. We therefore need to invest.

We also need to have the right sort of education, unlike what is being pioneered by the Secretary of State for Education, who is going back to a sort of “Tom Brown’s Schooldays”. James Dyson recently mentioned that the Secretary of State’s removal of coursework will harm creativity and problem-solving. That does not just affect modern manufacturing. Our added value is about applying creativity and problem-solving to the arts, music and the whole mix to have a point of difference in the global marketplace. Going back in time will not prepare us for an ever-changing world.

I am proud that Swansea has done well today. It is part of a growing cultural British offer. Culture and creativity define our identity and past, and are an engine for growth in an ever-fiercer global marketplace. Without further ado, I will leave my remarks there.

6.32 pm

Kerry McCarthy (Bristol East) (Lab): This has been an interesting and varied debate, ranging from libraries to museums and to more contemporary issues. It has been a pleasure to sit through it all.

We have heard how many jobs there are in the creative industries, the contribution they make to GDP and how they account for around £1 in every £10 of the UK’s exports. The sector is one of the fastest growing in the economy, and is forecast to grow by 31% by 2020. The arts budget is tiny, but brings big returns. The current investment is 14p per person per week, which is equal to approximately 0.05% of total Government spending. I

was told that the former Culture Secretary, the right hon. Member for South West Surrey (Mr Hunt) described the budget as equivalent to

“a rounding error at the Department of Health”,

his new Department. That is why it would be entirely counter-productive to cut arts funding at this time. Cutting investment makes no sense when we need to kick-start the economy. We have seen this in Bristol, where cultural investment is helping to attract visitors and drive regeneration.

Stephen Doughty (Cardiff South and Penarth) (Lab/Co-op): My hon. Friend is, like me, a strong supporter of the cultural hub developing between Bristol and Cardiff in the south-west of England and south Wales. Is she aware that 60% of the funding for the Welsh National Opera, which is based in my constituency, comes from the Arts Council England, because it does 60% of its work in England? Damaging the arts and creative industries in England could have a negative impact on Wales. We need a strong and thriving industry on both sides of the border.

Kerry McCarthy: I think in Bristol we have not yet quite forgiven Wales for stealing “Casualty” from us, but I appreciate what my hon. Friend says about the links between cultural institutions and the important work that Cardiff does elsewhere.

It is impossible to talk about Bristol without mentioning the Oscar-winning Aardman and the amazing output of the BBC’s natural history unit, which is a real money-spinner for the BBC and funds its other work. It is estimated that the Banksy exhibition in 2009 brought £10 million into the city and doubled the turnover of local businesses during the height of the recession.

Back in 1975, the Arnolfini centre for contemporary arts was an important part of the regeneration of the Bristol harbour site. In 2002, Andrew Kelly, the director of the Bristol Cultural Development Partnership described it as

“one of the first examples in the United Kingdom of the arts used for encouraging inward investment and economic regeneration leading...to a likely total investment in the site of £600 million and the creation of over 3,500 jobs”.

Now, we are creating an enterprise zone in the Bristol Temple quarter with a focus on the creative and digital sector, and Arts Council funding has been approved for artworks at the historic Bristol Temple Meads station, which will act as a gateway to the quarter. There are also plans for a long-awaited and much-needed arena. When Sir Peter Bazalgette, the chair of Arts Council England, visited Bristol earlier this year, he said that it was a city that had “got things right”, highlighting strong partnership working in particular.

It is important that funding for the arts in Bristol should continue. Bristol Old Vic and the Bristol Cultural Development Partnership, which was praised by the Arts Council chair as an example of a “great regional arts alliance”, have both already received significant cuts. Funding cuts are disproportionately affecting educational programmes such as the Acta community theatre in Bristol, which last year worked with 1,000 people of all ages and backgrounds, over 80% of whom had never been to a theatre.

In Bristol, it is not just the highbrow, publicly funded, mainstream creative scene that is thriving; the city is also renowned for its counter-culture scene. Banksy is

obviously the most notable example of that. A 2010 PRS for Music survey showed Bristol as the UK’s most musical city, with more songwriters per capita originating from the city than from any other place. Bristol is probably best known for the groundbreaking group of musicians that emerged in the 1990s and included Massive Attack, Tricky, Portishead and Roni Size. I have talked to DJ Krust, who was involved in that scene, about its DIY ethos. Those involved started by putting on events in empty warehouses and no one turned up. Eventually, however, they started selling tickets and created an incredibly innovative scene that influences people to this day. It emerged in a similar way to the punk scene that sprang from squats in London and elsewhere in the 1970s.

DJ Krust told me that those involved did not need or want public funding. That raises interesting questions about how we can ensure that such creativity thrives without the stultifying effect of trying to get funding, assessing outcomes and all the bureaucracy that goes with that. We need to support it, perhaps simply by not repressing it. The Minister once confessed to me that he was an ardent fan of the Redskins, and he will understand the point that I am making. As well as the Adeles and Coldplays of this world, we need acts that are innovative and edgy and that have something important to say.

Stephen Williams (Bristol West) (LD): I join my neighbour in celebrating the artistic creativity of our city. Perhaps she would like to visit the Bristol Institute of Modern Music, which is based in King Square in my constituency, where a lot of the pop musicians of the future are being trained without public subsidy.

Kerry McCarthy: I am well aware of the institute, and I hope to visit it at some point.

My final point is linked to what I was just saying. It is increasingly difficult for musicians to make a living these days, due to the growth of piracy and illegal downloading and to the growing prevalence of low pay and no pay in the creative industries. Recent research by the Musicians’ Union showed that more than half of professional musicians worked for less than £20,000 a year and that 60% had worked for free over the past year. This is not just a problem for musicians; it is an issue across many creative industries. Equity’s most recent survey of members found that over 69% earned either nothing or under £10,000 a year. We need to get a grip on this situation; otherwise, we could end up with a British music scene that, although still successful, was dominated by the privately educated, the winners of “The X Factor” and products of the Brit school. A survey in 2010 found that 60% of acts in the charts had attended private school, compared with just 1% two decades ago.

A number of Members have mentioned the Stone Roses. Someone told me earlier that they had seen the brilliant Shane Meadows film about them that has just come out. They said that we just do not get bands like that any more—working class lads who have made good and really inspired other people from the same background as them. Now, it is all Mumford and Sons. I do not know whether the Minister is a fan of theirs, but I know the Prime Minister is. It would be sad if that was the only music that could thrive in Britain today.

6.39 pm

Kelvin Hopkins (Luton North) (Lab): I am grateful for the opportunity to speak briefly. As a former member of the Musicians Union and a current member of the board of the National Youth Jazz Orchestra, I will speak primarily for music, musicians and the wonderful music culture we have in Britain.

We are undoubtedly the leading nation in Europe when it comes to popular music, jazz and, I would argue, classical music, but that culture is in danger from cuts. Music is sustained by the Arts Council, but also by local authorities. The local authority in Luton sustains the Luton music service, an absolutely wonderful service that provides opportunities for literally hundreds and possibly thousands of working-class youngsters who would never have the opportunity to play or learn an instrument if it was not for the support of the local authority.

There is a class component in all this, because middle-class youngsters have their instruments bought for them by their parents and professional lessons paid for by their parents, but working-class kids need the support of local authorities. Local authority support for music is fundamental to sustaining, for the foreseeable future, the wonderful musical culture of which we are rightly proud. Luton is a prime example of what we do well. I want that to continue, which means that we must sustain local authority support and resist cuts to local authority music.

6.40 pm

Dan Jarvis (Barnsley Central) (Lab): In our country, when we describe ourselves to others, we often rightly turn to the cultural and the creative. This debate, just before the comprehensive spending review, is timely because the arts and the creative industries are facing great challenges. That matters, because as David Lan, artistic director of the Young Vic theatre, has said:

“The arts and culture are not just what you do...at the weekend...They are everything that makes us see the world and live in it in the way we do”.

Our commitment to the arts is a reflection of the type of society we want to live in.

This has been a good debate, with a number of fine contributions. I am sure that all Members will be heartened by the interest in it. Let me begin by highlighting the brilliant maiden speech by my hon. Friend the Member for South Shields (Mrs Lewell-Buck). As the first woman to represent her constituency, she spoke with great passion. I know she will be a highly effective champion for her constituents and I am sure we all look forward to her contributions for many years to come.

We have also had some particularly timely contributions from those who have championed the value of their local cultural institutions. In particular, we heard some fine speeches about the future of the Science Museums Group, which was raised by my hon. Friends the Members for Stalybridge and Hyde (Jonathan Reynolds), for Worsley and Eccles South (Barbara Keeley) and for York Central (Hugh Bayley). My hon. Friend the Member for York Central spoke about the crossover between science and the arts, perfectly illustrating the point by talking about the influence that the National Railway museum had had on his son, who went on to become a railway engineer.

The hon. Member for Manchester, Withington (Mr Leech) rightly pointed out that it would be a mistake to go back to the days when national museums charged for entry. My hon. Friend the Member for Bradford South (Mr Sutcliffe) spoke with passion about the impact of the National Media museum on Bradford and pointed out the importance of forging new partnerships to help to reinvigorate the museum.

A number of contributions were about the positive impact of the arts and the creative industries on constituencies and regions. My hon. Friends the Members for Swansea West (Geraint Davies), for Paisley and Renfrewshire North (Jim Sheridan), for Birmingham, Northfield (Richard Burden), for Rutherglen and Hamilton West (Tom Greatrex) and for Stockton North (Alex Cunningham) and the hon. Members for Hove (Mike Weatherley), for Truro and Falmouth (Sarah Newton), for Daventry (Chris Heaton-Harris), for Strangford (Jim Shannon), for Perth and North Perthshire (Pete Wishart) and for Lancaster and Fleetwood (Eric Ollerenshaw) all demonstrated the interest in the arts that exists among Members.

We also had some particularly valuable contributions that reflected more generally on the value of the arts. The Chair of the Select Committee on Culture, Media and Sport rightly paid tribute to the last Labour Government's support of the arts. Obviously I completely agree with him. He also raised the issue of the flexibility of national lottery funding, which is something we should definitely consider. My right hon. Friend the Member for Exeter (Mr Bradshaw) and my hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent Central (Tristram Hunt) spoke with great passion and knowledge about the value that the arts add to our national life. My hon. Friend the Member for Hartlepool (Mr Wright) rightly reflected on the importance of cross-Government co-operation to support the creative industries.

Finally—I know that he would not want me to miss him out—the hon. Member for North Swindon (Justin Tomlinson) rightly raised the importance of the video games industry and the huge contribution it makes to the economy. He also rightly raised the important subject of libraries. My hon. Friend the Member for West Ham (Lyn Brown) correctly said that libraries bring us together as a community. Libraries provide a unique public space for individuals and communities to access services, to read and to learn, but cuts to local government mean there is rightly concern about their future.

As has been reflected in the debate, we believe that the arts are of intrinsic value to us as a people and as a nation. They help to include those who feel disfranchised and to inspire those without hope. We have rightly discussed the importance of the arts in the context of education, and our young people can expect to undergo several career changes in their lifetimes, requiring them to possess a flexible skill set. Children who play in orchestras or sing in choirs learn the value of team work, and the discipline of rehearsal develops confidence and character. Those who dance learn the importance of practice, and the ability to reproduce routines with skill and precision.

Chris Ruane (Vale of Clwyd) (Lab): My hon. Friend has mentioned the importance of involving children and young people. As he knows, the Prime Minister takes delight in slagging off Wales at regular intervals.

Will he pay tribute to the Urdd eisteddfod, which persuades young people in Wales to come together every year to celebrate culture and the arts?

Dan Jarvis: I am delighted to do so. My hon. Friend is right to raise the important issue of the arts in the context of education.

All the skills to which I have referred are crucial in a modern world, and all of them feed into our creative industries. The arts and the creative industries provide huge economic benefit, as was made clear by my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol East (Kerry McCarthy). The creative industries are worth more than £36 billion a year, and employ 1.5 million people in the United Kingdom.

Since 2001, free entry to our museums and galleries has seen the number of visitors more than double to over 18 million a year, and we earn vital revenue from overseas tourists who visit us for our acclaimed theatre companies. Our thriving music industry is the second biggest exporter of music in the world, and in 2011 the total revenue from the international sale of UK television programmes was £1.5 billion. We compete with the best in the world when it comes to animation, video games, fashion, radio, publishing, architecture, design and advertising.

Culture has helped to revitalise many of our grey city and town centres. As our cultural scene has developed, so have the jobs and the social well-being of the people who live there. That point was made eloquently by my hon. Friends the Members for Liverpool, Walton (Steve Rotherham) and for Liverpool, Wavertree (Luciana Berger).

We live in tough times and tough choices need to be made, but we also need to make decisions about the kind of society in which we want to live. Labour has therefore been working on a strategy for jobs and growth in the creative industries, which focuses on areas in which we believe the Government should be leveraging effort.

First, the Government should nurture creative skills in education and develop talent. By giving young people the opportunities and skills provided by a creative education, we can ensure that our creative industries have the widest talent pool available from which to draw. Secondly, the Government should explore innovative ways of giving the creative industries access to finance. Thirdly, they should champion intellectual property. By protecting content creators and the rights of the consumer, we can provide a sound basis for investment.

Fourthly, the Government need a regional strategy to support the arts and the creative industries in all regions—not just in London—and to ensure that opportunities are available in every town and city. What work is the Minister doing with local authorities to safeguard investment in the arts locally? May I ask him specifically to repeat his assurance that none of the Science Museum Group's museums, including the National Coal Mining museum for England, in Wakefield, will close as a result of Government spending cuts?

Fifthly, the Government need an international strategy that promotes our culture and creative industries around the world. Finally, they should champion equality of access and opportunity, ensuring that all people, whatever their background, have access to the arts and culture.

There has been speculation recently that in the forthcoming comprehensive spending review, the Department for Culture, Media and Sport will be abolished and its constituent parts moved elsewhere. The Secretary of State stopped short of thanking Opposition Members for our campaign to save her job, but in a recent debate about the future of her Department, one well-known commentator reminded us that the DCMS is a Department in which the Government can assert their culture, define their mission, and set the tone of their term in this place.

We need a devoted voice in government and at Cabinet for the arts and the creative industries, and DCMS is the place for that voice. The arts and creative industries are vital to Britain both socially and economically, and we need a strong and influential DCMS working closely with the arts and creative industries. Our commitment to the arts as a country can be a reflection of the type of society we want to live in—one that is innovative, creative and productive. I commend the motion to the House.

6.50 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport (Mr Edward Vaizey): I begin by congratulating the hon. Member for South Shields (Mrs Lewell-Buck) on her excellent maiden speech. She is not in her place and is no doubt already working for the people of South Shields elsewhere in the building. I thought she talked about—I will check the record—a new library opening in her constituency. That was music to my ears, because what we have today is a slightly surreal situation: because Opposition Members are determined to attack the Government, they end their speeches by saying that everything is doom and gloom, yet the majority of their speeches were taken up with extolling the cultural vitality of the areas that they represent.

As one would expect, I heard from my hon. Friend the Member for Truro and Falmouth (Sarah Newton) about the vibrancy of films, film-making and museums and galleries in Cornwall, and from my hon. Friend the Member for Daventry (Chris Heaton-Harris) about his chairmanship of the Northampton Theatres Trust, with 700 performances and audiences of 250,000. We heard from my hon. Friend the Member for Folkestone and Hythe (Damian Collins) about the Folkestone triennial and the huge work that the great philanthropist Roger de Haan is doing there, and from my hon. Friend the Member for Romsey and Southampton North (Caroline Nokes), a former local government cabinet member for leisure, about the thriving scene in Hampshire.

We heard, too, from the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent Central (Tristram Hunt), who has taken a tour as a judge for the ArtFund to see the great museums all over the country, but he failed to mention the CBE that has recently been awarded to Emma Bridgewater, who runs the fantastic Bridgewater Pottery in his constituency. We heard from the former Secretary of State, the right hon. Member for Exeter (Mr Bradshaw), about the municipal museums and theatres in his constituency, and from my hon. Friend the Member for Lancaster and Fleetwood (Eric Ollerenshaw) about the vibrancy in his area. We heard from the hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde (Jonathan Reynolds) about how successful Manchester is, and I look forward to visiting Manchester next month for the Manchester international festival.

[Mr Edward Vaizey]

We heard, of course, from two Liverpool Members—the hon. Members for Liverpool, Walton (Steve Rotheram) and for Liverpool, Wavertree (Luciana Berger)—about the success of culture in that city. The hon. Member for Stockton North (Alex Cunningham) spoke about the Riverside festival and made reference to the success of Gateshead. And so it goes on, from Swansea West and from Strangford, where we heard about the success of both television and film investment in Northern Ireland, and specifically about Derry or Londonderry. [Interruption.] Opposition Members try to shout me down, but the virtues and vibrancy of culture throughout this great nation will not be silenced.

I could talk about Margate, Wakefield, Houghton hall in Norfolk, the Yorkshire sculpture park and the Zurbaran painting saved by a great act of philanthropy by Jonathan Ruffer. The fact is that the arts are thriving in this country. That is because of the success of our policies. If we talk about support in the regions, I would mention the Cultural Olympiad, chaired by Tony Hall, that happened under this Government—a huge success, bringing culture all over the nation.

Today, we announced the four cities on the UK capital of culture shortlist—the UK capital of culture created by Phil Redmond, who did so much to make the Liverpool capital of culture such a success. I have just finished reading his excellent autobiography, “Mid-Term Report”. Eleven different places around the UK applied to become the UK capital of culture. That is not a country on its knees culturally; it is a country where all parts of the nation are celebrating the success of cultural and creative industries.

A lot of hon. Members’ contributions were about the northern museums. We have an Adjournment debate on that very matter straight after this vote, so I will say a lot more about it in a few minutes’ time. We heard contributions on this issue from the hon. Members for York Central (Hugh Bayley), for Manchester, Withington (Mr Leech), for Bradford South (Mr Sutcliffe), for Salford and Hyde (Jonathan Reynolds) and for Worsley and Eccles South (Barbara Keeley). On national museums in general, I can first of all assure hon. Members that there is absolutely no reason at all for any of the northern science museums to close.

The Science museum has taken responsibility for MOSI, with visitor numbers going up by 30%. It is striking a deal with Tyne and Wear museums, too, and the Victoria and Albert museum is working with Dundee. There is the new Tate extension and the rehang, and there are Tate partners all across the country. There is the Imperial War museum in Salford, and the Imperial War museum in London is currently closed because of new galleries to commemorate world war one. There is the new extension at the Natural History museum. During all of this there is the maintenance of free admission to our national museums. [Interruption.] That is another success story. [Interruption.] Opposition Members can try to shout me down, but they cannot deny the truth: success in the regions, success in our towns and cities, success in our national museums.

Because the Opposition cannot deny that, they claim it is their success. I do not deny the successes of the last Government, but nor should they deny the successes of this Government, because we are the ones having to

make the difficult decisions because of the budget deficit they left us. They are forced to put forward policies that are imaginary and to suggest we are doing nothing, so they talk about skills and education without acknowledging the first ever national music education plan or the extension of the In Harmony scheme—set up by the last Government, extended by this Government—and they do not acknowledge the achievements of our cultural education plan, the first youth dance company, Film Nation bringing together the film charities, which is a £7 million fund, and Heritage Schools, which is a £3 million fund.

The Department for Education and DCMS are working together to put £50 million a year into education, too. There is also our creative employment programme, run through the Arts Council, and 6,500 creative apprenticeships being supported by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills. The Next Gen report is changing the teaching of computer science in schools, and acknowledging the importance of the arts. Creative Skillset has been given £16 million to support skills, and there are the BRIT schools, set up by the last Conservative Government, and acknowledged in this debate.

Paul Farrelly: I want to pay the Minister a single, straight-edged compliment. He is very well respected across the creative industries. He has got energy, and from our experience in north Staffordshire with the Wedgwood museum, we know he is a man of action, so could I press him on this? When is he likely to take action on the recommendations of the Sieghart review to extend the public lending rights to e-books and audiobooks in our libraries, and so help authors and this vital element of our creative economy?

Mr Vaizey: That was a good question, asked just as our brilliant Education Secretary, who does so much to support reading in schools and libraries, takes his seat. We will be making an announcement on that soon.

On skills, we are delivering; on access to finance, we are delivering with the enterprise investment scheme; and on tax credits, I have not even had time to mention not only the maintenance of the film tax credit, but its extension to television, and the rejuvenation of our animation industry and, soon, the video games tax credit.

The case for our regional strategy has already been made from the Opposition Benches, with Members talking about what is happening throughout the country. Also, my Secretary of State is putting together our international strategy to work with our national museums and performing arts organisations to fly the flag abroad and help Britain punch its weight. May I take this opportunity to welcome the appointment of Ian Livingston, chief executive of BT? He runs a successful company, and he is joining a successful Government to make the case for Britain abroad, to help our companies export abroad, and to help companies invest here because of the skills we have in our creative industries.

Let me say one last thing: DCMS is here to stay. We have moved buildings, but that is a metaphor for this Government. We have better offices, and they cost less, because with this Government we get more for less. We get the tough decisions being made. Opposition Members cannot get on their feet and have a debate about the arts until they come clean. Are they going to put more

money into the arts? Are they just going to give a nudge and a wink, and say we do not like this cut here and we do not like that cut there, because they have to go on the record and tell the country and tell the arts what financial support they are going to give? I will give way to any Front-Bench Member who can tell me now—

Ms Rosie Winterton (Doncaster Central) (Lab) *claimed to move the closure (Standing Order No. 36).*

Question put forthwith, That the Question be now put.

Question agreed to.

Question put accordingly (Standing Order No. 31(2)), That the original words stand part of the Question.

The House proceeded to a Division

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Lindsay Hoyle): I ask the Serjeant at Arms to investigate the delay in the No Lobby.

The House having divided: Ayes 219, Noes 298.

Division No. 30]

[6.59 pm

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Abrahams, Debbie
Ainsworth, rh Mr Bob
Alexander, rh Mr Douglas
Alexander, Heidi
Ali, Rushanara
Allen, Mr Graham
Anderson, Mr David
Ashworth, Jonathan
Austin, Ian
Bailey, Mr Adrian
Bain, Mr William
Balls, rh Ed
Barron, rh Mr Kevin
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, rh Margaret
Benn, rh Hilary
Benton, Mr Joe
Berger, Luciana
Betts, Mr Clive
Blackman-Woods, Roberta
Blears, rh Hazel
Blomfield, Paul
Blunkett, rh Mr David
Bradshaw, rh Mr Ben
Brown, Lyn
Brown, rh Mr Nicholas
Brown, Mr Russell
Bryant, Chris
Buck, Ms Karen
Burden, Richard
Burnham, rh Andy
Campbell, Mr Alan
Campbell, Mr Ronnie
Caton, Martin
Champion, Sarah
Chapman, Jenny
Clarke, rh Mr Tom
Clwyd, rh Ann
Coaker, Vernon
Coffey, Ann
Connarty, Michael
Cooper, Rosie
Corbyn, Jeremy
Creagh, Mary
Creasy, Stella
Cruddas, Jon
Cryer, John
Cunningham, Alex
Cunningham, Mr Jim
Cunningham, Sir Tony
Dakin, Nic
Danczuk, Simon
David, Wayne
Davies, Geraint
De Piero, Gloria
Denham, rh Mr John
Dobbin, Jim
Dobson, rh Frank
Docherty, Thomas
Donohoe, Mr Brian H.
Doughty, Stephen
Dowd, Jim
Doyle, Gemma
Dromey, Jack
Durkan, Mark
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eagle, Maria
Edwards, Jonathan
Efford, Clive
Elliott, Julie
Ellman, Mrs Louise
Engel, Natascha
Esterson, Bill
Evans, Chris
Farrelly, Paul
Fitzpatrick, Jim
Flello, Robert
Flint, rh Caroline
Flynn, Paul
Fovargue, Yvonne
Francis, Dr Hywel
Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
Gardiner, Barry
Gilmore, Sheila
Glass, Pat
Glindon, Mrs Mary
Godsiff, Mr Roger
Goggins, rh Paul

Goodman, Helen
Greatrex, Tom
Green, Kate
Greenwood, Lillian
Griffith, Nia
Gwynne, Andrew
Hain, rh Mr Peter
Hamilton, Mr David
Hamilton, Fabian
Hanson, rh Mr David
Harman, rh Ms Harriet
Havard, Mr Dai
Healey, rh John
Hendrick, Mark
Hillier, Meg
Hilling, Julie
Hodge, rh Margaret
Hodgson, Mrs Sharon
Hoey, Kate
Hopkins, Kelvin
Howarth, rh Mr George
Hunt, Tristram
Irranca-Davies, Huw
Jackson, Glenda
James, Mrs Siân C.
Jarvis, Dan
Johnson, rh Alan
Johnson, Diana
Jones, Graham
Jones, Helen
Jones, Mr Kevan
Jowell, rh Dame Tessa
Kaufman, rh Sir Gerald
Keeley, Barbara
Kendall, Liz
Lammy, rh Mr David
Lavery, Ian
Lazarowicz, Mark
Leslie, Chris
Lewell-Buck, Mrs Emma
Lewis, Mr Ivan
Llwyd, rh Mr Elfyn
Long, Naomi
Love, Mr Andrew
Lucas, Ian
Mactaggart, Fiona
Malhotra, Seema
Mann, John
Marsden, Mr Gordon
McCabe, Steve
McCann, Mr Michael
McCarthy, Kerry
McDonagh, Siobhain
McDonald, Andy
McDonnell, Dr Alasdair
McFadden, rh Mr Pat
McGovern, Alison
McGuire, rh Mrs Anne
McKechin, Ann
McKenzie, Mr Iain
McKinnell, Catherine
Meacher, rh Mr Michael
Meale, Sir Alan
Mearns, Ian
Miliband, rh Edward
Moon, Mrs Madeleine
Morden, Jessica

Morrice, Graeme (*Livingston*)
Morris, Grahame M.
(*Easington*)
Mudie, Mr George
Munn, Meg
Murphy, rh Paul
Murray, Ian
Nandy, Lisa
O'Donnell, Fiona
Osborne, Sandra
Owen, Albert
Paisley, Ian
Pearce, Teresa
Perkins, Toby
Phillipson, Bridget
Pound, Stephen
Qureshi, Yasmin
Raynsford, rh Mr Nick
Reed, Mr Jamie
Reed, Mr Steve
Reynolds, Jonathan
Riordan, Mrs Linda
Robinson, Mr Geoffrey
Rotheram, Steve
Roy, Mr Frank
Roy, Lindsay
Ruane, Chris
Ruddock, rh Dame Joan
Sarwar, Anas
Sawford, Andy
Shannon, Jim
Sharma, Mr Virendra
Sheerman, Mr Barry
Sheridan, Jim
Skinner, Mr Dennis
Slaughter, Mr Andy
Smith, rh Mr Andrew
Smith, Nick
Smith, Owen
Straw, rh Mr Jack
Stuart, Ms Gisela
Sutcliffe, Mr Gerry
Tami, Mark
Thomas, Mr Gareth
Timms, rh Stephen
Trickett, Jon
Turner, Karl
Twigg, Derek
Twigg, Stephen
Umunna, Mr Chuka
Vaz, rh Keith
Vaz, Valerie
Whitehead, Dr Alan
Williams, Hywel
Williamson, Chris
Wilson, Phil
Winnick, Mr David
Winterton, rh Ms Rosie
Wishart, Pete
Wood, Mike
Woodcock, John
Wright, David
Wright, Mr Iain

Tellers for the Ayes:
Tom Blenkinsop and
Susan Elan Jones

NOES

Adams, Nigel
Afriyie, Adam
Aldous, Peter
Amess, Mr David

Andrew, Stuart
 Arbuthnot, rh Mr James
 Bacon, Mr Richard
 Baker, Steve
 Baldry, Sir Tony
 Baldwin, Harriett
 Barclay, Stephen
 Barker, rh Gregory
 Baron, Mr John
 Barwell, Gavin
 Bebb, Guto
 Beith, rh Sir Alan
 Bellingham, Mr Henry
 Benyon, Richard
 Beresford, Sir Paul
 Berry, Jake
 Bingham, Andrew
 Birtwistle, Gordon
 Blunt, Mr Crispin
 Boles, Nick
 Bone, Mr Peter
 Brady, Mr Graham
 Brake, rh Tom
 Brazier, Mr Julian
 Bridgen, Andrew
 Brine, Steve
 Brokenshire, James
 Brooke, Annette
 Browne, Mr Jeremy
 Bruce, Fiona
 Buckland, Mr Robert
 Burley, Mr Aidan
 Burns, Conon
 Burns, rh Mr Simon
 Burrowes, Mr David
 Burstow, rh Paul
 Burt, Alistair
 Burt, Lorely
 Byles, Dan
 Cable, rh Vince
 Cairns, Alun
 Campbell, rh Sir Menzies
 Carmichael, rh Mr Alistair
 Carswell, Mr Douglas
 Chishti, Rehman
 Chope, Mr Christopher
 Clappison, Mr James
 Clark, rh Greg
 Clegg, rh Mr Nick
 Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
 Coffey, Dr Thérèse
 Collins, Damian
 Colville, Oliver
 Cox, Mr Geoffrey
 Crabb, Stephen
 Crockett, Mike
 Davey, rh Mr Edward
 Davies, David T. C.
 (Monmouth)
 Davies, Glyn
 Davies, Philip
 Davis, rh Mr David
 de Bois, Nick
 Dineneage, Caroline
 Djanogly, Mr Jonathan
 Dorrell, rh Mr Stephen
 Dorries, Nadine
 Doyle-Price, Jackie
 Drax, Richard
 Duddridge, James
 Dunne, Mr Philip
 Ellis, Michael

Ellison, Jane
 Ellwood, Mr Tobias
 Elphicke, Charlie
 Eustice, George
 Evans, Graham
 Evans, Jonathan
 Evennett, Mr David
 Fabricant, Michael
 Fallon, rh Michael
 Farron, Tim
 Field, Mark
 Foster, rh Mr Don
 Fox, rh Dr Liam
 Francois, rh Mr Mark
 Freeman, George
 Freer, Mike
 Fullbrook, Lorraine
 Fuller, Richard
 Gale, Sir Roger
 Garnier, Sir Edward
 Gauke, Mr David
 Gibb, Mr Nick
 Gillan, rh Mrs Cheryl
 Goldsmith, Zac
 Goodwill, Mr Robert
 Gove, rh Michael
 Graham, Richard
 Grant, Mrs Helen
 Gray, Mr James
 Grayling, rh Chris
 Green, rh Damian
 Grieve, rh Mr Dominic
 Griffiths, Andrew
 Hague, rh Mr William
 Halfon, Robert
 Hames, Duncan
 Hammond, rh Mr Philip
 Hammond, Stephen
 Hancock, Mr Mike
 Hands, Greg
 Harper, Mr Mark
 Harrington, Richard
 Harris, Rebecca
 Hart, Simon
 Harvey, Sir Nick
 Haselhurst, rh Sir Alan
 Heald, Oliver
 Heath, Mr David
 Heaton-Harris, Chris
 Hemming, John
 Henderson, Gordon
 Hendry, Charles
 Herbert, rh Nick
 Hinds, Damian
 Hollingbery, George
 Hollobone, Mr Philip
 Holloway, Mr Adam
 Hopkins, Kris
 Horwood, Martin
 Howarth, Sir Gerald
 Howell, John
 Hughes, rh Simon
 Huppert, Dr Julian
 Hurd, Mr Nick
 Jackson, Mr Stewart
 Javid, Sajid
 Jenkin, Mr Bernard
 Johnson, Joseph
 Jones, Andrew
 Jones, Mr Marcus
 Kawczynski, Daniel
 Kelly, Chris

Kirby, Simon
 Knight, rh Mr Greg
 Kwarteng, Kwasi
 Laing, Mrs Eleanor
 Lancaster, Mark
 Lansley, rh Mr Andrew
 Latham, Pauline
 Leadsom, Andrea
 Lee, Jessica
 Lee, Dr Phillip
 Leech, Mr John
 Lefroy, Jeremy
 Leigh, Sir Edward
 Leslie, Charlotte
 Letwin, rh Mr Oliver
 Lewis, Brandon
 Lewis, Dr Julian
 Liddell-Grainger, Mr Ian
 Lilley, rh Mr Peter
 Lloyd, Stephen
 Lord, Jonathan
 Loughton, Tim
 Luff, Peter
 Lumley, Karen
 Macleod, Mary
 Main, Mrs Anne
 Maude, rh Mr Francis
 McCartney, Jason
 McCartney, Karl
 McIntosh, Miss Anne
 McLoughlin, rh Mr Patrick
 McPartland, Stephen
 McVey, Esther
 Menzies, Mark
 Metcalfe, Stephen
 Miller, rh Maria
 Mills, Nigel
 Milton, Anne
 Mitchell, rh Mr Andrew
 Moore, rh Michael
 Mordaunt, Penny
 Morris, James
 Mosley, Stephen
 Mowat, David
 Mulholland, Greg
 Munt, Tessa
 Murray, Sheryll
 Murrison, Dr Andrew
 Newmark, Mr Brooks
 Newton, Sarah
 Nokes, Caroline
 Nuttall, Mr David
 O'Brien, Mr Stephen
 Ollerenshaw, Eric
 Opperman, Guy
 Ottaway, Richard
 Paice, rh Sir James
 Parish, Neil
 Patel, Priti
 Paterson, rh Mr Owen
 Pawsey, Mark
 Penrose, John
 Percy, Andrew
 Perry, Claire
 Phillips, Stephen
 Pincher, Christopher
 Poulter, Dr Daniel
 Prisk, Mr Mark
 Pritchard, Mark
 Pugh, John
 Raab, Mr Dominic
 Randall, rh Mr John

Reckless, Mark
 Redwood, rh Mr John
 Rees-Mogg, Jacob
 Reeve, Simon
 Reid, Mr Alan
 Rifkind, rh Sir Malcolm
 Robertson, rh Hugh
 Robertson, Mr Laurence
 Rogerson, Dan
 Rosindell, Andrew
 Rudd, Amber
 Ruffley, Mr David
 Russell, Sir Bob
 Rutley, David
 Sanders, Mr Adrian
 Scott, Mr Lee
 Selous, Andrew
 Shapps, rh Grant
 Shelbrooke, Alec
 Simmonds, Mark
 Simpson, Mr Keith
 Skidmore, Chris
 Smith, Miss Chloe
 Smith, Henry
 Smith, Julian
 Soames, rh Nicholas
 Soubry, Anna
 Spelman, rh Mrs Caroline
 Spencer, Mr Mark
 Stephenson, Andrew
 Stevenson, John
 Stewart, Bob
 Stewart, Iain
 Stewart, Rory
 Streeter, Mr Gary
 Stride, Mel
 Stuart, Mr Graham
 Stunell, rh Sir Andrew
 Sturdy, Julian
 Swales, Ian
 Swayne, rh Mr Desmond
 Swinson, Jo
 Syms, Mr Robert
 Teather, Sarah
 Thornton, Mike
 Thurso, John
 Timpson, Mr Edward
 Tomlinson, Justin
 Truss, Elizabeth
 Turner, Mr Andrew
 Uppal, Paul
 Vaizey, Mr Edward
 Vara, Mr Shailesh
 Vickers, Martin
 Walker, Mr Charles
 Walker, Mr Robin
 Wallace, Mr Ben
 Walter, Mr Robert
 Ward, Mr David
 Watkinson, Dame Angela
 Weatherley, Mike
 Webb, Steve
 Wharton, James
 Wheeler, Heather
 White, Chris
 Whittaker, Craig
 Whittingdale, Mr John
 Wiggin, Bill
 Willetts, rh Mr David
 Williams, Mr Mark
 Williamson, Gavin
 Willott, Jenny

Wilson, Mr Rob
Wollaston, Dr Sarah
Wright, Jeremy
Wright, Simon
Yeo, Mr Tim

Young, rh Sir George
Zahawi, Nadhim

Tellers for the Noes:
Mark Hunter and
Karen Bradley

Question accordingly negated.

Question put forthwith (Standing Order No. 31(2)),
That the proposed words be there added.

The House divided: Ayes 285, Noes 213.

Division No. 31]

[7.15 pm

AYES

Adams, Nigel
Afriyie, Adam
Aldous, Peter
Amess, Mr David
Andrew, Stuart
Arbuthnot, rh Mr James
Bacon, Mr Richard
Baker, Steve
Baldry, Sir Tony
Baldwin, Harriett
Barclay, Stephen
Barker, rh Gregory
Barwell, Gavin
Bebb, Guto
Beith, rh Sir Alan
Bellingham, Mr Henry
Benyon, Richard
Beresford, Sir Paul
Berry, Jake
Bingham, Andrew
Birtwistle, Gordon
Blunt, Mr Crispin
Boles, Nick
Bone, Mr Peter
Bradley, Karen
Brady, Mr Graham
Brake, rh Tom
Brazier, Mr Julian
Bridgen, Andrew
Brine, Steve
Brokenshire, James
Brooke, Annette
Browne, Mr Jeremy
Bruce, Fiona
Buckland, Mr Robert
Burley, Mr Aidan
Burns, Conor
Burns, rh Mr Simon
Burrowes, Mr David
Burt, Alistair
Burt, Lorely
Byles, Dan
Cable, rh Vince
Cairns, Alun
Campbell, rh Sir Menzies
Carmichael, rh Mr Alistair
Carswell, Mr Douglas
Chishti, Rehman
Chope, Mr Christopher
Clappison, Mr James
Clark, rh Greg
Clarke, rh Mr Kenneth
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coffey, Dr Thérèse
Collins, Damian
Colville, Oliver

Cox, Mr Geoffrey
Crabb, Stephen
Crockart, Mike
Davey, rh Mr Edward
Davies, David T. C.
(*Monmouth*)
Davies, Glyn
Davies, Philip
Davis, rh Mr David
de Bois, Nick
Dinenage, Caroline
Dorrell, rh Mr Stephen
Dorries, Nadine
Doyle-Price, Jackie
Drax, Richard
Duddridge, James
Duncan, rh Mr Alan
Ellis, Michael
Ellwood, Mr Tobias
Elphicke, Charlie
Eustice, George
Evans, Graham
Evans, Jonathan
Evennett, Mr David
Fabricant, Michael
Fallon, rh Michael
Farron, Tim
Foster, rh Mr Don
Fox, rh Dr Liam
Francois, rh Mr Mark
Freeman, George
Freer, Mike
Fullbrook, Lorraine
Fuller, Richard
Gale, Sir Roger
Garnier, Sir Edward
Gauke, Mr David
Gibb, Mr Nick
Gillan, rh Mrs Cheryl
Goodwill, Mr Robert
Gove, rh Michael
Graham, Richard
Grant, Mrs Helen
Gray, Mr James
Grayling, rh Chris
Green, rh Damian
Grieve, rh Mr Dominic
Griffiths, Andrew
Hague, rh Mr William
Halfon, Robert
Hames, Duncan
Hammond, rh Mr Philip
Hammond, Stephen
Hancock, Mr Mike
Hands, Greg
Harper, Mr Mark

Harrington, Richard
Harris, Rebecca
Hart, Simon
Harvey, Sir Nick
Haselhurst, rh Sir Alan
Heald, Oliver
Heath, Mr David
Heaton-Harris, Chris
Hemming, John
Hendry, Charles
Herbert, rh Nick
Hinds, Damian
Hollingbery, George
Hollobone, Mr Philip
Holloway, Mr Adam
Hopkins, Kris
Horwood, Martin
Howarth, Sir Gerald
Howell, John
Hughes, rh Simon
Huppert, Dr Julian
Jackson, Mr Stewart
Javid, Sajid
Jenkin, Mr Bernard
Johnson, Joseph
Jones, Andrew
Jones, Mr Marcus
Kawczynski, Daniel
Kelly, Chris
Kirby, Simon
Knight, rh Mr Greg
Kwarteng, Kwasi
Laing, Mrs Eleanor
Lancaster, Mark
Lansley, rh Mr Andrew
Latham, Pauline
Laws, rh Mr David
Leadsom, Andrea
Lee, Jessica
Lee, Dr Phillip
Leech, Mr John
Lefroy, Jeremy
Leigh, Sir Edward
Leslie, Charlotte
Letwin, rh Mr Oliver
Lewis, Brandon
Lewis, Dr Julian
Liddell-Grainger, Mr Ian
Lilley, rh Mr Peter
Lloyd, Stephen
Lord, Jonathan
Loughton, Tim
Luff, Peter
Lumley, Karen
Macleod, Mary
Maude, rh Mr Francis
McCartney, Jason
McCartney, Karl
McIntosh, Miss Anne
McLoughlin, rh Mr Patrick
McPartland, Stephen
McVey, Esther
Menzies, Mark
Metcalfe, Stephen
Miller, rh Maria
Mills, Nigel
Milton, Anne
Mitchell, rh Mr Andrew
Moore, rh Michael
Mordaunt, Penny
Morris, James
Mosley, Stephen

Mowat, David
Mulholland, Greg
Munt, Tessa
Murray, Sheryll
Murrison, Dr Andrew
Newmark, Mr Brooks
Nokes, Caroline
Nuttall, Mr David
O'Brien, Mr Stephen
Ollerenshaw, Eric
Opperman, Guy
Ottaway, Richard
Paice, rh Sir James
Parish, Neil
Patel, Priti
Paterson, rh Mr Owen
Pawsey, Mark
Penrose, John
Percy, Andrew
Perry, Claire
Phillips, Stephen
Pincher, Christopher
Poulter, Dr Daniel
Pritchard, Mark
Pugh, John
Raab, Mr Dominic
Randall, rh Mr John
Reckless, Mark
Redwood, rh Mr John
Rees-Mogg, Jacob
Reevell, Simon
Reid, Mr Alan
Rifkind, rh Sir Malcolm
Robertson, rh Hugh
Robertson, Mr Laurence
Rogerson, Dan
Rosindell, Andrew
Rudd, Amber
Ruffley, Mr David
Russell, Sir Bob
Rutley, David
Sanders, Mr Adrian
Scott, Mr Lee
Selous, Andrew
Shapps, rh Grant
Shelbrooke, Alec
Simmonds, Mark
Simpson, Mr Keith
Skidmore, Chris
Smith, Miss Chloe
Smith, Henry
Smith, Julian
Soames, rh Nicholas
Soubry, Anna
Spelman, rh Mrs Caroline
Stephenson, Andrew
Stevenson, John
Stewart, Bob
Stewart, Iain
Stewart, Rory
Stride, Mel
Stuart, Mr Graham
Stunell, rh Sir Andrew
Sturdy, Julian
Swales, Ian
Swayne, rh Mr Desmond
Swinson, Jo
Teather, Sarah
Thornton, Mike
Thurso, John
Timpson, Mr Edward
Tomlinson, Justin

Truss, Elizabeth
Turner, Mr Andrew
Uppal, Paul
Vaizey, Mr Edward
Vara, Mr Shailesh
Walker, Mr Charles
Walker, Mr Robin
Wallace, Mr Ben
Walter, Mr Robert
Ward, Mr David
Watkinson, Dame Angela
Weatherley, Mike
Webb, Steve
Wharton, James
Wheeler, Heather
White, Chris
Whittaker, Craig

Whittingdale, Mr John
Wiggin, Bill
Willets, rh Mr David
Williams, Mr Mark
Williams, Stephen
Williamson, Gavin
Willott, Jenny
Wilson, Mr Rob
Wollaston, Dr Sarah
Wright, Jeremy
Wright, Simon
Yeo, Mr Tim
Young, rh Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr Robert Syms and
Mark Hunter

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Abrahams, Debbie
Ainsworth, rh Mr Bob
Alexander, rh Mr Douglas
Alexander, Heidi
Ali, Rushanara
Allen, Mr Graham
Anderson, Mr David
Ashworth, Jonathan
Austin, Ian
Bailey, Mr Adrian
Bain, Mr William
Balls, rh Ed
Barron, rh Mr Kevin
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, rh Margaret
Benn, rh Hilary
Benton, Mr Joe
Berger, Luciana
Betts, Mr Clive
Blackman-Woods, Roberta
Blears, rh Hazel
Blomfield, Paul
Blunkett, rh Mr David
Bradshaw, rh Mr Ben
Brown, Lyn
Brown, rh Mr Nicholas
Brown, Mr Russell
Bryant, Chris
Buck, Ms Karen
Burden, Richard
Burnham, rh Andy
Campbell, Mr Alan
Campbell, Mr Ronnie
Caton, Martin
Champion, Sarah
Chapman, Jenny
Clarke, rh Mr Tom
Clwyd, rh Ann
Coaker, Vernon
Coffey, Ann
Connarty, Michael
Cooper, Rosie
Corbyn, Jeremy
Creagh, Mary
Creasy, Stella
Cruddas, Jon
Cryer, John
Cunningham, Alex
Cunningham, Mr Jim
Cunningham, Sir Tony
Dakin, Nic

Danczuk, Simon
David, Wayne
Davies, Geraint
De Piero, Gloria
Denham, rh Mr John
Dobbin, Jim
Dobson, rh Frank
Docherty, Thomas
Doughty, Stephen
Dowd, Jim
Doyle, Gemma
Dromey, Jack
Durkan, Mark
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eagle, Maria
Edwards, Jonathan
Efford, Clive
Elliott, Julie
Ellman, Mrs Louise
Engel, Natascha
Esterson, Bill
Evans, Chris
Farrelly, Paul
Fitzpatrick, Jim
Flelo, Robert
Flint, rh Caroline
Flynn, Paul
Fovargue, Yvonne
Francis, Dr Hywel
Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
Gardiner, Barry
Gilmore, Sheila
Glass, Pat
Glindon, Mrs Mary
Godsiff, Mr Roger
Goggins, rh Paul
Goodman, Helen
Greatrex, Tom
Green, Kate
Greenwood, Lilian
Griffith, Nia
Gwynne, Andrew
Hain, rh Mr Peter
Hamilton, Mr David
Hamilton, Fabian
Hanson, rh Mr David
Harman, rh Ms Harriet
Havard, Mr Dai
Healey, rh John
Hillier, Meg
Hilling, Julie

Hodge, rh Margaret
Hodgson, Mrs Sharon
Hoey, Kate
Hopkins, Kelvin
Howarth, rh Mr George
Hunt, Tristram
Irranca-Davies, Huw
James, Mrs Siân C.
Jarvis, Dan
Johnson, Diana
Jones, Graham
Jones, Helen
Jones, Mr Kevan
Jowell, rh Dame Tessa
Kaufman, rh Sir Gerald
Keeley, Barbara
Kendall, Liz
Lammy, rh Mr David
Lavery, Ian
Lazarowicz, Mark
Leslie, Chris
Lewell-Buck, Mrs Emma
Lewis, Mr Ivan
Llwyd, rh Mr Elfyn
Long, Naomi
Love, Mr Andrew
Lucas, Ian
Mactaggart, Fiona
Malhotra, Seema
Mann, John
Marsden, Mr Gordon
McCabe, Steve
McCann, Mr Michael
McCarthy, Kerry
McDonagh, Siobhain
McDonald, Andy
McDonnell, Dr Alasdair
McFadden, rh Mr Pat
McGovern, Alison
McGuire, rh Mrs Anne
McKechin, Ann
McKenzie, Mr Iain
McKinnell, Catherine
Meacher, rh Mr Michael
Meale, Sir Alan
Mearns, Ian
Miliband, rh Edward
Moon, Mrs Madeleine
Morden, Jessica
Morrice, Graeme (*Livingston*)
Morris, Grahame M.
(*Easington*)
Mudie, Mr George
Munn, Meg
Murphy, rh Paul
Murray, Ian
Nandy, Lisa

O'Donnell, Fiona
Osborne, Sandra
Owen, Albert
Paisley, Ian
Perkins, Toby
Phillipson, Bridget
Pound, Stephen
Qureshi, Yasmin
Raynsford, rh Mr Nick
Reed, Mr Jamie
Reed, Mr Steve
Reynolds, Jonathan
Riordan, Mrs Linda
Robinson, Mr Geoffrey
Rotheram, Steve
Roy, Lindsay
Ruane, Chris
Ruddock, rh Dame Joan
Sarwar, Anas
Sawford, Andy
Shannon, Jim
Sharma, Mr Virendra
Sheerman, Mr Barry
Sheridan, Jim
Skinner, Mr Dennis
Slaughter, Mr Andy
Smith, rh Mr Andrew
Smith, Nick
Smith, Owen
Straw, rh Mr Jack
Stuart, Ms Gisela
Sutcliffe, Mr Gerry
Tami, Mark
Thomas, Mr Gareth
Timms, rh Stephen
Trickett, Jon
Turner, Karl
Twigg, Derek
Twigg, Stephen
Umunna, Mr Chuka
Vaz, rh Keith
Vaz, Valerie
Whitehead, Dr Alan
Williams, Hywel
Williamson, Chris
Wilson, Phil
Winnick, Mr David
Winterton, rh Ms Rosie
Wishart, Pete
Wood, Mike
Woodcock, John
Wright, David
Wright, Mr Iain

Tellers for the Noes:
Susan Elan Jones and
Tom Blenkinsop

Question accordingly agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker declared the main Question, as amended, to be agreed to (Standing Order No. 31(2)).

Resolved,

That this House welcomes the Government's support for the arts and creative industries; notes the increase in Lottery funding for the arts which will mean that some £3 billion will be provided for the arts from the National Lottery and in Grant in Aid over the lifetime of the present Parliament; notes that there has been further support for the arts from the Government, including the introduction of lifetime giving, catalyst funding and the maintenance of free admission to the UK's national museums; welcomes the first ever national music plan for education, and looks forward to

the imminent publication of the national cultural plan for education; further notes the Government's support for the creative industries, including tax credits for film, television and animation; looks forward to the introduction of a tax credit for video games; notes the establishment of a Creative Industries Council; and welcomes the continued strong lead given by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport in these areas.

Business without Debate

DELEGATED LEGISLATION

Motion made, and Question put forthwith (Standing Order No. 118(6) and Order of 21 May),

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE TO INDUSTRY

That this House authorises the Secretary of State to undertake to pay, and to pay by way of financial assistance under section 8 of the Industrial Development Act 1982, sums exceeding £10 million and up to a cumulative total of £25 million to support early stage venture capital funds investing in small and medium-sized enterprises.—(Karen Bradley.)

Question agreed to.

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

FAMILY LAW

That the draft Child Support and Claims and Payments (Miscellaneous Amendments and Change to the Minimum Amount of Liability) Regulations 2013, which were laid before this House on 20 May, be approved.—(Karen Bradley.)

Question agreed to.

EUROPEAN UNION DOCUMENTS

Motion made, and Question put forthwith (Standing Order No. 119(11)),

ADJUSTMENT OF DIRECT FARM PAYMENTS FOR 2013

That this House takes note of European Union Document No. 7935/13, a draft Regulation on fixing an adjustment rate to direct payments provided for in Regulation (EC) No. 73/2009 in respect of calendar year 2013; supports the Government's view that financial discipline is needed in 2013 to constrain spending on the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and establish the new Crisis Reserve; and agrees that there should be an equal proportional reduction for all direct payments for all beneficiaries, and therefore that no payment should be exempt from financial discipline in 2013 or in future years.—(Karen Bradley.)

Question agreed to.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith (Standing Order No. 119(11))

ECONOMIC GOVERNANCE: EUROPEAN SEMESTER AND MACROECONOMIC IMBALANCES

That this House takes note of European Union Document No. 16669/12 and Addenda 1 and 2, a Commission Communication: Annual Growth Survey 2013, No. 16671/12 and Addenda 1 and 2, a Commission Report: Alert Mechanism Report 2013, prepared in accordance with Articles 3 and 4 of the Regulation on the prevention and correction of macroeconomic imbalances, No. 16513/12, a Commission Staff Working Document: Completing the scoreboard for the Macroeconomic Imbalances Procedure: Financial Sector Indicator, No. 8660/13, a Commission Communication: Results of in-depth reviews under Regulation (EU) No. 1176/2011 on the prevention and correction of macroeconomic imbalances, SWD(2013) 125, a Commission Communication: Results of in-depth review for the United Kingdom in accordance with Article 5 of Regulation (EU) No. 1176/2011 on the prevention and correction of macroeconomic imbalances,

COM(2013) 378 and Addendum, a recommendation for a Council Recommendation on the United Kingdom's 2013 national reform programme and delivering a Council opinion on the United Kingdom's convergence programme for 2012-17, and COM(2013) 350, a Commission Communication: 2013 European Semester: Country-Specific Recommendations: Moving Europe beyond the crisis; recognises the five priorities of the 2013 Annual Growth Survey; supports the Government's view that it is important to focus on implementation of existing reform commitments; takes note of the results of the In-Depth Review; takes note that the European Commission's draft Country-Specific Recommendations to the UK stress the importance of tackling the deficit, pursuing ambitious structural reforms and prioritising investment in UK infrastructure; and acknowledges that these are already the priorities of the Government.—(Karen Bradley.)

Question agreed to.

PETITIONS

Proposed Closure of Downham Fire Station

7.26 pm

Heidi Alexander (Lewisham East) (Lab): I would like to present a petition signed by 723 residents of south-east London who are concerned about the proposed closure of Downham fire station. Today is the final day of the Mayor of London's consultation on fire station closures in the capital. These closures, if they go ahead, will lead to average response times increasing by 31 seconds in the London borough of Lewisham. Signatories to the petition therefore urge the Department for Communities and Local Government to appeal to the Mayor of London to prioritise public safety and keep Downham fire station open.

Following is the full text of the petition:

[The Petition of residents of South East London,

Declares that the Petitioners regret the £30 million cut to the grant received by the London Fire Brigade for the years 2013-14 and 2014-15; express concern about the proposed closure of Downham Fire Station as set out in the Fifth London Safety Plan; and note that the proposed closure of Downham Fire Station, currently subject to consultation, will increase the average Fire Brigade response time to incidents in the London Borough of Lewisham by 31 seconds.

The Petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons urges the Department for Communities and Local Government to appeal to the Mayor of London to prioritise public safety and to keep Downham Fire Station open.

And the Petitioners remain, etc.]

[P001187]

Proposed Closure of Suffolk Court Care Home

7.27 pm

Greg Mulholland (Leeds North West) (LD): I would like to present a petition against Leeds city council's proposed closure of the Suffolk Court care home in Yeadon.

The petition states:

The Petition of a resident of the UK,

Declares that the Petitioner objects to the proposed closure of Suffolk Court Care Home in Yeadon; further that with the increase in numbers and age of older people in our community,

[Greg Mulholland]

Suffolk Court is a vital resource, providing security and practical care for those unable to be sustained at home by community services; further that closing Suffolk Court would undermine services to the elderly and vulnerable in Yeadon.

The Petitioner therefore requests that the House of Commons call upon Leeds City Council to reassess its priorities and keep this essential service open.

And the Petitioner remains, etc.

[P001188]

National Media Museum

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

7.29 pm

George Galloway (Bradford West) (Respect): I am relieved, up to a point, that I do not have to come to the House this evening to savage the Minister as an enemy of the people, or to denounce him as a philistine and cultural vandal. I am relieved because I have always considered him rather an adornment to the Government of brutes with whom he sits—a civilised man; a kind of lipstick on the pig.

I am also relieved because, in a meeting the Minister graciously gave my colleagues and I just a day or two ago, up to a point, he rather shot my fox. There I was, with my parliamentary colleagues—four parties are represented in Parliament from the Bradford district—absolutely united and leading what looked like becoming a mass campaign of the entire city and district against a proposed act of cultural vandalism, but the Minister disarmed it in the first line of the meeting by telling us that the Bradford National Media museum would not close.

We are grateful to the Minister for that, although he will forgive us if we want to look the gift horse a little closer in the mouth, because there are, of course, more ways of closing somewhere than simply locking its doors. However, we are grateful that the Minister had the sense to listen to the public, led by the five parliamentarians from four parties, the city council, and the local newspaper, the *Telegraph and Argus*. There was, as I have said, a crescendo of opposition to the proposed closure, and it is only right to commend a Minister who listens. I hope I do not spoil his chances in the forthcoming reshuffle—I wish him well, and am grateful to him up to this point, when I must part company from him.

The National Media museum is fundamental to Bradford. It is a national treasure, but it is fundamental to Bradford, a city with a sea of troubles, with mass unemployment, mass poverty, mass child poverty, record infant mortality rates, record deaths in hospitals and so on. Bradford has so many problems that it could not afford another. If the closure as leaked—I will come to that point in a minute—had gone ahead, it could have been a death blow to a great city, which in 1903 was the richest city per capita in England, but which now, in 2013, does not have its troubles to seek, particularly in the city centre, where we have a hole in the ground where Westfield was supposed to be. When I arrived there at least 15 months ago, the iconic Odeon building was crumbling and shrink-wrapped, looking like it was going to fall down. If the National Media museum had closed on the back of that desertification of the city centre, it could have been a death blow, so I am grateful that the Government have announced that it will not close.

In part, it will not close because the public expenditure cuts in this age of austerity, which the Government are imposing on the country, have turned out, in the case of the Department for Culture, Media and Sport at least, not to be as severe as planned. We are told in authoritative media briefings that 10% has been reduced to 5%, but, as the late and lamented trade union leader Alan Fisher once said, 5% of bugger all is bugger all. Five per cent.

off our shrunken budget will be a serious blow none the less, so my first question to the Minister, which I hope he addresses, is this: the museum will not close, which is wonderful, but what will happen to the capital programme and capital expenditure on the building? Will the building be not closed, but allowed to crumble? Will the vital physical changes in the building not be possible? As my colleagues and I will advance, and as we advanced in our meeting with the Minister, many things about the National Media museum need to change. That is the first question.

To move on to my second question for the Minister, I have doubts as to whether the National Media museum belongs in the Science Museum Group at all. Media to me is an art rather than a science. The science of how film, radio and television get into the living room or the cinema is interesting, but not as interesting as the content of the film, radio and television. The National Media museum in Bradford is the repository of the national BBC archive, but who knows about it, who can access it and who can see it? The whole notion of the national Science Museum Group should be brought into question by this debate.

Mr Gerry Sutcliffe (Bradford South) (Lab): The Minister will know that there was a radio station supported by the BBC in the National Media museum. That station left in March of this year without any fight from the museum. That is why we all smelt a rat. My hon. Friend might want to comment on that. That surely had an impact on visitor numbers to the museum.

George Galloway: Undoubtedly; that was one of the most popular attractions. It was interactive: people could get behind a desk and conduct make-believe interviews. Future politicians were being groomed in that studio in Bradford. Now it is gone and no fight was put up for it.

To skip ahead in what I was going to say, I belong to the Deng Xiaoping school of socialists: I do not care whether the cat is black or white, as long as it catches mice. The state must of course be a major stakeholder in museums, and free admission must be defended at all costs. The National Media museum has half a million visitors. That is down from 1 million, but it is not nothing. The overwhelming majority of those half a million visitors are from Yorkshire and Humberside. Most of them, very unusually for a museum, are from lower socio-economic groups. Charging would be a death knell for us and the state must be there to guarantee that that does not happen.

However, the BBC is a national institution that is deeply in need of a new lick of paint to renovate its tattered public reputation. Why does the BBC not help to pay for the National Media museum? Why can the BBC logo that used to be at White City not be up on that building? Its archive is there. The public pay for the BBC. Heaven knows, any money that it spends on the National Media museum might save us from hours of tripe that, I am sorry to say, would otherwise be included in its output.

Perhaps other media outlets could be involved. I am not arguing for the rehabilitation of Mr Rupert Murdoch, but I have written to His Highness Prince al-Waleed bin Talal, with his great media interests, and asked him to sponsor the museum. That is how desperate I was. Perhaps, I am glad to say, he did not reply.

Philip Davies (Shipley) (Con): I commend the hon. Gentleman, my parliamentary neighbour, not only for securing this debate, but for the way in which he has worked with all Bradford MPs to secure the future of the museum. Does he agree that this matter shows that although we may disagree wildly on lots of issues, we all have the best interests of the Bradford district at heart? It also shows what we can achieve when we work together. Will he join me in saying to the Minister and the Science Museum Group that Bradford MPs will continue to work as a united front not only to secure the short-term future of the museum, but to ensure that it has a viable long-term future?

George Galloway: I am grateful for that intervention. What the hon. Gentleman says is absolutely true. It is a rare species, the northern Tory MP, but our district has two of them and they have turned out both to be able and dedicated parliamentarians. They were ready, without qualification, to throw themselves into a more obvious popular front led by my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford South (Mr Sutcliffe), the Liberal Democrats in the shape of hon. Member for Bradford East (Mr Ward) and me. We all came together as one hand and we moved mountains. The leak of a closure at least gave us the opportunity to show what politics and public opinion can do, and how Governments can be influenced and made to listen.

Thinking along the lines I described earlier about the media paying something towards the National Media museum, this country gives a fortune to the privatised train operators, so why can we not force them to help my hon. Friend the Member for York Central (Hugh Bayley) ensure that the future of the National Railway museum in York is secured?

The point we are keen to make is that these museums should not just be kept open, because keeping something and letting it crumble and die is no use. These are national treasures. If our country can strut around the world at the G8 and G20—when we are not bugging people; I am sorry, there is a D notice on that—saying what an important country we are, it can certainly pay for the upkeep of those national treasures.

The Museum of Science and Industry in Manchester, which I visited a week or so ago, is another national treasure. Imagine Manchester, the workshop of the workshop of the world, having its museum of industry closed. Why is industry not helping pay for that museum—it is, after all, a showcase of British industry? Indeed, why is it in the Minister's Department at all? The museum in Manchester could more than satisfactorily fit into the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills—or as it used to be, the Department of Trade and Industry—thus relieving the pressure on the Department for Culture, Media and Sport by making the necessary investment in our museum.

Some may say, "What's in a name?" but why is our museum called the National Media museum? Indeed, in the age of Leveson, the word "media" does not have immediately attractive connotations. Why should we not call it the national museum of film, radio and television? Then it would do what it says on the tin, and everybody loves film, radio and television. Moreover, with the archive already there, there is no reason why we could not fill that museum every afternoon by showing some of the jewels in the crown of the BBC national archive.

Mr David Ward (Bradford East) (LD): I, too, express my gratitude to the hon. Member for Bradford West (George Galloway) for initiating this debate. A little earlier he referred to the leaking of the state of the group as a whole, and the media museum in particular, and I am annoyed that we should have to rely on a leak, rather than a more mature approach that would have involved MPs at a much earlier stage. The hon. Gentleman has made a number of suggestions tonight, but I believe that collectively we could have worked much harder, much sooner, and that the hysteria and huge anxiety created across the Bradford district could have been avoided.

George Galloway: Indeed, and the hon. Gentleman was right to be cross about that in our meeting, although being a glass-half-full man, I saw it as giving us an opportunity to shine. The hon. Gentleman is right, which brings me to the only discordant note I intend to make—the Minister must listen to this please.

The performance of the leadership of the Science Museum Group has been sadly lacking in this affair. Indeed, we had the spectacle of the leadership of the group rubbishing the performance of museums under their own purview, apparently oblivious to the obvious fact that if the museums were underperforming, they themselves were being paid rather a lot of public money to preside over that underperformance. I do not normally attack public servants because they have difficulty responding, but I was not impressed by the leadership of the museum's group before our meeting this week, and I was less impressed after it.

There is a serious question mark and I am not confident about leaving the fate of the National Media museum in Bradford in the hands of the leadership of that group, and that is in part because of the point raised by the hon. Member for Bradford East (Mr Ward). It is obvious that it leaked the potential closure of one or more of these three museums, which makes its position now—negotiating in public—much more difficult. When the Minister said, in that first sentence, that the museum in Bradford would not close, I could sense that sinking feeling on the part of the officials, as he shot their fox—just as, in a way, he shot mine, given that I had already applied for this debate. I believe the Minister. I agree with Nick, as they used to say—or, in this case, Ed. It is all very well these panjandrums of the culture industry sitting in London, in the Victoria and Albert, deciding which of their northern chess pieces they can dispose of, but it is Ministers who must decide, and it is Parliament, to whom Ministers are accountable, and democracy, to which we are all accountable, that really count.

7.45 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport (Mr Edward Vaizey): I am grateful for the chance to respond to this important debate, and I congratulate the hon. Member for Bradford West (George Galloway) on securing it. I thank him for his kind comments about me at the beginning of the debate—I am sure they were very career-enhancing for me.

I have not worked closely with the hon. Member for Bradford West in the past, but I would echo what my hon. Friend the Member for Shipley (Philip Davies) said: I was expecting a potentially difficult meeting with the hon. Gentleman and I knew from his reputation

that being savaged by him would not be akin to being savaged by a dead sheep, but something somewhat worse. I must say, however, that he has behaved in an entirely constructive fashion on this issue—and that, of course, goes for all the other hon. Members in the area. The hon. Member for Bradford South (Mr Sutcliffe) has been exceptionally helpful. I should also mention the hon. Member for Bradford East (Mr Ward) and of course my hon. Friend the Member for Shipley. It is also good to see in their places the hon. Member for York Central (Hugh Bayley) and my hon. Friend the Member for York Outer (Julian Sturdy), who represent one of the science museums in York.

It is clear that the hon. Member for Bradford West spoke for all his colleagues in the area, but they also made it clear, in their own interventions, that they believed passionately in the value of our museums and cared deeply about the museums that have their homes in the regions they represent. They spoke eloquently of the relationship between the national museum in Bradford and the people of that city. They paid tribute to the work of the museum in educating and engaging and contributing to the economies of the regions where they are based and in creating a focal point for inquiry and enjoyment. I share the concern expressed in recent weeks that any of these museums—in York, Manchester or Bradford—might be in danger, and I understand the strong feeling it has caused among all those who care about and benefit from everything that these museums do for us.

Ironically, the hon. Member for Bradford West called this debate the week after the national museum celebrated its 30th birthday, and it is worth reminding the House that the museum holds collections ranging from the earliest surviving photographic negative to John Logie Baird's original television apparatus and the camera used to create the first moving images. In an intervention, the hon. Member for Bradford South said that he was sad that BBC Radio had left the museum, but it is also worth noting that the BBC recently gifted its collections of almost 1,000 historical objects to the museum as part of the BBC's 90th anniversary celebrations. As Members have said, the media museum also hosts the Bradford international film festival, as well as animation and science festivals, and the BAFTA young designer event, which was streamed live over the web and marked 100 years of Indian cinema with a series of events, including appearances by Bollywood stars. These are good news stories and show the impact that the museum continues to have on the region, particularly Bradford.

As the hon. Member for Bradford West said, however, things have to change. I am not sure I necessarily agreed with his diagnosis. I would not change the leadership of the Science Museum Group. I have complete confidence in Ian Blatchford, its director, who took over about one year ago, and let us not forget that the leadership took over the Museum of Science and Industry in Manchester, which has seen visitor numbers increase by 30%. What I recognise, and what we must all recognise, is that attendances have fallen from a peak of nearly 1 million between 2000 and 2001 to just under half a million now. Educational visits are also declining while investment from the Science Museum Group has continued to rise.

As the hon. Gentleman pointed out, the director of the Science Museum Group and I met the hon. Members who are in the Chamber tonight. It was clear from that

meeting that there is huge support for the National Media museum, as well as the branches of the Science museum in Manchester and York. We agreed that further study was needed, and that a working group representing the Science Museum Group, MPs and Bradford city councillors should come together to look at supporting a sustainable future for the museum in Bradford. As the hon. Member for Bradford East so eloquently put it, this campaign has shown—we in this House know this, but it is worth saying—that MPs can be valuable. They can make a difference and bring constructive and useful ideas to the table. Above all, they can bring their communities together to look for constructive solutions. Again, I must emphasise how constructive everyone has been in this debate on what I think has been an unnecessary cause of concern for their communities.

These are challenging times. The only silver lining that I can think of from the past few weeks is that this has brought people together. It is important that the local council comes to the table and makes an important contribution to the future of the National Media museum. It was said at the meeting that the local council has its own strategy to promote science and technology to young people in Bradford. There, sitting in the middle of Bradford, is the National Media museum. It is part of the Science Museum Group, and has an opportunity and a remit to promote science and technology. I hold my hand up, too. As a Government who are promoting science and technology, we should recognise the huge opportunity that the presence of the National Media museum in Bradford offers us to further our agenda to promote science and technology among young people.

We have to consider a range of options. In the meeting, the idea of a five-year plan was discussed, which perhaps echoes the earlier reference to the brand of socialism favoured by the hon. Member for Bradford West. A five-year plan to turn around the National Media museum would be a brand of socialism that I would potentially sign up to. I think that is a point on which we are all agreed. I again echo the words of the hon. Gentleman: it is simply not good enough to have a sticking-plaster solution that keeps the doors open, saves face and gets people off our back. We must use this concern to look at all the opportunities that could present themselves for the National Media museum. For example, in November it will have an exhibition on the large hadron collider. The group continues to attract income through corporate activity and is looking to stage a range of live theatre-style events across all branches, including in Bradford.

It is important to talk about the spending review. In the last spending review, the Government protected our national museums so that they could continue to deliver free access to their important collections. The cut was limited to 15% in real terms over four years. Indeed, the grant in aid provided by the Government is conditional on the national museums providing free admission to their permanent collections. This has been a spectacularly successful policy. In my closing remarks in the entertaining debate that we have just had on the importance of the arts, I made the point that it is important to recognise the previous Government's achievements, just as I hope the current Opposition will recognise this Government's achievements.

There have been some further reductions to the original settlement of 2010, but taken overall they do not amount to the 25% cut that I have been hearing about recently.

There has also been speculation that the outcome of the spending review for 2015-16 will deliver deep cuts to museums. We now know that in the overall settlement for the Department for Culture, Media and Sport the national museums will see resource grant funding reductions of just 5% in 2015-16. In the context of this spending round, that is a significant success story. There is absolutely no reason for any of the museums in the Science Museum Group to close because of funding levels.

George Galloway: Will the Minister now address my point about the capital programme? We are very worried about it. He has acknowledged that keeping the museum's doors open but allowing it to crumble would be no use. Will he now put his money where his mouth is in that regard?

Mr Vaizey: I am not yet in a position to say what the capital spend will be, following the spending review announcement that the Chancellor is due to make at the end of this month. At the risk of getting a savaging, I must disappoint the hon. Gentleman, but whatever the capital settlement might be, there are other opportunities, particularly through the Heritage Lottery Fund, which makes huge grants to our museums regularly. There are also opportunities to work with corporate partners, as the hon. Gentleman said earlier. It was made clear at the meeting that it is not simply a question of keeping the roof on the museum; it is also a question of reconfiguring the building in order to take in exciting touring exhibitions.

Mr Ward: There was some talk of the group being transferred to the remit of the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills. Whether it transfers or not, will there be a possibility to access some of the BIS funding that exists for the promotion of science?

Mr Vaizey: My hon. Friend makes a good point. The Science Museum Group will certainly stay within the DCMS family as part of the 13 national museums that we fund directly. His intervention gives me the opportunity to elaborate on a point that I made earlier. The Science museum is the most formidable organisation in this country for promoting science and technology in exciting ways to young people, so we must use it not only as a repository for a science collection that is unparalleled almost anywhere in the world, but as an opportunity to excite young people and the wider population and engage them with science. On the basis of that intervention and others, I will certainly undertake to sit down with the Science museum. There was a lot of talk earlier about joined-up government, and I take that point on board. I will sit down and discuss how my Department and others can work together to make use of the Science museum's fantastic resources.

I pay tribute to the way in which all our national museums have coped with the difficulties that they have had with ongoing funding. We have done the best we can to limit the cuts in these difficult financial circumstances, and they have risen to the challenge. We have not been remiss in coming up with innovative ideas such as catalyst match funding with Arts Council England to support the creation of endowments and to help promote philanthropy.

On the point about capital funding, it is important to say that the regional branches of the Science Museum Group have received more than £1 million of support

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from the joint Wolfson Foundation-DCMS fund. Indeed, the National Railway museum recently received £100,000 for its station hall project. The joint Wolfson Foundation-DCMS capital fund will be getting a further £4 million for this funding programme in 2014. It is also important to note that the Chancellor of the Exchequer has recently said that he will grant our national museums the freedom to borrow and to set pay scales.

I shall conclude by thanking yet again the hon. Member for Bradford West, all his colleagues and my

hon. Friends for their constructive approach to what has been a difficult two weeks for their communities. They have been concerned about the loss of a much-loved institution. Let us take what has happened and turn it to our advantage. Let us work together to transform the National Media museum into what it could and should be.

Question put and agreed to.

7.59 pm

House adjourned.

Westminster Hall

Wednesday 19 June 2013

[JIM DOBBIN *in the Chair*]

Speech, Language and Communication Education

Motion made, and Question proposed, That the sitting be now adjourned.—(Mark Lancaster.)

9.30 am

Mr Robert Buckland (South Swindon) (Con): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Dobbin. I am delighted to secure a debate on an issue that is of great importance to me personally, as a parent of a child in receipt of speech and language therapy services and as vice-chair of the all-party group on speech and language difficulties, chaired ably by the noble Lord Ramsbotham, whose track record in this field is second to none.

Let me set the scene by discussing the seminal importance of communication skills in modern society. We are living in an increasingly complex world, where more and more information is available to us. Therefore the ability to communicate effectively is becoming ever more vital in securing employment and gaining skills. Communication is about having the ability not just to use language, but to understand and assimilate information being conveyed to the individual; it is a two-way process. For many children it is a given that the importance of communication is understood at an early age, but for a significant cohort that is not the case, which is where invaluable help from speech and language therapy comes in, to teach the child the value of communication itself.

As many as 10% of children in the United Kingdom—more than 1 million—have speech, language and communication needs that are not caused by language neglect or English as an additional language. That means that, in the average classroom, there are two or three children with such communication difficulties. Of that group, a large cohort—some 5% to 7% of the child population—has a specific language impairment, which means that they have difficulties acquiring, learning and using language that are not associated with factors such as cerebral palsy, hearing impairment or autism spectrum disorders. We are talking about children whom we would all describe as bright, but who struggle to listen to and understand the language being used in the classroom, or who struggle to express themselves effectively. Perhaps we politicians should draw the distinction between being articulate and being bright. One can be both, but sometimes one can be either/or.

The Department for Education annual special educational needs statistics demonstrate that speech, language and communication needs are the most common type of primary need for pupils with full statements of SEN in maintained primary schools. In January 2011, nearly 28% of pupils in maintained primary schools had speech, language and communication registered as their primary need.

Jim Shannon (Strangford) (DUP): I congratulate the hon. Gentleman on securing an important debate that all hon. Members can relate to in respect of their constituencies. In Northern Ireland, we have some 8,650 pupils with learning difficulties: there are three in every class of 30, which illustrates the magnitude of the problem. Does he agree that it is best to have a co-ordinated approach in schools, with families as well, so that the capacity to help and teach children can be reached and they can have that wee bit extra help when they need it most?

Mr Buckland: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving us some of the Northern Ireland figures: the three-per-classroom figure reflects the United Kingdom average. He makes an important point, which I will come back to in discussing examples in Swindon, because I am familiar with the services there.

In areas of social deprivation, upwards of 50% of children are starting school with language delay. That does not mean that their general cognitive abilities are below the national average, but their language skills are delayed. That delay can often run into secondary school and that has an impact on literacy and general attainment. It is clear from research that reading difficulties can be made worse if children are taught written language before their spoken language skills are developed enough to access this teaching.

David Simpson (Upper Bann) (DUP): I congratulate the hon. Gentleman on obtaining this debate. The figures that he has given us are startling: almost 1 million children across the United Kingdom have difficulties. In Northern Ireland, we have a major problem owing to the shortage of speech therapists. Does he agree that, for children to be helped in the classroom, it is vital that we have trained staff to identify the difficulties at an early age?

Mr Buckland: The hon. Gentleman is right. He talks realistically about the fact that, although it would be wonderful to have a speech and language therapist in every classroom across the country, it is about increasing staff training so that generally, whether they are teachers or teaching assistants, they have awareness and understanding of how to manage and help children with identified speech, language and communication disorders. However, having link speech and language therapists for each mainstream school, such as the one we have in Swindon, is an excellent way of making sure that there is a network of specialists who can provide support when needed for teachers dealing with children in the mainstream environment.

Robert Ffello (Stoke-on-Trent South) (Lab): I apologise, Mr Dobbin, because I must leave in a few moments to attend other meetings in the House. I congratulate the hon. Gentleman on securing this important debate.

In Stoke-on-Trent, Stoke Speaks Out has done fantastic work addressing speech and language needs in a deprived community. The hon. Gentleman talks about linking schools and organisations in Swindon—I think he was going to give examples—but what is his view on linking all groups, such as Stoke Speaks Out and the groups that work in Swindon, to have a national approach to this matter?

Mr Buckland: I am glad that the hon. Gentleman raised that, because there is an opportunity to do that through the Government's response to the better communication research programme, set up under the previous Government as a result of the Bercow review. I pay tribute to Mr Speaker for the work that he has done in this field. The report published by this Government at the end of last year, entitled "Better communication research programme: improving provision for children and young people with speech, language and communication needs", led to the creation of a communication council, which I believe will address the hon. Gentleman's legitimate question. The council will involve the Department for Education, the Department of Health and the Communication Trust, which is an organisation comprising more than 40 bodies in the field of speech, language and communication. The aim of the council will be to promote best practice, to share the good work of councils, such as Stoke and Swindon, to work out ways in which the research that has been obtained can be shared with as many councils and agencies as possible and to promote a better awareness of speech, language and communication needs. I should be grateful if my hon. Friend the Minister provided an update on the progress being made with regard to the work of the new communication council.

I was talking about primary school. It is important to note that there is an attainment gap. Although nearly 80% of all children achieve the expected level in English at the end of key stage 2, just 25% of children with speech, language and communication needs reach that level: a gap of 55%. The gap in maths is similarly dramatic—it is 46%—and in science it is 41%. In key stage 4, when young people are doing their GCSEs, just 15% of children with speech, language and communication needs achieve five GCSE A* to C or equivalent, compared to 57% of all young people.

As I said, we are not talking about children who are not cognitively able—they are—but their communication impairments mean they lose out big time when it comes to achieving the qualifications they need to progress into further education, training and employment. We talk a lot in this place about young people who are not in education, employment or training, and this issue is part of the problem. Unless we nail it here and now, we will not do justice to the hundreds of thousands of young people who are still not in education, employment or training.

An Institute of Directors skills survey reveals that businesses suffering skills shortages named communication skills as among the most difficult skills to obtain, with 22% of businesses experiencing difficulties recruiting people with oral communication skills and 18% experiencing difficulties recruiting those with written communication skills. That evidence reinforces the point I made at the beginning of my remarks that communication skills are becoming vital to not only social interaction, but the economic contribution young people can make to society. This issue is not, therefore, just a question of social good, but a fundamental question of economic activity and this country's future economic prosperity, so there is a hard edge to all this.

Jim Shannon: In Northern Ireland, 51% of school providers have indicated that speech and language difficulties are a serious problem, which shows the magnitude of

the issue. Does the hon. Gentleman feel that there should be better co-ordination between schools, education boards and business to ensure we have follow-through?

Mr Buckland: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman, and I like his point about linking up with business so that the skills young people acquire, such as communication skills, match what businesses need. We need to look at that in terms of young people, in 2015, coming to their GCSEs and, indeed, reaching the age of 17 or 18 and remaining in some form of learning environment.

Annette Brooke (Mid Dorset and North Poole) (LD): I, too, apologise to my hon. Friend because I have to leave shortly for another meeting. I have two brief points. Does he agree that we must start picking up the problems in pre-school and nursery? Otherwise, we get intense behavioural problems, which is not a good start to the child's period at school. On GCSEs, does he share my concern about the potential impact of Ofqual's proposal to remove the speaking and listening assessment from GCSE English language?

Mr Buckland: I am grateful to the hon. Lady for both those points. I will come to the concerns I share with her about Ofqual and GCSE English language in a little while, but let me deal with her first point, about early years. Often, we are talking about a pre-education setting and a health setting. I have long advocated the need for a proper, health-based assessment of speech, language and communication needs at the age of two, and I am supported by people such as Jean Gross, the communications champion. The Government are similarly committed to moving in that direction. With the increase in health visitor numbers—an extremely welcome initiative, which is already having an effect in places such as Swindon—and with extra training for health visitors and other professionals, we can start to identify a cohort of young people who, at the moment, are not being identified until early years education or, sometimes, even later.

Caroline Nokes (Romsey and Southampton North) (Con): I congratulate my hon. Friend on securing this important debate. On pre-school and pre-early years, he makes an important point. A couple of constituents recently approached me with their son, who is pre-school age. As parents, they found it incredibly difficult to find the correct signposting for speech and language therapy for him. Does my hon. Friend agree that, although the increase in the number of health visitors may well help, it is imperative that they have the knowledge to allow them to refer parents and children on to the specialist help that can nip the problem in the bud and, therefore, prevent the significant problems he identified at key stage 4 and later life?

Mr Buckland: I entirely agree; indeed, I would go further. In Swindon, we are training staff in early years settings and children's centres. We are training our health visitors in the skill of early identification and in the support strategies that can be put in place there and then. Despite the fact that Swindon's child population is rapidly increasing—our population generally is increasing, and we expect it to grow from 209,000 last year to 240,000 in the next 15 years—the need for specialist referrals is staying stable. That is clearly important,

because we are saving valuable resources by putting in early support to prevent issues from becoming acute and prevent the need for more specialist referrals. That is good for the child, good for the family and good for the provision of local services, at a time when resources are increasingly tight.

In that context, I am glad to commend my local authority for being flexible about the use of health and education funding, so that there is a link speech and language therapist in each mainstream school—in other words, the artificial division between sources of funding for health and education has been broken down, there is proper joint commissioning and people are intermeshed, rather than just working side by side. For example, speech and language therapists have been TUPE-ed over to the local authority, and there is a genuine coming together of services around the child. That must increasingly be the way forward for local authorities.

Let me deal briefly with the Children and Families Bill. In recent weeks and months, we have had much debate about it—I see that the hon. Member for Washington and Sunderland West (Mrs Hodgson), the shadow spokesperson, is in her place, and she joined in much of that debate in Committee and on Report last week—so I do not want to go over old ground. However, from the point of view of speech and language communication, it is important to deal with some of the concerns that remain, despite the general welcome for the Bill, and the warm welcome for the approach taken throughout Bill proceedings by the Under-Secretary of State for Education, my hon. Friend the Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mr Timpson), who has responsibility for children and families, and for his engagement with the sector, as well as with families, children and young people who have an interest in, and passion for, this issue.

We have talked about early identification not only at pre-school level, but at the first opportunity, when the problem is identified. There are still concerns about how the Bill will ensure that the identification mechanisms will work across all phases of education. There needs to be clearer guidance across health, education and social care about how speech, language and communication needs are identified. Paragraph 11(a) of schedule 1 in the draft regulations in the indicative code of practice makes it clear that local offers must set out what speech and language therapy provision is available. That is welcome, but it would be helpful to have further clarity about how the draft regulations would ensure that those responsible for the quality and delivery of services can be held to account. The Minister has indicated that those are draft regulations and that there will be a full consultation later in the year, but today is a golden opportunity to highlight some of the work that needs to be done.

I have made the point many times to the Minister that it would be helpful to have a common framework in which local authorities could be guided to construct their offer. That would help us to have a consistency of approach to speech and language therapy. I am not asking for uniformity, but simply for a common framework within which local authorities can be guided towards best practice.

I welcome the Minister's comments that children and young people with SEN who would not be eligible for a full education, health and care plan will continue to be tracked under the new framework, but further reassurances

as to how that will function in practice would be welcome. We must avoid any compromise over the identification of the need. The imposition of a duty on health providers, which was the subject of an amendment tabled by my hon. Friend the Minister, was good news. That clearly reinforces the existing commitment in the Bill to impose a duty jointly to commission services. We had a long argument about the phrase “wholly or mainly”, and my hon. Friend the Minister is familiar with the issue. Until now, speech, language and communication needs have been identified as educational needs, and we hope that that will remain the case, and that it will be clear.

I welcome the declaration that communication and interaction are a primary need, in the draft code of practice, but there are concerns that the role of schools in SEN provision remains at the edge of the Bill; there is not a huge amount of detail about what responsibilities schools will have. That is important, bearing in mind the welcome move to the creation of academies and free schools, and the unintended consequence that that may have on long-term provision of speech and language therapy services locally. There is a tension, is there not, between the need to employ therapists on a medium or long-term basis and the short-term spending priorities of schools that must spend to budgets? Some further clarity about how academies can work collaboratively to commission services would be extremely helpful. It would be regrettable if, through the welcome and admirable ethos of the new academy structure, we lost some of the long and medium-term thinking that is necessary in the commissioning of services from speech and language therapists.

My hon. Friend the Minister will, I know, update us on progress as much as he can, but I want to mention a couple of issues that I hope he will deal with. Early identification is the key to improving educational outcomes for children and young people with speech, language and communication needs, so will the Government introduce clear guidance to all health, education and social care providers on identifying those needs, to ensure that the needs of those we are dealing with—10% of the cohort—are met?

The creation of childminder agencies comes under part 4 of the Bill, but is relevant to the debate. I would welcome some clarity about how children with speech, language and communication needs will be identified and receive the support they need—particularly with respect to early years non-maintained settings.

Training has come up in some interventions, and I have already made a realistic acknowledgement of the limitations of resources. It is clear that staff knowledge of speech, language and communication needs is crucial for parents and young people with those issues. Currently, the universal work force has limited knowledge of speech, language and communication issues, and low confidence in identifying and supporting children with those difficulties—particularly hidden difficulties. However, historically, staff knowledge of speech, language and communication needs has been worryingly low.

That was demonstrated by research undertaken by Ofsted on the skills and knowledge of qualifying teachers, which identified that fewer than half had good or better skills, and concluded that

“not enough new teachers had consistent high-quality training during initial teacher education and induction to ensure that they

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developed good teaching skills, underpinned by a deep understanding of language development and the acquisition of literacy skills.”

Additionally, the research showed that 32%

“did not have sufficiently in-depth training in assessing pupils’ skills and knowledge in language and literacy to be able to use their judgements effectively”

for the planning of lessons and the provision of extra help. Evidence also shows that many early years staff feel inadequately equipped to help children with language delay, with more than 60% of teachers reporting that they lacked confidence in their ability to meet children’s language needs. Those are 2012 figures, so they are relevant and important. I should be grateful for further clarity about how teachers’ knowledge of speech, language and communication needs, and that of the wider education work force, is developing.

Mr Gregory Campbell (East Londonderry) (DUP): I join in congratulating the hon. Gentleman on obtaining the debate. Does he agree that UK devolution presents a double-edged sword when it comes to these difficult issues, in that the devolved institutions and the Westminster Parliament progress at varying speeds, but that we could benefit from best practice in the communication and cross-fertilisation of ideas and projects across the United Kingdom? That could only enhance the way we deal with the issues.

Mr Buckland: I agree with the hon. Gentleman and hope that the work of the communication council will include consideration of the devolved nations, Northern Ireland, Wales and Scotland.

I want briefly to consider low-incidence, high-cost specialist need, and approaches that can help with communications. One such approach is augmentative and alternative communication. It is estimated that about 0.5% of the population may need that approach at some point in their lives: that is about 260,000 children and adults. In addition, it is estimated that 0.05% of the population need access to regional specialised augmentative and alternative communication services, and communication aids. I am talking about the sort of technology that you may have seen, Mr Dobbin, when meeting speech and language therapists. It would include iPads, and apps developed to assist with communication. I have had a go at some of them; they are incredible, and, frankly, rather fun to use, to begin with. They are a great tool for young people, who are extremely adept at using the touch technology that is now available. The technology is evolving all the time, of course, and the problem for local commissioners is that often they make expensive decisions that quickly become obsolete. We must address that, and I would welcome support for local health and wellbeing boards to deal with such problems.

Paul Maynard (Blackpool North and Cleveleys) (Con): I congratulate my hon. Friend on his speech so far. Does he share my concern that many education authorities give children quite complex and expensive AAC equipment, which is removed when they leave the education system, leaving them bereft in adulthood? What thoughts does he have on how we can ensure a better transition for them from school to adult life?

Mr Buckland: I am extremely grateful to my hon. Friend and pay tribute to his work on the all-party group for young disabled people. He makes an excellent point. We need to think of new models and frameworks to deal with the issue of ownership of the technology. We should remember that some of it is expensive, and we cannot put an undue burden on the children and their families; however, perhaps with a joint ownership or lease-back approach we could make the transition to adulthood much easier for those young people. I would welcome further debate on my hon. Friend’s point about making sure that it is not all about the equipment, but about the young person. It is clear that as technology develops we can get things right and avoid expensive mistakes by local commissioners.

My hon. Friend the Member for Mid Dorset and North Poole (Annette Brooke) mentioned Ofqual’s proposal to remove the speaking and listening assessment from GCSE English language. There is huge concern that that proposal will damage one of the most important drivers for giving speaking and listening due consideration in secondary education, and significantly reduce the incentive to teach oral communication in schools; there will be no chain of accountability for pupils’ performance if that assessment is removed. I believe that that will lead to further disadvantage for the 10% cohort that we are so concerned about, and it could be considered an admission of defeat, as it suggests that schools and teachers cannot be held accountable for how speaking and listening are assessed. I would be grateful if my hon. Friend the Minister could comment on that proposal, and suggest a way forward that might ensure that those skills are still at the heart of secondary education in a way that meets the needs of children and young people who have speech, language and communication needs.

It has been a pleasure to open this debate, and I have spoken for a considerable time, but I will end on this note. I moved amendments to the Children and Families Bill on inclusion. At the time, I said that, in general, inclusion is not some sort of buzz word used by the politically correct; for tens of thousands of young people with disabilities, their right to access not only mainstream education services but mainstream social provision, and indeed a whole range of mainstream services, is vital if we are to value their contribution to society.

I will give an example of where I believe inclusion works well: a playgroup for young pre-school children that can incorporate speech and language therapy within its weekly schedule. What does that mean? It means convenience, not only for the child but for their family, who do not have to go to two separate appointments during the week, with all the concomitant disruption that that causes. That is what inclusion means, and I very much hope that, when the Bill is considered by the House of Lords, there will be a return to what I regard as the important and integral right for children and young people to be part of the mainstream of our society. That is what this debate is all about: children and young people attaining speech, language and communication skills, so that they can be part of the mainstream of our social and economic life. They deserve nothing less.

10.2 am

Nick Herbert (Arundel and South Downs) (Con): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for South Swindon (Mr Buckland) on securing this debate and on

the way in which he raised these issues in relation to the Children and Families Bill on Report. I am sorry that I was unable to attend that debate, but I read his speech with great interest because I have been approached by a number of constituents about the difficulties they have faced with their children who have speech and language impairments.

As a consequence of those approaches, I convened a meeting in my constituency. The meeting was on the wider issue of autism, but nevertheless I heard many very moving accounts from parents about the difficulties they face under the current fragmented system, which makes it unclear to whom they can turn, and presents difficulties in accessing the help their children need. For those reasons, I welcome the recognition implicit in the Government's introduction of the Bill that the current system for addressing special educational needs is not fit for purpose and that we need a system that better integrates the provision of services for parents and, frankly, just stops making it so difficult for parents to achieve what they need.

My hon. Friend, for reasons I understand, emphasises the economic benefits of ensuring better provision, but there is a more fundamental question about our duty as a society to ensure that parents who face difficulties that other parents do not face are spared being repeatedly put through the ordeal of finding it impossible, or at least very difficult, to access the services they need. The transitions through the different phases of a child's life present repeated hurdles that parents must clear.

In the specific case of speech and language impairment, what do parents want to ensure? First, they want to ensure that the problem is diagnosed and picked up early. Secondly, the diagnosis having been made, they want to ensure adequate provision of the therapy and the particular, specific and, yes, sometimes resource-intensive services that such children need, without having constantly to petition different agencies and providers and without the difficulties that they have experienced. And thirdly, in the event that they do not feel a service is being provided adequately, they want to make certain that they have the ability to appeal, that the appeal is clear and that providers are therefore held to account for the services they are obliged to provide. We should judge the new measures in the Bill against the yardstick of those three tests.

I welcome the Bill and the Minister's particular commitment to it and to these issues. He has made enormous strides in setting out a new approach that will produce a much better system. From his response to my hon. Friend the Member for South Swindon in Committee and on Report, I think the Minister recognises that there is still some concern about speech and language therapy and whether the new system will have the accountability that I describe.

I know the Minister is considering the code of practice, as my hon. Friend the Member for South Swindon mentioned. Will the Minister take this opportunity to reassure those groups and parents who are engaged with this issue that the move to the new system will indeed secure an improvement for parents and not make things more difficult for them? First, will the new system ensure that the issues that children might have are picked up at the earliest possible stage?

Secondly, will there be no room for doubt in the new integrated assessment, so that where speech and language therapy is identified as being needed, it will be treated as an educational provision that cannot be gamed or passed over by providers? The concern is that if that is not the case and if for some reason the existing case law that has built up in this area can be bypassed or ignored, parents will be left in a position of being told that a particular form of provision has been identified as necessary but that, because the provision is not held to be an educational provision, it will not actually be provided and will instead be passed over to another provider that sidesteps its obligation. The concern is that the Bill's aim to ensure that there is an integrated assessment and that agencies work together, which is exactly what parents want, might be sidestepped.

Thirdly, as a consequence of ensuring that speech and language therapy is treated as an educational provision, where there is a lapse or where parents are unhappy with the provision, is the appeals system adequate to ensure that their concerns will be answered?

I know my hon. Friend the Minister has indicated his willingness to address those concerns, but there is still anxiety out there about whether the transition to a new system will produce exactly what the Government intend. The Bill is an important opportunity to achieve very different provision of essential services. We know the gains that can be made when the agencies work together, and we know that they can produce a tailored, integrated service that not only produces a better service for the children but hugely reduces the anxiety that parents face when they constantly have to navigate their way around the different services.

There is a huge opportunity here, but there is also a need to reassure parents about the move to the new system. If my hon. Friend the Minister is able to do that, with particular reference to the code of practice, and to address the concerns that my hon. Friend the Member for South Swindon has now raised on two occasions, I would be very grateful.

10.9 am

Mrs Sharon Hodgson (Washington and Sunderland West) (Lab): It is as ever a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Dobbin, just as it is to debate matters with the hon. Member for South Swindon (Mr Buckland) and the Minister, which is just as well given how many times we have done so over the past few months. I congratulate the hon. Member for South Swindon on securing the debate and for his comprehensive and passionate speech. He is becoming a real expert on the issues we are discussing, for which he is becoming the go-to Member in the House, and he is to be commended for that. We had some good-quality discussions on this area of policy when the three of us served on the Children and Families Bill, with other Members—no longer in their place—who also served on the Bill Committee.

Today's debate allows us to go into further detail, with specific reference to children and young people with speech, language and communication needs. The topic—to be more specific, speech and language therapy—was the subject of the first parliamentary debate that I spoke in as a shadow Minister, way back in 2010. That debate, which was secured by the hon. Member for

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Blackpool North and Cleveleys (Paul Maynard), who is present this morning, was oversubscribed, as he might remember, but we heard a lot of personal stories about the need for and the value of speech and language therapy, including from the hon. Gentleman and me.

I have a son who had speech therapy until the age of seven. Sadly, that therapy did not cease at seven because he was cured, but because we moved south to a London borough that decided his speech was within the normal realms. It was not, but that is what we call the postcode lottery, which we hope will be addressed to an extent by the local offers, especially if they are underpinned by a national framework, as we called for in Committee. I will return to that point in more detail.

Since I have been a Member of the House, there has been a small number of opportunities to debate and discuss this important topic, not least the excellent debate on the Floor of the House in the previous Parliament following the outstanding Bercow review into speech, language and communication needs. As we all agree, it was a seminal report on the situation throughout the country of children and young people with speech, language and communication needs and on the support, or lack of it, available to them. I am interested to hear an update from the Minister on where we are with regard to the recommendations made in the Bercow review and whether they have all been met or are under way. Once again, we have had an excellent debate, with a great deal of interest from Members in all parts of the House and some excellent contributions.

I am pleased that the hon. Member for South Swindon mentioned augmentative and alternative communication aids and equipment, because that area is often not discussed in the House, perhaps because it is so specialist. For the children, young people and adults who rely on such AAC equipment, however, it is fundamental to their lives and to the quality of their lives.

Paul Maynard: I recently had an Adjournment debate on that very subject, which was replied to by a Health Minister. Does the hon. Lady agree that part of the problem is the lack of clarity in Government about where AAC should sit? Should it be a Department of Health or a Department for Education priority?

Mrs Hodgson: The hon. Gentleman makes a valid point. As the name suggests, the education, health and care plans are a combination of education, health and social care. The Minister must be commended for his excellent work in that regard, to get the involvement of the Department of Health and that collaboration and cross-departmental working that in the past has been lacking, leading to confusion about whether AAC sits under Education or Health. I am sure that the Minister will respond to that point when he winds up. Under the new plans, I hope that things will become clearer, if only in the sense that the different parts of government work better together to meet the needs of the child or young person. The right hon. Member for Arundel and South Downs (Nick Herbert) asked for assurances from the Minister that the new system will bring improvements and not make it more difficult for parents to access the support that their child needs. We all agree that that is what we want to see from the new system, which I hope will be the case.

Speech, language and communication needs are highly prevalent: more than 30% of those on school action plus schemes have been identified as having speech, language and communication needs, and around a quarter have statements. Only 44% of pupils with speech, language and communication needs achieve their expected progress in English; as we heard from the hon. Member for South Swindon, even fewer—35%—do so in maths by the end of their school life. Even by age 19, little more than half those young people have achieved level 2 qualifications, which means a C or above at GCSE. Obviously, fewer still go on to get A-levels: just one in five young people with speech, language and communication needs has achieved a level 3 qualification by the age of 19.

Shockingly, those statistics suggest that speech, language and communication needs hold back children and young people more than other special educational needs and disabilities that we might otherwise think have a bigger impact on educational outcomes. The proportion of children achieving level 3 qualifications is lower for those with speech, language and communication needs than for those with hearing or visual impairment, multi-sensory impairment, physical disability, autistic spectrum disorders and specific learning difficulties. Such statistics clearly indicate that we have a real problem with how we provide support for such children and young people. It is therefore little surprise that they are so over-represented in exclusions from school and the youth justice system—about 65% of young offenders have speech, language and communication difficulties, according to the Communication Trust.

Mr Buckland: I am extremely grateful to the hon. Lady for those shocking statistics about 65% or more of young people in custody having such need. Is it not essential that we use the Children and Families Bill as an opportunity to reach in to those young people in custody, to rehabilitate them and to reduce the risk of reoffending? That is what it is all about.

Mrs Hodgson: The hon. Gentleman has made an excellent point, which we discussed at length in Committee and on Report. Noble lords will return to the issue in the other place, and Lord Ramsbotham will be seeking some commitment from the Government, specifically to amend or even scrap clause 69 of the Bill. The area is vital, and I am sure that we and others will return to it time and again until that figure of 65% comes down to a more representative level.

Paul Maynard: I am afraid that my point might be slightly political. Will the hon. Lady put some pressure on her Front Benchers about the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Bill? They are opposing abolition of the antisocial behaviour order—ASBOs trap many young people with speech and language needs in a cycle of breach that ends up in imprisonment—and its replacement with the injunction to prevent nuisance and annoyance or IPNA, which will enable a positive requirement to be imposed on the individual and might help to tackle some of the conditions. Will she have a discussion with her shadow Front-Bench team, please?

Mrs Hodgson: The hon. Gentleman has made his point, but I will not test the Chair during this debate by expanding on antisocial behaviour or on my discussions

of the subject with Front-Bench colleagues. The hon. Gentleman has made his point, however, and it will have been heard by my colleagues.

That failure—all those young people being excluded and ending up in the youth justice system and then adult prisons—is a significant cost to the public purse, through lost productivity and taxes from children not reaching their potential, and the cost of welfare or of keeping the young person in youth justice or in the prison system, if it comes to that. Therefore, early intervention and getting the right support in place as soon as possible are important not only to the individual child or young person, but to the whole of society. That is why I pushed the Minister so hard, as did everyone who spoke on these matters during Committee consideration of the Bill, on the provisions that will be in place under the new system, and particularly on the role that early years settings and early years area special educational needs co-ordinators working across those settings will be expected to play.

The Minister resisted my calls for local authorities to have a duty to co-operate with private, voluntary and independent child care providers with regard to children in their settings whom they believe to have special educational needs, saying that he believed it would place a burden on those providers. However, as I have heard from such providers, the problem is that they are often completely ignored by local authorities when they try to refer a child for an assessment or some other form of help. That is the problem that I was trying to solve with an amendment. I hope that our noble colleagues can address it in more detail in the other place.

I would also like early years area SENCOs to be given a statutory role to ensure that PVI child care settings are given the support that they need to identify and adequately cater for such children. As we discussed in Committee, the draft code of practice includes a heading on that role, which I welcome, although there is no content yet. I am sure that the Minister and his officials are working on that now, so I would be grateful if he could tell us what progress has been made on developing that guidance since our discussion in March.

Obviously, the vast majority of children and young people with identified SLCNs do not qualify for a statement at present, and will not qualify for an education, health and care plan when the new system is rolled out. At present, their teachers and parents have school action and school action plus as a graduated response to meeting their needs, which will become a single SEN category under the new code of practice. We are still not sure exactly how that will look in practice, but the Minister assures us that the 1.4 million children on school action and school action plus will continue to be supported, and we must take him at his word.

Clearly, though, the level of support that children receive will owe much to the quality of the local offer in their area, which is why I have sought at every stage of the Children and Families Bill to strengthen the wording of the legislation on that issue. In particular, the Minister and I, along with the hon. Member for South Swindon, have had many debates about what standards we should expect from local offers in terms of provision and accountability. I am sure that such debates will rumble on as the Bill continues its passage through the other place.

I reiterate a point made in last week's debate by the Chair of the Select Committee on Education, the hon. Member for Beverley and Holderness (Mr Stuart). The success of this raft of reforms rests on getting local offers right. I do not believe that the Department for Education can afford to take the chance that 152 flowers will blossom if cash-strapped councils are left to their own devices.

Finally, teacher training is crucial in making every school a good school for children and young people with high-incidence SENs such as speech, language and communication needs; the hon. Member for South Swindon mentioned that as well. Every teacher is a teacher of children with speech, language and communication needs, but not every teacher knows how to be. Fewer than half of newly qualified teachers surveyed by Ofsted had good skills and knowledge of language development, and about one third did not have sufficient training to enable them to plan how to give such children extra help in the classroom. That is clearly not satisfactory.

Again, I feel that the Department for Education should be leading on that issue by requiring improvements to teacher training and continuing professional development so that every teacher has the skills needed to teach the class in front of them rather than just the subject. The Department is going in the opposite direction, saying that people do not need a teaching qualification to teach, or even to head a school in some instances. Labour Members restated our opposition to that idea this week.

That said, I hope that the Minister, outside the Children and Families Bill process, will consider our calls to make such improvements to the quality of the work force. He has made a lot of improvements to the Bill during his relatively short time in office, for which Members from all parties are grateful. During his remaining time in post, however long or short it may be, I hope that he will continue to listen to the concerns of parents and practitioners and take the actions needed to ensure that the unacceptable outcomes for children and young people with SLCNs that the hon. Member for South Swindon and I described will be improved in the years to come.

Jim Dobbin (in the Chair): I am sure that the Minister will take this opportunity to stay in place.

10.24 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education (Mr Edward Timpson): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Dobbin, for the remaining 35 minutes of this debate. I hope that my time in office will be longer than that, so I can reach the end of the debate still in post.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for South Swindon (Mr Buckland) on securing this important and still timely debate—it follows Report of the Children and Families Bill last week—which has been well attended by Members on both sides the House. I know that he speaks from a voluminous amount of personal experience, as he does valuable work with children and young people with special educational needs and their families in his constituency.

As my hon. Friend rightly reminded us, he is also the vice-chair of the all-party group on speech and language difficulties. He has been championing the cause not just

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through that group but through the work that he has done on the Bill. As a member of the Committee that considered the SEN provisions in the Bill, he helped to shine a bright light on many of the key issues by tabling amendments and making wise and measured contributions to the discussions. I thank him again for his engagement. I also thank the hon. Member for Washington and Sunderland West (Mrs Hodgson), who has been another constructive participant in those debates.

I will try to cover as many of the points raised as possible. In the usual way, I will be happy to write to hon. Members to provide full answers if any points remain outstanding. I will deal at the outset with the specific points raised. The points made by my right hon. Friend the Member for Arundel and South Downs (Nick Herbert) on behalf of his constituents exemplify why it is necessary for us to push through these important reforms, so that parents in his constituency and across the country do not face the battles that form the downside of their experience in trying to access special educational provision for their children. Those problems prevent them from feeling that the system is working with them rather than against them, which happens on too many occasions.

The hon. Member for Washington and Sunderland West raised the importance of the local offer in trying to drive improvements on the ground. The local offer will set out in one place information about all the services that the local authority expects to be available in the local area and beyond for local children and young people with special educational needs and their parents. We have been clear in the indicative regulations that it must cover support for all children and young people with SEN, not just those with education, health and care plans. That could include provision from small specialist services providing outreach support to schools, such as those offering support to children using alternative and augmentative communication, as well as the provision normally available in mainstream settings and on offer in special schools and specialist colleges, including those in the non-maintained and independent sectors.

The local offer will also let parents know how to access services, what support is available to enable them to do so and what to do if they are unhappy with the support on offer. My approach is to make that engagement as clear and simple as possible for parents to access, so that they do not have to navigate through what I have described in the past as a labyrinthine array of different organisations and processes. We must have a single, easy entry into ensuring that those services are properly provided.

Regulations and a new SEN code of practice will set out a common framework for the local offer, but the key to the success of the local offer in each area will be the transparency of information and the involvement of local parents, children and young people in developing and reviewing it. That will help to ensure that it is responsive to local needs. Arguments have been made for stipulating minimum standards for the local offer. I believe that that would weaken local accountability and lead to a race to the bottom, as my hon. Friend the Member for South Swindon said in Committee.

We made an indicative draft of the code of practice available to the Committee to aid consideration of the SEN provisions in the Bill, and we are revising the

guidance in the draft to take account of the points raised in Committee and the wider discussions that we are having and continue to have with others. To that end, I had a productive meeting recently with the Communication Trust, another key interest in the speech, language and communication sector. I also had the privilege, only last week, of visiting Springfield special school in my constituency, which makes excellent provision for children's speech, language and communication needs, particularly for those who need alternative and augmented communication. If I have time, I will explain a little more about how that experience has enriched my understanding of this important area. My officials will shortly meet the Communication Trust and many of its constituent groups—I believe it is made up of 47 such groups—to discuss the code of practice. That will offer the opportunity to consider the guidance on the local offer and the issues raised this morning.

Important points were raised about the need to ensure that we identify and provide for children's speech, language and communication needs as quickly and as early as possible. My right hon. Friend the Member for Arundel and South Downs and my hon. Friends the Members for South Swindon, for Mid Dorset and North Poole (Annette Brooke) and for Romsey and Southampton North (Caroline Nokes) all made that point.

Age two is an important time for children and their parents because it is when problems with language development and behaviour become readily identifiable and when intervention may be more effective than for an older child. That can make a real difference to a child's future. The early years progress check that we introduced at age two and our work with the Department of Health to develop an integrated health and development review at age two to two and a half will make a real difference. Developmental delays, including in speech and language, will form part of that review and the training of clinicians will include assessing speech and language needs.

As my hon. Friend the Member for South Swindon said, by 2015, we will recruit and train an extra 4,200 health visitors to identify disability and special educational needs, to provide advice and support and to suggest activities to enhance language development and communication skills, including referral for speech and language therapy when appropriate. We have also commissioned the Early Language Consortium to deliver a £1.4 million three-year early language training programme to train practitioners to identify language development problems and to work with children and families. We aim to train nearly 13,000 professionals and to reach 95,000 families through that programme.

Ofsted evidence points to over-identification of SEN. The better communication research programme was funded by the Department for Education and arose from a recommendation by the Bercow review. We are continuing to take forward many of the key recommendations, including our work with the Communication Trust, our grants and contracts with the trust, to help to disseminate much of the good practice that came out of that research programme and to ensure that all that is brought together in one place, with the involvement of the royal colleges, and used effectively and pragmatically where we know it can make a difference on the ground.

That research also shows that some groups, such as those with speech, language and communication needs, are under-identified. We plan to replace the present system of School Action and School Action Plus in schools with new guidance to help schools to ensure that they identify children with SEN more accurately and put the right support in place as quickly as possible. The new SEN code of practice will include clear expectations for schools on the processes for identifying and assessing pupils, setting objectives for them, reviewing progress and securing further support. That will not change the legislative duties on schools to use their best endeavours to secure special educational provision, to have an SEN co-ordinator, to notify parents of such provision and to publish information on how they are implementing their policy on SEN and disability. Those are all set out in the Children and Families Bill.

The local offer presents clear opportunities for local authorities and schools to reflect approaches with good evidence of positive impact. I CAN's programme, "A Chance to Talk", which is supported by funding from my Department, is one example. It provides a comprehensive approach to children's speech and language development across clusters of schools and through the involvement of NHS speech and language therapists. It incorporates a joint commissioning approach to ensure that children with the most complex needs receive specialist help at school. That is very much the model that my hon. Friend the Member for South Swindon talked about and it has flourished in his constituency. It provides flexibility in health and education, breaks down many of the barriers that my right hon. Friend the Member for Arundel and South Downs spoke about in relation to his constituency, and starts to bring about the culture change that we need to see on the ground.

Teachers tell us that the quality of their training is increasing, and many hon. Members have spoken about the importance of training the work force. Through the school direct programme, we are giving schools greater control over how they recruit and train teachers to meet the needs of their pupils. For example, ARK school is working with Canterbury Christ Church university to train 54 teachers through school direct. The programme includes intensive training during the first three years of a new teacher's career, with additional training in inclusion behaviour and the teaching of reading and writing. They have a clear focus on SEN and equipping teaching to meet the range of pupils' needs.

I am aware that the practical tools for schools developed by the better communication research programme, including those for developing communication supporting classrooms, are being widely disseminated by the Communication Trust as part of its work with the Department and elsewhere. The Department is also supporting the development of teachers' skills in meeting SEN in other ways. A national scholarship fund for teachers has helped 600 teachers to obtain a qualification related to SEN, and there have been specialist resources for initial teacher training and new advanced level online modules for serving teachers, including on dyslexia, autism and speech and language skills. Funding has been provided for new SENCOs to complete the master's-level national award for SEN co-ordination, with 10,119 between 2009 and 2012 and a further 800 in 2013-14.

Additional training for established SENCOs has been offered through NASEN, formerly the National Association for Special Educational Needs, to 5,000 teachers to date

and there has been funding for several sector-specialist organisations, including the Communication Trust, to support the implementation of SEN reforms and to provide information to schools and teachers. The Institute of Education was awarded a grant in 2013-14 to explore the development of a scalable pilot to increase knowledge and skills in SEN within initial teacher training for trainees who wish to study this area in greater depth as part of their programme.

There has been a strong effort in initial teacher training and the current work force to develop skills and expertise in special educational needs, so that the ambitions set out in the Green Paper are reflected in the draft code of practice, which states that all teachers should be special educational needs teachers. That is becoming a reality following the work that I have mentioned.

A key change to the Bill, which several hon. Members have mentioned today and in Committee, is the introduction of a specific duty requiring those responsible for commissioning health provision to secure the health care provision in education, health and care plans. That significant change has been acknowledged and widely welcomed. The new duty builds on the joint commissioning duty in the Bill which requires local authorities and clinical commissioning groups, as well as NHS England when appropriate for national commissioning, to assess the needs of the local population of children and young people with SEN, and to plan and commission services to meet those needs. Joint commissioning arrangements must include those for securing education, health and care needs assessments, and the education, health and care provision specified in education, health and care plans. The new health duty requires health commissioners to ensure that the health care elements of those plans are provided for each individual. That provides direct clarity to parents that the support their child needs will be provided.

My hon. Friend the Member for South Swindon raised particular concerns in Committee, on Report and again today about clause 21 of the Bill and about when health provision is to be regarded as special educational provision. My right hon. Friend the Member for Arundel and South Downs also made that point. Clause 21(5) states:

"Health care provision or social care provision which is made wholly or mainly for the purposes of the education or training of a child or young person is to be treated as special educational provision".

That was included to fulfil an undertaking I gave during pre-legislative scrutiny that we would maintain existing protections, including case law, and preserve the current position where there is no duty to secure the health provision in plans.

Under the broader, integrated assessments and plans in the Bill, decisions will be based on special educational, health and care provision. Without clause 21(5), it may be difficult for a tribunal to say that, although speech and language therapy is health care provision made by health care providers, it is in fact special educational provision. The clause also enables appeals to the tribunal in respect of health provision when it is defined as special educational provision, as now. However, as I said on Report—I am happy to reiterate it for the purposes of this debate—we want to get things right, so that the position is clear for parents and for young people and children with a special educational need. I

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am content to continue listening to the views expressed in this House and in the other place to ensure that that is the case.

Mr Buckland: I applaud the Minister for his efforts, but will he look again at the Bromley case that I referred to on Report? Although I accept that it was in the context of the old system of statements of special educational need, there, we had a very clear exposition from Lord Justice Stephen Sedley, as he then was, of what is necessary for the purposes of provision. As for my wording, I agree that just removing “wholly or mainly” may not be the right approach, but we all need to strive together to get the wording absolutely right, so that we avoid the nice legal arguments that the Minister and I might enjoy academically, but which are no good to families.

Mr Timpson: As ever, my hon. Friend makes an excellent point, which reminds us lawyers that sometimes we need to look beyond the boundaries of a legal document and reflect more on what it seeks to achieve, as a way of ensuring that it does what we intend it to. I will look carefully at the Bromley case that he mentioned, not only in context, but as a demonstration of where we need to think through the implications of the clause as drafted to ensure that some of those eventualities do not still pertain in the new environment and in the reformed system that we all want to see work. I am happy to do that, and I have clearly indicated my intent to continue thinking carefully about how that aspect of the Bill will fulfil all those objectives.

I completely agree with my hon. Friend and with the hon. Member for Washington and Sunderland West that young offenders, including those with special educational needs, need to receive the right support and access to education, both when in custody and when they return to their communities. Clause 69 is necessary because it prevents our legislation from coming into conflict with existing comprehensive statutory provisions governing how education support is delivered in custody, as set out in the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009, which I am sure the hon. Lady remembers well.

Duties placed on local authorities by that legislation are fulfilled through contracts held by the Education Funding Agency that are funded by the Ministry of Justice. As hon. Members will know, the MOJ is clear that the current system is not working, which is why it recently consulted on transformational reforms to how education and support in youth custody should be delivered in future. I have ensured that the education element for children, including those with SEN, in the care system and elsewhere, is being properly considered as part of the review. That provides an important opportunity to be absolutely clear about what role the time that a young person spends in custody plays, both as a form of punishment and in rehabilitation, so that when they come out of custody, they have every prospect of moving on in a positive direction. We have done that elsewhere in the prison estate. There are some good examples, but we can do much better, which is why I have given a commitment to my hon. Friend the Member for South Swindon that we want to make progress, both

in my Department and across Government, as the Bill moves on and as other work is done by the Ministry of Justice on the consultation that is taking place.

Mr Buckland: I know that the Minister was a family practitioner, but does he agree, perhaps from his experience dealing with criminal cases, that, very often, crimes of violence are precipitated by communications misunderstandings and young people resorting to using their fists—or worse—instead of being able to communicate with each other to resolve any differences?

Mr Timpson: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. He will know—as do I, from my family’s experience of fostering many children—that some manifestations of the inability to communicate result in outbursts of anger. I have spoken before, on one occasion, about when someone who appeared to be, on the surface, a quiet, unassuming young man ended up smashing every single pane in my Dad’s greenhouse, because he did not know how else to communicate his anger, frustration and worry about what had happened to him in the past. I am very alive to that fact, which is why I am determined that we make progress in that important area.

I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Blackpool North and Cleveleys (Paul Maynard)—I am looking forward to coming to his working group later today on speech, language and communication needs—on the importance of ensuring that children and young people who need specialised communication aids have access to them. I know that he has raised that vociferously on a number of occasions, including in Prime Minister’s questions, in which the Prime Minister was clear that he wanted to help bring about the important changes that my hon. Friend wants.

My hon. Friend made the point about whether the interest in Government in the issue lies in health or education. The best answer I can give is that it is in both, which is why, in both those Departments, there is a strong interest from Ministers, who work not only individually, but collectively. I have met the Minister of State, Department of Health, the hon. Member for North Norfolk (Norman Lamb), who has responsibility for care, on a number of occasions to discuss that and other matters that transcend the Children and Families Bill, to ensure that we are moving in the right direction and in a way that will bring about the best results.

For lower-level alternative and augmentative communication needs, it will be up to health commissioners and their local authority partners to work together—we should lead by example by doing that in national Government—to ensure that the right services are in place locally to meet the needs of the population, and to reflect those services in the local offer. Highly specialist services needed by only a very small number of children will be commissioned centrally by NHS England, as my hon. Friend will know.

Prior to 1 April this year, there was no national commissioning of AAC services. There was no standard or nationally consistent definition of the services that were the commissioning and funding responsibility of the NHS. As a result, there was variation in organisations and in the commissioning and funding of specialised AAC services, and inequitable access to such services. A key priority must be to ensure that commissioning arrangements for specialised services are placed on a

much more robust and equitable footing across England. That is currently being undertaken by NHS England's area teams.

Work is under way to establish the required baseline for AAC services. Area teams are working with colleagues in clinical commissioning groups to identify the value of contracts for communication aids. My hon. Friend the Member for South Swindon mentioned the work of the former communication champion, Jean Gross, whose 2010 report suggested that a national budget of £14 million was required for 2012 to 2014 to bring the required baseline into effect. Working with experts on its AAC sub-group, NHS England will be looking at the report's assumptions and other available data. We need to be clear that the progress on AAC has to be fulfilled to a degree that ensures the greatest level of equitable access that we can achieve. The development of the national commissioning of those services provides an opportunity to have much more consistency. I hope that that will be an important step forward.

One reason why I am pleased to support my hon. Friend the Member for Blackpool North and Cleveleys in trying to improve the situation is that I saw for myself, on my visit to Springfield school in Crewe, some of the incredible aids that are now available. Those are quickly coming on stream all the time. I was given a number of demonstrations involving buttons and click mice, and I was also told about gaze technology—I confess that I cannot remember the exact phraseology, but that is the term that I have decided to use—in which the length of time a person keeps their eyes fixed on the screen determines their command to the device. That is an astonishing way of providing anyone, whatever their level of communication, with an opportunity to communicate.

As the technology advances, some of the costs of the technology, certainly in the early stages, prove quite significant, so we need to think carefully about how we ensure, as my hon. Friend rightly said, that the equipment can still benefit the individual as they move on from compulsory education and, we hope, make the transition to a fulfilling adult life.

Mrs Hodgson: There was recently a reception, which some hon. Members may have gone to, about the gaming industry. One company there, SpecialEffect, is developing some of this eye-movement technology. It works in the gaming industry, but also on the educational opportunities provided by that technology. A lot of people may think that gaming is not necessary, but this is a very important move, with regard to cohesion, and young people feeling included in society, and able to play games and take part in other online activities in the same way that their peers can. The cost of the technology could be prohibitive, so I am pleased that the Minister is aware of it and has availed himself of it. I hope that we can ensure that where these technologies can help children with their education and the social aspects of their life, they will not be deemed too prohibitively expensive all the time.

Mr Timpson: The hon. Lady is a great advocate of the role that information technology can play in the lives of many children and young people with special educational needs. That even led to her persuading me, in Committee, to include elements relating to IT in the code of practice. This is another example of where we

have the chance to widen the opportunities for many young people with speech, language and communication needs who, not many years ago, would not have had any of that at their disposal. Yes, there will be costs that must be taken into account, but with some of the new commissioning arrangements that are coming on board, including the joint commissioning in the Bill, and with personal budgets, there is a raft of ways in which, with the right support, many families can start to consider that as a reality, rather than a pipe dream. It is incumbent on all of us to think carefully about how we can help them to achieve exactly that.

I want to touch on an important issue that my hon. Friends the Members for Mid Dorset and North Poole, and for South Swindon, touched on—the Ofqual consultation proposal not to assess formally speaking and listening skills at GCSE. Clearly, pupils need speaking skills for their future progression, and employers value good communication skills and want them to be taught. The subject content of the new English language GCSE will strengthen the requirement to teach pupils how to become more confident in using spoken language in formal settings. The key point is how speaking skills are taught. Often, we dwell on the subject matter, rather than how that will be put across and absorbed by each individual child in such a way that it will endure. We do not want it to be just an exercise in process.

Improvements to the new national curriculum key stage 2 and 3 programmes of study for English will result in students being better prepared for the start of their GCSE courses. We do not want to undermine the robust standard of this subject by including assessments that cannot be externally validated, and that is reflected in Ofqual's proposals. We have consulted organisations representing students with special educational needs as part of the equality analysis that we published in March. Overall, we believe that the benefit to all students will be positive. Students will follow more robust and challenging GCSE courses that will have real value for their future progression to further education and employment. Those with special educational needs can, through the Equality Act 2010, be supported in their exams through reasonable adjustments, such as extra time or supervised rest breaks. Ofqual, as the independent regulator, will monitor access arrangements and reasonable adjustments as the reformed GCSEs are introduced.

The consultation is still open. I know that the Communication Trust and others have submitted their own reflections on the proposals, and I have no doubt that Ofqual will take those reflections extremely seriously. We shall have to wait for the outcome of the consultation to see what steps are to be taken next, but it is important that Members of the House have the opportunity, both through the consultation and through the debate today, to make their feelings known, so that every angle is properly considered when understanding the ramifications of any changes on which Ofqual is consulting.

The changes that we are making in relation to special educational needs through the Children and Families Bill and through the 20 pathfinders across 31 local authorities are a key feature of our determination to ensure that all vulnerable children, whatever their background, have the chance to reach their full potential, not just in their education but in their wider life socially, culturally and otherwise. It is encouraging that we

[Mr Timpson]

have reached the halfway point of the Bill's passage and there is strong consensus on much of what it is designed to achieve and how we are going about that.

We are not talking about a small cohort of children in our country. We are talking about a significant number of children, and as my hon. Friend the Member for South Swindon rightly pointed out on a number of occasions, we have a duty to ensure that they have every opportunity to reach their goals, academic or otherwise, that we would want for our own children. I know that as the Bill moves on, many Members here and in the other place will want to continue this dialogue, which has been extremely constructive to date, to ensure that we meet our responsibilities in Parliament to provide the best possible framework for the local agencies that are working so hard on the ground, in the public, private and voluntary sectors, to help to bring about these important changes. I am confident that we have set our stall out in a way that will drive reform and bring about the culture change that we all want and that, as a consequence, many children and families will feel that rather than the system working against them, it is much more on their side.

We are already starting to see, in some of the evaluation of the work that the pathfinders are doing, reports from parents who are starting to feel more included. They are being properly consulted. They are seeing changes in attitude, particularly in the health service, towards their involvement in not just the assessment process, but the delivery of services. The building blocks are starting to be put in place. Some of the relationships are starting to be recalibrated and are starting to mesh; my hon. Friend the Member for South Swindon said that was happening already in his constituency.

We still have a huge amount of work to do. We are under no illusions about the fact that it will be a monumental task for all of us to ensure that this is a lasting and fulfilling change for many families, but the signs are encouraging, and I look forward to working with hon. Members on both sides of the House to continue to do all that we can to ensure that these important reforms really do hit the mark.

Dorset Police (Funding)

10.59 am

Richard Drax (South Dorset) (Con): Good morning, Mr Dobbin. It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship today and to see the Minister in his place. He and I have communicated on several occasions on this subject. He has been extremely accommodating to date, and I am sure that our good relationship will continue despite what I have to say this morning. I plan to speak for no more than 15 minutes to give him time to reply and to take some interventions. I am sure that my hon. Friends the Members for Bournemouth East (Mr Ellwood) and for Mid Dorset and North Poole (Annette Brooke) will intervene and make points, and I am happy to take their interventions.

Let me praise and thank Dorset police and all its officers who serve with great distinction and honour and who keep the residents of Dorset safe. Dorset police force is one of the best in the country; I have met many of its officers and am impressed by their devotion to duty and their dedication. We are all extremely grateful to them for what they do.

Dorset is now the lowest centrally funded police force out of the 43 in England and Wales. While some forces receive three quarters of their grant from central Government, Dorset receives less than half. The rest of the burden is placed on the local tax payer, and that inequity is repeated year after year and will worsen when a further £1.9 million is lost in so-called formula damping.

The 2013-14 grant settlement has seen Dorset receive less funding than the formula calculates as appropriate. Had the formula been followed, we would have had an additional £16 million to spend this year alone, which equates to nearly 850 more police officers on the beat at today's starting salary of £19,000 a year. The reality is that, through cuts, we have lost an astonishing 340 officers since 2007, which is 23% of our total officer strength. By 2018, anticipated further cuts suggest that we will lose 468 warranted police officers, which is 31% of our numbers. That is equivalent to losing every single officer in Weymouth, Portland, Dorchester, Bridport, Lyme Regis, Sherborne, Blandford, Shaftesbury, Gillingham, Sturminster Newton and Beaminster—it sounds a bit like a train journey I have been on a few times. On the urban side of our county, cutting 468 officers would mean losing every officer in Bournemouth and Christchurch and some of those in Poole.

Proportionally, Dorset has lost the highest number of police officers and staff in the country. Back-office functions are already pared to the bone; that was done by the previous chief constable who did a wonderful job in meeting Government expectations and targets. None the less, Dorset police are expected to do more with less. To their great credit, they have one of the highest levels of public confidence in the country, but they will not be able to sustain that because they face unique policing challenges, which are increasing every year.

Mr Tobias Ellwood (Bournemouth East) (Con): I am reluctant to ask my hon. Friend to give way because he is making such a powerful case. May I join him in congratulating the emergency services—not just the police but the fire and ambulance services—for the work that

they do in Dorset? He is right to say that Dorset is not only one of the best performing constabularies in the country, but one of the worst funded. Does he agree that one aspect of this damping formula is that it does not include visitors or tourism? Places such as Bournemouth and his constituency have an influx of people coming in, giving police extra work to do, which then hinders them from taking responsibility for the residents, and that concerns police.

Richard Drax: My hon. Friend makes an excellent point, and I will come to it later on. Dorset gets no recognition for the fact that it receives 14 million visitors a year.

Evenly split between a large conurbation on one side and a scattering of rural communities on the other, the “two Dorsets” demand very different styles of policing. Rural policing involves greater distances and time and, therefore, costs, and the night-time economy in our seaside towns, particularly when summer numbers peak due to tourism, demands a significant police presence. That is an area of great concern as stretched resources have to be targeted at weekend trouble spots, leaving the rest of the county with minimal cover. Resources are stretched even further to cope with the 14 million visitors who come to Dorset each year. Added to that, we have thriving sea ports and a busy international airport. None of those factors is recognised in the police funding allocation, which, by 2018, will allow us barely to fund 1,000 officers to police the lot.

Our police and crime commissioner, Martyn Underhill, has fought valiantly for increased funding and continues to do so. As he says:

“We are the lowest funded force and have seen the worst cuts. This is wrong. I will continue to fight this.”

However, in the absence of any new funding, he is obliged to look at sponsorship, which is anathema to most police officers and to me. It has been tried elsewhere in the Met, but there is naturally great concern about the independence of the police when sponsors’ names are emblazoned on every police vehicle, station and letterhead. Admittedly, the rules are strict: sponsorship must not amount to more than 1% of a force’s total income; none of the statutory functions of the force should depend on the sponsorship; and sponsors may not interfere with police duties.

However, the potential for conflict of interest, or at least a perception of conflict of interest, is evident. I should like, if I may, to inject a note of levity here. In the future, when someone asks, why do all police officers look so young these days, the answer will be, because they use Camay! I inject a note of humour, Mr Dobbin, but I think it makes the point rather well. Policing is a serious matter, and this sponsorship business does not bode well. If the police lose their independence through sponsorship deals, can privatisation be far away? Will the Minister tell us whether there are any plans to privatise the police?

Surprisingly, the Treasury seemed less embarrassed than perhaps it should have been over the news of the Dorset police sponsorships. It may even be policy. Chief Inspector Tom Winsor, in a recent speech to the Royal United Services Institute, said:

“The provision of services to police forces by private sector organisations, and agencies and organisations in the public sector, is likely to increase markedly as efficiencies and economies have to be found.”

Whether or not sponsorship is used—and I hope it is not—the funding formula remains profoundly flawed. Its original purpose, which is to achieve a reasonable balance across counties in police service delivered and council tax paid, manifestly no longer works.

Along with Dorset police, I welcome the review of the police funding formula, which I understand from my conversations with the Minister is due in September. Police treasurers met the Home Office yesterday as the first stage in that review. As we are on this subject, may I, on behalf of our police and crime commissioner Martyn Underhill, remind the Minister of the undertaking that he gave him at their meeting on 15 May? In a significant change to the Government’s position, the Minister agreed that PCCs can now be involved in the review, and several will be invited to join the table. As the greatest losers in the funding settlement nationally, and one of the best performers despite it, Dorset should be represented. Mr Underhill would be a worthy representative and if the Minister will kindly give some kind of acknowledgement when he responds, both Mr Underhill and I would be grateful.

Annette Brooke (Mid Dorset and North Poole) (LD): I congratulate my hon. Friend on securing this debate and I endorse his congratulations on what all our public services achieve with such scarce resources. It is commendable, and I agree that when an organisation is already cut to the bone, it is very serious to have to tackle further cuts. What is most important to my constituents, who are in the next-door constituency, is their safer neighbourhood teams. If there were any further threats to those teams, we would be in danger of losing public confidence. They have been built up with our scarce resources but are now potentially affected. I endorse my hon. Friend’s request for Martyn Underhill to join the table, because he is hard working and someone who has his feet on the ground and will know what he is talking about when he gets to that table.

Richard Drax: I agree with every one of my hon. Friend’s words. The safer neighbourhood teams are key to policing in Dorset, as I am sure they are around the country, and we are now getting to a point where even they are stretched, with officers being removed to deal with the night-time economy and, as I have already indicated, the other target areas of potential crime from which all towns suffer to a certain extent.

I am concerned about the Government’s plan, as I understand it, to begin the review this autumn but not report back until after the next election. We cannot wait any longer to get a proper and fair settlement, and I ask the Minister, most respectfully, to speed the process up considerably and report back before 2015. Need I remind him that there is no guarantee that he and I will be serving in government in 2015, or even be MPs? Policing is a serious matter, and the resources must be there to do the job effectively. Crime may well be down in Dorset, but that should not be an excuse to keep cutting. The previous chief constable told me repeatedly that every time Dorset police did well, more resources were taken away. I am afraid that I do not understand the logic that if someone is doing well they should lose the resources with which they can keep up the extremely high standard they have attained.

[Richard Drax]

I believe, and my constituents tell me—as, I am sure, do the Minister's—that people ideally want to see police officers on foot, patrolling their towns and villages day and night. I have argued strongly for a return to the days when each village had its own bobby living in the community. Costly though that may be in the short term, catching a potential offender in their childhood would save countless millions of pounds in the longer term.

I would like to dwell a bit on that point, and speak from my previous experience as a soldier patrolling the streets of Northern Ireland. The way in which we dominated the ground, gathered intelligence, fought against the IRA and protected the good people of Belfast and the other places in which I served, was by presence, by showing a face, patrolling the streets, being there for people to talk to, and being there to reassure, listen and pick up intelligence. The modern world relies more and more on technology, but the CCTV cameras, precious though they are, cannot possibly pick up on a patrol on the ground, on the atmosphere, the feedback, the communication and the observation, on the shop that is a bit different this morning from what it was last night because there is a gunman inside with a weapon to the shopkeeper's head. CCTV cameras will not pick that up; police officers on foot will. When they come back, a huge amount of intelligence can be obtained by asking, "What did you see during that two-hour patrol?" When our soldiers came back everything was logged, pictures were taken and checks were done, and all the intelligence went up the line, meaning we were better informed and could do a far better and more effective job on that mission.

I am glad to say that policing does not carry the threat of being blown up, although police officers in this country tragically lose their lives in the line of duty. In Dorset, however, we are most fortunate not to have had such an incident, as far as I can recall, for many years, if at all, and long may that be the case. Nevertheless, the threat is there. I urge the Minister carefully to consider the funding formula, and to give a fairer deal to the people of Dorset, who must be treated more equitably. We are not asking for more money. We understand the restrictions that the Minister, the Government and the country face—the austerity we all face. We have heard about that again and again. What the people of Dorset are asking for is a much fairer share of the cake.

11.15 am

The Minister for Policing and Criminal Justice (Damian Green): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for South Dorset (Richard Drax) on securing the debate and on continuing his assiduous pursuit of the issue. I understand, not least through that pursuit, how important police funding is for Dorset and, as he said, we have corresponded on the subject. I very much welcome the interest he has shown in the specific needs of the Dorset police, who of course do much of their work in rural areas. I also appreciate the significance he attaches to the forthcoming review of the police allocation formula.

I had a very positive meeting last month, not only with Police and Crime Commissioner Martyn Underhill, but with Chief Constable Debbie Simpson, and I assured

them that the Dorset police and crime commissioner, along with PCCs across the country, will be able to engage fully with the review process. I am happy to repeat that reassurance today.

I should just say that this is not the change of policy that my hon. Friend presents it as; the Government have always intended the process to be a full one, and that is why it has to be longer than he would have hoped. As part of the process, we want to engage as many people as possible, precisely because everyone, understandably, comes to the issue from their individual point of view, and we want to hear all their voices.

Richard Drax: Is the Minister able to guarantee that Mr Underhill will be one of the delegates during the review? It would be most helpful if he could confirm that.

Damian Green: What I can confirm is that all PCCs will be able to contribute fully to the review, and therefore his own commissioner will, I am sure, make an important contribution.

Mr Ellwood: While we are testing what might or might not be included, could I provoke the Minister even further and invite him to say that tourism will at least be considered as part of the formula? Bournemouth swells by up to between 15,000 and 20,000 people on Friday and Saturday nights. That places huge pressures on Bournemouth police, and with half of them focused on the town centre, the rest of the town does not get the attention that residents believe it deserves.

Damian Green: I am very conscious that each area has its particular pressures. The pressures can be rural or tourism ones, and there are clearly night-time economy pressures in big cities as well, and I am absolutely sure that during the review people who feel such pressures locally will urge us to take them into account more than the current formula does. I can only repeat that that is why the review will be complex and will take some time.

My hon. Friend the Member for South Dorset made the point that we have the financial background that we do. The action taken has secured stability, and we have positioned the UK as a relatively safe haven, with interest rates at near-record lows, benefiting businesses and families. We have, however, had to make tough spending decisions, and as a service that was spending more than £14 billion a year, the police service must take its fair share of the funding reductions. Nevertheless, in the financial year 2013-14, we have sought to protect the police as far as possible.

Richard Drax: On the fairness that the Minister talks about, because Dorset has been at the bottom of the pile for so many years, we do not regard any further cuts across the board as fair. Our cuts do not equate to those for another force that has had a lot more money for a lot longer. I hope that the Minister follows my logic.

Damian Green: My hon. Friend makes that point powerfully, but as he would expect, those in other parts of the country make equal and opposite points just as powerfully. It is in the nature of applying a national formula to 43 forces that there are obviously winners and losers. To repeat myself for about the fourth time—I

apologise, Mr Dobbin—the formula is an extremely complex instrument, so changing it to make it fairer will be a long and complex process.

There were further cuts to most departmental budgets last December, but we protected the police from those additional reductions in 2013-14. The Home Secretary decided not to pass on reductions relating to the November 2011 announcement on pay restraint that would have resulted in a fall of £66 million in overall police funding. The further reductions announced in the 2013 Budget have not been passed on to the police. In 2013-14, the police will therefore receive the amount of funding agreed in October 2010.

I understand that PCCs are keen to know their funding allocations for 2014-15 and, in particular, the implications of the last two autumn statements and the March Budget. As hon. Members would expect, we are looking carefully at all Home Office budgets for 2014-15 to ensure that every penny is spent where it is most needed, and we will announce our decision as soon as we can. Obviously, the spending review is next week.

Mr Ellwood: The Minister mentioned the Home Office budget and the Home Secretary. I was delighted to read the ideas she advanced in *The Sunday Times* about savings that could be made in not just the police, but the emergency services, not least because they are my ideas that I presented to her about six months ago in my report on improving the efficiency, interoperability and resilience of our blue light services. Will the Minister say, for a couple of seconds, where those ideas are going, because greater savings made in the Home Office budget as a whole will have an impact in Dorset?

Damian Green: I should indeed congratulate my hon. Friend on the creative and stimulating ideas about more efficient ways of providing blue light services across the board. As he is aware, we are looking at them carefully, but it is a long-term process. For example, many people have asked whether PCCs could merge the fire and police services in their area, but there is currently no legal power for them to do so, so that will not happen tomorrow. As he knows, the Home Secretary and others are interested in those ideas.

Let me turn specifically to Dorset. As has been said, the overall funding settlement for the police is challenging, but Dorset police and the vast majority of forces are demonstrating that it is manageable. The latest report from Her Majesty's inspectorate of constabulary makes it clear that forces are making the necessary savings, while front-line delivery to the public is largely being maintained. As has been said, recorded crime in Dorset was 13% lower in the year to December 2012. Overall crime is down more than 10% since this Government came to power, and in the last set of figures the downward trend was replicated across every police force in England and Wales.

I appreciate that funding reductions have meant all forces having to consider where savings must be made in officer and staff numbers. In Dorset, the number of officers was reduced by 6% in the year to September 2012. Ultimately, decisions on the work force's size and composition, which are important, are for individual chiefs and PCCs. However, I emphasise that, across forces, the proportion of officers on the front line is increasing. That, together with continued improvements

in victim satisfaction levels, shows that the police are rising to the challenge of maintaining and improving services to the public while delivering their share of the savings required, and I congratulate them on that.

Richard Drax: I have to make the point that we are at the very bottom of the pile. Yes, Dorset police force is doing a good job, as the Minister said. I question his figure of 6%: it does not tally with mine—I am just thinking on my feet—but perhaps he is looking at a shorter period. The figure of 30% has stuck in my mind, and that would be even bigger if the planned cuts, whereby we would lose nearly 500 officers, are implemented by 2018. We are now at the point where the force is doing a good job, and there are officers on the front line—no one is left in back offices; they have gone now—but we do not have any more to put on the front line. The idea that we do is a complete fallacy for us, because the point is that we are at the very bottom of the pile. With all due respect to the Minister, he seems to be talking about forces across the country, but we are a very exceptional case.

Damian Green: All I can say to my hon. Friend is that at a time of austerity, all Ministers discover that everyone is an exceptional case. He projected the numbers out to 2018, but I do not share his degree of clairvoyance about public spending. I am conscious that we will get the figures for 2015-16 next week. Anything beyond that can be only speculation, but he cited numbers out as far as 2018. I am not saying that there will be an instant turnaround in the public finances—we will need to maintain suitable discipline—but on Wednesday we will know about the numbers for as far as 2016.

Central Government are not the only source of funding for the police, who receive an average of 25% of their funding from the police precept component of council tax. The exact proportion varies from force to force, and the level at which it is set is a matter for individual PCCs. In Dorset, as my hon. Friend said, the proportion, at more than 40%, is much greater than average, which means that it is in a much better position than the majority of forces to manage central Government funding reductions.

I recognise the concerns that my hon. Friend and the Dorset PCC have raised, in that the specific nuances of policing in Dorset may not be reflected fully in the police allocation formula. That includes the various challenges that he and others have referred to about rural policing, visitor influx and the demands created by the night-time economy. The current formula accounts for the needs of police forces that do much of their work in rural areas, and it should ensure that local police forces get funding to compensate for the policing required in areas with high concentrations of pubs and bars. Those and all other elements of the formula will be considered as part of the forthcoming review.

Mr Ellwood: I am pleased that the Minister has mentioned the point about high concentrations of bars. The formula does not work properly because the mathematics are for the whole of Dorset. An awful lot of its rural areas have no pubs and clubs, which are collected closely together in certain pockets. If we look at the maths, and consider the number of pubs and clubs in the area covered by Dorset, it works out that we

[Mr Ellwood]

have about one every square kilometre, but of course that is not the case. That is the dilemma with the current formula.

Damian Green: Indeed. I hear what my hon. Friend says, and there will be a review, as I have said.

On sponsorship, I am aware that the Dorset PCC has said that he wants to ensure that his force takes full advantage of all funding streams. The Government's position is that it is for the PCC and the chief constable to determine whether any sponsorship is appropriate. There is a financial code of practice, meaning that every force should have its own guidelines about the acceptance of gifts and sponsorship.

I am happy to assure my hon. Friend the Member for South Dorset that that is not privatisation. We do not want to privatise the police, but sensible use of private sector skills can help forces to discharge their duties and ensure that officers are on the front line, not trapped behind desks, so improving the protection we give the public. Core functions, such as patrolling and leading investigations, will always be done by sworn warranted officers. The police will remain accountable to the people, and any decisions to engage the private sector will be taken by elected PCCs, which gives local people a say. I am afraid that I do not share his view that it is anathema: if PCCs think that that is a good way to get more resources on to the front line effectively, we should look at it.

The challenge for Dorset police force, as for all other forces, will be to continue to transform its organisation and to build a modern, flexible and resilient service that delivers for the public. I commend the work that it has already done to rise to that challenge, and I hope and expect that it will continue to do so.

11.30 am

Sitting suspended.

Family Migration Rules

[ALBERT OWEN in the Chair]

2.30 pm

Mr Virendra Sharma (Ealing, Southall) (Lab): It is a pleasure, Mr Owen, to serve under your chairmanship. I am grateful for this welcome opportunity to discuss this important matter in this timely debate. Last week, the all-party parliamentary group on migration launched its report on the impact of the income requirement for those sponsoring a partner or spouse from outside the European economic area, and the new rules on adult dependants, almost a year after the new family migration rules were introduced. The media coverage of the rules and the numerous e-mails and phone calls received in my office over the past week suggest that there is great public interest in the matter, which makes this debate even more important.

I thank the APPG on migration and its secretariat, the Migrants Rights Network, for the dedicated and professional support provided to the inquiry and to the group's members. Thanks are also due to the 280 or so individuals and organisations that took the time to submit evidence to the APPG inquiry. Submissions were received from more than 175 families, who reported that they had directly experienced difficulties as a result of the new family migration rules, and I keep receiving more every day in my office from both constituents and other families who have the same concerns.

One of the main concerns is that the income requirement—£18,600 to sponsor a non-EEA spouse or partner, more if there are also children—is high for many British people and permanent residents of the UK. According to the accounts we received, the income requirement has affected some British people who appear to have more than adequate means to support themselves and family members. Some people seeking to sponsor a non-EEA spouse or partner told us that they were not receiving any benefits and were living well within their means, but that the application process did not allow them to reflect their self-sufficiency.

Many individuals who submitted evidence said that they were in employment in the UK and being paid a wage above £12,850, which hon. Members will recognise as the current level of the national minimum wage. We heard from the Migration Observatory at Oxford university that 47% of the UK working population would now be unable to meet the income requirement through earnings alone.

Sir Alan Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed) (LD): That fact has led people in my constituency to say—although this would not suit the hon. Gentleman's area—that there should be some regional recognition of the fact that in low-wage areas, the problem is even worse.

Mr Sharma: I thank the right hon. Gentleman for his appropriate intervention. I am sure that other Members will have heard their constituents expressing the same concerns.

Dame Joan Ruddock (Lewisham, Deptford) (Lab): This seems a pertinent moment to say that it is not just the low-wage areas of the country that are affected.

There are so many people in my constituency in Lewisham, Deptford, in London who are getting only the minimum wage. I have a case of a woman whose husband cannot be reunited with her. She is a support worker, which is a valuable job in the community, on £12,800 a year. She is on the minimum wage and fully legal, but she cannot bring in her husband. Surely that cannot be fair.

Mr Sharma: I quite agree. The amount highlighted in the report and stipulated in the rules has clearly impacted on many families, irrespective of where they live—London or the regions. Some of the British people seeking to sponsor a spouse stated that they were working in key occupations as auxiliary and health support nurses, security guards, clerical assistants and even ordained ministers.

Mr Jim Cunningham (Coventry South) (Lab): The average wage in both the private and the public sectors is around £13,000 to £14,000, which is not high at all.

Mr Sharma: It is clear that jobs and the income from those jobs are not relevant when families are forced to live apart. The income requirement would exclude almost half the UK working population from living with their husbands or wives if they were from outside the EEA. That seems unfair. Should they have to move overseas? We heard from a number of families whose child care commitments prevented them from relocating overseas, or who had other caring duties in the UK—for example, for elderly parents—that meant that the family had compelling reasons to wish to settle in the UK.

In addition, we heard from a number of hard-working, tax-paying British citizens who were determined that being effectively forced out of their own country should not be the only way in which they could live with their spouse and children. I think most of us would have the same reaction, were we in that situation.

Another issue close to those affected by the family migration rules is the manner in which the income requirement can be met. The limited list of permitted income sources has delayed and prevented even those families with clear means, or access to means, from entering the UK since last July. In the case of families who have been living overseas and wish to return to the UK, if the couple wish to meet the income requirement from the employment-related income source, the UK sponsor must show prior earnings of that amount, which may well be difficult for those who have been working in lower-income countries. The prior earnings or prospective income in the UK of the non-EEA partner is not taken into consideration at any point, regardless of whether he or she is the main earner in the family. Even if the non-EEA partner has strong chances of employment in the UK, or has a firm job offer here, it will still not count towards the application. One submission to the inquiry raised the case of a family based in Dubai; the non-EEA national was earning £250,000 per annum, which could not be counted in any way towards meeting the income requirement.

We have also heard that meeting the requirement through one of the other permitted sources is not always possible, even for high net worth families.

Jack Dromey (Birmingham, Erdington) (Lab): I pay tribute to my hon. Friend for securing this debate and to my hon. Friend the Member for Stretford and Urmston (Kate Green) for serving with distinction on what was

an all-party inquiry. My hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, Southall (Mr Sharma) is making a powerful case about families being torn apart and children being indefinitely separated from one of their parents. Does he agree that we are seeing some perverse outcomes, in that reunited families could help people go out to work? As the rules stand, even if the combined family income enables them to support an individual with whom they wish to be reunited, they cannot do so.

Mr Sharma: I thank my hon. Friend for his intervention. I quite agree with him; he has made a very powerful point. Yes, these rules are keeping families apart, not helping them to unite and support each other, even where uniting them could help them to progress in their family life. Hopefully, the Minister will make a note of that point.

The prior earnings and prospective income in the UK of the non-EEA partner are not taken into consideration at any time, regardless of whether he or she is the main earner in the family. The cash savings source requires sponsors and applicants to take up to £62,500 out of investments in stock and shares, and to place it in a bank account, which is difficult for people whose assets cannot be liquidated. Again, does that not exclude a substantial number of hard-working families from being united in this country, because the income requirement is not a proper reflection of the resources that will be available to those families once they are together in the UK? The great number of colleagues who are present in Westminster Hall shows the interest in this issue, both inside and outside Parliament.

Fiona Mactaggart (Slough) (Lab): My hon. Friend is coming close to the end of his remarks, and there is a particular issue—one that I know he is aware of—that should be highlighted. It is the very significant number of circumstances in which a couple who are living overseas might want to come back to the UK to support and care for a vulnerable family member, thus reducing the cost to the general taxpayer of the care needs of that vulnerable family member, and yet they are not able to get through the hoops that the rules require them to get through. Frankly, that is an example of the state cutting off its nose to spite its face.

Mr Sharma: I thank my hon. Friend for her intervention, and I accept the point that she makes. There are many other areas of concern, which I am sure Members will highlight. I am just making a few points, so that other Members have the opportunity to speak. I know for certain of the interest that was expressed during the inquiry by the all-party group. Members who took part in that inquiry have already raised those points, and I am sure, having listened to what the Minister for Immigration said last week, that he has taken note of them and will reflect on them—hopefully favourably—in his response to the inquiry's report.

These families are being kept apart; children are kept from living with both parents, and elderly relatives cannot be cared for by their families.

Mark Lazarowicz (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab/Co-op): I am glad that my hon. Friend made that point, because the issue of elderly relatives is another one that many of us have come across in our constituencies; of

[Mark Lazarowicz]

course, I also agree with what he has said about spouses. Under the new rules, it is almost impossible for a relative over the age of 65 to be admitted to the UK, because their sponsor may not have the income—may not meet the cash requirements—to allow them to come to the UK; if the sponsor does meet the requirement, they will be expected to support their relative in the foreign country, thereby keeping away grandparents and parents who will not cause a major impact on the UK population. It is a very cruel and inhumane thing to do. Would my hon. Friend agree that that is another thing that the Government should review?

Mr Sharma: I thank my hon. Friend for his intervention, and I quite agree with his point. It was a very appropriate intervention, because it highlights the fact that we generally expect families to be united, with grandchildren living with their grandparents, so that heritage can be passed on. That applies not only to people from outside the EU, but to people everywhere—wherever we feel that families need to come together. However, these rules are keeping families apart and forcing them to remain apart.

I hope that the Minister will note the intervention by my hon. Friend and by other Members, as well as the contributions that will come later in the debate. We would like to hear positive things from the Minister. I hope that, in the light of this unfairness, the Minister and the Government will allow for an independent review of the impact of these new migration rules, so that the situation can be reassessed.

2.45 pm

Sarah Teather (Brent Central) (LD): I am incredibly grateful to the hon. Member for Ealing, Southall (Mr Sharma) for securing this debate, and I congratulate him on doing so.

I served on the all-party inquiry with the hon. Gentleman and with the hon. Member for—is it Stretford?

Kate Green (Stretford and Urmston) (Lab) *indicated assent*.

Sarah Teather: I have actually got the hon. Lady's constituency correct.

Many of us on that inquiry were really horrified by what we found, despite my own experience as a constituency MP and having encountered the frustrations of an awful lot of my constituents as they tried to deal with the new rules. Of course, as the hon. Member for Ealing, Southall said, the new rules have been in place for a year now and there is no doubt that they are proving a significant source of frustration and tension for family life without providing any obvious and immediate benefit to the UK. When the Minister responds to the debate, I will be very interested to see if he can tell us what benefits he considers the new rules have brought to the UK, because they are not immediately obvious to me; I can see many of the harms but I cannot see many obvious benefits.

The first thing that is very apparent about the new rules is that they represent a distinct philosophical shift in approach from the old rules. The system used to be

tilted in favour of family life, subject to certain basic conditions being met, such as the ability to support a spouse coming into the UK and the ability to meet a basic income threshold, which was pretty much tantamount to a basic income threshold that we would expect around income support levels. Now, the system is tilted entirely in the opposite direction, and against family life, unless someone can meet certain requirements to demonstrate that their spouse who is coming into the UK is desirable in some way and meets some extra criteria. So rather than having a system that was very much about keeping families together, the system now is about serving an overall objective on immigration policy, with family life being significantly relegated in importance. Of course, it is not only family life that is being relegated in importance, but relationships, children's best interests, basic human compassion and a certain level of common sense.

The consequence is that we have created a system that is highly inflexible and incredibly rigid, and that fails by its own narrow criteria in terms of preventing a burden falling on the taxpayer. What do I mean by that? The hon. Member for Ealing, Southall raised many of these issues, as did a number of the Members who intervened on him. One of my own reflections from having been on the all-party group's inquiry was, "If you're self-employed, woe betide you. You might be earning a fortune, but it's incredibly difficult for you to demonstrate that you meet the Government's criteria." Money must be in certain very specific bank accounts; it must be accessible in a very specific way. Parents' wealth is disregarded, so someone may have a very wealthy family who are more than willing to support them but that is not taken into account.

As the hon. Gentleman said, someone may have wealth tied up in other ways; for example, it might be tied up in capital. Once again, however, that is not adequate under the new rules. It is only someone's earned income in the UK that is taken into account, so even if someone has been earning a small fortune abroad that is not taken into account. Equally, even if someone's spouse earns a small fortune, if they come to the UK that is not taken into account either, and nor are their projected future earnings. Even by the incredibly narrow criteria of wanting income to be the most important factor and wanting people to demonstrate a level of wealth that the Government have decided is desirable, the system at the moment fails to deliver.

That is not to mention the hidden costs, which were highlighted by hon. Members in a number of interventions—the costs that are incurred by refusing someone permission to come to the UK. The obvious ones that we heard about during our inquiry were around caring burdens, particularly if the person who is here in the UK has some health problems, or if they have very young children and they have been separated from their partner. They might be able to go back to work if their partner was here in the UK to share child care. Without the partner, however, it is much more difficult.

Then there are the obvious things that the rest of government knows about. For example, if people are separated from their partner and families are divided up, the effects on mental health and on children failing to bond with one parent or another have a wide-ranging

impact on behaviour and educational attainment. Of course, none of those more subtle things is taken into account either.

Dame Joan Ruddock: Among African and Caribbean parents, it is common for a child to be left at home with grandparents, but when the grandparents die, the child is left vulnerable. I have heard about one young girl being abused by the uncle, and the mother is in despair because the rules prevent her getting the child into this country. Has the hon. Lady also heard about such examples?

Sarah Teather: I have not seen that specific situation with regard to the rules we are discussing, but I have seen such a situation elsewhere. We heard all sorts of examples in the inquiry, such as one parent being separated from children and children being left in other places. The impact in terms of the splitting up of families and the effect on children is potentially devastating and, of course, none of that is being taken into account at the moment.

Dr Alan Whitehead (Southampton, Test) (Lab): Has the hon. Lady, or the inquiry that she participated in, considered the instance of UK citizens coming back to the UK, having married abroad, often in complete ignorance of what the rules now say? Such people are finding that their spouse and child are simply stranded thereafter. Someone in my constituency has done exactly that and is now faced with the prospect of trying to get a job in the UK that will pay £18,000, not being able to access any of his parents' assistance, and his wife and child remaining outside the UK perhaps for several years, even though he has done everything right in terms of his life and work, and all other factors.

Sarah Teather: What the hon. Gentleman mentions is absolutely the story that we heard over and over throughout the inquiry.

Mr Virendra Sharma: *indicated assent.*

Sarah Teather: The hon. Gentleman nods in recollection.

One of the most interesting aspects of this policy is that people being caught up in this change in immigration rules would never have imagined that they would come into contact with the immigration system; they are British citizens who went abroad to work as a teacher, perhaps, or to do development work, or were sent abroad by their company for business purposes, then met somebody and came back. This is the first time that they ever thought that they might come into contact with the immigration system.

Jonathan Ashworth (Leicester South) (Lab): In my constituency in Leicester, a city with a tradition of welcoming people, these new rules are causing considerable concern. A British citizen came to see me last week who has been living in Syria and fled from there with her children, for obvious reasons, yet her husband cannot get out because of the rigidity of the rules. People might think that, given the circumstances and what is happening in that part of the world, there should be some flexibility in how the rules are implemented.

Sarah Teather: I agree. Leicester is my home town, so I sympathise with the point that the hon. Gentleman makes. The rigidity of the rules makes it particularly difficult for people. Under the previous rules—I will not say that they were perfect; as a constituency MP, from time to time I pleaded for people's cases to be accepted and reconsidered—there was at least some flexibility to look at somebody's case, based on compassionate grounds or common sense, whereas now there appears to be no flexibility whatever.

Why are the rules being so rigidly and inflexibly enforced? It is because income probably has nothing to do with it. It is not really about trying to prevent a burden on the taxpayer; it is actually about the Government trying to demonstrate that we are reducing the number of foreigners coming into the UK. That is driving it. If anything else were driving it, it would be implemented in a far more common-sense way, there would be much more flexibility around it, and it would not have been set at a level to keep out as many people as possible.

Dr Julian Huppert (Cambridge) (LD) *rose*—

Kate Green *rose*—

Sarah Teather: I will give way to the hon. Member for Cambridge (Dr Huppert) first.

Dr Huppert: I thank my hon. Friend for giving way and congratulate the hon. Member for Ealing, Southall on securing this important debate on the work of the group. Does she agree that the rules are not only keeping foreigners out but causing some good British people to leave? The response of a number of people in my constituency has been simply to leave the country. These are successful entrepreneurs, those at early stages of what will be well-paid careers, and people coming back, as the hon. Lady said. We risk losing some of our best people, who are internationally experienced, as a result of the rules.

Sarah Teather: The classic story that we heard in the inquiry was that people are going somewhere else in Europe to make a home, and waiting until their partner gains EU citizenship there. During that time they donate their skills, wealth and significant social contribution to another European country, and they may or may not return to the UK.

Kate Green: It was a pleasure to serve with the hon. Lady and my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, Southall on the Committee. Does she agree that one reason why these rules may be being applied so rigidly is a lack of confidence in the decision-making powers and abilities of Border Agency officials, and that investment in training them to make sensible decisions, rather than imposing blanket rules, would be a fairer and more sensible approach?

Sarah Teather: I think it would. I have to say that it would be wiser if we were not being driven entirely by an objective to keep numbers down, but that is perhaps another story.

I should like the Minister to respond to what I am now going to say about the best interests of children. When I was a Minister in the Department for Education,

[Sarah Teather]

we committed the Government to standing by and meeting our commitment on the United Nations convention on the rights of the child and to take into account children's best interests when decisions are made. What account is being taken of that now by the Minister's Department, as it looks at the rules and their impact? Has any assessment been done and has any discussion been had with Department for Education officials on this point? If he is unable to answer that question today, I should be grateful if he wrote to let me know.

The impact of the rules on bringing in grandparents and elderly dependants is just as shocking as that of the spousal rules. Almost no approvals have happened since the new rules came in. It was described to me by one lawyer as a ban masquerading as a rule, which is probably a rather more effective way of describing the problem. If almost nobody can come in, that demonstrates what the Government want to do, and it might have been more honest if that had been done in the first place. The hon. Member for Edinburgh North and Leith (Mark Lazarowicz), who is no longer in his place, intervened on the hon. Member for Ealing, Southall and made a similar point. It is almost impossible to meet the rules. People must have a high income and must be clear that their family member will not have recourse to any kind of benefits, and sign something to say that that will not happen. They must also demonstrate that the family member is so sick that they must come here, and cannot possibly have their care needs met in the country where they are, even if they were to pay for it.

Almost nobody will meet those criteria. One lawyer said that he had been thinking through all the possible scenarios and the only example that he came up with where somebody might meet such criteria was if they had an elderly dependent relative in Monaco and had enough money here to meet the first part of the rules, but because care is so expensive in Monaco they would not be able to afford to pay for it there. That would probably be the only way we would allow such people to come to the UK. If we are going to have a ban, let us at least be more honest about it.

The consequences of the rules were drawn to our attention in the inquiry most notably by the British Medical Association, which said that they were among the biggest challenges in planning resourcing around consultants and senior doctors, many of whom are second-generation south Asian and want to bring a relative. For example, two people who are partners, both of whom may be highly paid consultants capable of supporting an elderly dependent relative but with no means of meeting the rules, might end up moving to Singapore. If such highly trained, highly valued people go somewhere else to work so that they are able to be with their family members, that is a significant drain on our national health service.

The current system seems to me to be inhumane and lacking in basic common sense. It cuts across a whole set of areas that the Government say are a priority: it cuts across our commitments on family policy, on early intervention and on our obligations under the UNCRC. We heard in our inquiry that the rules disproportionately affect those from poorer communities in the UK, such as Bangladeshis and Pakistanis, and that women, who struggle to earn the same wages as men, are particularly

affected. The system affects not only those people but many highly paid British citizens who may never have thought that they would meet the full force of the immigration system preventing them from having a happy family life. I strongly urge the Minister to review those rules properly and to reconsider them.

3 pm

Keith Vaz (Leicester East) (Lab): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Owen. It is also a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Brent Central (Sarah Teather). I am sure she will not mind me reminding her of this, but it is the coalition Government, of whom she was a member, who originally proposed the rules and put them through the House. I respect her late conversion to condemning the Government publicly for what they are doing, and I know she feels sincerely about that.

Sarah Teather: I assure the right hon. Gentleman that, as I am sure the Minister would accede, I say nothing in public that I did not say in private.

Keith Vaz: I am sure that is the case, which is why I gave the hon. Lady a wildcard. Of course I am sure that, privately, she was very much against the rules when she was a Minister in the Government who put them through the House.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, Southall (Mr Sharma), whom I have known for more than 35 years, on securing this debate. Even before he became a Member of Parliament, he took up immigration issues in Southall for almost a quarter of a century through the Indian Workers' Association, as a councillor, as the lord mayor of Ealing and as a prospective parliamentary candidate, so it is no surprise that he should be introducing this debate and that he served on the inquiry organised by the all-party group on migration.

All those who served on the inquiry, including my hon. Friend the Member for Stretford and Urmston (Kate Green), the hon. Member for Brent Central, the noble Baroness Hamwee and others, have done the House a great service. I wish the Select Committee on Home Affairs had time to consider the rules, but being pressed so often by the hon. Member for Cambridge (Dr Huppert) to take up new and exciting inquiries, we just did not have time to do so. The all-party group has produced a stunning report, which everyone needs to read with great care.

For those of us who do immigration cases every day, and I see Members here who represent constituencies in Birmingham, Manchester and Leicester, including my hon. Friend the Member for Leicester South (Jonathan Ashworth), my right hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Dame Joan Ruddock) and others—I cannot name every constituency—there is the line in the Lord's prayer that says

"Give us today our daily bread."

Immigration cases are our daily bread and butter. Every single Friday, immigration cases are 90% of the work I do in my surgery. Although the Minister, who represents the Forest of Dean, and the shadow Minister, who represents Rhondda, do not have the casework that we have, those of us who have seen the Minister perform before the Select Committee and have heard the shadow

Minister's comments know that they understand our concerns on immigration. For us, as constituency MPs, immigration is a big deal. I am glad to see the Minister here today, and I am sorry that he is on crutches. It is better to be on crutches before the debate than after.

My hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, Southall and the hon. Member for Brent Central have already stated the facts—why bring in an arbitrary figure? Tony McNulty was wrong to bring in the points-based system, and I told him so at the time. He thought it was a great invention. I went to see him when he was Minister for Immigration, and he said, “It is very important that people tot up the points, and then you know whether they qualify to come in under the points-based system.” I said, “Where is the discretion in all this? What about those cases that don't reach the number of points but where there might be grounds for compassion?” The hon. Member for Brent Central talked about that, and my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, Southall talked about other issues. What about those issues that the entry clearance officers cannot address because the migrant does not have enough points?

Here is another example on the arbitrary figure. Yes, we know that the Migration Advisory Committee advised on the figure and, yes, we know there are lots of statistical surveys that say the sum should be £18,600, but as the Chair of the Select Committee on Justice, the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Sir Alan Beith), said, the average wage in his constituency is not £18,600. The average wage is certainly not £18,600 in Leicester East and Leicester South; it is about £16,000 or even less—in fact, it is £4,000 less than the national average according to the Office for National Statistics. I have people coming into my surgery who will never get their spouse into the country—even those who are working very hard indeed. I say to them, “Why don't you get another job?” They cannot get another job because they are exhausted from working up to 60 hours a week. I know that is not the minimum wage, and it may not be lawful, but that is what is on their little slips.

Dr Whitehead: My right hon. Friend might be surprised to learn the results of a survey carried out among the members of a Southampton mosque by my right hon. Friend the Member for Southampton, Itchen (Mr Denham). Some 95% of the mosque's members earn less than £18,000 a year. The rules therefore effectively ban an entire community from rights that we would accede to any other community in this country.

Keith Vaz: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. Thousands of people who wish to bring their spouse into this country now cannot do so. For a Government who came to power saying that they wanted to engage with the ethnic minority communities—I have seen the Prime Minister, the Deputy Prime Minister and every senior member of the Government at big functions for the ethnic minority communities so many times, and they really want to reach out like no other Conservative Government have ever done before—introducing a rule that will cause huge damage to the Government at the next election is electorally disastrous for the Conservative party, not that the Government need advice from me on electoral disasters ahead of the next election. That goes against everything the Prime Minister and the Home

Secretary have said at Diwali and Eid functions, which is that they want a community in which people feel at peace with each other and get on well together. Introducing an arbitrary figure disfranchises thousands and thousands of people.

As the hon. Member for Brent Central said, why do it? Is it because the Government want to stop abuse? I do not think so because, as I discovered this morning—even I did not know about this, which just goes to show how quickly such things happen—the Government have increased the probation period from two years to five years. People cannot get indefinite leave to remain if they are on benefits, so it is not a question of people arriving and going on benefits, because doing so means they cannot get to the next stage on the way to citizenship. Abuse is better dealt with through face-to-face interviews, such as those the Minister saw when he went to Sheffield—he saw people who are coming here as students being interviewed. If we do that for spouses, we can address abuse much better than putting in an arbitrary financial limit. The purpose, of course, is to limit the number of people coming here.

We are an island, and we all understand that we cannot have unlimited migration to Britain. We understand that, and I hope the Labour party understands that when it was in government it made mistakes in its operation of the UK Border Agency. From what the Select Committee has heard from the Minister, we know he understands that he needs to address the problem. I think he is genuine in his desire to try to address the organisational issues. The fact remains that there is no coherent and cogent reason for the limit. I would like an explanation from the Minister. I would understand it if entry clearance directors were given discretion to tell applicants who had an offer of a job in this country, “You haven't reached the limit, but you have a job offer in Leicester. You'll go over the limit as soon as you arrive in the United Kingdom, so we'll grant you a visa.” However, there seems to be no explanation for the current arrangements.

Dame Joan Ruddock: Let me tell my right hon. Friend of a case I have. A man who has been made redundant cannot get his Canadian wife into the country in the normal way. She was a teacher in this country for three years before she returned with him to Canada and they married. She could get a job immediately she sets foot in this country, but she is not allowed to move here.

Keith Vaz: I can well understand that case. We all have similar cases, which are heart-rending, but there is nothing we can do, because the rules are so rigid.

When my hon. Friend the Member for Rhondda (Chris Bryant), the shadow Immigration Minister, stands up, I hope that he will say that the Labour party will look again at the threshold at the next election. I am sorry to tell him that I think the Labour party has been very quiet on this issue. Now that we have the report on migration, which points to the problems experienced at a practical level, we would like to know what the official Opposition will do about the rule. My hon. Friend came to Leicester and listened carefully to what my constituents and those of my hon. Friend the Member for Leicester South said, but we need to have some thinking on these issues, rather than blanket, rigid rules that seek to stop people coming into this country.

[Keith Vaz]

My hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh North and Leith (Mark Lazarowicz) and the hon. Member for Brent Central said that getting dependants into this country is no longer on the agenda and that people simply cannot do it. Frankly, the dependants I know who have come to this country have come only from east Africa, because of the nature of Leicester. They stay only a short time, and then they want to go back; they are just grateful to be able to come here whenever they can.

My last point is about rights of appeal for people who are visiting, which the coalition Government are about to take away. If they do that, they will put even more pressure on our immigration service—this will, I am sure, be the subject of the next report by the all-party group on migration. If they remove the right of appeal, which is extremely important because it means that a judge, rather than the Home Office, can make a determination, they will take away the one guarantee of absolute fairness in the system. I put it to the Minister that there needs to be an independent review when cases are turned down. An entry clearance manager and director should not be reviewing a decision by an entry clearance officer, when they see them every day, in the evening and in their post.

I am not casting aspersions on anyone in any case, but the perception is that things are not fair. We have some fantastic entry clearance directors, such as Janice Moore in Mumbai and Mandy Iveny in Pakistan, but there are only a few we could name as being people to whom we could go to solve a problem. I ask the Minister to look again at the issues of discretion and review. In the time he has been doing his job—certainly in his dealings with the Home Affairs Committee, as the hon. Member for Cambridge will confirm—he has shown that he actually listens and considers what is put forward. I therefore hope he will listen to what the all-party group has said and to what we are saying today.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Albert Owen (in the Chair): Order. Before I call Mr Dan Rogerson, I remind Members that I will call the Front Benchers no later than 3.40 pm.

3.13 pm

Dan Rogerson (North Cornwall) (LD): Let me reassure you, Mr Owen, that I do not intend to take up a great deal of time. It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, and I congratulate the hon. Member for Ealing, Southall (Mr Sharma) on securing the debate. I also congratulate all the Members and advisers who put together the report, which has featured very much in our discussions today.

It is a great privilege to follow the Chair of the Select Committee, whose work as a constituency MP and on the Committee means that he brings a great deal of experience to the debate. I was struck when he indicated the range of constituencies represented here, but he probably would not point to North Cornwall as one of those we would expect to feature. That is a measure of the change we have undergone in the system.

As the right hon. Gentleman said, there are issues about the rise in the number of people who have come into the country in recent years. The Government are

determined to look at how the issue can be managed differently, and the approach they have taken is to set targets and rigid rules.

Over the eight years I have represented my constituency, the number of immigration cases I have had has been very small, and I suspect I spend much more time talking to the Rural Payments Agency about single farm payments than the right hon. Gentleman does in Leicester East. In recent months, however, a number of people have come to see me about immigration issues. They have mainly grown up in my part of the world, and their circumstances are similar to those other hon. Members, including my hon. Friend the Member for Brent Central (Sarah Teather), have described. These people have gone overseas and fallen in love, or they have met someone who has come to this country as a student or to work for a time. They have formed a relationship and married, but they now have a problem—one that they and their families never thought they would encounter. They assumed it would be relatively straightforward to sort out, but they then found that it is not.

To help the Minister appreciate how we, as constituency MPs, are being affected, I want, without mentioning names, to highlight some of the cases that have been brought to me in recent weeks. One constituent grew up in my area and has been living in Canada. She is now in a permanent relationship with someone in Canada. They both have skills and want to bring them to this country, but they cannot come here together. Given the industry in which they work, and given the wages in places such as north Cornwall, there is no way they can come here and meet the threshold. They would be able to live without recourse to benefits because they would have access to housing and so on, but they cannot meet the threshold. Effectively, someone who wants to return to Cornwall will be unable to do so, and she will have to stay in Canada. That is very painful for her family, who would like the couple to come here. There are no children involved, but it is just as painful for the extended family that the couple have, effectively, had this ban imposed on them.

In another case, a woman who was born in the Caribbean married a British man. She had children here, and she has been here for more than 20 years. Unfortunately, the marriage came to an end. A number of years later, she got back in touch with someone from her home country. They formed a relationship, and they have married, which is a source of great happiness to them and her family, because she has children and a grandchild in this country. However, if the couple are to live together, she will have to leave her children and her grandchild, taking away the support that she could offer them as a grandparent, and return with her new husband to the country in which they grew up. She has a business and the means to provide the foundation for a life together in this country if he joined her. Indeed, he is a skilled tradesman, and there are opportunities here. He has been able to come over, and they have spent some time together, but the system is now saying that he has to leave.

In another case, a young woman born in the constituency married an American citizen. They have a child here, and they have a life together, but he will have to return to the United States. He gave up the job, the base and the support he had there to start a new life here, but it is

not possible for him to stay. I could go on with this list of painful cases, which are affecting people who want to make a real contribution here as the new spouse or partner of a British citizen. These cases also affect those who are keen to welcome that new person into their family and to make sure they are part of the community. That is a real shame.

One of the big strengths of places such as Leicester is their diversity and the fact that people are from all sorts of backgrounds. Although I grew up in Cornwall, I spent my first six or seven years after leaving university in the town of Bedford, which is a very diverse place. It was a great experience and education to be part of a community such as that. Cornwall has many strengths. Those who have come from overseas to live there have often done so because they have married someone from the area, and that has added to diversity and enriched the local community. However, we will lose that because, given the wage set-up in Cornwall, there will, effectively, be a ban on people doing that in future. That is a great tragedy; it is not only a personal tragedy for the families, but an issue for society as a whole.

I said I would be brief. I just wanted to give a perspective from an area outside the cities with their more noticeable patterns of migration, and mention that the policy is becoming an issue for us too. I hope that in considering what to do about immigration policy the Government will examine such cases and come up with a system that allows families to stay together and contribute to British society.

3.20 pm

Kate Green (Stretford and Urmston) (Lab): It is a pleasure to take part in the debate, Mr Owen. I pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, Southall (Mr Sharma) for arranging it, and for serving as vice-chair of the inquiry. I am pleased to see the hon. Member for Brent Central (Sarah Teather), who added a great deal of value to our discussions. I also thank Migrants Rights Network, which was useful and supportive in briefing the inquiry committee and gathering evidence for us, and the many people who shared their experiences, either in person or in writing.

For me, as for other hon. Members taking part in the debate, this is a constituency issue. Many of the constituents who have talked to me about the rules' effect on them and their families are particularly upset, because they have been preparing for family weddings, or have planned for a long time to bring a relative back to care for them. They feel strongly that the rules cut across their strong attachment to the importance of family ties and family life. We recognise, as other hon. Members have said, the need to manage migration and protect the public purse, but the rules must be fair to families, and effective. We have heard of many instances where they were neither.

I recognise that the income threshold, at £18,600, is at the lowest end of the range suggested by the Migration Advisory Committee to take households out of reliance on benefits. However, as the Chair of the Select Committee on Justice—the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Sir Alan Beith)—and other hon. Members have said, the threshold will have a differential impact on different sponsors, and it will create a significant disadvantage for those who, by definition, are likely to be on low earnings. That includes women sponsors,

who typically will be on incomes lower than men's. They often work part time; also, taking time out of the labour market to care for family members may have depressed their ability to progress at work. Young people will also be disadvantaged. Let us not forget that many who want to bring in a spouse will be young, because they will be starting out on their adult and family life.

The people who would want to make such an application are often precisely those whom the rules will most effectively work against. Others who will be disadvantaged are those who struggle to earn well—people with low levels of qualifications, people with disabilities and those outside high-pay areas such as London and the south-east. Last week in my constituency, I was told of a young woman who has been forced to take three jobs to try to meet the income requirement and bring in her spouse.

It is important to understand that we are not talking just about poorly paid, poor-quality, low or entry-level jobs. The inquiry committee heard evidence from the Royal College of Nursing that health care workers can typically earn between £14,153 and £17,253, so they would be below the income threshold of £18,600. Pay levels in many other sectors, such as retail, security, administration and customer service, and in the public sector, are likely to mean people will not meet the threshold. That is unfair to UK sponsors, many of whom have lived here all their lives—people who are British-born, of British families—who cannot fulfil the income requirement. Those people make a valuable contribution to the economy and provide services that we all depend on. They are being told, in effect, that they cannot carry on living in their own country with their spouse. They are shocked and surprised to find that out.

As to the impact of the rules on the public purse, the picture is more complicated than the Government's analysis and impact assessment may suggest. The Government suggested in their assessment that there would be savings to the overall welfare state—health, benefits, education and so on—of £660 million over 10 years. However, we must remember that most migrant partners would work and pay taxes. They would therefore be contributing to the public purse. Evidence presented to the committee by researchers at Middlesex university suggests that by preventing up to 17,800 migrant partners from coming to the UK and working here, the income requirement could lead to a cost to the UK Exchequer and economy of as much as £850 million in lost economic activity.

The Government impact assessment took account of tax forgone by reducing the number of migrant partners entering the country, but failed to consider the loss of the wider economic benefits of partner earnings: lost output, lower consumption and spending in the economy, and the loss of their overall economic contribution. Nor is it clear that the benefits bill will reduce as the Government expect.

Dame Joan Ruddock: If the resident person was on a very low income, so that they qualified for housing benefit, and they were joined by a partner who was in work, would not the benefit be set aside and no longer claimed? That is a different picture from the one that the Government always go on about, of people depending on housing benefit.

Kate Green: That is right, and that is one of the perversities in the operation of the rules. Some families who could be floated off benefits if there were two adults in the household are being forced to remain on benefits because a second earner will not be coming to support the family—which may be a family with children. The hon. Member for Brent Central alluded to the fact that in some cases parents are forced to rely on benefits because they cannot share the responsibility for care of children with the other parent. Also, not being able to bring a spouse into the country to share the balance of parenting and working will affect the ability of the parent who is already here to enter the labour market or increase their working hours. We know sharing those roles is a feature of lifting families out of poverty; those two sets of earnings are important in keeping families off out-of-work benefits.

Quite a large part of the Government's assessment of the benefits that would be affected has to do with benefits for children—child benefit and child tax credit. They are paid for children who are British citizens. In some cases they will continue for those children, but in a family in which only one parent is here to support the child; so the overall benefits impact is rather more complicated than the Government suggest.

Keith Vaz: My hon. Friend is making a powerful speech. Did she find that mostly, in the case of people who gave evidence to the inquiry committee and wanted to bring in male spouses, those spouses wanted to work when they arrived, not sit at home? Obviously, they could not claim benefits, because it would be against their undertaking, but most want to arrive and work, so they would soon be over the threshold anyway.

Kate Green: That is right. Indeed, we already know that migrant male workers are more likely to be in work than non-migrant people of working age. The history of migrants, and particularly male migrants, arriving in this country is that they want and intend to work, and contribute to our Exchequer and the wider economy. Women migrants may be less likely to work than non-migrant adult women, but their earnings tend to be a little higher; so, again, the labour market picture is more complicated than the simple notion that may have been assumed—that a spouse coming to this country will simply be dependent. In fact, the opposite is often the case.

As the hon. Member for Brent Central said, we need to recognise some of the more indirect costs that we are piling up for society. I absolutely agree with her about the potential long-term impact on the public purse of separating children from their parents for long periods. We know that separation can have long-standing and detrimental effects on children's health, including their mental health, and on their educational attainment and behaviour, all of which will increase costs to the public purse down the line. The Office of the Children's Commissioner for England has made a strong case for children's right to have their best interests taken into account as one of the factors considered by the Government, but it is important to recognise that not only a moral and legal but an economic case can be made in relation to children. The Government should also consider the long-term economic impact.

The committee and I ask Ministers for a much more comprehensive review and assessment of the fiscal and economic impact of the policy, in both the short and longer term. The rules are causing hardship. They are riddled with inconsistencies. In some cases, I believe them to be discriminatory under our equalities legislation, and in terms of protecting the public purse, it seems that they may in fact be having a perverse effect. For those reasons, the committee strongly urges the Government to take the time to conduct a full review of the impact of the new rules on families and communities, and specifically to examine further the effect on the public purse.

3.31 pm

Gavin Barwell (Croydon Central) (Con): I will be brief. I am grateful to you, Mr Owen, for allowing me to speak, and I apologise to Members for not having been here at the start of the debate; I was on a Committee considering a statutory instrument. Members will know that I have a great deal of interest in this subject. I will limit myself to two minutes, because I see that an hon. Member who has been here from the start wishes to speak.

I have two points to make. The first is broadly in support of what the Government are trying to do. There is growing consensus across the House that net migration levels in recent years have been too high and need to be reduced. My view is that that should be done in a way that prioritises the forms of migration that are most economically beneficial to the country. The family migration route needs to be looked at. I say to Opposition Members, with apologies for not having heard all their speeches, that it is not enough just to will the aims; we must also consider the means of achieving any reduction.

I have sympathy with the hon. Member for Stretford and Urmston (Kate Green) on one specific point: the income threshold at which the rules kick in. There is a perfectly defensible intellectual logic to what the Government have selected: essentially, the income level at which people no longer need recourse to public funds. However, I have raised the issue privately with the Minister; an individual working full time on the minimum wage would be below the threshold set. The test set by the Prime Minister was that people should be doing their best. Preventing someone who has taken a full-time job that only commands the minimum wage from bringing a partner with whom they have fallen in love into the country seems to me to fail the test of fairness.

I support the principle behind the Government's tightening of rules, but there is an issue at the margins about the point at which the threshold is set. I hope that Ministers will go away and look at it. I will be true to my word and stop at that, so that the right hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Dame Joan Ruddock) can speak.

3.33 pm

Dame Joan Ruddock (Lewisham, Deptford) (Lab): I am most grateful to the hon. Member for Croydon Central (Gavin Barwell). I did not come planning to make a speech, but I saw a few minutes remaining and thought that I would jump up. I wanted to ask the Minister a specific question.

I referred earlier to a constituent of mine whose wife is Canadian. I want to fill in a few points about his case. His wife had the right to be in this country; she had taught here for three years. He was a high earner. The two of them established a relationship that led to marriage. They went on honeymoon to Canada completely unaware of the rules, and he, unfortunately, had been made redundant. They were shocked. He wrote an e-mail to me, which I have just received, saying, "Can you imagine a worse way to start your married life?"

He has tried everything. She has a job to go to and his parents have money, but that cannot be accepted. He is now raising the sum that must be lodged as capital—I think that the Minister will confirm that it is £62,500—because he cannot get a job at the moment. He is missing their first wedding anniversary, and he tells me—I have not checked this—that once the money is assembled, it must remain in his bank account for six months in order for the Government to find it acceptable.

That is not how we should behave. A civilised country should not be separating people who married in good faith and have their future ahead of them. All the cases that we have heard from hon. Members are unacceptable. The most tragic cases with which I am concerned are ones in which a split involves children, or children are left alone. It is just not acceptable. I urge the Minister to hear the important message from the committee. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, Southall (Mr Sharma) on securing this debate, which has been invaluable, and which demonstrates that this policy is against all human rights and must be changed.

3.35 pm

Chris Bryant (Rhondda) (Lab): It is a delight to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Owen. I join the congratulations that have been rightly heaped on my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, Southall (Mr Sharma) for securing this debate, and on those involved in the all-party parliamentary group and the report. Without the vast resources that the Government would have for a full investigation, the all-party group has produced an important piece of work, and I was delighted to be at its launch last week.

I also congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Stretford and Urmston (Kate Green)—who made an important contribution to this debate, just as she did to the process of bringing together the report—and the hon. Member for Brent Central (Sarah Teather). It was a delight to hear from a Conservative as well, in the shape of the hon. Member for Croydon Central (Gavin Barwell), who, as we all know, has taken a strong interest in these issues and pursued them with an open mind and an interest in getting to the truth rather than dealing with the facile arguments that we sometimes hear about immigration in the media.

I take issue slightly with the Chair of the Select Committee on Home Affairs, my right hon. Friend the Member for Leicester East (Keith Vaz). He said that because the Minister and I represent constituencies without large amounts of immigration casework, we somehow might not be as kosher in this debate as others. I say to him, first, that I suspect that people in the Rhondda take as great an interest in the issue of immigration as people in his constituency, but may come to a different set of conclusions about it. Secondly, in the Rhondda, we would not have the population that

we presently have were it not for migration: particularly from Ireland and England, but also from Italy in the 19th century. Learning long-term lessons about immigration and migration is far more important than chasing daily or monthly headlines on those issues, and that is certainly what I hope to do as shadow immigration Minister.

I make one other point to the Chair of the Select Committee. The average wage in my constituency is considerably lower than the £18,600 threshold, so the immigration cases that I do have all arise from the rule change.

Keith Vaz: I would never accuse the shadow immigration Minister of chasing headlines. The point that I was making is that the Members here today, apart from those on the Front Benches, have a heavy case load. I said—he can check *Hansard*; I know that he is keen on people reading it—that despite the fact that he and the Minister represent the Rhondda and the Forest of Dean, they do have an understanding of the issues. I urge him to look at *Hansard* before he gets on his high horse again.

Chris Bryant: I was not very much on my high horse; I was just using an opportunity to tease my right hon. Friend. Anyway, he has risen to the bait, which is a great delight for us all.

I agree with many of hon. Members' remarks. Largely thanks to several campaigning organisations, my inbox for the past year has been absolutely full of individual cases, not from my constituency but from all around the country. I will quote a few words from various people; I will not name them. One man wrote:

"I am at breaking point and I can see no chance of being a family, it is breaking our hearts".

Another wrote:

"We feel trapped by our circumstances. I feel like I'm a prisoner in my own country!"

Both are British people unable to sponsor people to come here. Another wrote:

"This makes me feel extremely angry at the present government and very sad to be a British citizen treated in this way."

There is certainly a great deal of distress out there. That might be because there has been a change in the law and many people were proceeding on the assumption that there would not be, so they have been suddenly caught out, but we should not underestimate the pain caused. At the same time, I accept that a fundamental duty of Government is to protect the public purse, which I do not think anyone would dispute. When there are real financial problems in the UK, which we need to sort out, it is all the more important for our public services to be protected and for the taxpayer to be protected. Furthermore, everyone accepts that a fundamental duty of Government is to ensure that the system is not open to abuse.

Use of the family route to circumvent immigration rules is small; it does exist and, indeed, I have had cases in my own constituency, but we need to look at it as the years go forward. Women have married someone from abroad, and the man has come to the UK, but, as soon as the marriage has happened, he disappears. We need to tackle that, however, as a form of exploitation and criminality—we need to look at whether there are further changes in the law we need to make.

Mr David Ward (Bradford East) (LD): My apologies; I have been in a Delegated Legislation Committee. I was due to speak, so I am sorry about that.

Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the extraordinary thing is the ordinariness of our cases? We have all come armed with cases; when we read them, they are about a husband, or a child, and how the situation affects an uncle or a carer. The consequences are not unintended; they are things that were obvious to anyone who knew anything about the circumstances.

Chris Bryant: In political life and legislation, in many cases the effect on an individual is indirect; in this case, the effect is direct, and that is true of immigration policy generally—we pull a lever and something happens. It is, therefore, all the more important to look at our process for changing rules in Parliament. My point is not partisan; we, in the past—it is certainly true in this instance—have brought forward immigration rule changes involving an enormous screed of material, but with a negligible parliamentary process. We need to look at how we do that in the future.

Hon. Members have already referred to some of the real elements of hardship experienced. Inevitably, a significant number of children have been involved, because many of the relationships at issue are those of people who are just getting married and having their first children. My real concern is that children might be growing up now without either a father or a mother for the first three or four years of their life, and I do not know what that is storing up for the future in Britain, in particular in areas where there are already multiple layers of deprivation. That might become a bigger social problem in future than we have estimated thus far.

Mr Virendra Sharma: I hope that my hon. Friend agrees that the new rules are against the basic principles of family life, with husband and wife not being able to live together and children kept apart at a time when both parents are needed to support their future.

Chris Bryant: The right to a family life is obviously an important part of what we all accept to be intrinsic to humanity, but it is a qualified right—it always has been under human rights legislation. If it were not a qualified right, we would not be able to imprison someone who was married. I do not want to say that the right is categorical and exists in all positions, but my hon. Friend makes a fair point.

A Catch-22 now arises for many people: if they are the carer of a child and the other parent cannot be present, they might not be able to engage in a full-time job, so they cannot earn the £18,600 that enables them to bring the other parent in. That puts many parents in a difficult situation, and might end up placing a further burden on the state, rather than removing one, and would be a mistake.

As Members have said, it is also true that the effect of the changes is harsher in some parts of the country than in other parts. I suspect that that is why we have a large number of people from the more deprived constituencies in this Chamber today, rather than those from the country's leafier suburbs. It is also true that the effect on women is disproportionate to that on men; because of the pay gap between men and women, many fewer

women than men can achieve the £18,600 figure. Moreover, as the hon. Member for Brent Central mentioned, the report rightly makes the point that to all intents and purposes the adult dependent relative route has been closed: people have to be able to prove in this country that they have so much money, they can care for those dependants; in which case, people should care for them in the country in which the dependants live, unless they are so ill that they cannot stay there, in which case they probably could not travel anyway. We need to look at such issues.

Keith Vaz: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Chris Bryant: I will, although I am about to disagree again with my right hon. Friend.

Keith Vaz: When he does so, will he tell this Chamber what the official Opposition's position is on the limit? Will it be removed if the Labour party gets into government, or is he planning to review the limit anyway in the next two years, to look at the impact that it is having on people?

Chris Bryant: If my right hon. Friend did not intervene, I would have more time to lay out what our plans are. I was about to say that he said the figure was arbitrary, but it is not arbitrary; it is deliberate. The Migration Advisory Committee advised on a range between £18,600 and £25,700—I suppose we should be grateful that the figure is not £25,700—and laid out that, according to its interpretation, at the lower bound of the range, 45% of applicants would not meet the income threshold. In other words, it is deliberate that 45% of people are caught by the limit. It is, therefore, important for us to look at the full impact of the policy—to look not only at the short-term implications, because I understand that it helps the Government to meet their net migration target, but at the full implications in the long run for the public purse and family life.

We undoubtedly have to examine some of the existing anomalies. Many who have written to me made the point, "It is fine if you can come in as a European economic area national; you don't have to prove anything", but that seems grossly unfair to someone coming in from outside the EEA. We need to look at such anomalies. We also need to look at what flexibility can be brought into the system. As many Members have said, a non-EEA partner's earnings cannot be considered at the moment, even though they may be considerable. Ministers sometimes reply that people will be able to come in through a different route—a work route—but that does not apply to many, unless they have a specific job offer and so on. The way in which cash savings are estimated and the earnings of those who are self-employed similarly need to be looked at, as does whether third-party support can be brought into the equation, as it has been in several other countries.

I have already referred to the matter of the parliamentary process. I want us to engage in a proper process, so that Members can go through the legislation for any future change. We also need to assess the effect on the NHS, not only of people coming to this country, but of losing people who are working in the NHS—they might be worried about their elderly dependent relatives elsewhere in the world and decide to leave this country to go there. That issue is already affecting recruitment in south Wales and other places. Also, categorically, we will seek

to repeal the Government's recent abolition of the right of appeal for family visits. It seems quintessentially fair that someone coming to a funeral, wedding or some such occasion should have a right of appeal.

I have one final point to make. The honest truth is that in future there will be more British people falling in love with foreigners. That is simply a fact: more people go on holiday—one in four people go on holiday to Spain each year and one in six to Greece—and they go much further afield for their holidays than they ever have done before. Many of those people are not on vast incomes, but they end up falling in love. That is why we need to—we must—keep the issue under permanent review.

Jane Austen wrote:

"It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune must be in want of a wife."

I do not entirely agree, but I suggest a different version: "It is a truth universally acknowledged, that every family's set of circumstances is different." The law needs to be able to cater for that, rather than the opposite.

3.50 pm

The Minister for Immigration (Mr Mark Harper): I am pleased to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Owen. I congratulate the hon. Member for Ealing, Southall (Mr Sharma) on securing this debate. Before responding to him, I want to respond to points made by other hon. Members.

The hon. Member for Rhondda (Chris Bryant) took well over half the remaining time, so I will probably not be able to take many interventions, and I will struggle to cover some points. In response to the point that the right hon. Member for Leicester East (Keith Vaz) ably made, apart from the commitment by the Opposition to repeal our changes to the family visa appeal route, I struggled to hear any commitments from the Opposition on what they would do about our policies. That may be a disappointment to Opposition Members, but the Labour party does not seem to think that it will change any of the rules that we have laid out. That is the impression I got from the speech of the hon. Member for Rhondda, so I suspect that he will be popular with people wanting to bend his ear. Despite saying nothing about the Opposition's policies, he took a long time in doing so.

I will say a few words about the intentions of our policy, and then try to pick up some of the points ably made by the wide range of hon. Members who spoke. A general point about the immigration system is that we are determined to take control of it and to restore public confidence. We have made considerable progress with the changes on numbers, reducing net migration by more than one third since the election. The issue is not just about numbers—my hon. Friend the Member for Croydon Central (Gavin Barwell) touched on this—but about preventing abuse and setting out sensible rules that people can follow. That was the context in which we implemented the reforms to change the rules for family migration for non-European economic area nationals seeking to enter or remain in the UK on the basis of their family life.

The rules have three aims. The first is to tackle abuse. The hon. Member for Ealing, Southall referred to the extension of the probationary period from two years to five years before partners can apply for settlement. That

is to test whether the relationship is genuine and should help to deter applications based on sham marriages. That not only deals with abuse, but protects people who are often forced into sham marriages to provide a mechanism for someone to come to the United Kingdom. That is a welcome change.

Secondly, we want to ensure that family migrants are better integrated into British society, which is why, for example, from October 2013 they will have to pass the new "Life in the UK test" and demonstrate that they can speak English at intermediate level. Our view is that no one can properly integrate into British society without at least intermediate English language skills.

The third aim, which hon. Members largely focused on today, is to prevent a burden on taxpayers, which is why we have introduced the minimum income threshold of £18,600 for those wishing to sponsor the settlement of a partner.

Alison McGovern (Wirral South) (Lab): Will the Minister give way?

Mr Harper: No, I will not give way because the hon. Lady has not been here for the whole debate and I want to deal with points raised by hon. Members who have been here, if she will forgive me.

The central point, which came into all the contributions, is that we welcome people who want to make their family life in the United Kingdom, but we expect them to pay for it and we do not expect taxpayers to pay for it. This may be one area where our welfare system interacts with the immigration system. The £18,600 figure is not arbitrary—I agree that the Migration Advisory Committee did some serious evidence-based work. It is broadly the figure at which a couple are no longer able to have income-related benefits. If the argument is that that figure is high and that many people in this country will not earn that much, we must remember that they may have a level of income at which they may receive income-related benefits. That is the challenge.

I would turn the question that some hon. Members have asked around. If someone is on a very low income and wants to bring a partner to the United Kingdom, they are really saying that they want the taxpayer to support them. Hard-working families around the country would ask why their hard-pressed taxes were being used to fund someone else's family, because that is what they would be asked to do.

Dame Joan Ruddock: The Minister said "a couple". Our argument is that we should let the other person in on the basis that they will take work, and then be above the threshold and not claiming public benefits.

Mr Harper: The right hon. Lady makes a very good point.

Mr Roger Godsiff (Birmingham, Hall Green) (Lab): Will the Minister give way?

Mr Harper: I will not give way because the hon. Gentleman has not been here for the whole debate—[HON. MEMBERS: "Yes he has."] I will give way briefly as he did not get to make a speech.

Mr Godsiff: That is kind of the Minister. I was waiting for his speech so that I could ask my question. Will he tell us how many applications have been made by spouses who come here for the two-year probationary period to try to access benefits? He must have some figures, so can he tell us?

Mr Harper: The point I was making was about people who come here when they are not entering into a genuine marriage. I will not have a chance now to find the data. If the hon. Gentleman had asked me earlier, or made a speech, I would have been able to find them before the end of the debate. I want to try to answer the questions that hon. Members have already asked.

I turn to some matters that will address the point made by the right hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Dame Joan Ruddock). There are some areas where we have been flexible already. I had a meeting with the hon. Members for Slough (Fiona Mactaggart) and for Bristol East (Kerry McCarthy), who were here earlier. We looked at some flexibilities, which I agreed to take away and consider. They were about the length of time for which savings must be held if they arise from the realisation of an asset that can be clearly traced to that family. The example that was given to me was someone selling a property that was clearly their property. I also said I would consider the situation where people hold savings in an investment-based account, such as a stocks and shares ISA, and whether that counts as cash.

I am prepared to consider whether we can put in place some rules that are not vulnerable to abuse. The best argument was the example of a couple, one of whom would be working here but was insufficiently skilled to meet the criteria to apply under the tier 2 scheme. I thought one of the examples in the report was a bit odd. I struggled to see how someone who earned £400,000 a year and had £3.5 million of assets could not come here on a tier 2 visa, or would be unable to organise their finances sufficiently to meet the rules. If people can get here under a tier 2 visa, that is fine. However, clearly there are people who could make a contribution but could not meet those criteria.

The situation is not quite as straightforward as people say, because we must guard against abuse. If all people have to do is to show a piece of paper saying that they have a job offer, I know from the number of cases I have seen that it will not be long before people are setting up vague companies and offering jobs that do not exist. There must be a way of putting in place processes that do not lead to abuse. I think that is worth doing and I am prepared to go away and do so. The Chairman of the Home Affairs Committee said that I listen, and I do. I see details of cases that colleagues write to me about, and I am keen to ensure that the rules are fair. They have been in force for less than a year, and we have already made some changes to make them more flexible.

Another suggestion was to have a different income level across the country, and the Migration Advisory Committee looked at that. We do not have a regionalised benefit system, with the exception of housing benefit. Most benefits are consistent throughout the UK. The logic for having a different income limit would mean a different benefit system throughout the United Kingdom. I do not know, but I am guessing that most Members who argue for a regional income level to be taken into account for this process would probably not be in favour of a regionalised benefit system.

Kate Green: Will the Minister give way?

Mr Harper: I have only 50 seconds left and I have not covered all the points. Let me pick up two specific points. The hon. Member for Brent Central (Sarah Teather) asked whether there had been any discussion with the Department for Education on children's best interests. Yes, there has been. Our family consultation and the statement of intent that we published were discussed with all relevant Departments in the way that one secures agreement across Government. Our rules and policy on leave outside the rules take into account a child's best interests. I will give an example. In exceptional cases, those circumstances can be taken into account. Since I have been doing this job, I have authorised the grant of leave outside the rules to an applicant who, with their British partner, was unable to meet the income threshold but had serious concerns about the health and welfare of a child.

Car Clamping (Private Car Parks)

4 pm

Ms Margaret Ritchie (South Down) (SDLP): I am delighted to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Owen, and I am pleased, on behalf of many of my constituents and many people throughout Northern Ireland, that the Minister is here to provide a response on this vexatious issue.

I have been made aware of the serious problem of dubious and irregular charges being levelled by private parking companies on customers who use private car parks, for example, near shopping centres. There is often little oversight or regulation of the marketplace and many companies seem to operate in a dubious manner. My constituents have made me aware of the problem, which I know exists across Northern Ireland. I am therefore delighted to have secured the debate, and again, I thank the Minister for coming to address the Chamber on the issue.

I am aware that the matter partly falls under devolved competencies, but given that the Department for Transport, or more specifically, the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency, provide such companies with driver and vehicle information, it is important that the UK Government address these concerns.

Mr Mark Williams (Ceredigion) (LD): I am grateful to the hon. Lady for giving way so early on in her speech, and I congratulate her on securing the debate. I reassure her that the concerns are not restricted to Northern Ireland; they are UK-wide. Is not the critical point the role of the DVLA, which she just mentioned, and how, in a largely unfettered way—sometimes inappropriately, it seems—vehicle licence details from the DVLA are released to these companies?

Ms Ritchie: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his intervention. That is absolutely correct, and the Minister needs to look into the unfettered handing-out of that information to private parking companies, because it is placing a lot of people, particularly the elderly and those who are disabled, in great distress.

Jim Shannon (Strangford) (DUP): I thank the hon. Lady for bringing the matter to the Chamber; it is important, as she said, to all of us across the United Kingdom, and especially to those in Northern Ireland. Does she agree that many companies seem to have no care whatever for people? In particular, they seem to have a zealotry for clamping the cars of those with blue badges, who are clearly disabled. Does she feel that perhaps the Government should take that on and train them, so that we ensure that they do not do a job that aggravates people, and pick on those who cannot necessarily defend themselves?

Ms Ritchie: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his intervention, and I agree with him. He highlighted areas that I will move on to in my speech. These car parking companies are particularly zealous in their desire to overcharge people, and when they are taken on, they withdraw the charge. That makes me ask whether it was ever valid in the first place. He will be aware of some of the experiences that my constituents have had in his constituency, in the town of Newtownards.

I accept that we are talking about a legal marketplace, within which there are many reputable companies, but I would like to highlight the most pertinent examples of bad practice and the existence of less reputable companies. From the outset, it must be clarified that private operators do not have the right to levy a statutory fine. Instead, they are effectively levying a charge for loss incurred by the operator due to breach of contract. However, in practice, in the cases brought to my attention, it would appear that some companies often go to every length to give the appearance to the customer that they are being fined, and that the fine is non-contestable.

Graham Jones (Hyndburn) (Lab): I congratulate the hon. Lady on securing the debate. There is a related issue, and I wonder whether it should be put out there as public knowledge. The Government need to come clean about whether we can tidy this matter up. These pieces of land were given a zero rateable value when the companies were given planning permission, or whatever permission it was, and now an income is being made from that land. The Government need to look closely at whether the Valuation Office Agency should try to revalue pieces of land where car parking charges are being applied, on the grounds that as there is now an income from it, the rateable value should be reviewed. I hope that the Government look at that, and I want to put that on the record.

Ms Ritchie: I thank my hon. Friend for his intervention. I have found instances of that in Northern Ireland, but the rating of particular properties or pieces of wasteland now used for car parking purposes in Northern Ireland is a devolved matter. In this debate, I want to concentrate on the issues that are particularly the reserve of the Minister and the Department. However, I take my hon. Friend's point. There is a certain over-zealous attitude on the part of many of the players, but the bottom line is that the ordinary person, whether they are elderly, young with a family, or disabled, is placed at great disadvantage—particularly a financial one—some months down the line.

I would like to give some brief examples of the way in which certain companies go to every length to put a significant amount of pressure on people to settle up as quickly as possible, without querying the nature of what they may perceive as an inescapable fine. Often the correspondence, especially the initial notification letter to the customer, will be designed to look like an official statutory notice of the kind issued by a council or a local authority. For example, they will commonly refer to “parking charge notices”, otherwise known as PCNs, mimicking the “penalty charge notice” title of official council tickets, and that will often be accompanied by an official-looking logo, such as the scales of justice. Such notices are clearly designed to make the person feel that this is something they have to pay, and that its source is a body other than a private company, thus making the person—it could happen to any single one of us—deeply uncomfortable.

In addition, companies will present the possibility of the Debt Recovery Agency becoming involved as early as the first correspondence with the customer. Such a threat is clearly vastly out of proportion for what amount to relatively small civil claims. Again, the purpose of that is clearly to get the person to pay up as soon as

[*Ms Ritchie*]

possible and not to question the source, reasonableness or accuracy of the claim. People are made to feel under pressure and that they have no right to recourse.

Such tactics are reprehensible, especially in that many of those being pursued are elderly or vulnerable, and they have even been employed in my constituency against people with disabilities who have very specific parking requirements. Surely the Minister agrees that his Department should not facilitate things for companies that operate in that manner, and surely he will confirm that he would act on evidence that companies are harassing members of the public over dubious claims.

Jim Shannon: The hon. Lady is being very generous in giving way. Is she aware in her constituency, as I am in mine, that when the companies are pressurised on behalf of our constituents, after a period of time, on many occasions, they back down and renege on the original clamping that they did? Does she feel that that underlines the fact that the Government need to be more aware of what the companies do within the law?

Ms Ritchie: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his intervention. In my experience, the companies do back down and withdraw the fines, but that is after a considerable period of time in which my constituents or other people in other areas have felt deeply under stress—

Jim Shannon: Harassed.

Ms Ritchie: Deeply harassed by the companies. These people feel that they are criminals when they are not.

Having considered the manner in which some claims are pursued, we need also to consider the fairness and reasonableness of the claims. Again, it seems that certain companies are pressing claims that are spurious at best. Previous court guidance has said that charges must be proportionate and that an owner is entitled to seek only damages relating to actual loss. For a start, the existence of tiered levels of payment depending on how quickly fines are paid suggests that any real evaluation of loss is not being used. The charges also seem excessive against any determination of an actual loss incurred. The fact that some companies are charging up to £150, which is more than 50% higher than, in our case, the Roads Service's fine, or a council fine, indicates that it is not actual loss that is being charged to the customer.

Graham Jones: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for giving way so generously. She makes a valid point about the loss. How is the loss quantified? In Hyndburn, there is free car parking everywhere, so how can a car park actually lose money? How can these companies fleece motorists for £100, £60 or whatever, as happens in the case of Eastgate retail car park in Accrington, when there is simply no loss of income? The comparator is that there is free car parking everywhere.

Ms Ritchie: I thank my hon. Friend for his intervention. I agree; that is another point that needs to be investigated and explored by the Minister.

There is an associated issue about the prominence of the terms of use of private car parks. Those signs must be clear and of a certain size, but too often the terms are hidden in small print within a lot of other text. Surely there should be more of an onus on the operator to

make clear to the customer the terms and conditions for using the parking space, and what action will be taken should those be breached. Instead, people often receive notification that they are being charged up to a month later, with very inconsistent evidence as to what their infringement was. What evidence there is normally consists of using automated registration recognition techniques, which are often highly contestable, and there are real fears that such machines are not being operated within the terms of the guidance provided by the Information Commissioner.

Graham Jones: I want to press the issue of the Equality Act 2010. How do these car parking companies square what they do with the Equality Act when they are indiscriminate in their charging? Surely it is illegal to discriminate against disabled people with these car parking charges—and with time limits, when disabled people need more time. It is absolutely outrageous that disabled people are treated in exactly the same way as others when the law of the land says that they should be treated in a different way because of their disability.

Ms Ritchie: I thank my hon. Friend for his intervention. I agree that an area of the Equality Act needs to be investigated, but perhaps because these are private car parks, they sometimes fall through various loopholes. None the less, the issue requires investigation.

Mr Mark Williams: I concur with the comments of the hon. Member for Hyndburn (Graham Jones). Mr and Mrs Sheldon, a disabled couple from Aberystwyth who visited me in my constituency surgery last week, had exactly the same experience. With regard to taking these complaints further, may I ask the hon. Member for South Down (Ms Ritchie) what her experience has been of the British Parking Association, the body that is supposed to regulate the conduct of its member companies?

Ms Ritchie: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his intervention. I think that part of the problem lies with the British Parking Association—he is right—because it is not doing the job that it is supposed to do. It is letting things fall through the net.

Let me explain some more of the background. People may well be asked for proof of purchase from the car park's associated store. I do not know about the Minister's shopping habits, but it would be very rare for me still to have a receipt, months later, for every small item of shopping that I had bought. None of this seems to constitute a fair claim or burden of evidence, and I would like to know whether the Minister agrees.

Given the very uncertain regulations that cover this area, consumers caught in such cases have very little access to recourse, and companies seem to obfuscate where possible. If the operator is approved and controlled by the British Parking Association, there is a more formal appeal mechanism, but it must be recognised that the BPA is not an independent body; it represents the parking industry. Moreover, many of these companies operate outside the BPA.

Surely the Minister agrees that there should be a requirement on companies operating in this market to be BPA registered, at least, and that there should be a clear set of independent guidelines that require companies

to provide information on the right of recourse for those being charged. I put it to the Minister that any such guidelines or regulations should also put clear limits on the nature of letters that can be sent to consumers and put a robust burden of evidence on the company demanding the charge.

What exists currently is not fit for purpose and damages not only consumers, but those companies that seek to operate in a reputable manner. We have a private parking regime that is highly inadequate. The Government claim to want people to return to their city and town centres to support small business and the local economy. We have had the Mary Portas report, and we have had an emphasis on regeneration of our town and city centres, but what message does it send when people return from shopping trips and a month later are served with parking notices such as these? I will tell the Minister exactly what they think: "I'll stay at home and do my shopping online." That is only those who are fortunate enough to have that option. People will simply stay at home or go elsewhere, where there are not these impediments or hindrances, but they will not go back to the town or city that placed that burden on them through a parking operation.

I have come here today hoping at the very least to gain assurances that the Department for Transport is aware of the problems and, more specifically, will take remedial action to prevent companies that are operating in a disreputable manner from accessing the DVLA's database. I know that in the Northern Ireland context, my party colleague who is the Minister of Environment there, Alex Attwood, has been talking to the Under-Secretary of State for Transport, the hon. Member for Wimbledon (Stephen Hammond), about this issue, but also about the very important need to devolve the DVLA to Northern Ireland, so that we have our own base there. Perhaps the Minister wants to take that issue away and talk to his colleague about it, but surely there should be a degree of concern that the DVLA information system—

Albert Owen (in the Chair): Order. I know that the hon. Lady has been very generous in giving way on a number of occasions, but to give the Minister the opportunity to make a full reply, could she make her concluding remarks?

Ms Ritchie: I was about to do that, Mr Owen; I have just one more sentence. The DVLA information system is being used to help process very dubious claims. I want to know what discussions the Minister has had on this matter, and what the DVLA considers when dealing with requests from private car parking companies. Private firms have no right to impose a fine or penalty, and anything that purports to be a charge but is in reality a fine or penalty should be outlawed.

Albert Owen (in the Chair): I am grateful to the hon. Lady. I call the Minister to give a thorough reply.

4.18 pm

The Minister of State, Department for Transport (Mr Simon Burns): Thank you, Mr Owen. That is quite a challenge, given that my time has been reduced somewhat. May I begin by saying that it is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship? I congratulate the hon. Member

for South Down (Ms Ritchie) on securing the debate. I welcome the opportunity to discuss in detail a matter that is clearly of great concern to her and her constituents and to other hon. Members who have taken part in the debate. I will give the hon. Member for South Down the assurance, because this is a highly complex area and she has covered a considerable amount of ground, that I will get the Under-Secretary of State for Transport, my hon. Friend the Member for Wimbledon (Stephen Hammond), to write to her on those issues that I am unable to deal with specifically in the limited time left to me.

The management of private parking and the release of vehicle keeper details to allow car park operators to apply parking controls can, understandably, be emotive matters. Receipt of a parking ticket is never popular, and some drivers become very annoyed when they are subject to enforcement action, particularly if they disagree with the principle of vehicle keeper information being provided to private companies for such purposes. Unpopular though receipt of a parking charge may be, measures to control parking on private land are necessary to ensure that parking facilities remain accessible and provide value to all who use them. Drivers who choose to park their vehicles on private land do so in line with terms and conditions that should be clearly displayed on signage at the entrance to the car park and around it; I take the hon. Lady's point about the size of displays and their accessibility.

Graham Jones: Will the Minister give way?

Mr Burns: I will not be accepting any interventions from the hon. Gentleman. This is the hon. Lady's debate; I do not have much time and I want to address as many of her points as I can.

Typically, conditions relate to the need to pay a fee and display a valid ticket, and to observe the maximum permitted time for parking. There may be other conditions, such as a stipulation that parking is for patrons only. Parking control is necessary to allow landowners who invite drivers to park on their land to exercise their legal rights and gain the benefit to which they are entitled from the use of their property. Without any form of control, I am sure the hon. Lady would agree that errant drivers might park as they liked, breaching reasonable terms and conditions, without fear of any recourse arising from their misuse of the land and the detrimental effect that their actions might have on the availability of parking spaces for more considerate motorists.

It is important to bear in mind that UK law specifically provides for the release of vehicle keeper information to those who can demonstrate that they have a reasonable cause for requiring it. There is no statutory definition of "reasonable cause", but our policy is that requests for such information should relate to the use of a vehicle, following incidents where there may be liability on the part of the driver. Where a parking infringement may have taken place, it is considered reasonable to provide the vehicle keeper's contact details to allow the matter to be taken up with the driver responsible.

Those procedures are fully in keeping with the terms of the Data Protection Act, and the Information Commissioner's Office is fully apprised of the release of information for such purposes. Although the law provides for the release of information, we are committed to

[*Mr Simon Burns*]

striking the correct balance between protecting drivers from unfair or unscrupulous practices that some parking management companies may employ, and ensuring that land owners are able appropriately to control the use of their land and benefit fairly from it.

The management and control of parking on private land has been under considerable scrutiny over recent years, and the activities and standards of operation in the sector have changed substantially. Despite perceptions to the contrary, I assure the hon. Lady that significant control is already applied to the operation of private car parking companies. Unscrupulous operators can no longer put a sign up in a car park that sets outrageous charges and harass motorists for payment. Rogue operators might once have been able to request vehicle keeper details, but that is no longer the case. Unlike in the past, control is now exercised over the charges that can be imposed, the standards for signage and the operating standards for the conduct of staff employed by parking management operators.

Since 2005, when the previous Government were in power, the issues raised by motorists aggrieved by private parking enforcement have been carefully scrutinised. As a result of the first review, the systems for accessing vehicle keeper data were totally changed and formal safeguards were introduced. The review led to the introduction of a requirement for companies that receive keeper data via electronic links to be members of an accredited trade association. The conditions have been strengthened by making ATA membership a requirement for all car parking companies as a prerequisite for access to data. Since 2009, all private car parking companies that want to request vehicle keeper information for private car parking management have been required to be ATA members, regardless of whether they make such requests via electronic or paper channels. That requirement has delivered a regulatory regime for the parking industry where none previously existed.

An ATA must have a code of practice based on fair treatment of the motorist, which requires its members to operate to high professional standards of conduct while allowing them to take reasonable action to follow up alleged parking contraventions. We would expect any organisation that wanted to become an ATA to be able to demonstrate that it has a code of practice that ensures that only a fair parking charge is asked for and that prominent signage is present, which outlines clearly the restrictions on parking and the charges and conditions that apply. There should be no hidden charges or ambiguity for the motorist as to what is and what is not permitted on the land. The code also helps to ensure that contact with motorists is not threatening and that parking charge notices are issued promptly so that a driver can recall the circumstances surrounding the event. A reasonable amount of time must be allowed for payment to be made before any additional charges are imposed or the matter is escalated. That is the case in Northern Ireland and in the rest of the United Kingdom

Even though strong requirements are in place to regulate the actions of parking companies, disclosure of data is also tightly controlled. Even when a company can demonstrate full compliance with the code of practice, the DVLA and its Northern Ireland equivalent, the Driver and Vehicle Agency, operate to the same standards and must be assured that there is good reason to believe that a parking contravention is likely to have occurred and that the company is acting with integrity when requesting data.

Parking management companies are visited to audit their operations and further in-depth checking of individual cases is undertaken to make sure that requests have been submitted for genuine reasons and with reliable evidence to back them up. All requests for keeper details of Northern Ireland-registered vehicles are written requests, and the information provided in support of the application is examined to confirm that the release of the information requested is fair and lawful.

Car parking operators pay fees when requesting keeper details. The fee levels are set to recover the cost of processing requests, so that those costs are not passed on to the taxpayer. The Government do not gain financially from the provision of such information.

It is inevitable that motorists who feel that they have been unfairly treated will complain. The first port of call is usually the ATA, and I have mentioned that an operator needs to demonstrate compliance with the code of practice in order to retain its membership. The ATA is there to investigate and ensure that, where appropriate, remedial action is taken. It is for the ATA to decide whether the operator needs to be placed on notice with additional scrutiny, follow-up audits and checks to monitor future actions closely. In more serious cases, a decision may be taken to terminate an operator's membership of the ATA, without which they cannot operate. That consequence is serious for a company's survival and it is an incentive for them to behave responsibly.

The agencies that supply data to operators also play a key role. Where sufficiently serious concerns are raised or ongoing issues are identified, agencies will consider whether continued access to vehicle keeper data is appropriate. Several parking management companies have had their ability to request vehicle keeper data suspended where shortfalls in the standards expected have been identified. In addition, trading standards departments can prosecute companies if they have breached consumer protection law. In short, if a company is not meeting the standards expected, there are serious consequences.

I trust we can all agree that we have come a long way in providing proportionate regulation for the parking sector. I do not have enough time to deal with the hon. Lady's other points, so I will ensure that my ministerial colleague, my hon. Friend the Member for Wimbledon, writes to her. I conclude by urging her to forward to the responsible Minister the details of any cases experienced by her constituents and others that have involved questionable actions and bad behaviour, and where the expected standards of operation have not been met, so that those cases can be investigated.

SMEs (Middle East and North Africa)

4.30 pm

Daniel Kawczynski (Shrewsbury and Atcham) (Con): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Owen.

The United Kingdom is the sixth largest economy in the world, yet we are, I believe, only the 12th largest exporter. Many colleagues will know about my passion for British exports. Having come from an exports background, I take a strong interest not only in exports but in the region we are discussing, namely the middle east and north Africa.

I have spent the past eight months undertaking a report into UK Trade & Investment—UKTI—and into how it interacts with small and medium-sized British companies in assisting them to export to the middle east and north Africa. Of great interest to me is that we have interacted with more than 220 such companies, which have come from all over the United Kingdom into the House of Commons to give evidence in a very positive and enthusiastic way, about their experiences of UKTI. Small and medium-sized enterprises—SMEs—are keen to improve the service they get from UKTI, and I pay tribute to all their work in helping me to write my report, which will be published in seven to 10 days' time. I will give a copy of the report to the Minister, for his consideration.

I would like to put on record my thanks to Mr Nick Baird, UKTI's chief executive, who has been extraordinarily patient with me over the past eight months. I sometimes think he must stick pins into a voodoo doll of me in his office, because of the number of issues that I constantly raise with him. Extraordinarily, I have had to take a lot of the companies that I have interviewed to meet with him directly—and he will testify to that—because they simply have not had the traction that they expect and deserve from interacting with UKTI on the ground in their various regions. I am delighted to help them by taking them to meet Mr Baird, but that should not be for a Member of Parliament to do; they should automatically get the traction and support on the ground that they so rightly deserve.

Jim Shannon (Strangford) (DUP): The hon. Gentleman shows genuine zeal, and I congratulate him on his great interest in and passion for the issue. The agri-food industry in Northern Ireland is worth some £4 billion to the economy. Most of that comes from sales in Northern Ireland and the United Kingdom, and just some of it from sales overseas. Does the hon. Gentleman feel that the time has come for a UK-wide promotion of all the regions together, for the agri-food industry to market itself and get those markets in the middle east and north Africa? There is clearly the potential there to do even more for the economies back home.

Daniel Kawczynski: I very much concur with the hon. Gentleman. He will know that British agricultural products are among the best in the world. The British brand is extremely strong in the middle east and north Africa—they are crying out for dairy, beef and other products—and there should be a concerted approach, promoting the best of British of agricultural products in the region.

Mr Mark Williams (Ceredigion) (LD): I, too, congratulate my hon. Friend on securing the debate and on his impressive work in this field. He mentioned agriculture and SMEs, but does he also think that important links need to be made between UKTI and the higher education sector, regarding the expertise in the sector and the work we are doing there? Wearing his hat as Parliamentary Private Secretary at the Wales Office, does he acknowledge that Welsh universities can offer a lot to UKTI in boosting our economy?

Daniel Kawczynski: I agree with my hon. Friend on that point, and I very much hope that he will engage—as I do—with the Minister in bringing directly to him, and also to Mr Nick Baird, examples of how UKTI can get involved with his constituency in Wales.

We must always be evaluating the structure of UKTI, its reporting processes and its accountability to Parliament. We must never forget that the organisation receives more than £400 million of British taxpayers' money every year. We must also, and I will not flinch from this, be assessing, as with any other organisation, the calibre of its staff, in the United Kingdom and overseas. We must consider whether UKTI should remain in its current form, become a stand-alone entity along the lines of the Technology Strategy Board, or be brought, rather than between the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, into a new external relations department of the Foreign Office, UKTI and the Department for International Development, focusing on our foreign relations interactions.

What there must be, however, is greater scrutiny of UKTI in the House of Commons. Since the general election, this is only the third debate—two of them initiated by me—that Parliament has had on UKTI and British exports, and I certainly will not be able to say everything I wish to say in 15 minutes. I am pleased that there is a Labour Member—the right hon. Member for Oxford East (Mr Smith)—here today. In the previous debate there were none, so I welcome the fact that a Labour MP is taking an interest. I do not know what mechanism could be used for that greater scrutiny. I do not know if an independent Select Committee just evaluating UKTI would be feasible, but we must always challenge UKTI and its Ministers and raise concerns when things do not go right.

I shall now turn to the subject of the debate—north Africa. I feel passionately about French-speaking north Africa because of its proximity to the United Kingdom and its importance strategically, for security reasons, and from an economic perspective. When I went to Mauritania two years ago, I was the first British MP to do so since 1960, when the current Father of the House, my right hon. Friend the Member for Louth and Horncastle (Sir Peter Tapsell), went there for its independence day celebrations. Regrettably, most MPs I talk to do not even know where Mauritania is, yet it is an important and rapidly growing country. It is close to Morocco, and is part of the Arab League and of north Africa. There are huge opportunities in its oil and gas sector, as well as in mining, education and construction, yet on the UKTI website no opportunities whatever are listed for the country.

I know that we have representation in Mauritania. Following my report about the country, the Foreign Secretary visited Mauritania, and we have now established

[*Daniel Kawczynski*]

a diplomatic presence on the ground in Nouakchott. As UKTI has a website for SMEs to look at and interact with, to find out what opportunities there are in a country, it is rather daunting to look up Mauritania and find nothing there. We must ensure that if we have a website it is properly populated.

Last week I took Nick Baird to have lunch with the Moroccan ambassador, Princess Lalla Joumala, and we talked about the importance of partnering with and working constructively with Morocco in joint venture operations. Morocco has tremendous relations from a banking, cultural and linguistic perspective with the other countries in the region—not just in north Africa—including Senegal, Mali and Niger. The Moroccans are keen to engage with us, so I was pleased that Mr Baird came with me to that lunch. I hope that there will be an increased focus on the Moroccans and on partnering with them to work constructively on penetrating the French-speaking north African market.

Luckily I speak French, because I studied it at university, but we are too guilty in this country of going only to places where English is spoken. If the first national language of a country is not English, we tend to gravitate away from it, and we cannot afford to do that any longer. All of the north African French-speaking countries are very keen to interact with the United Kingdom.

Mr Andrew Smith (Oxford East) (Lab): I congratulate the hon. Gentleman on securing the debate and on his work on the report, which I look forward to reading when it is produced. I share his enthusiasm for the effort that must go into backing up and making a success of exports by our SMEs. Does he agree that everything he says about French should also apply to Arabic, a language to which more attention needs to be given in our country?

Daniel Kawczynski: I absolutely agree, and I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman. A recent media report expressed concern at the number of British diplomats operating in Arab countries who do not speak fluent Arabic. If we are to send such people overseas, they must speak either fluent Arabic or fluent French.

I have been to Tunisia, where 60 British companies operate compared with 1,700 French ones, which I emphasise because it is a staggering difference. Interestingly, by far the biggest investor there is British Gas. I want to ask the Minister what we are doing in conjunction with British Gas to ensure that its network of contacts, particularly in the petrochemical industry, is harnessed so that more of our companies are encouraged to operate in Tunisia.

Pauline Latham (Mid Derbyshire) (Con): I thank my hon. Friend for securing this debate. It is important because if we are to get out of this recession well, we have to look to other markets, and UKTI is absolutely fundamental to that. I recently received a delegation from French-speaking Mali, which is desperately keen for our mining engineers and electricity people to go there to provide power and infrastructure in a country that has been in turmoil, but is now doing much better. We need to encourage such people to come and give presentations, and UKTI could play a much bigger role than it does currently.

Daniel Kawczynski: I completely agree. We have seen what happens in countries such as Mali. When we are not present, not trading with them and not on the ground, a vacuum is left for others to fill, and the costs involved in sorting out the mess are greatly increased.

I met the President of Niger when he came to the Foreign Office. He informed me that bilateral trade between Niger and the United Kingdom was £4 million per annum—only £4 million with an incredibly important strategic country that has a rapidly growing population.

On Libya, I met Deloitte yesterday and was informed that it is setting up offices in Tripoli. I am very pleased about that, and I want to pay tribute to Deloitte for taking that plunge. I am concerned that media coverage of instability in Benghazi is preventing more British SMEs from exporting to Libya. I have a small company in Shrewsbury that has successfully managed to win contracts to provide metal piping to various projects in Libya. I urge the Minister to ensure that UKTI does more to encourage British companies to go to Libya, which is a hugely important market for us. We have spent nearly £1 billion helping the Libyans to throw off the shackles of dictatorship, and we must not fall behind our German, Italian and French counterparts, who are banging the drum for their companies in that country.

I am frustrated that the UKTI does not engage more with parliamentarians. I have been the chairman of the all-party group on Libya for the past eight years. I have led many delegations to Libya, and I have an extensive network of contacts throughout the country. Before the revolution, I even wrote a biography of Colonel Gaddafi. Yet I have not had a single exchange with UKTI about anything to do with that country or the delegations I go on. It is almost as though it is impervious to, ignorant of or has no interest in what parliamentarians are doing.

Having prime ministerial trade envoys is a very good step that I want to be expanded. There are also catalysts—they are hired by UKTI as such—who have expert knowledge of a country. I want to mention one to the Minister: Mr Ali Mosawi, who came to see me, has been selected as an Iraqi catalyst. He has expert knowledge of the country, being from one of the best-known Iraqi families and having a network of offices throughout the country. He is an official UKTI catalyst, but he came to see me because he is getting very little traction with UKTI, which is not using his services at all. He has even offered UKTI free use of his extensive network of offices throughout Iraq, but nobody has responded to his very generous offer. I want the Minister to investigate that and I want his officials to ensure that Mr Mosawi is contacted.

On inward investment to the United Kingdom, I want to know—I will ask a series of parliamentary questions to find out—where UKTI staff are based and what areas they cover. I think that the UK is still No. 1 for inward investment in the European Union, although Germany is rapidly catching us up. It seems to me that the vast bulk of inward investment from the middle east, particularly Qatar, comes into London.

With the Shropshire chamber of commerce, I recently met UKTI staff in Shrewsbury. I asked them who was responsible for ensuring inward investment into Shropshire, and I was told that there is nobody. We have huge opportunities in Shropshire, with both the council

and the chamber of commerce for Shrewsbury and Shropshire. It is vital that inward investment to the United Kingdom is spread more evenly and that professional staff in UKTI cover more rural constituencies. For the record, I will not rest from badgering UKTI until at least one of its members of staff is responsible for and dedicated to working with my local companies and authorities to attract inward investment into Shropshire.

The Prime Minister has set a target of £1 trillion of exports by 2020, which is a hugely important issue. We spend so much time in this House debating between Labour, Liberal Democrats and ourselves and having huge arguments about how to cut up the cake. I respect that, but we must come together as three political parties—with those from Ulster—to talk about and work collectively on how to increase exports. That should not be a party political issue; we should come together and work together to ensure that SMEs, which are the lifeblood of our country, are given every assistance to export.

The Prime Minister's target of £1 trillion will not be met unless we radically change the way exports are carried out. I met Lord Green over breakfast at 8 o'clock this morning, with other parliamentarians, and he told me that the £1 trillion target would be rather challenging. He seemed to give the impression that it would be good to get to 80% of it, but I think that we should aim to exceed that target. I look forward to hearing from the Minister.

4.47 pm

The Minister of State, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (Michael Fallon): On behalf of us all, I welcome you to the Chair, Mr Owen. I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Shrewsbury and Atcham (Daniel Kawczynski) for giving me the opportunity to explain in more detail the breadth and depth of support provided by UK Trade & Investment for UK SMEs in the middle east and north Africa. Let me reassure him that there is a very good story to tell. This is a large and growing marketplace, in which there are tremendous opportunities. We export more to the United Arab Emirates than we do to India, more to Saudi Arabia than to Brazil and more to Qatar than to Mexico. Equally, there are challenges, particularly in markets such as those in Iraq and Libya that he mentioned, where the business environment is clearly more challenging.

My hon. Friend will be familiar with some of the services that UKTI provides. A typical example is support for trade missions, of which 20, involving 150 SMEs, have visited Saudi Arabia alone since mid-2012. Indeed, independent research undertaken on UKTI's behalf demonstrates that, for the year to September 2012, the organisation delivered 4,500 services to businesses across the region. Some 60% of businesses surveyed reported that those services generated significant business benefit, including an average additional profit of £84,000.

In addition to supporting companies in-market, UKTI brings its specialists from the region back to the UK to speak directly to SME exporters. For example, earlier this month, in partnership with private sector sponsors and other partners, UKTI organised a UK tour for specialists from the UAE, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. My hon. Friend will be interested to know that they met more than 200 companies in four cities—Glasgow,

Manchester, Bristol and London. Those events were organised in association with UKTI's extensive domestic regional network, which is dedicated to supporting exporters across our country. I do want to reassure my hon. Friend, because he asked this specific question, that there are UKTI staff in every region, if not in every council area.

The work of UKTI officials to support SMEs is increasingly enhanced by the activity of the Prime Minister's trade envoys and our British business ambassadors. As senior business leaders, they are well known internationally, and they consistently generate significant interest in overseas markets. For example, one of our business ambassadors, Malcolm Brinded, recently led a trade mission to Jordan, significantly helping the companies concerned to position themselves to secure a share of Jordanian business.

I should also highlight that SMEs in the region will benefit from another UKTI initiative—its high value opportunity campaigns. Those campaigns cover 100 of the world's largest commercial projects, 19 of which are in the middle east and north Africa. Each will open up for our SMEs huge supply chain opportunities in projects as diverse as Qatar's World cup stadium infrastructure, Dubai's airport expansion and huge oil and gas projects in Iraq and Saudi Arabia. We want success in those major overseas projects to mirror the positive benefits of investment in our national infrastructure by Gulf sovereign wealth funds. Indeed, we are tendering for the provision of private sector support in the Gulf to help to grow that opportunity.

Looking forward, my hon. Friend will want to know that my colleague, Lord Green, and UKTI's chief executive officer, Nick Baird, intend to build on the excellent services already provided to make the organisation more attuned to what its competitors offer, in line with their desire to bring more private sector expertise to bear in support of exporters. One of the key differences between us and our major competitors, especially Germany, is the range of business-to-business services available in overseas markets from organisations such as chambers of commerce. That is a difference that we need to address. Lord Green and Nick Baird also want to see a much stronger connection between domestic and overseas business networks. A strong case has been made, and British chambers and other British business groups offer a potential means to extend such services to UK SMEs. However, in most cases, that will require a substantial upgrading of those business groups' own capacity to offer the requisite level of service, which is why the Prime Minister announced last year a transformational change to the support that business can offer to business.

UKTI has now launched a pilot campaign in 20 markets that will radically enhance the support to UK SMEs over the next three to five years. The pilot focuses on high growth and emerging markets and includes Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the UAE. Our aim is that by 2017 the support available to UK SMEs from Government and business groups will have significantly increased in range, quantity, impact and quality in at least the first 20 markets. It is then planned to roll out the programme to include all markets and connect our overseas business-to-business support to UK business networks, so that we have one global British business network that is operating on a par with our competitors.

[Michael Fallon]

At home, UKTI's broader official business offering needs to adapt to the actual needs of business rather than to what we think they need. UK Export Finance understands that and continues to provide invaluable support to UK companies, many of which are SMEs, during turbulent times in the region. It was one of the first export credit agencies to resume cover for Libya, and even at the height of the Arab spring uprisings, UK Export Finance took a long-term view of the risks involved and remained on cover for the majority of countries.

I hope that my words demonstrate to my hon. Friend that UKTI intends to continue to build on its success in supporting SMEs in the middle east and north Africa, while at the same time developing new programmes of assistance. We want, for example, to be able to help more companies such as Apton Partitioning Limited of the west midlands, which designs, manufactures and distributes office partitioning systems for commercial offices.

The Apton story shows how a British business, dependent on the UK construction industry, lost 50% of its business in 2008, but emerged, with the help of UKTI, to be an international business operating in countries with major construction growth across the world. It is now exporting to Qatar, the UAE, Bahrain, Oman, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait.

My hon. Friend raised a number of specific points, which I will touch on if I may and write to him if I miss. He announced the publication of his report. We all look forward to reading that when it appears in the next few weeks. He asked about scrutiny of UKTI. I think today has been about scrutiny, but I take his point that there have not been sufficient debates on that important issue. It is of course open to the Select Committees to take up the work of UKTI.

My hon. Friend asked me specifically about Libya. We were one of the first to open an office again in Libya. Some 250 British firms have been to Libya since

the end of the conflict, but I wholly accept that we need to do more than that. He mentioned Mr Mosawi in relation to Iraq, and I will certainly follow that up and reply to it. I repeat the reassurance that there are UKTI staff in every region of our country.

I hope that my hon. Friend will be reassured that UKTI takes seriously any scrutiny and comments on its activities. I hope he has had engagement with senior UKTI staff in response to any concerns that he has had. The fact that some companies occasionally feel that they are not getting the service they expect is, in my experience, the exception rather than the rule. Across the globe, countries that have used UKTI sing its praises. There may of course be exceptions to that, and if there are we need to learn why that is and to build on it. Nick Baird has made improving all levels of customer satisfaction one of the top priorities for him and his top management team. They are challenging the organisation and are seeing a response. Current indications are that, over the last calendar year, UKTI hit its target of 32,000 businesses assisted, up from just 25,000 the previous year. This year, UKTI aims to help 40,000 companies. Its target for 2015 is 50,000 businesses.

I hope that hon. Members will be reassured to hear that, of the tens of thousands of businesses that were helped and supported by UKTI in the year to September 2012, 90% of which were SMEs, more than 75% were either satisfied or very satisfied, and those companies say that UKTI has helped them generate additional sales of £49 billion. I hope that my hon. Friend and others will agree that that is an impressive performance. It is not a performance that we are complacent about, but one to which we should none the less pay tribute.

Question put and agreed to.

4.58 pm

Sitting adjourned.

Written Ministerial Statements

Wednesday 19 June 2013

HEALTH

Nutrition Labelling

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Anna Soubry): Today we are launching the new front of pack nutrition labelling scheme across the UK.

This will introduce more consistent nutrition labelling across the UK by providing, on the front of food and drink products, clear information on energy and those nutrients of public health concern that the majority of us should be aiming to limit in our diets.

The scheme incorporates reference intake (previously known as guideline daily amount) information together with the levels of energy and the levels of fat, saturates, sugar and salt, highlighted by red, amber or green colour-coding. The combination of this information will allow people to judge how much energy and nutrients a portion of the labelled food will contribute to their overall diet, and also enable them to compare products and make healthier choices.

Two new public health responsibility deal pledges are also being launched today in order to enable food businesses to commit themselves to adopting the new scheme and, more widely, to enable businesses, non-Government organisations and others to help promote it.

The “Guide to creating a front of pack (FoP) nutrition label for pre-packed products sold through retail outlets” has been placed in the Library. Copies are available to hon. Members from the Vote Office and to noble Lords from the Printed Paper office.

It is also available at:

[https://www.gov.uk/government/publications?departments\[\]=department-of-health](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications?departments[]=department-of-health).

Copies of the two new responsibility deal pledges have also been placed in the Library. Copies are available to hon. Members from the Vote Office and to noble Lords from the Printed Paper office.

The two pledges are also available at:
<https://responsibilitydeal.dh.gov.uk/>.

WORK AND PENSIONS

Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council

The Minister of State, Department for Work and Pensions (Mr Mark Hoban): The Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council will be held on 20 June 2013 in Luxembourg. I will represent the UK.

The Council will finalise its contribution to the European Council to take place on 27 and 28 June 2013. The European semester 2013 discussion will focus on a number of documents linked to the European semester. There will also be a separate discussion on youth employment.

Council will seek a general approach on the European globalisation adjustment fund regulation (2014-20) and will provide an update on the fund for European aid for the most deprived regulation.

Council also seek a general approach on the proposed directive on minimum requirements for enhancing worker mobility by improving the acquisition and preservation of supplementary pension rights. There will be updates on directives on equal treatment between persons irrespective of religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation; posting of workers in the framework of the provision of services; and gender balance among non-executive directors of companies listed on stock exchanges.

Ministers will consider two sets of Council conclusions on social investment for growth and cohesion and on women in the media.

Under any other business the presidency will provide updates on legislative files and other issues. There will also be information on public employment services (PES) and state of play regarding preparation for the G20 Labour and Employment Ministers’ meeting and joint meeting with Finance Ministers. Finally, the Lithuanian delegation will outline the work programme of their forthcoming presidency.

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 19 June 2013

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

Bovine Tuberculosis

David Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what steps his Department is taking to eliminate bovine tuberculosis in addition to the current cull of badgers. [159446]

Mr Heath [*holding answer 13 June 2013*]: There is no one solution to overcoming bovine TB. The Government is committed to a comprehensive and balanced approach to tackling bovine TB using all available tools. Badger culling is one of these tools. Numerous cattle controls are already in place, including:

Routine surveillance testing of cattle herds with frequency of testing based on risk;

Pre-movement testing of cattle from higher risk herds;

Movement restrictions on animals from herds that have tested positive or inconclusive for bovine TB;

The slaughter of all cattle that have tested positive for bovine TB;

All cattle carcasses inspected at slaughterhouses for evidence of TB;

Advice and support for farmers that have had cases of bovine TB in their herds about bio-security and reducing the risk of bovine TB.

In January 2013, the Government introduced further changes to the TB surveillance testing regime and cattle movement controls. Measures for controlling bovine TB in cattle will continue to form the backbone of our approach to tackling bovine TB and we will continue to look for ways to enhance them.

The Government is also funding local deployment of injectable badger vaccine and significant investment in research and development, including the development of cattle and badger vaccines.

The Government intends to publish an eradication strategy for consultation over the summer pulling all of these strands together.

David Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what plans he has to test a tuberculosis vaccine on (a) cattle and (b) badgers; and if he will make a statement. [159447]

Mr Heath [*holding answer 13 June 2013*]: We hope to have successfully completed all the cattle vaccine experimental work, including studies on safety of meat and milk, during 2014. We will then be able to make an application to the Veterinary Medicines Directorate for an Animal Test Certificate to begin the field trials proposed in EU Commissioner Tonio Borg's letter to the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs dated 14 January 2013.

An injectable badger vaccine was licensed in 2010. We are investing in the development of an oral badger vaccine but this work is still at the research stage and we cannot say with any confidence when a usable vaccine might become available.

David Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what steps his Department is taking to work with Save Me, the Badger Trust and the RSPCA to look at alternatives to the forthcoming badger cull. [159448]

Mr Heath [*holding answer 13 June 2013*]: We regularly meet and correspond with a broad range of stakeholders, including wildlife and animal welfare groups, on bovine TB.

There is no one solution to overcoming bovine TB. The Government is committed to a comprehensive and balanced approach to tackling bovine TB using all available tools. Badger culling is one of these tools.

Nobody wants to cull badgers but the scientific evidence and experience of other countries clearly show that without tackling the reservoir of disease in badgers effectively we will never get on top of the disease in cattle.

Horses: Animal Welfare

Neil Parish: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs whether he plans to bring forward legislative proposals on the hot branding of horses and ponies; and if he will make a statement. [159963]

Mr Heath: There are no proposals to amend the existing legislation relating to hot branding. While the Government accepts that there is currently a need for semi-wild moorland ponies to be hot branded, we have asked the semi-wild moorland pony societies to prepare a code of practice on hot branding and to continue to look for suitable alternatives.

COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Buildings: Energy

Mr Betts: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government how much money has been included in the local authority settlement each year under the New Burdens Doctrine for compliance activity by trading standards officers in respect of the Energy Performance of Buildings Directive regulations since their introduction. [160591]

Brandon Lewis: Funding for Trading Standards is included in the Local Government Finance Settlement. Funding provided under the Local Government Finance Settlement can be used by local authorities to fund any service.

East of England Energy Group

Peter Aldous: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government if he will take steps to facilitate the completion of outstanding and

future payments from the European Regional Development Fund to the East of England Energy Group; and if he will make a statement. [160351]

Mr Foster: I can confirm that Officials are working to conclude post-audit contract negotiations with the East of England Energy Group in order that outstanding and future payments can be resumed as an urgent priority.

Housing: Building Alterations

Lyn Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government what assessment his Department made of the cost implications for local councils of the changes to permitted developments for householders. [160507]

Nick Boles: This assessment is set out in 'Extending Permitted Development Rights for Homeowners and Businesses Impact Assessment', which is available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/extending-permitted-development-rights-for-homeowners-and-businesses-impact-assessment>

The Department is engaging in discussions with the Local Government Association on its assessment of the impact on local authorities. Currently no net costs are envisaged.

Local Enterprise Partnerships: Arts

Ms Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government what guidance his Department has given to local enterprise partnerships to support the arts and creative industries. [159681]

Mr Prisk [*holding answer 17 June 2013*]: DCLG has not issued guidance on local enterprise partnerships' role with the arts and creative industries. It is a matter for local enterprise partnerships to decide their own activities which will best support local economic growth. The West of England Local Enterprise Partnership, for example, has a strong focus on the creative industries which, through its Enterprise Zone, has offered planning permission for the 'Creative Common' project, securing arts at the heart of its plans.

<http://www.bristoltemplequarter.com/blog/creative/showtime-for-creative-common/>

Local Government: Audit

Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government how many local authorities have transferred audit work from the Audit Commission to one of the big four accountancy firms to date; and if he will estimate the likely cost to the public purse. [159980]

Brandon Lewis: In total, 186 out of 353 councils are now, collectively, audited by the big four accountancy firms. Appointments to 124 of these councils were made under the audit contracts that were let in 2012, when the work of the Audit Commission's in-house audit practice was outsourced to the private sector. The outsourcing of the Commission's in-house practice led to a reduction in fees of 40%, and savings over five years of over £250 million for local public bodies.

The outsourcing of the Audit Commission's in-house audit practice brought two new firms into the market, increasing the number of suppliers in the market from five to seven and 13 firms passed the pre-qualification questionnaire.

In developing the framework for local audit, we are working with regulatory bodies to ensure that we strike the right balance between maintaining a high quality of audit, and opening up the market to new entrants.

Planning Permission

Dr Huppert: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government if he will make it his policy that a recently constructed outbuilding cannot be classified as an existing outbuilding and converted to residential accommodation without planning permission. [160592]

Nick Boles: An outbuilding can only be converted to residential accommodation without planning permission where this is ancillary to the use of the main house. This freedom allows homeowners to adapt their homes to meet changing family needs, for example by providing accommodation for an elderly parent or close relative.

Local authority planning permission is required for the creation of a separate residential unit, and this provides protection against the use of outbuildings for 'beds in sheds'.

Rents: Arrears

Mr Byrne: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government how many cases of local authority housing rent arrears there have been since January 2010; and what the cost to local authorities' housing revenue accounts has been from such arrears in each month since January 2010. [160525]

Mr Prisk [*holding answer 18 June 2013*]: Information is not collected centrally on the number of cases in arrears. Statistics are available annually on the total value of rent arrears and the total value of the rent roll by local authority (Section H of the tables at:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/73210/la-hs-data-returns-for-2011-12.xls

Taking into account inflation, the figures for England show there was no substantial change between 2009-10 and 2011-12.

Sleeping Rough

Lindsay Roy: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government what estimate he has made of the number of people sleeping rough in the UK. [160198]

Mr Prisk: The autumn 2012 total of rough sleeping counts and estimates in England was 2,309, as reported in the Department's statistical release of 6 February, which is available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/rough-sleeping-in-england-autumn-2012>

Figures for the rest of the United Kingdom are a matter for each devolved Administration, although web-links to relevant information for Scotland and Wales are given on page 9 of the above statistical release.

We are investing £470 million in homelessness prevention over four years (2011-12 to 2014-15). This includes £20 million for a Homelessness Transition Fund to support the national roll out of No Second Night Out and protect vital front line services. All local authorities have adopted the No Second Night Out approach.

The CHAIN (Combined Homeless and Information Network) which covers London and contains detailed information on London's rough sleepers over the year) bi-monthly data for March-April 2013 shows that No Second Night Out helped ensure that 80% of new rough sleepers spend just a single night on London's streets.

We have also supported the voluntary sector to develop a new service—Streetlink. The national hotline (0300 500 0914) and website:

www.streetlink.org.uk

enables the public to ensure rough sleepers are found quickly and offered the support they need to get off the streets. Over 17,600 members of the public contacted Streetlink to pass on details of people they believed were sleeping rough since the scheme launched on 11 December 2012 up to the end of April 2013. Of these, over 5,399 referrals were made to local authorities to investigate.

TRANSPORT

Airbus A380

Seema Malhotra: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what estimate he has made of likely changes in the number of A380s flying into London airports in the next 10 years. [160559]

Mr Simon Burns: In 2012 there were nearly 6,000 movements of A380s in and out of London airports. The Department's aviation forecasting model suggests that between 2012 and 2023 there will be an additional 10,000 movements in and out of London airports by A380s.

Seema Malhotra: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he plans to take to ensure that an increase in the number of Airbus A380s landing at Heathrow airport does not affect the continued operation of runway alternation. [160561]

Mr Simon Burns: The increasing use of aircraft like the Airbus A380 at Heathrow airport, which are typically both larger and quieter than the aircraft they replace, could help the airport operator and airlines to make more effective use of the existing runway capacity at our biggest and busiest airport while reducing the noise impact on local communities.

On the issue of runway alternation, the trial of operational freedoms at Heathrow included proactive tests to better understand the relationship between alternation and the arrival of A380s in order to maintain airport operations while respecting spacing rules for protection from wake vortices. The Government intends to consult on the results of the trial in due course.

Electric Vehicles

Kerry McCarthy: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what his policy is on the introduction of mandatory approaching vehicle audible systems in electric vehicles; [160544]

(2) whether he has had recent discussions with electric vehicle manufacturers regarding approaching vehicle audible systems; and if he will make a statement. [160545]

Norman Baker: I am currently considering whether to revise our negotiating approach to the introduction of a mandatory requirement for audible systems in electric vehicles. I have discussed this issue with the Guide Dogs Association and the Royal National Institute of Blind People. However, I have not yet had any discussions on this topic with electric vehicle manufacturers.

Great Western Railway Line

Kerry McCarthy: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what recent discussions he has had with Directly Operated Railways and GW Railways Ltd regarding the Great Western franchise extension. [160548]

Mr Simon Burns: Departmental officials meet regularly with Directly Operated Railways Ltd and GW Railways Ltd to discuss the contingency work that they are undertaking in connection with the Great Western Franchise. This contingency work is designed to ensure that the Secretary of State for Transport, my right hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire Dales (Mr McLoughlin), can discharge his statutory obligations under Section 30 of the Railways Act 1993, to protect the continuity of rail services should negotiations with First Great Western not be successfully concluded.

Kerry McCarthy: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what recent progress he has made on negotiations towards a short-term extension of the Great Western franchise due to commence in October 2013. [160549]

Mr Simon Burns: The Secretary of State for Transport, my right hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire Dales (Mr McLoughlin), announced on 31 January this year that he intended to negotiate a new interim franchise agreement with First Great Western to secure continuity of train services after the end of the current franchise agreement, which terminates on 12 October 2013. These negotiations are proceeding as planned.

Heathrow Airport

Stephen McPartland: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make it his policy that Heathrow airport be renamed Churchill airport. [160543]

Mr Simon Burns: The Government's Aviation Policy Framework does not comment on how individual airports in the UK are named. Decisions regarding the renaming of airports are a matter for individual airports' owners.

High Speed 2 Railway Line

Mr Ellwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans his Department has for the interface between Cross Rail and High Speed 2 at Heathrow airport. [160694]

Mr Simon Burns: At present, detailed plans have not yet been made for how High Speed 2 will interface with Crossrail at Heathrow airport. However, an interchange between Crossrail, Great Western and High Speed 2 will be provided through a new station at Old Oak Common in West London as part of Phase One of HS2. This interchange will enable direct links to Heathrow airport.

Work on the HS2 spur to Heathrow has been paused pending the publication of the Airports Commission's work to examine the need for additional runway capacity in the UK.

Mr Ellwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether double decker trains will be permitted to operate on the High Speed 2 line. [160697]

Mr Simon Burns: HS2 will be built to the European standard structure gauge for new lines—GC Gauge—which is the same as HS1. This gauge permits double deck trains to be operated.

Level Crossings

Andrew Rosindell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what recent steps his Department has taken to increase awareness about the potential dangers of using level crossings. [160066]

Mr Simon Burns: The Department works closely with Network Rail, in its role as operator of the majority of level crossings in Great Britain, to ensure that members of the public are aware of the potential dangers.

We have supported Network Rail in developing its awareness programmes including its ongoing national

television and radio campaign 'Don't Run The Risk', holding awareness days at level crossings and working directly with schools and user groups.

We welcome Network Rail's continuous efforts to reduce risks and improve level crossing safety.

Railway Stations

Lilian Greenwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what bids he considered for awards from the New Stations Fund; and whether the New Stations Fund will be underspent. [160453]

Mr Simon Burns: Funding from the New Stations Fund has been awarded to four stations at Newcourt in Devon, Ilkeston in Derbyshire, Lea Bridge in the London borough of Waltham Forest, and Pye Corner near Newport, totalling around £8.6 million. The strong case for a station at Kenilworth was noted, therefore we are minded to provide funding of £5 million towards this new station, subject to the new station's integration into the programme of wider improvement works in the area, which are set out in Network Rail's Strategic Business Plan published in January 2013.

There is a potential underspend of £6.4 million which is being held as a programme contingency until the final costs of each of the stations is confirmed. These costs will be clarified when the schemes are fully designed and developed.

Railways

Julie Hilling: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many (a) new national rail stations and (b) miles of new or reopened miles of passenger lines have been brought into service in (i) Scotland, (ii) Wales and (iii) each region of England in each of the last 10 years. [160240]

Mr Simon Burns: The following table shows the number of new railway stations opened in Scotland, Wales and each region of England in each of the last 10 years and so far in 2013.

New railway stations opened by region: Great Britain 2003-13

Region	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009 ¹	2010	2011	2012	2013 ²
East Midlands	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0
East of England	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
London	0	0	0	0	3	3	2	4	0	0	0
North East	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
North West	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
Scotland	1	0	5	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	1
South East	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
South West	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Wales	0	0	2	0	1	6	0	0	0	0	0
West Midlands	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Yorkshire and Humber	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	2	1	8	1	5	11	5	4	2	0	2

¹ Excludes the temporary station opened at Workington North.

² Up to the end of May 2013.

The Department for Transport does not hold information on the number of miles of new or reopened passenger lines that have been brought into service in Scotland, Wales and each region of England in each of the last 10 years. This information may be held by Network Rail. Network Rail can be contacted at the following address:

Network Rail
Kings Place
90 York Way
London
N1 9AG

Mr Betts: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many (a) new national rail stations and (b) miles of new or reopened miles of passenger lines have opened in (i) England outside London, (ii) Wales, (iii) Scotland and (iv) London in each of the last 10 years. [160589]

Mr Simon Burns: The following table shows the number of new railway stations opened in Scotland, Wales, London and in England outside London in each of the last 10 years and so far in 2013.

New railway stations opened by region: Great Britain 2003-13

Region	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009 ¹	2010	2011	2012	2013 ²
Scotland	1	0	5	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	1
Wales	0	0	2	0	1	6	0	0	0	0	0
London	0	0	0	0	3	3	2	4	0	0	0
England outside London	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	0	2	0	1
Total	2	1	8	1	5	11	5	4	2	0	2

¹ Excludes the temporary station opened at Workington North.

² Up to the end of May 2013.

The Department for Transport does not hold information on the number of miles of new or reopened passenger lines that have been opened in Scotland, Wales, London and in England outside London in each of the last 10 years. This information may be held by Network Rail. Network Rail can be contacted at the following address:

Network Rail
Kings Place
90 York Way
London
N1 9AG

Rescue Services

Katy Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many and what proportion of shifts at maritime rescue co-ordination centres were staffed at below risk-assessed levels in May 2013. [160297]

Stephen Hammond: Out of the 930 watch-keeping shifts worked across all Maritime Rescue Co-ordination Centres (MRCCs) during May 2013, 175.8 individual shifts were staffed at below risk-assessed levels. These situations are mitigated by 'MRCC pairing' where each MRCC is connected to at least one other MRCC which is available to provide mutual support.

Rescue Services: Belfast

Katy Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport on how many occasions the Maritime Rescue Co-ordination Centre, Belfast was staffed at below risk-assessed levels in May 2013. [160296]

Stephen Hammond: In May 2013 the Maritime Rescue Co-ordination Centre (MRCC) in Belfast was staffed below risk-assessed levels on 37 occasions out of 62 shifts.

These situations are mitigated by 'MRCC pairing' where each MRCC is connected to at least one other MRCC which is available to provide mutual support. In respect of Belfast MRCC mutual support is available

through a fixed link from Stornoway MRCC and dial up links from the MRCCs at Shetland, Aberdeen, Liverpool or Holyhead.

Rescue Services: Stornoway

Katy Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport on how many occasions Maritime Rescue Co-ordination Centre, Stornoway was staffed at below risk-assessed levels in May 2013. [160298]

Stephen Hammond: In May 2013 Stornoway Maritime Rescue Co-ordination Centre (MRCC) was staffed below risk-assessed levels on seven occasions out of 62 shifts.

These situations are mitigated by 'MRCC pairing' where each MRCC is connected to at least one other MRCC which is available to provide mutual support. In respect of Stornoway MRCC mutual support is available through a fixed link from Belfast MRCC and dial up links from the MRCCs at Shetland or Aberdeen.

Roads: Repairs and Maintenance

Graham Stringer: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what meetings his Department has held to review the road maintenance block grant since 1 January 2010; with whom those meetings were held; and what the outcome was of those meetings. [160505]

Norman Baker: Information in respect of the Highways Maintenance Block Review Group, including representatives who sit on the group, as well as meetings that have taken place since January 2010, is available at the following web link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/local-transport-capital-block-funding>

The Department for Transport is currently testing a number of options in respect of a revised funding formula to be in place for 2015-16 and is expecting to hold a consultation on a number of possible funding formula options in due course.

Traffic Lights

Seema Malhotra: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to promote the use of cycle-specific traffic lights. [160590]

Stephen Hammond: DfT officials are working closely with Transport for London on a project trialling a range of new measures, including low-level signals for cyclists. We are also working with Cambridgeshire county council, who are trialling the use of cycle filter signals.

Assuming a successful outcome, we would consider prescribing these signals in regulations or authorising on a wider basis. They would then become part of the range of cycling infrastructure measures available.

Transport: Finance

Mr Betts: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how much funding his Department has already provided, or is planning to provide, over the period of the current Spending Review, to (a) Transport for London and local transport authorities outside London and (b) protect local bus fares from inflationary increases. [160574]

Norman Baker: The Department for Transport does not pay money direct to local transport authorities outside London for the purpose of lowering bus fares. However, DfT does make funding available to bus operators in the form of Bus Service Operators Grant (BSOG), which can be used for this purpose. In 2012/13 around £350 million was paid out to operators in England in the form of BSOG.

The Department for Transport made an additional £136m available to Transport for London (TfL) in 2012 and £96m in 2013 to enable the Mayor to hold down the planned fare rises to RPI+1% for the remainder of the current Spending Review period. This funding covers all modes, including bus, Tube, DLR, tram and Overground rail. It is not possible to disaggregate how much of this was spent on bus fares. Responsibility for setting fares rests with the Mayor and TfL.

WORK AND PENSIONS

Disability Living Allowance

Mr Hepburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many recipients of disability living allowance in (a) Jarrow constituency, (b) South Tyneside, (c) the North East and (d) the UK have been interviewed and had their benefits reassessed since May 2010; and how many such assessments (i) resulted in award of a lower level of benefit, (ii) led to the removal of all the allowance and (iii) were successful on appeal. [160303]

Mr Hoban: The information requested is not available centrally. We estimate that gathering this information would incur disproportionate costs.

Disciplinary Proceedings

Mr Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many staff were suspended from his Department and its associated public bodies on full pay in (a) 2010-11, (b) 2011-12 and (c) 2012-13; and what costs were incurred as a result of such suspensions. [160427]

Mr Hoban: An employee would be suspended from duty in exceptional circumstances and in line with the Civil Service Management Code. This would usually be after an allegation of serious or gross misconduct has been made against an employee and it is necessary to remove them from work, for example, to ensure the integrity of the subsequent investigation or to prevent a repeat offence. The cost involved relates specifically to the continued payment of salary.

The number of staff suspended from the ministerial Department and the costs incurred are provided in the following table.

	<i>Year end headcount</i>	<i>Number of staff suspended</i>	<i>Suspensions as percentage of headcount</i>	<i>Costs incurred (£000)</i>
2010-11	109,445	59	0.05	407.2
2011-12	99,958	45	0.04	281.7
2012-13	96,386	39	0.04	208.8

NDPBs and public bodies

The number of staff suspended on full pay within each of the Department's NDPB's and public bodies, who have been able to respond, is between one and four individuals. As the numbers are low individuals may be identified. For this reason these figures have not been disclosed.

Employment and Support Allowance: Mental Illness

Stephen Timms: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions if he will make it his policy that people with mental health problems should not be relied on to gather themselves all the medical evidence relevant to their application for employment and support allowance. [160587]

Mr Hoban: People with mental health problems are not always relied on to gather all medical evidence relevant to their application for employment and support allowance (ESA) themselves. Existing guidelines for Atos health care professionals allow them in defined circumstances to request further medical evidence to confirm that the limited capability for work or work related activity criteria would be met and so avoid those face-to-face assessments which are clearly unnecessary.

There is also an existing safeguard in the Work Capability Assessment (WCA) process for people with mental health problems whereby their claim is not ended if they fail to complete and return their ESA50, and they are instead called for a face-to-face assessment.

A recent judgment in a judicial review against the WCA found that claimants with a mental health problem suffer a substantial disadvantage or experience an unreasonably adverse experience going through the WCA process, but importantly it:

“rejected the... primary case that it would be reasonable for FME (further medical evidence) always be sought at an early stage in the process of the assessment of the entitlement to ESA of claimants with MHPs (mental health problems)”.

DWP has been asked to provide further evidence to help determine whether there are any reasonable adjustments that could be made to the process.

We disagree with the judicial review-judgment and have lodged our application for leave to appeal it with the Court of Appeal.

Housing Benefit: Social Rented Housing

Stephen Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how much was allocated in discretionary housing payment funding to (a) each local authority, (b) England, (c) Scotland and (d) Wales in 2012-13. [160359]

Steve Webb: The total discretionary housing payment allocation for Great Britain in 2012-13 was £67.9 million. This comprised £60 million annual allocation and £7.9 million of unspent funding from 2011-12 which local authorities were exceptionally allowed to keep.

A detailed breakdown of the allocations for 2012-13 by nation and local authority has been placed in the Library.

Pension Protection Fund

Richard Harrington: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what progress he is making with his planned reforms to the compensation cap on the Pension Protection Fund. [160295]

Steve Webb: The Department has carried out a review and we hope to make an announcement shortly.

Property

Margaret Curran: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what the (a) location and (b) value is of any property his Department owns in Scotland. [160288]

Mr Hoban: In 1998 the Department for Work and Pensions sold its interest in the estate it occupied under the Private Sector Resource Initiative for Management of the Estate (PRIME) and now leases back fully serviced accommodation in a 20 year PFI deal with Telereal Trillium.

Therefore the Department for Work and Pensions does not own any properties in Scotland.

Social Exclusion

Debbie Abrahams: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what steps his Department is taking to tackle social exclusion. [160384]

Esther McVey: We published our ‘Social Justice: transforming lives’ strategy in March 2012. A copy can be found in the Library.

Previous approaches to tackling poverty have focused on increasing income levels to bring people above the poverty line. The social justice strategy goes much further,

exploring how tackling the root causes of problems can make real and sustained changes to the lives of those who face social exclusion.

On 24 April 2013, we published ‘Social Justice: transforming lives—one year on’, which highlights the progress made since the publication of the strategy and against seven social justice indicators, ‘yardsticks’ of success for the strategy. A copy can be found in the Library.

We will publish a second report by November 2014.

Social Security Benefits

Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions if he will estimate the amount no longer spent by his Department on people in (a) North-East Lincolnshire and (b) Henley-on-Thames as a result of all changes made to the welfare system since May 2010. [160304]

Mr Hoban: The information is not available, and could be calculated only at disproportionate cost.

Stephen Timms: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many non-working age households currently have benefit income, excluding housing benefit, above the level of the benefit cap; and, of those, how many he estimates will have benefit income above the cap level after the cap is in place. [160586]

Mr Hoban: Non-working age households are not within the scope of the benefit cap policy. As such the information is not readily available.

Stephen Timms: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions whether it is his policy that, for non-working households whose benefit income other than housing benefit exceeds the level of the benefit cap, their benefit income will not be reduced to the level of the cap; and if he will make a statement. [160593]

Mr Hoban: The majority of households who currently receive benefits in excess of the cap level will be in receipt of housing benefit and they will have the cap applied from April 2013 in line with the Department’s announced time-table for its phased-rollout. We are aware that there may be a small number of households whose income from benefits other than housing benefit exceeds the level of the cap and these will continue to receive benefits over the cap level until their claims migrate to universal credit.

Universal Credit: East Ham

Stephen Timms: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what his latest estimate is of the first date on which residents of East Ham constituency will be able to apply for universal credit. [160580]

Mr Hoban: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer I gave the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Hodge Hill (Mr Byrne), on 3 June 2013, *Official Report*, column 1052W.

Universal credit will progressively roll out in a carefully managed and controlled way from October 2013 with all those who are entitled to UC claiming the new benefit by 2017.

Work Capability Assessment

Mr Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (1) how many individuals with chronic fatigue syndrome have been classified as Fit for Work under the Atos Back to Work assessments; [160204]

(2) how many individuals with chronic fatigue syndrome have been successful in appealing against a Fit for Work judgement under the Atos Fit for Work assessments. [160205]

Mr Hoban: Information on chronic fatigue syndrome is not held, however we do hold information classified in two broader categories by the World Health Organisation International Categorisation of Diseases 2010. Note that the totals are likely to over-estimate the actual numbers with CFS, as these categories include unrelated conditions.

Of those that have had an initial work capability assessment on a new claim for employment and support allowance starting between October 2008 and August 2012, 9,900 had a primary condition in the broader categories which include CFS and were found fit for work. Of those starting their claim between October 2008 and February 2012, 2,100 had their fit for work decision overturned at appeal.

Numbers have been rounded to the nearest 100.

Richard Harrington: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what comparative assessment he has made of the number of complaints made against Atos and any other firm carrying out work capability assessments. [160217]

Mr Hoban: Atos Healthcare is the only organisation conducting work capability assessments at this time and therefore a comparison is not possible.

Work Capability Assessment: Appeals

Seema Malhotra: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how much his Department spent on legal representation in appeals against decisions on benefits entitlement made following work capability assessments in 2011-12. [160562]

Mr Hoban: Between April 2011 and April 2012, the Department for Work and Pensions handled 350,295 benefit appeals at First Tier Tribunal level, not all of which were related to the work capability assessment. Each invoice for 2011 and 2012 would therefore need to be analysed on an individual basis and this would incur disproportionate cost.

Work Programme

Mr Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (1) how many participants in the Work programme have been successful in finding employment since its inception; [160201]

(2) how many individuals have participated in the Work programme since its inception. [160202]

Mr Hoban: The information as requested on the number of people who have been placed into employment from the Work programme is not available.

The information we do have shows the number of Work programme referrals and job outcomes and this can be found in the Employment Programmes section at:

<http://research.dwp.gov.uk/asd/index.php?page=tabtool>

Guidance for users is available at:

<http://research.dwp.gov.uk/asd/asd1/tabtools/guidance.pdf>

Statistics covering Work programme referrals, attachments and job outcomes to March 2013 will be published on 27 June 2013.

Work Programme: Wales

Owen Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the Work programme in tackling unemployment in Wales. [160435]

Mr Hoban: The Department publishes regular official job outcome statistics for the Work programme, broken down by contract package area and provider. The next figures will be published on 27 June and on a quarterly basis thereafter. In addition, we have commissioned independent research to evaluate delivery and performance of the programme, involving research in England, Scotland and Wales. A final report will be published in 2015.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Animal Welfare

Mr Hanson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what meetings (a) she and (b) her ministerial colleagues have held with representatives from the animal welfare sector between 1 January 2013 and 13 June 2013. [160500]

James Brokenshire: Home Office Ministers and officials have meetings with a wide variety of international partners, as well as organisations and individuals in the public and private sectors, as part of the process of policy development and delivery. Details of these meetings are passed to the Cabinet Office on a quarterly basis and are subsequently published on the Cabinet Office website:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/quarterly-reports-of-ministers-meetings-with-outside-interest-groups>

Asylum

Chris Ruane: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what assessment she has made of the (a) performance of G4S in delivering its COMPASS contract for asylum seekers and (b) capacity of G4S to make provision for vulnerable asylum seekers under that contract. [159779]

Mr Harper: In July 2009, the UK Border Agency announced the launch of the Commercial and Operational Managers Procuring Asylum Support Services (COMPASS) Project to procure accommodation, transport and related services for asylum applicants. In 2012 G4S was awarded. COMPASS contracts in the North East, Yorkshire and Humber Region and the Midlands and East of England Region. The COMPASS procurement project was conducted in line with EU Procurement Regulations. Following extensive market engagement, options analysis and appraisal a range of potential suppliers were identified as being capable of delivering the services against a range of criteria including financial strength, experience in delivering services to Government, quality, cost, risks and benefits. The potential suppliers were invited to submit proposals. The proposals were extensively evaluated by a team of operational, financial and commercial experts who were aware of the statutory obligations of the Home Office and the complexities of providing these services. The evaluation and subsequent due diligence testing of the proposals confirmed that G4S to be a fit and proper organisation with the capacity and expertise to deliver integrated accommodation, transport and related services to asylum applicants.

COMPASS Contracts define the required performance standards expected of all providers and also contain prescribed performance and governance regimes.

Since mobilisation of COMPASS contracts in June 2012 G4S have attended monthly contract board meetings where they report on their performance. Every three months they have attended a strategic review to discuss past performance and future activity.

G4S performance is satisfactory. Where shortfalls in performance have been identified the performance regime has been applied and improvement plans developed and implemented.

Chris Ruane: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many returned asylum seekers returned to their country of origin have since returned to the UK and have been accepted as victims of persecution in the last five years. [159894]

Mr Harper: The data requested is shown in the following table:

Table 1: Asylum grants following previous removal 2008-12

	<i>Grants</i>
2008	5
2009	15
2010	30
2011	35
2012	25
Total	110

Notes:

1. The figures quoted have been derived from management information and are therefore provisional and subject to change. This information has not been quality assured under National Statistics protocols.
2. Figures relate to main applicants only.
3. Figures relate to grants of asylum between 1 January 2008 and 31 December 2012 where the decision followed a removal linked to a previous asylum application.
4. Removals may include voluntary and third country removals.
5. Figures round to nearest five and may not come to total because of independent rounding.

Asylum: Children

Jonathan Ashworth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many children seeking asylum in the UK have been subject to the use of physical force in the last six months. [159899]

Mr Harper: There have been no reports during the last six months of the use of physical force against a person seeking asylum in the UK who is under the age of 18.

Jonathan Ashworth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many children seeking asylum in the UK have been strip-searched in the last six months. [159902]

Mr Harper: The Department is not aware of any instances where a person under the age of 18 has been strip searched in the course of Immigration or Border Force activity in the last six months, including those seeking asylum.

As a matter of policy, the Department and its agents do not strip search persons under the age of 18 in the course of Immigration or Border Force activity.

The Home Office has a duty under section 55 of the Borders, Citizenship and Immigration Act 2009 to carry out its immigration, asylum, nationality and customs functions having regard to the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in the UK.

Asylum: Finance

Chris Ruane: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when she last assessed the performance of the Azure card. [160161]

Mr Harper: The card is provided to destitute failed asylum seekers who require support because they are temporarily unable to leave the United Kingdom and the performance of it is reviewed regularly. The Government is satisfied that the card is an effective way of ensuring the individuals are able to buy food and other items to cover their essential living needs.

Borders: Personal Records

Mr Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what progress has been made on reaching a settlement with Raytheon Systems Ltd on the e-Borders programme; and when the arbitration progress is scheduled to be completed. [160166]

Mr Harper: The dispute with Raytheon Systems Ltd is the subject of a confidential binding arbitration. We have recently entered the decision phase and we anticipate, in view of the complexity of the case, that this may take many months.

Capita

Mr Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how much her Department currently spends on contracts with Capita; and how much was spent in each year since 2008. [158468]

James Brokenshire: For the last full financial year, 2012-13, the Home Department's total expenditure on contracts with Capita was £76 million.

The Home Department's expenditure on contracts with Capita since financial year 2008-09 is detailed in the following table. Spend figures for the current financial year 2013-14 are not yet available.

Financial year	£ million
2009-10 ¹	58.9
2010-11	55.7
2011-12	53.8
2012-13	76

¹ FY 2008-09 and 2009-10 does not include Her Majesty's Passport Office spend.

Criminal Investigation

Priti Patel: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proportion of police investigations were dropped before a charge was brought against the accused in the latest period for which figures are available.

[159985]

Damian Green [*holding answer 17 June 2013*]: The information requested is not collected centrally by the Home Office. The Home Office collects information on the number of persons arrested however these data are not linked with details of any subsequent outcome.

Cybercrime

Mr Bellingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps she is taking to tighten control over illegal internet sites.

[160358]

James Brokenshire: Working in partnership with law enforcement, industry and charities, we have taken significant steps to remove illegal child sexual abuse content from the internet, block access to such material, and to take action against those responsible for it. The UK has a clear process by which criminal images of child sexual abuse can be reported and for websites containing such images to be blocked by Internet Service Providers (ISPs). The Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, my right hon. Friend the Member for Basingstoke (Maria Miller), invited the major ISPs, mobile operators, and others, to a summit on 18 June to discuss what more could be done to minimise internet harm, which the Policing Minister attended.

The internet continues to be used as a central platform by Al Qaida and other terrorists and extremists. Extremist material online can contribute to an individual becoming radicalised. The Counter Terrorism Internet Referral Unit is taking down and filtering more and more unlawful content online. To date, this unit has removed 5,700 pieces of online terrorist content and blocked around 1,000.

Deportation: Children

Lindsay Roy: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many children have been deported by the UK Border Agency in each of the last three years.

[160197]

Mr Harper: The following table provides the total number of enforced removals of children under 18 in each of the last three years from the UK.

Total enforced removals of children under 18 from the UK^{1, 2, 3} 2010 to 2012

	2010	2011 ⁴	2012 ⁴
Enforced removals of children under 18 from the UK	352	180	208
Under 14	296	140	176
14-15	26	9	14
16-17	30	31	18

¹ Enforced removals are where it has been established that a person has breached UK immigration laws and has no valid leave to remain within the United Kingdom. UKBA/Home Office enforces their departure to ensure they leave the UK.

² Removals are recorded on the system as at the dates on which the data extracts were taken.

³ Age recorded at the time of departure from the UK.

⁴ Provisional figures. Figures may under record due to data cleansing that take place after the extracts are taken.

Deportations are included in published enforced removals statistics which are either following a criminal conviction (foreign national offenders) or when it is judged that a person's removal from the UK is conducive to the public good; the deportation order prohibits the person returning to the UK until such time as it may be revoked. It is not possible to separately identify deportations from enforced removals.

The Home Office publishes quarterly and annual statistics on the number of persons removed or departed voluntarily from the UK within Immigration Statistics. The data on removals and voluntary departures by type, age at departure date and sex is available in the latest release, Immigration Statistics: January-March 2013, table rv_02 (volume 1) web pages at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/home-office/series/immigration-statistics-quarterly-release>

and also available from the Library of the House.

Domestic Violence

Andrew Stephenson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent assessment she has made of the scale of under-reporting of domestic abuse.

[160471]

Mr Jeremy Browne: The latest data from the Office for National Statistics (Focus on: Violent Crime and Sexual Offences, 2011-12) indicate that there is an under-reporting of domestic violence and abuse. For example, only 5% of respondents who reported being victims of domestic violence and abuse in the self-completion module of the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) had reported that they were victims of domestic violence and abuse in face-to-face interviews in the same survey, reflecting the sensitivity and complexity of this topic. The under-reporting of crime to the police is known to be particularly acute for intimate violence.

We recognise this under-reporting and are working with the College of Policing and the voluntary sector to ensure that victims of domestic and sexual violence feel able to come forward and report these crimes.

We also have a comprehensive programme to tackle domestic and sexual violence. This is set out in the Government's Violence Against Women and Girls Action Plan.

Firearms: Licensing

David Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many gun licences were issued

by each police force in (a) 2009-10, (b) 2010-11, (c) 2011-12 and (d) 2012-13. [160164]

Damian Green: The following tables provide the number of firearms and shotgun certificates issued in each police force area in England and Wales, for each of the years 2009-10 to 2011-12. These data are published annually in the Home Office statistical release 'Firearm and Shotgun Certificates in England and Wales'.

Table 1: Firearm certificates: new applications, renewal applications and variation of applications granted, by police force area, 2009-10 to 2011-12

	2009-10			2010-11		
	New applications granted	Renewal applications granted	Variation of applications granted certificate	New applications granted	Renewal applications granted	Variation of applications granted certificate
Avon and Somerset	343	570	313	449	1,448	358
Bedfordshire	73	167	107	131	406	140
Cambridgeshire	192	270	166	226	683	169
Cheshire	180	262	120	174	641	124
Cleveland	80	87	50	80	244	69
Cumbria	188	320	172	152	813	165
Derbyshire	175	292	151	237	724	200
Devon and Cornwall	632	823	457	964	2,437	542
Dorset	206	275	152	241	707	144
Durham	226	288	218	182	622	188
Essex	413	538	354	389	1,159	316
Gloucestershire	129	205	131	169	631	158
Greater Manchester	140	241	132	197	504	152
Hampshire	325	464	273	309	1,121	298
Hertfordshire	159	240	141	186	498	176
Humberside	199	179	149	212	572	197
Kent	412	483	345	509	1,238	370
Lancashire	208	317	204	255	675	206
Leicestershire	149	232	142	177	469	170
Lincolnshire	300	426	230	290	1,002	213
London, City of	1	1	—	0	0	0
Merseyside	57	82	54	67	255	56
Metropolitan Police	317	473	250	469	937	343
Norfolk	400	378	281	465	985	301
Northamptonshire	107	235	135	97	537	231
Northumbria	185	281	182	285	1,003	210
North Yorkshire	309	586	263	426	1,643	321
Nottinghamshire	101	193	119	140	447	137
South Yorkshire	136	170	150	178	379	187
Staffordshire	172	280	145	198	707	166
Suffolk	308	423	212	335	1,151	244
Surrey	216	254	173	248	644	211
Sussex	445	508	350	455	1,319	370
Thames Valley	336	639	303	375	1,772	343
Warwickshire	101	220	93	159	539	121
West Mercia	457	533	311	456	1,356	307
West Midlands	124	225	145	146	421	189
West Yorkshire	218	286	181	231	515	168
Wiltshire	190	267	159	286	765	218
Dyfed-Powys	223	285	140	315	777	160
Gwent	77	120	95	93	251	126
North Wales	127	224	111	182	730	144
South Wales	126	158	116	151	405	146
England and Wales	9,462	13,500	7,975	11,286	34,132	9,054

	2011-12				2011-12		
	New applications granted	Renewal applications granted	Variation of applications granted certificate		New applications granted	Renewal applications granted	Variation of applications granted certificate
Avon and Somerset	421	1,439	362	Northamptonshire	146	625	118
Bedfordshire	122	422	101	Northumbria	275	992	218
Cambridgeshire	219	719	166	North Yorkshire	469	1,625	363
Cheshire	180	762	138	Nottinghamshire	126	420	110
Cleveland	105	230	64	South Yorkshire	176	443	191
Cumbria	136	701	141	Staffordshire	177	568	179
Derbyshire	229	718	203	Suffolk	360	1,121	238
Devon and Cornwall	906	2,319	570	Surrey	272	683	213
Dorset	353	848	171	Sussex	464	1,569	335
Durham	171	611	210	Thames Valley	448	1,674	360
Essex	413	1,191	345	Warwickshire	160	627	127
Gloucestershire	138	701	164	West Mercia	348	1,308	281
Greater Manchester	211	531	178	West Midlands	119	466	163
Hampshire	384	1,294	286	West Yorkshire	277	718	224
Hertfordshire	195	554	153	Wiltshire	257	832	237
Humberside	232	788	205	Dyfed-Powys	391	901	155
Kent	476	1,141	321	Gwent	91	315	124
Lancashire	257	734	213	North Wales	200	675	152
Leicestershire	194	516	136	South Wales	174	491	122
Lincolnshire	244	978	241				
London, City of	2	0	0	England and Wales	11,502	35,723	8,951
Merseyside	72	238	66	'—' denotes nil			
Metropolitan Police	462	1,055	307	Source:			
Norfolk	450	1,180	300	Home Office			

Table 2: Shotgun certificates: new applications and renewal applications granted, by police force area, 2009-10 to 2011-12

	2009-10		2010-11		2011-12	
	New applications granted	Renewal applications granted	New applications granted	Renewal applications granted	New applications granted	Renewal applications granted
Avon and Somerset	816	1,666	911	5,044	899	5,039
Bedfordshire	241	605	330	1,643	340	1,759
Cambridgeshire	502	1,147	707	3,117	701	3,215
Cheshire	811	929	474	2,260	579	3,166
Cleveland	133	251	138	525	160	557
Cumbria	331	743	304	1,597	255	1,486
Derbyshire	470	760	676	2,403	683	2,631
Devon and Cornwall	843	2,368	1,337	7,583	1,396	7,197
Dorset	439	915	549	2,186	738	2,329
Durham	292	519	325	1,418	358	1,352
Essex	1,158	1,941	1,039	4,933	1,110	5,169
Gloucestershire	361	729	553	2,549	539	2,892
Greater Manchester	407	765	510	2,036	468	2,087
Hampshire	833	1,728	983	4,759	1,104	5,384
Hertfordshire	453	860	648	2,254	708	2,626
Humberside	408	687	392	1,813	493	2,550
Kent	921	1,803	1,222	5,332	1,224	4,592
Lancashire	684	1,007	749	2,638	794	2,988
Leicestershire	486	882	648	2,497	734	2,749
Lincolnshire	603	1,323	564	3,486	680	3,519
London, City of	2	2	3	9	1	10
Merseyside	134	318	161	828	172	934
Metropolitan Police	1,629	2,041	2,224	5,467	2,529	5,623
Norfolk	1,152	1,971	1,353	5,002	1,347	5,886
Northamptonshire	359	766	332	2,171	453	2,304
Northumbria	372	496	550	1,946	533	1,863
North Yorkshire	694	1,579	827	4,103	845	3,997

Table 2: Shotgun certificates: new applications and renewal applications granted, by police force area, 2009-10 to 2011-12

	2009-10		2010-11		2011-12	
	New applications granted	Renewal applications granted	New applications granted	Renewal applications granted	New applications granted	Renewal applications granted
Nottinghamshire	364	666	465	2,045	358	1,850
South Yorkshire	506	676	509	1,826	573	1,891
Staffordshire	488	946	571	3,038	513	2,723
Suffolk	675	2,186	752	4,112	847	3,933
Surrey	561	1,077	864	2,996	916	3,232
Sussex	722	1,388	930	3,896	978	4,627
Thames Valley	1,109	2,627	1,479	7,167	1,598	6,795
Warwickshire	325	759	467	2,195	425	2,296
West Mercia	997	2,292	1,088	5,747	1,186	7,792
West Midlands	371	794	386	2,324	420	2,285
West Yorkshire	571	933	594	1,830	698	2,461
Wiltshire	529	1,034	757	3,016	818	2,946
Dyfed-Powys	433	1,071	713	4,206	1,019	3,757
Gwent	174	464	176	1,307	206	1,708
North Wales	364	932	476	3,487	488	3,209
South Wales	227	491	332	1,946	368	1,869
England and Wales	23,950	47,137	29,068	130,737	31,254	137,278

Figures for 2012-13 will be published later this year.

David Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans she has to review gun licence fees. [160165]

Damian Green: Firearm licensing fees are under review by the Home Office. We are currently in discussion with the national policing lead on firearms, stakeholders and HM Treasury.

Illegal Immigrants: Employment

Rehman Chishti: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many businesses in (a) Gillingham and Rainham constituency and (b) Medway have been fined for employing illegal foreign national workers in each year since 2008. [159773]

Mr Harper: The information requested is in the following table. The figures are based on the number of civil penalties served at visited business addresses. Information is not available broken down into the Medway area or by constituency, data is available by regional split and therefore figures for London and south-east region have been provided as well as for the postal areas of ME4, 5, 7 and 8.

Since the start of the civil penalty regime on 29 February 2008 up to 31 May 2013 the Civil Penalty Compliance Team has issued 80 penalties after initial consideration, on businesses visited in the postal areas of ME4, 5, 7 and 8, totalling £695,000.

	Number of initial decision penalties issued in ME4, 5, 7 and 8	Number of initial decision penalties issued in London and south-east region
2008	12	419
2009	25	954
2010	25	657

	Number of initial decision penalties issued in ME4, 5, 7 and 8	Number of initial decision penalties issued in London and south-east region
2011	6	435
2012	6	372
2013 up to 31 May 2013	6	222
Total	80	3,059

Please note penalties issued at the initial decision stage may be reduced, cancelled, increased or reissued.

Members: Correspondence

Sir Gerald Kaufman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) when she plans to reply to the letter to her dated 7 May 2013 from the hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton with regard to Mr P. Chakawata; [160039]

(2) when she plans to reply to the letter to her dated 7 May 2013 from the hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton with regard to Ms F.M. Ismail. [160040]

Mr Harper: I wrote to the right hon. Member on 13 June 2013.

Social Security Benefits: Mothers

Jenny Chapman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps her Department takes to ensure that commercial organisations distributing information about available benefits to new and expecting mothers do not use data gathered about mothers and their children for other purposes. [159470]

Mrs Grant: I have been asked to reply on behalf of the Ministry of Justice.

The Data Protection Act establishes a framework of rights and duties which are designed to safeguard personal data. This framework balances the legitimate needs of

organisations to collect and use personal data for business and other purposes against the rights of individuals to respect for privacy of their personal details.

The second data protection principle in schedule I of the DPA states that personal data shall be obtained only for one or more specified purposes, and shall not be further processed in a manner incompatible with that purpose or those purposes. Personal data should not be used for broader purposes without the consent of the individual concerned.

Compliance with the DPA is regulated by the Information Commissioners Office (ICO). The ICO has issued comprehensive guidance on the application of the Act which can be viewed at:

<http://www.ico.org.uk/>

UK Border Agency

Chris Ruane: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people were employed by the UK Border Agency in each year of its establishment.

[160077]

Mr Harper: The following figures are as published in the yearly Annual Report and Accounts:

	<i>Average FTE</i>
2009-10	15,880
2010-11	15,233
2011-12	¹ 14,112

¹ The published figures in the 2011-12 Annual Report and Accounts included an estimated 350 full-time equivalent persons working on behalf of the agency but directly employed by Border Force.

The following figures have not been published in this years Annual report as yet and are subject to finalisation.

	<i>Average FTE</i>
2012-13	13,353

All figures are the average FTE (full-time equivalent) of staff employed that year and include UK Border Agency staff, excluding Border Force.

Full-time equivalent means that part timers are counted by the proportion of full-time hours they work, so that a part timer working half the time of an equivalent full timer would count as 0.5 FTE.

BUSINESS, INNOVATION AND SKILLS

Business: Loans

Mark Lazarowicz: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills what targets he has set for increased funding for small and medium-sized enterprises through the establishment of a Business Bank.

[159966]

Michael Fallon: In March this year, the Government published a document "Building the Business Bank", setting out progress on establishing a British Business Bank. In this, the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills, the right hon. Member for Twickenham (Vince Cable), made clear, that the Business Bank's success will be measured against its ability to:

Raise the overall amount of finance provided to viable but underserved small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and mid-sized businesses;

Increase the diversity of suppliers and products in the SME and mid-sized finance market;

Improve effectiveness, raise awareness and increase use of Government's business finance support and advice services;

Achieve the above while generating an appropriate return on the bank's capital dedicated to commercial or near-commercial schemes and maximising the impact of those schemes which involve the provision of subsidy.

These targets will be refined and quantified in the course of this year.

Enterprise and Regulatory Reform Act 2013

Mr Brady: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills when he intends to publish delegated legislation to implement Section 69 of the Enterprise and Regulatory Reform Act 2013. [160341]

Mr Hoban: I have been asked to reply on behalf of the Department for Work and Pensions.

The Commencement Order to bring section 69 of the Enterprise and Regulatory Reform Act 2013 into effect will be laid during the summer parliamentary recess.

A short consultation on draft regulations creating an exception to section 69 in respect of pregnant workers and new/breastfeeding mothers ends on 20 June. The Health and Safety Executive will then consider any responses to the consultation and take into account any issues arising, with a view to the regulations being laid together with a Consequential Amendments Order tidying up existing legislation in the light of the enactment of section 69. It is proposed that the regulations and order will come into effect on 1 October 2013, the date on which it is anticipated section 69 will also come into effect.

Grants

Dr McCrea: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills whether a company's (a) history of tax avoidance and (b) compliance with the national minimum wage is taken into account when awarding grants from his Department.

[160096]

Jo Swinson: The majority of BIS funding is allocated by our partner organisations to universities, research institutes, colleges and other training providers as well as students, according to the quality and volume of the services they provide or their means and circumstances.

BIS also awards some grants itself, including the Regional Growth Fund grants, Grants for Business Investment, and grants to the three National Academies. When BIS awards grants, the Department will carry out checks on each applicant or organisation's suitability. The extent of these checks will depend on the materiality of the grant, but if the applicant were publicly known to be engaged in criminal activity, such as evading the National Minimum Wage requirements, then we would normally expect this to disqualify the applicant from receiving BIS grants. BIS has no access to ongoing investigations into National Minimum Wage non compliance, however, as these are confidential.

The Department has a strict policy of discouraging tax avoidance in its own payments to staff, and the tax arrangements of employees of BIS and its partners are reviewed regularly. The Department cannot enforce such controls over independent bodies that we fund. BIS grants are not normally a taxable supply, so the tax history of a body is not a key issue in determining eligibility. It is also not usually a reasonable grant requirement to require a recipient to divulge its full payroll or tax records. For these reasons, it is unlikely that legal tax avoidance would have an impact on an organisation's eligibility for BIS grants.

Dr McCrea: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills what new development grants his Department makes available to small and medium-sized enterprises. [160097]

Michael Fallon: The full range of publicly backed sources of finance, from Government grants through to investment types of finance available, can be found at:

www.gov.uk/business-finance-support-finder

The BIS guide 'SME access to finance schemes: measures to support small and medium-sized enterprise growth' details the main forms of public support available to businesses and can be found at:

www.gov.uk/bis/financeguide

A number of individual grant schemes are also available via the Regional Growth Fund. This supports projects and programmes that are using private sector investment to create economic growth and sustainable employment. Further information can be found at:

www.gov.uk/regional-growth-fund-a-guide-for-small-and-medium-enterprises-smes

The Government supports research and development in small and medium-sized businesses through a range of measures, including the programmes delivered by the Technology Strategy Board and R&D tax credits.

The Technology Strategy Board is the Government's prime channel for supporting business-led technology innovation. It delivers a range of grant-based programmes in support of businesses, including SMEs, undertaking research and development including Collaborative R&D, SMART and Knowledge Transfer Partnerships. The Technology Strategy Board also provides opportunities for innovative businesses of all sizes through the growing network of Catapult centres. Further details can be found at:

www.innovateuk.org

R&D tax credits are the single largest Government support for business investment in R&D. In the year ending March 2011 claims totalled £1.1 billion on expenditure of £10.9 billion. The rate of tax relief available through the SME R&D tax credit was raised to 225% from April 2012, making it among the most competitive regimes in the world, which is likely to further incentivise companies to invest in R&D.

In addition, we have taken a number of further actions which will increase support for business R&D including: the introduction of an Innovation Vouchers programme, increased investment in the Small Business Research Initiative, and the new UK Research Partnership Investment Fund, which will secure over £1 billion

support for the development of new research facilities and partnerships between universities, businesses and charities.

Higher Education: Females

Seema Malhotra: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills what proportion of those who accepted a university place to study (a) engineering, (b) technology, (c) mathematics and computer science, (d) architecture and (e) physical sciences in 2011-12 were female. [160560]

Mr Willetts: The proportion of UCAS accepted applicants to UK HEIs that are female by subject of study in the academic year 2011/12 is provided in the table. The answer is based on UCAS data and as such will be limited to those accepted through UCAS to its member institutions. Accepted applicants of all ages from all domiciles are included.

<i>JACS subject group</i>	<i>Percentage of accepted applicants that are female</i>
Group A Medicine and Dentistry	54.7
Group B Subjects allied to Medicine	79.1
Group C Biological Sciences	58.3
Group D Veterinary Science, Agriculture and related	66.0
Group F Physical Sciences	39.7
Group G Mathematical and Computer Science	22.3
Group H Engineering	12.5
Group J Technologies	18.4
Group K Architecture, Building and Planning	31.5
Group L Social Studies	60.5
Group M Law	62.5
Group N Business and Admin studies	49.0
Group P Mass Communications and Documentation	54.2
Group Q Linguistics, Classics and related	72.5
Group R European Languages, Literature and related	72.0
Group T Non-European Languages, Literature and related	62.4
Group V History and Philosophical studies	51.4
Group W Creative Arts and Design	63.0
Group X Education	85.1
Combined arts	67.5
Combined sciences	47.2
Combined social sciences	55.2
Sciences combined with social sciences or arts	46.3
Social sciences combined with arts	65.8
General, other combined and unknown	53.5
Total	54.9

Note:

Subjects are allocated to subject groups using the Joint Academic Classification of Subjects (JACS).

Source:

UCAS

Local Enterprise Partnerships: Rural Areas

Miss McIntosh: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills what recent assessment he has made of the role of local enterprise partnerships in rural areas; and if he will make a statement. [160439]

Michael Fallon: The Government does not carry out formal assessments of the effectiveness of local enterprise partnerships (LEPs) in either urban or rural areas. As partnerships of business and civic leaders, local enterprise partnerships are first and foremost accountable to their local community and local businesses.

Manufacturing Industries

Lindsay Roy: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills what steps he is taking to support manufacturing industry in the UK. [160195]

Michael Fallon: We are supporting UK manufacturing industries by encouraging innovation and technology commercialisation, exports and business investment; and by improving skills, building UK supply chains and promoting manufacturing's image.

In collaboration with industry, we are developing sector strategies to give business the confidence to invest and grow.

£1.5 billion has been committed to support sector strategies including £1 billion for the Aerospace Technology Institute with matched funding from industry; £1 billion to the Business Bank; £600 million to develop the "eight great technologies"; a further £350 million to the Regional Growth Fund; £250 million to support the most energy intensive industries and an additional £120 million in the Advanced Manufacturing Supply Chain Initiative.

Public Sector: Procurement

Grahame M. Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills if he will take steps to ensure that companies involved in blacklisting of workers are banned from tendering for public sector contracts. [160038]

Jo Swinson: Blacklisting is an appalling practice and that is why we brought in the Blacklists Regulations in 2010 to make certain that it is illegal. Any business, whether it works on public contracts or not, should comply with the law of the land. We expect them not to break data protection law, trade union law or the Blacklists Regulations when planning or undertaking work for the public sector or anywhere else.

Since the Opposition debate on blacklisting on 23 January 2013, *Official Report*, column 330, no evidence has been presented to Government to show that blacklisting of trade unionists is ongoing. There have been a lot of accusations, but we have not yet received any evidence that blacklisting continues. We continue to urge anyone who has such information to get in touch with the appropriate authorities.

Similarly I am not aware of any evidence that the Blacklists Regulations are not doing their job.

In line with well-established policy, when they came into force in 2010, the Blacklists Regulations were not retrospective and were not intended to be. Where it has

been proven that construction companies have previously used the Consulting Association blacklist, they need to ensure that employees and investors can have confidence in their current practices.

More generally, public sector procurers are required to comply with EU treaty principles of openness, transparency and non-discrimination when awarding public contracts. In addition, contracts over certain thresholds (around £4.3 million for works contracts) are subject to detailed rules set out in EU directives and implemented by the Public Contracts Regulations 2006, which set out in detail how the contract must be conducted.

Under EU procurement rules, public procurers must also exclude suppliers from bidding for public contracts when they have been convicted of certain offences including conspiracy, corruption, bribery and fraud.

Where a supplier or other interested party finds an instance of what they believe to be poor procurement practice, they can raise it with the Cabinet Office's Mystery Shopper Service.

Full details of the scheme can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/mystery-shopper-scope-and-remit>

The Scottish Affairs Select Committee is continuing its own investigation into blacklisting and Government will be looking carefully at their final report as well as any other evidence submitted. Where there is evidence that blacklisting is currently being used in any sector of the economy, the appropriate authorities will be asked to carry out a full and thorough investigation.

We are also aware that there are some ongoing cases currently before the courts, and will be interested to see the outcome of these.

Shipping: Pay

Katy Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills when his Department last conducted a study of rates of pay for seafarer ratings working in the UK maritime sector; what its findings were; and if he will take steps to regularly undertake and publish the results of such a study. [160119]

Jo Swinson: There is not a specific survey of seafarers rates of pay carried out by Government.

However, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) carries out the annual survey of hours and earnings (ASHE)—a comprehensive survey on earnings of employees across the economy. The latest figures from ASHE show that the median gross weekly pay for full-time marine and waterways transport operatives was £583.5 in April 2012.

There is no information available on seafarer ratings.

Because ASHE is based on HMRC records from UK PAYE/tax records it may not provide a full picture on seafarer's earnings.

The Government has no plans to undertake a specific study of the rates of pay of seafarer ratings.

Young People: Employment

Tim Farron: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills what estimate his Department has made of the number of young people who have

moved away from rural areas to urban areas in search of long-term employment in (a) England and (b) Cumbria in each year since 2008. [160429]

Jo Swinson: We have made no such estimate.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Conditions of Employment

Mr Thomas: To ask the Attorney-General how many staff were retained on zero-hour contracts by (a) the Law Officers' Departments and (b) the executive agencies and non-departmental public bodies for which he is responsible in (i) 2010-11, (ii) 2011-12 and (iii) 2012-13; and if he will make a statement. [160761]

The Solicitor-General: None.

Crown Prosecution Service

Daniel Kawczynski: To ask the Attorney-General what proportion of Crown Prosecution Service cases charged at police stations were rejected or downgraded prior to the listing hearing in (a) 2012 and (b) 2013. [159333]

The Solicitor-General: The police can charge some minor offences without referral to a prosecutor from the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) for a charging decision. The following table shows the number of prosecutions that were charged by the police during the period in question:

	<i>Police charged cases</i>
2012	595,077
2013 (January to May)	223,870

Upon receipt of a police charged case, prosecutors will assess the evidential material provided in accordance with the guidance set out in the Code for Crown Prosecutors. CPS prosecutors are proactive in identifying and rectifying evidential deficiencies or bringing to an early conclusion those cases that are deficient but cannot be strengthened by further investigation or where the public interest clearly does not require a prosecution.

The following table sets out the number of police charged cases that were subsequently discontinued by the CPS.

	2012	2013 (January to May)
Police charged cases discontinued by the CPS (Number)	47,049	18,631
Proportion of Police charged cases discontinued (Percentage).	7.9	8.3

The responsibility for continuing with proceedings lies with the CPS. If after reviewing a case fully in accordance with the Code for Crown Prosecutors the CPS prosecutor believes that the proceedings should not continue, the case will be terminated at the earliest possible opportunity.

No central record is kept of the number of cases discontinued prior to a hearing being listed; however, in 2012, 30,478 of the 47,049 cases that needed to be discontinued were done so at either the first or second hearing. For January to May 2013, the figure is 12,058. This represents almost two thirds of the terminated cases charged by the police.

No central record is maintained of cases that are 'downgraded'. However, the CPS have the option to deal with a police charged case by way of an out-of-court disposal in place of a prosecution in court if it is an appropriate response to the offender and/or the seriousness and consequence of the offending. In 2012, 2,940 cases were discontinued in favour of an out of court disposal and 704 cases from January to May 2013.

TREASURY

Business: Loans

Dr McCrea: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what recent discussions he has had with banks and other financial institutions about making additional finance available to small and medium-sized enterprises. [160102]

Greg Clark: Ensuring that small and medium sized enterprises can access the finance they need in order to, grow is vital to continued economic recovery across the UK.

Treasury Ministers and officials meet regularly with banks to discuss access to finance for small and medium sized enterprises. However, as was the case with previous Administrations, it is not the Treasury's practice to provide details of all such representations.

Illegal Immigrants: Employment

Lady Hermon: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many businesses in Northern Ireland have received fines or other penalties for employing illegal labour in each of the last three years for which figures are available. [159957]

Mr Harper: I have been asked to reply on behalf of the Home Department.

The information requested is in the following table. The figures are based on the number of civil penalties served following visits to business addresses in Northern Ireland.

The Civil Penalty Compliance Team has issued 41 civil penalties from 1 June 2010 to 31 May 2013, totalling £335,000.

<i>As at 1 June to 31 May each year:</i>	<i>Number of initial decision penalties issued in Northern Ireland</i>
2010-11	9
2011-12	11
2012-13	21
Total	41

Please note penalties issued at the initial decision stage may be reduced, cancelled, increased or reissued.

Revenue and Customs: St Helens

Mr Woodward: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what estimate he has made of how many jobs will be lost if the proposed closure of HM Revenue and Customs' enquiry centre in St Helens goes ahead; [160498]

(2) what information his Department holds on the number of visitors to HM Revenue and Customs' enquiry centre in St Helens in each of the last five years. [160499]

Mr Gauke: On 14 March 2013, HM Revenue and Customs announced a public consultation on a proposed new service for supporting customers who need extra help with getting their taxes and entitlements right. Earlier this month the department started a five month pilot of the new service in the north east of England.

If HMRC does decide to introduce the new service across the entire inquiry centre network then it would replace the current arrangements between February and May 2014.

Because HMRC has yet to make a decision on this issue, it cannot comment on the situation of the five staff working in the inquiry centre in St Helens. The number of visitors to the HMRC inquiry centre in St Helens for each of the last five financial years is:

	Number
2008-09	15,900
2009-10	13,315
2010-11	17,070
2011-12	14,545
2012-13	13,296

Royal Bank of Scotland

Chris Leslie: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer on what date he or his officials first discussed with Sir Philip Hampton the desire for a target sale date for some or all of the Government's shareholding in the Royal Bank of Scotland by the end of 2014. [160558]

Sajid Javid: UK Financial Investments Ltd (UKFI) continues to be responsible for managing the Government's shareholdings in RBS and Lloyds on a commercial and arm's length basis, and for developing and executing a strategy for disposing of the investment in an orderly and active way.

The Government has consistently said there is no target price for the sale of the Government's shareholding in RBS and no timetable—including the general election.

Chris Leslie: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) whether the decision to change the Chief Executive of the Royal Bank of Scotland was independently determined without consultation with him or his officials; [160582]

(2) on what date did he or officials or ministers of his Department first discussed the possibility of changing the Chief Executive of the Royal Bank of Scotland (RBS) with (a) UK Financial Investment Ltd, (b) Sir Philip Hampton and (c) other members of the Board of RBS. [160581]

Sajid Javid: Mr Hester's departure was a matter for Mr Hester and the board of Royal Bank of Scotland (RBS). The Chancellor of the Exchequer was consulted on this decision, as was UK Financial Investments (UKFI) Ltd.

Tax Evasion: Fuels

Dr McCrea: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the loss of revenue as a result of fuel laundering activities in the Republic of Ireland. [160100]

Sajid Javid: No assessment has been made of the loss of revenue as a result of fuel laundering activities in the Republic or Ireland. However, tax gap figures published in the document at the following link give estimates of revenue lost to illicit fuel on the GB mainland, and the non-UK duty paid market share in Northern Ireland, which includes both legitimate cross border shopping and illicit fuel.

<http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/statistics/tax-gaps/mtg-2012.pdf>

Welfare Tax Credits

Mr Byrne: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much is spent annually on (a) working tax credits and (b) child tax credits in each region of the UK. [160256]

Sajid Javid: The following table gives entitlement figures for working and child tax credits from finalised 2011-12 awards data. Note that the figures do not add up exactly due to being rounded to the nearest pound.

	Entitlement to CTC	Entitlement to WTC	£ million Total entitlement
UK	21,469	7,734	29,203
North East	950	366	1,316
North West	2,664	1,049	3,713
Yorkshire and the Humber	1,992	753	2,745
East Midlands	1,554	569	2,123
West Midlands	2,185	752	2,938
East	1,745	575	2,320
London	3,016	1,001	4,017
South East	2,302	772	3,074
South West	1,585	586	2,171
Wales	1,107	403	1,510
Scotland	1,547	628	2,175
Northern Ireland	757	267	1,023
Foreign and not known	60	11	71

I also refer the hon. Member to the written answer I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Witham (Priti Patel), on 25 April 2013, *Official Report*, column 1155W, PQ 153455. This contained an estimate of total tax credits expenditure, split by working and child tax credit, for the years 2008-09 to 2012-13.

Dan Jarvis: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what steps he is taking to ensure that HM Revenue and Customs improves its performance in reducing tax credits error and fraud. [160552]

Sajid Javid: Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC) is building on its strategic approach to tackle tax credit error and fraud by improving the way it identifies claimants who have failed to notify changes. It includes using real time information on earnings to tackle income risks and, as part of the autumn statement, to introduce checks on child care claims and confirmation that a child is still in qualifying training or education. Work is also under way to explore whether the private sector can help HMRC to increase the number of checks it makes on tax credit claims. From April 2013, HMRC also introduced sanctions which stop payments of working tax credits where claimants have been fraudulent.

The latest estimates for 2011-12, published on 7 June 2013, show that HMRC has reduced the overall levels of tax credits error and fraud to 7.3%, from 8.1% in 2010-11—the lowest since tax credits were introduced in 2003.

WALES

Devolution

Owen Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he expects to publish the draft Wales Bill announced in the Queen's Speech. [160443]

Mr David Jones: The Wales Office intends to publish the draft Wales Bill for pre-legislative scrutiny later this year.

Owen Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many officials in his Department have been tasked with analysing the implications of the recommendations of the first report of the Commission on Devolution in Wales. [160444]

Mr David Jones: The Wales Office is working with a number of other Government Departments, particularly HM Treasury, in analysing the recommendations made by the Commission on Devolution in Wales. Eight Wales Office officials have been involved in this work (to varying degrees) since the Commission published its report.

	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	Overall change
Total departmental expenditure limit, net of depreciation and impairments (£ million)	15,366	14,861	14,867	15,009	15,121	-244
Percentage change—nominal	—	-3.3	0.0	1.0	0.7	-1.6
Percentage change—real	—	-5.2	-1.2	-1.3	-1.1	-8.7

Social Networking

Owen Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list all Twitter accounts for which his officials (a) have had or (b) currently have responsibility for (i) monitoring and (ii) updating. [160445]

Government Bills

Owen Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether his Department has published a summary of measures in the Queen's Speech that will have an effect on Wales. [160450]

Mr David Jones: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the written ministerial statement I made to the House on 9 May 2013, *Official Report*, column 12WS.

Official Cars

Owen Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many journeys he and his Ministers have undertaken in his Department's ministerial car in each of the last six months. [160653]

Mr David Jones: This information is not held centrally.

Politics and Government

Owen Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what meetings (a) he, (b) Ministers and (c) officials in his Department have had with Cabinet Ministers in the Welsh Government in the last six months. [160447]

Mr David Jones: Wales Office Ministers have regular meetings with their counterparts in the Welsh Government. Officials frequently accompany Ministers to these meetings.

Public Expenditure

Owen Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has made to the Chancellor of the Exchequer about the Welsh block grant ahead of the Spending Review. [160432]

Mr David Jones: I have frequent discussions with the Chancellor of the Exchequer and other Cabinet colleagues on matters that influence the size of the Welsh block grant.

Owen Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what changes have been made to the the Welsh block grant in each year of the current Parliament in both real and absolute terms. [160433]

Mr David Jones: The following table shows the changes to the Welsh Government's block grant. The Welsh Government's block grant has increased or is planned to increase each year from 2011-12.

Mr David Jones: Two—@walesoffice and @swyddfa cymru.

EDUCATION

Academies

Lyn Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Education when his Department expects to announce the calculation of the return funds to local authorities following the 2012-13 top slicing for academies; and when local authorities will receive that payment. [160214]

Mr Laws: The refunds to local authorities for the Local Authority Central Spend Equivalent Grant (LACSEG) in respect of 2012-13 financial year were paid by 31 May 2013.

Children: Diabetes

Andrew Stephenson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what support his Department provides to schools in caring for pupils with type-1 diabetes. [160352]

Mr Timpson: The Department for Education provides guidance on managing medicines in schools, which addresses a range of conditions, including diabetes. The guidance is designed to prevent medical conditions from hampering children's educational attainment or preventing them from participating fully in school life. We expect schools to: understand children's needs; work closely with parents and carers; and have clear procedures set out in their health care plan, with which staff are familiar and comfortable.

Andrew Stephenson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what recent representations he has received on requiring schools to provide support for pupils with type-1 diabetes; and if he will make a statement. [160354]

Mr Timpson: Ministers have met with colleagues from the Department of Health and, following representations made to both Departments, are aware of the concerns that have been raised by charities such as Diabetes UK about the level of support provided to pupils with type-1 diabetes. Diabetes provision was also debated at the report stage of the Children and Families Bill.

We continue to work alongside the Department of Health and have committed to publishing revised managing medicines guidance for schools later this year. This will update advice provided to schools to help them ensure that pupils with complex health conditions such as diabetes are able to participate in school life and fulfil their potential in education.

Free School Meals

Gavin Williamson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education when changes to the criteria to receive free school lunches were last made. [160345]

Mr Laws: An Order¹ came into force on 29 April 2013 extending eligibility for free school meals to children who are in receipt, or whose parents are in receipt, of universal credit, for the duration of the universal credit pathfinder. Pathfinder claims are only open to single adults with no dependent children, but this change

ensures that any children who subsequently join the household of claimants will be eligible for free school meals. This interim measure does not pre-judge which children will be entitled to free school meals when universal credit is rolled out more widely.

¹ <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2013/650/introduction/made>

Free School Meals: Secondary Education

Gavin Williamson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many students in secondary schools receive free lunches. [160344]

Mr Laws: Information on free school meal eligibility is published in table 3b of the Statistical First Release 'Schools, Pupils and their Characteristics, January 2012'.¹

Schools and local councils can also provide free lunches to children not eligible for free school meals if they wish, or to subsidise school meal prices for certain groups of children. These are approaches already taken in some schools and local councils. The Department does not collect information on this additional provision.

Information for January 2013 will be published on 20 June 2013 at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-education/series/statistics-school-and-pupil-numbers>

¹ https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/167510/sfr10-2012nt.xls.xls

Free Schools: Devon

Mr Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) what assessment he has made of the need for the Route 39 Free School in Torridge; [159809]

(2) for what reasons he approved the Route 39 Free School in Torridge; and what assessment he made of the level of support for such a school prior to granting an approval. [159810]

Mr Timpson: The Route 39 Academy will provide parents with more choices for their child's education and will help drive up standards through both the provision of high quality education and the competition it will bring. In addition, all five of the nearest secondary schools performed below the national average in 2012.

Each application to open a free school is scrutinised rigorously and the Secretary of State for Education, my right hon. Friend the Member for Surrey Heath (Michael Gove), approves only those proposals that meet strict criteria. The application to set up the Route 39 Academy, which was supported by over 500 families, met these criteria and demonstrated that there was sufficient demand for a relatively small secondary school to serve families living in the local rural community.

Mr Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) what assessment he has made of the cost of the Route 39 Free School; [159878]

(2) what assessment he has made of the (a) capital costs and (b) costs of adapting interim accommodation of the Route 39 Free School in Torridge. [159880]

Mr Timpson: We are satisfied that the Route 39 Academy will offer good value for money. Details of the capital funding—including site acquisition, renovation and construction costs—for free schools are made public

when contracts are finalised and the cost is no longer commercially sensitive. The costs for the Route 39 Academy will be published on the Department's website in due course.

Mr Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what assessment he has made of the effect of the Route 39 Free School on existing schools in the area. [159879]

Mr Timpson: Evidence shows that where choice exists, competitive pressures brought about by the creation of high-quality new schools can improve the quality of other schools in the local area.

GCSE

Damian Hinds: To ask the Secretary of State for Education pursuant to his answer of 10 June 2013, *Official Report*, column 124W, on education, what the GCSE performance was of (a) students in London eligible for free school meals, (b) students outside London eligible for free school meals, (c) students in London not eligible for free school meals and (d) students outside London not eligible for free school meals in each of the five years up to and including the start of the London Challenge. [160035]

Mr Laws: The data requested on free school meal eligibility in the five years up to and including the start of London Challenge are not available.

London Challenge started in 2003. Figures for the years 2001/02 and 2002/03 could only be provided at a disproportionate cost. Figures for the years prior to 2001/02 are not available because pupil-level data has only been collected in the School Census since the 2001/02 academic year.

Sixth Form Colleges: VAT

Caroline Lucas: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make representations to HM Treasury in support of proposals to introduce a VAT refund scheme for sixth form colleges that mirrors the scheme

currently in place for school sixth forms, academies and free schools; and if he will make a statement. [160145]

Mr Laws: The Government aims to ensure that all educational institutions receive fair support in relation to funding and keeps these issues under close review.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Community Relations Council

Mr Dodds: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what discussions she has had with the Community Relations Council since September 2012. [159994]

Mrs Villiers: I visited the Community Relations Council on 18 April 2013. During this visit I met the Chief Executive and Chairman of the Council and received a briefing on their work and heard their views on the challenges of building cohesion in Northern Ireland. I also had the opportunity to meet representatives from some of the projects which are funded by the Council.

Disciplinary Proceedings

Mr Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many staff were suspended from her Department and its associated public bodies on full pay in (a) 2010-11, (b) 2011-12 and (c) 2012-13; and what costs were incurred as a result of such suspensions. [160422]

Mike Penning: No staff were suspended from my Department on full pay during 2010-11, 2011-12 or 2012-13 and, therefore, no costs were incurred.

My Department has two executive non-departmental public bodies—the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission and the Parades Commission for Northern Ireland; and one advisory non-departmental public body—the Boundary Commission for Northern Ireland. As such bodies are independent of Government, the hon. Member may wish to write to the Commissions directly on these matters—contact details are set out in the following table:

ALB	Status	Contact details
Parades Commission for Northern Ireland	Executive NDPB	info@paradescommission.org
Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission	Executive NDPB	information@nihrc.org
Boundary Commission for Northern Ireland	Advisory NDPB	bcni@belfast.org.uk

Foreign Investment in UK

Lady Hermon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what meetings she has planned with attendees to the G8 summit on encouraging inward investment to Northern Ireland; and if she will make a statement. [160342]

Mrs Villiers: When the Prime Minister announced that Lough Erne would be the venue for the G8 summit he described Northern Ireland as:

“a great place for business, a great place for investment, a place with an incredibly educated and trained work force, ready to work for international businesses”.

At the summit both he and I took the opportunity to reinforce that message with the visiting delegations.

The economic package launched by the Government and the Northern Ireland Executive on 14 June announced that we will build on the summit by delivering a major G8 branded Investment Conference in Northern Ireland in October. The Prime Minister has undertaken to attend this conference to champion investment in Northern Ireland.

GCSE

Dr McCrea: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what recent representations she has made to the Northern Ireland Assembly to ensure that the GCSE examination is protected and viewed consistently across the UK. [160107]

Mrs Villiers: Education is devolved to the Northern Ireland Executive and the format of the GCSE exam in Northern Ireland a matter for the Northern Ireland Minister for Education.

I have not discussed GCSEs with the Secretary of State for Education but have highlighted with him the general value of close working relationships with the Northern Ireland Executive on education matters.

JUSTICE

Bribery Act 2010

Sadiq Khan: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice how many (a) successful and (b) unsuccessful prosecutions there have been under the Bribery Act 2010 since that act came into force. [159868]

Damian Green: There have been three successful and no unsuccessful prosecutions under the Bribery Act 2010 since the act came into force in July 2011.

Commercial Court

Sadiq Khan: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice how many cases were dealt with by the commercial courts in England and Wales in (a) 2010, (b) 2011 and (c) 2012. [158177]

Mrs Grant: Data are not collated on how many cases are dealt with by the commercial court. There are a number of ways a claim can be dealt with including settlement, default judgment, summary judgment, strikeout and trial. There were 1,060 claims issued in the commercial court in 2010 and 1,331 issued in 2011. Data for claims issued in 2012 are due to be published in Court Statistics Quarterly on 20 June 2013.

Courts: Shropshire

Daniel Kawczynski: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice what estimate he has made of the savings to his Department from the proposed centralisation of motoring courts in the area that includes Shropshire. [159332]

Mrs Grant: The proposal to create single traffic courts in each police area is designed to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the courts by ensuring that summary motoring cases are dealt with proportionately and rapidly. The Department is working with the judiciary on taking forward this proposal. There has been no assessment of potential savings.

Homicide

Adam Afriye: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice (1) what assessment he has made of public confidence in the rule of law of the present test of materiality used in partial defences to murder; [158841]

(2) what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the test of materiality used in partial defences to murder; and what steps he has taken to ensure that that test is sufficiently robust; [158902]

(3) what assessment he has made of whether the law relating to the defence of diminished responsibility to murder is sufficiently clear; [158903]

(4) if he will take steps to ensure that the defence of diminished responsibility to murder may only be used in cases where the associated medical condition has a clear and significant effect on the accused; [158904]

(5) what research his Department has conducted into the possibility of making diminished responsibility pleas the subject of the length of sentencing rather than conviction. [159094]

Damian Green: The partial defence of diminished responsibility was reformed in the Coroners and Justice Act 2009 to accommodate more modern ideas of psychiatry and abnormality of mental functioning which reduces the capacity to understand situations and control actions. The revised defence is based on the concept of a 'recognised medical condition'. The Law Commission, who recommended the reforms, and the then Government conducted extensive public consultation to inform these changes to the law, which were then subject to the full scrutiny of Parliament. There are no plans to review the law in this area.

Human Trafficking

David Simpson: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice what the (a) nationality and (b) gender was of each suspected victim of trafficking referred to the Trafficking Victim Support Scheme operated by the Salvation Army in May 2013; in which (i) region, (ii) local authority area and (iii) parliamentary constituency each of the suspected victims was found; and which agency referred each case to the scheme. [160055]

Mrs Grant: In May 2013 there were 60 referrals to the Government-funded support service for adult victims of human trafficking in England and Wales administered by the Salvation Army. In the interests of victim safety only the region in which the victim was encountered is provided, and not the local authority or parliamentary constituency. Details are provided as follows:

Nationality	Gender	Region	Agency type
Albanian	Female	West Midlands	Home Office
Albanian	Female	Wales	Home Office
Albanian	Female	South East	Other
Albanian	Female	South East	Home Office
Albanian	Female	South East	Home Office
Albanian	Female	Yorkshire	Home Office
Albanian	Female	West Midlands	Health Services
Albanian	Female	Yorkshire	Home Office
Albanian	Female	South East	Self Referral
Albanian	Female	West Midlands	Home Office
British	Female	South East	Other
British	Male	North West	Police
Cameroonian	Female	South East	Self Referral
Chinese	Female	South	Police
Chinese	Female	South West	Health Services
Chinese	Female	South East	Local Authority
Chinese	Female	South East	Home Office
Czech	Female	North West	Police
Czech	Female	North West	Police
Czech	Female	North West	Police

<i>Nationality</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Region</i>	<i>Agency type</i>
Congolese	Male	North West	Home Office
Gambian	Female	South East	Other
Ghanaian	Female	South East	Self Referral
Hungarian	Female	North West	Police
Hungarian	Male	East Midlands	Police
Indian	Male	Yorkshire	Home Office
Ivorian	Female	North West	Home Office
Kenyan	Female	West Midlands	Home Office
Latvian	Female	Wales	NGO
Latvian	Male	East Midlands	Police
Lithuanian	Female	South East	Police
Lithuanian	Male	North West	NGO
Lithuanian	Male	South East	NGO
Lithuanian	Female	South East	Self Referral
Nigerian	Female	West Midlands	Home Office
Nigerian	Female	South East	Legal Representative
Nigerian	Female	North West	NGO
Nigerian	Female	South East	Legal Representative
Nigerian	Female	South East	Self Referral
Nigerian	Female	South East	Home Office
Nigerian	Female	South East	Home Office
Nigerian	Female	South East	Local Authority
Nigerian	Male	South East	NGO
Nigerian	Female	South East	Home Office
Pakistani	Male	West Midlands	Police
Pakistani	Male	North East	Home Office
Polish	Male	West Midlands	NGO
Polish	Male	West Midlands	Police
Polish	Female	West Midlands	NGO
Romanian	Female	West Midlands	Other
Romanian	Female	West Midlands	Police
Sierra Leone	Female	South East	NGO
Sierra Leone	Female	South East	Self Referral
Tibetan	Female	East Midlands	Police
Ugandan	Female	South East	Self Referral
Ugandan	Female	South West	NGO
Vietnamese	Male	Yorkshire	Home Office
Vietnamese	Male	West Midlands	Home Office
Vietnamese	Female	South East	Health Services
Zambian	Female	Not known	Home Office

Legal Aid Scheme

Hywel Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice what assessment his Department has made of the likely effects of reforms to legal aid on Welsh language services. [159686]

Jeremy Wright: Between 9 April and 4 June 2013 the Government consulted on a number of proposals to reform legal aid via the “Transforming Legal Aid: delivering a more credible and efficient system” consultation. This included a proposed model of competitive tendering for criminal legal aid services. We have been clear we must continue to bear down on the cost of legal aid, including the £1 billion of taxpayers’ money spent on criminal legal aid a year, to ensure we are getting the best deal for the taxpayer.

Where providers supply services in Wales, they will be contractually obligated to provide services in Welsh in accordance with the Welsh Language Act 1993, as currently. No change is proposed in this respect.

Prisoners’ Incentives and Earned Privileges Scheme

Priti Patel: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice (1) what steps he is taking to ensure that recent changes to the Incentives and Earned Privileges measures are fully enacted in prisons; [159601]

(2) how the expectation for prisoners to work towards their own rehabilitation is measured by prison staff. [159603]

Jeremy Wright: On 30 April 2013, we announced significant changes to the Incentives and Earned Privileges (IEP) scheme which will come into effect on 1 November 2013. The focus of the IEP scheme will change so that not only are adult prisoners (18 or over) expected to behave well, but they will also be expected to actively work towards their own rehabilitation and, to reach the highest level of the scheme, demonstrate both an active commitment to their own rehabilitation and provide help or support to other prisoners and/or prison staff.

Detail of how the scheme will operate is currently being developed and this will include guidance to prison staff on assessing prisoner’s engagement with rehabilitation. A new Prison Service Instruction will be issued in due course which, as with all national policies, will require prisons to comply with the new requirements.

Prisons: Allotments

Priti Patel: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice how many prisons have working allotments on site. [159608]

Jeremy Wright: Central data is not available to confirm how many prisons may have working allotments on site. This information could be obtained only by a manual check with individual prisons, which would incur disproportionate cost.

However, there are 75 public sector prisons in England and Wales that have horticultural facilities including polytunnels, glasshouses, and gardens that produce vegetables for prison kitchens.

Prisons: Employment

Priti Patel: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice how many working positions in (a) cooking, (b) serving meals, (c) prison maintenance and (d) cleaning there are in each prison in the UK. [159599]

Jeremy Wright: Data on the number of these working positions available at each prison is not currently collected centrally and could be obtained only by a manual check with individual prisons, which would incur disproportionate cost.

Where work is available, all convicted prisoners are required to work in accordance with the Prison Rules. We know that substantial numbers of prisoners do work on these essential support tasks within prisons in England and Wales. Further data collection and analysis will be carried out ahead of the forthcoming competition for a range of prison works, maintenance and facilities management services which was announced earlier this month.

Priti Patel: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice with reference to rule 31 of the prison rules, what the procedure is for dealing with convicted prisoners who refuse to work at any point during their sentence. [159696]

Jeremy Wright: Prison rule 31 requires convicted prisoners to work as directed. The changes to the Incentives and Earned Privileges (IEP) scheme announced on 30 April 2013 will require prisoners to work towards their own rehabilitation by actively engaging in the prison regime. If they do not, they will not gain additional privileges. Where work is available, convicted prisoners will be required to take part.

When a prisoner refuses to work the reason will be identified and appropriate action taken. Where no valid reason for a refusal was given, this would initially involve a warning of the consequences. Continued refusal would be a breach of prison rules and result in a disciplinary adjudication hearing. A range of punishments are provided under the prison rules, from withdrawal of a range of privileges up to cellular confinement.

Prisons: Procurement

Priti Patel: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice if he will publish a detailed breakdown of the cost of all services in each prison in the UK. [159598]

Jeremy Wright: The National Offender Management Services (NOMS) publishes prison unit costs in summary form for each prison as an Addendum alongside its Annual Report and Accounts. We do not intend or plan to publish a detailed analysis of each prison unit costs.

The published information for each prison unit costs for financial year 2011-12 is available on the Department's website at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/prison-and-probation-trusts-performance-statistics-2011-12>

We plan to publish similar summary information for financial year 2012-13 on the MOJ website in October alongside the Management Information Addendum.

Copies of all previous Annual Reports and Accounts are also placed in the House Library.

Priti Patel: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice what proportion of the budget of each prison in the UK is spent on procuring external services. [159606]

Jeremy Wright: The National Offender Management Service central accounting system does not separately record expenditure on procuring external services for each public sector and private prison in England and Wales. To interrogate such cost details from each prison would incur disproportionate costs.

Budgets allocated to each establishment will be determined by various factors, including prison category, size, or age, and the type of regime. They do not separately identify individual elements of expenditure on procuring external services. These costs will be absorbed as part of local resource expenditure.

DEFENCE

Afghanistan

Miss McIntosh: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made of the success of Afghan-led security operations in Helmand Province. [160438]

Mr Robathan: The Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) is now in control of security throughout the country—all provinces, all cities, all borders—and for all of Afghanistan's 27 million citizens. The ANSF continues to make good progress and the UK military footprint is reducing in line with security transition.

Task Force Helmand has directly supported only three of the last 150 Afghan uniformed police operations and all of the estimated 1,000 police patrols each week are conducted alone, without ISAF support. In total, ISAF troops have represented just 7% of the total deployed on recent Afghan National Army kandak and brigade level operations in Helmand. Our main role now, in line with security transition, is the vital one of training, assisting and advising the ANSF as they take the lead for security.

While the ANSF assume this lead, violence levels within central Helmand appear lower than at the same point in the fighting season last year.

Armed Forces: Food

Gavin Williamson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what the cost for food on Christmas day was for each member of the armed forces stationed in the UK; [159969]

(2) what the full meal Christmas Day (a) breakfast, (b) lunch and (c) dinner menu was for soldiers based in the UK in 2012. [160033]

Mr Dunne: This information is not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Gavin Williamson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether vegan options are given at every meal for soldiers stationed in the UK. [159971]

Mr Dunne: Across armed forces sites in the UK, catering support is delivered by a number of Soft Facilities Management service providers. As part of this service they are contractually required to provide meal options which reflect cultural, religious and personal diversity, if requested.

Vegan meals are not available as a standard item but if an individual identifies the need for vegan meals to be provided then this will be accommodated by the service provider.

Armed Forces: Health Services

Mr Jim Murphy: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what targets are in place to ensure that his Department's personnel are treated within 10 weeks by NHS trusts. [156621]

Mr Francois [*holding answer 21 May 2013*]: NHS England has an 18 week target for treatment of non-military and military patients.

Mr Jim Murphy: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many of his Department's personnel have not been treated within 10 weeks for (a) urgent and (b) non-urgent care by NHS trusts. [156622]

Mr Robathan [*holding answer 21 May 2013*]: NHS England has an 18 week target for treatment of non-military and military personnel.

Information held by the Defence Medical Services (DMS) indicates that during 2011-12, approximately 80% of armed forces personnel were treated within the 10 week timeframe.

In line with the revised NHS Commissioning Strategy, NHS England will now provide the DMS with performance statistics on a six week basis.

Mr Jim Murphy: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what measures are in place to ensure his Department's personnel are treated within 10 weeks by NHS trusts if commissioned by his Department. [156636]

Mr Robathan [*holding answer 21 May 2013*]: NHS England has an 18 week target for non-military and military patients. The Defence Medical Services (DMS) monitored Ministry of Defence Hospital Units contracts commissioned with the NHS very closely. Each MOD Hospital Unit provided monthly statistics to the DMS on key activities, including waiting lists and the referral to treatment timeframe. This data was verified, validated and agreed between the Trust and the DMS. In addition, review meetings were undertaken by Trusts and the DMS, which increased to monthly Special Measures Contract Review meetings when required.

In line with the revised NHS Commissioning Strategy, NHS England will now provide the DMS with performance statistics every six weeks. The DMS will attend regular partnership meetings with NHS England to discuss activity and associated performance related to secondary health care commissioning.

Armed Forces: Injuries

Andrew Rosindell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what steps he is taking to improve the support given to injured service personnel. [160063]

Mr Francois: Our injured personnel make huge sacrifices in service of their country and it is only right that we do all we can to help them in their recovery.

I am therefore delighted that the Defence Recovery Capability, supported by charities such as Help for Heroes and the Royal British Legion, has now achieved full operating capability, which I formally declared at an event at Wellington Barracks on 11 June 2013. All injured and wounded personnel who come under the Defence Recovery Capability will receive a personalised recovery plan covering all aspects of their recovery including medical care, welfare, housing, re-skilling, education, work placements, and employment issues

and opportunities. I also laid a written ministerial statement in the House on 11 June 2013, *Official Report*, columns 3-4WS, which gives further details.

Army Families Federation

Mrs Moon: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent discussions he has had with representatives of the Army Families Federation with regards to the number of enquiries that body has received from foreign and Commonwealth soldiers since January 2013; and if he will make a statement. [159978]

Mr Francois: Army officials speak regularly with the Army Families Federation (AFF) across a range of issues, but have no central record of discussing the number of inquiries AFF have received from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office since January 2013.

AWE Aldermaston

Sir Nick Harvey: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what the write-off costs are as a result of cancelling Project Hydrus at the Atomic Weapons Establishment. [159715]

Mr Dunne: In the annual report and accounts 2010-11 the Ministry of Defence provided advance notice of the potential write-off of up to £120 million incurred on Project Hydrus prior to its termination.

The hydrodynamics testing capability will now be delivered through the joint UK and France programme, Project Teutates.

The exact amount to be written off will be finalised as Project Teutates matures.

Corps of Army Music

Sir Bob Russell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what the authorised establishment is of the Corps of Army Music; and how many posts were unfilled as at 31 March 2013. [160207]

Mr Francois: The authorised establishment of the Corps of Army Music is 799 and the number of unfilled posts at 31 March 2013 was 89.

Cybercrime

Mr Jim Murphy: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many individuals have been employed within his Department to work on cyber security issues since May 2010. [160293]

Mr Robathan [*holding answer 17 June 2013*]: We regard cyber security as the responsibility of all personnel within the Ministry of Defence, and we are incorporating it into the way we conduct operations and business. Since the Government has set out its cyber security strategy, we have also increased the numbers of specialists in the Department employed on cyber security. This information is being withheld for the purpose of safeguarding national security.

France

Sir Nick Harvey: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what estimate he has made of the cost of the Project Teutates Technology Development Centre at the Atomic Weapons Establishment Aldermaston; what the (a) total project costs and (b) projects costs incurred by the Government for Project Teutates has been in each year since 2010; and what he estimates such costs will be in each year to 2015. [159714]

Mr Dunne: The approved cost for the construction of the Technology Development Centre is £48.7 million. The breakdown for each year since 2010 is given in the following table:

Financial year	Costs at outturn prices (£ million)
2010-11	1.1
2011-12	11.7
2012-13	14.2
2013-14	¹ 15.1
2014-15	¹ 6.6
2015-16	¹ 0.0

¹Planned expenditure

I am withholding wider Project Teutates costs because disclosure would be likely to prejudice commercial interests and would impact on the formulation of Government policy.

G8: County Fermanagh

Dr McCrea: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many armed forces personnel have been made available to provide security for the G8 summit in Enniskillen, Northern Ireland. [160105]

Mr Robathan: The Ministry of Defence is not providing any armed security for the G8, as this is the responsibility of the Police Service of Northern Ireland.

HMS Tireless

Paul Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) whether any radioactive emissions were vented to the atmosphere following the recent reactor coolant leak of HMS Tireless; where such releases were emitted; when they took place; and what quantities of radioactivity was released; [159821]

(2) where and when the reactor of HMS Tireless was shut down following its recent reactor coolant leak; [159822]

(3) with reference to the answer to the hon. Member for Moray of 1 March 2013, *Official Report*, column 718W, on HMS Tireless, what the expected duration and cost of repairs to HMS Tireless is; and whether a decision has yet been made as to whether the submarine will remain in service following the recent reactor coolant leak. [159823]

Mr Dunne: The reactor in HMS Tireless was shut down on her return to Her Majesty's Naval Base Devonport to allow investigations to be carried out and repair plans to be developed. Laboratory tests confirmed that the level of airborne radioactivity in the reactor compartment was well within the normal permitted

limits for discharges to the environment. Following regulatory approval, normal alongside reactor compartment ventilation was resumed.

Repairs to HMS Tireless have now been completed and she will return to operational service in due course. It is too early to confirm what the final cost of the repairs will be.

Intelligence Services

Mr Jim Murphy: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many people engaged in defence intelligence speak (a) Chinese, (b) Japanese, (c) Vietnamese, (d) Taiwanese and (e) Korean. [159932]

Mr Robathan [holding answer 17 June 2013]: Details of language skills declared by personnel in defence intelligence are set out in the following table:

Language	Number of employees with a speaking ability
Chinese-Mandarin	9
Chinese-Other	7
Japanese	5 or less
Vietnamese	1
Taiwanese	1
Korean	0

¹ Data not held

Languages

Mr Jim Murphy: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many officials in his Department speak (a) Chinese, (b) Japanese, (c) Vietnamese, (d) Taiwanese and (e) Korean. [159935]

Mr Robathan [holding answer 17 June 2013]: The following table sets out the numbers of civilian officials in the Ministry of Defence who have chosen to record a level of speaking ability in Chinese, Japanese or Korean.

Language	Number of officials with a speaking ability
Chinese-Mandarin	37
Chinese-Other	63
Japanese	48
Korean	5 or less

Information on speaking ability in Vietnamese and Taiwanese is not held.

Military Bands

Sir Bob Russell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) whether he has any plans to reduce the number of military bands; and if he will make a statement; [160208]

(2) how many military bands there were in (a) 1997 and (b) 2010. [160209]

Mr Francois: There are currently no plans to reduce the number of Royal Marines and Royal Air Force military bands. The number of army bands is currently under review as part of the Future Music 2020 re-organisation programme, although no decision has yet been made.

The number of military bands in the Regular forces in 1997 and 2010 is presented in the following table:

	1997	2010
Royal Marines	5	5
Army	29	22
Royal Air Force	4	3

Navy

Andrew Rosindell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what research his Department is carrying out into underwater security in order to assist maritime operations. [160134]

Mr Dunne: The Defence Science and Technology (S&T) Programme funds a range of research activities relevant to underwater security, including anti-submarine warfare, sea mine countermeasures and military data gathering of geospatial information.

Property

Margaret Curran: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what the (a) location and (b) value is of any property his Department owns in Scotland. [160277]

Mr Robathan: A copy of a list showing the location of Ministry of Defence owned property in Scotland has been placed in the Library of the House.

Details of any valuations obtained, can not be released as to do so could influence the market.

Territorial Army: Northern Ireland

Mr Gregory Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether members of the Territorial Army in Northern Ireland are eligible to be recruited to UK Special Forces. [159940]

Mr Robathan [*holding answer 17 June 2013*]: Members of the Territorial Army in Northern Ireland are eligible for recruitment with UK Special Forces.

Unmanned Air Vehicles

Yasmin Qureshi: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether any of the five incidents of strikes by unmanned aerial vehicles which resulted in civilian casualties that were recorded by the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan in 2012 were carried out by the UK. [159703]

Mr Robathan: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my hon. Friend the then Minister for the Armed Forces (Sir Nick Harvey) on 26 June 2012, *Official Report*, column 187W, to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Hall Green (Mr Godsiff), and to the answer I gave on 11 July 2011, *Official Report*, column 52W, to the hon. Member for Brighton, Pavilion (Caroline Lucas).

CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

Conditions of Employment

Mr Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport how many staff were retained on zero-hour contracts by (a) her Department and (b) the executive agencies and non-departmental public bodies for which she is responsible in (i) 2010-11, (ii) 2011-12 and (iii) 2012-13; and if she will make a statement. [160764]

Hugh Robertson: No staff were retained by DCMS on zero-hour contracts. We do not hold, centrally, data for our executive agency or NDPBs.

DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER

Commonwealth

Mr Charles Walker: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister (1) how many Commonwealth citizens living in the UK, who are not UK passport holders, are eligible to vote in UK parliamentary elections; [160127]

(2) if he will list those Commonwealth countries whose citizens are allowed to vote in the UK's parliamentary elections if residing in the country. [160128]

Miss Chloe Smith: Electoral Registration data by nationality is not collected centrally. The Office for National Statistics collect and publish yearly statistics on electoral registration, but this does not include data on nationality.

Registration data on the basis of nationality is only collected at local level by local authority EROs for their own records, but they are under no obligation to do so. However, they only collect information about Commonwealth citizens who are registered to vote, not those who are eligible to do so.

Commonwealth citizens who have or do not require leave to enter or remain in the UK can vote in UK parliamentary elections, subject to meeting all other eligibility criteria for electoral registration. The full list of Commonwealth countries whose citizens are allowed to vote is as follows:

Antigua and Barbuda
Australia
The Bahamas
Bangladesh
Barbados
Belize
Botswana
Brunei Darussalam
Cameroon
Canada
Cyprus
Dominica
Fiji Islands
The Gambia
Ghana
Grenada
Guyana

India
 Jamaica
 Kenya
 Kiribati
 Lesotho
 Malawi
 Malaysia
 Maldives
 Malta
 Mauritius
 Mozambique
 Namibia
 Nauru
 New Zealand
 Nigeria
 Pakistan
 Papua New Guinea
 Rwanda
 St Kitts and Nevis
 St Lucia
 St Vincent and the Grenadines
 Samoa
 Seychelles
 Sierra Leone
 Singapore
 Solomon Islands
 South Africa
 Sri Lanka
 Swaziland
 Tanzania
 Tonga
 Trinidad and Tobago
 Tuvalu
 Uganda
 United Kingdom
 Vanuatu
 Zambia

Resident citizens of Zimbabwe, which withdrew from the Commonwealth in 2003, can also vote in UK parliamentary elections, as can resident citizens of Fiji, which was suspended from the Commonwealth in 2009.

ENERGY AND CLIMATE CHANGE

Conditions of Employment

Mr Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change how many staff were retained on zero-hour contracts by (a) his Department and (b) the executive agencies and non-departmental public bodies for which he is responsible in (i) 2010-11, (ii) 2011-12 and (iii) 2012-13; and if he will make a statement. [160767]

Gregory Barker: DECC has not employed staff on zero-hour contracts during the period outlined.

This information is not held by the Department in respect of non-departmental public bodies.

Disciplinary Proceedings

Mr Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change how many staff were suspended from his Department and its associated public bodies on full pay in (a) 2010-11, (b) 2011-12 and (c) 2012-13; and what costs were incurred as a result of such suspensions. [160412]

Gregory Barker: We are unable to supply full details of suspensions, as authority to suspend staff is delegated to line managers in some circumstances and no central record is maintained.

This information is not held by the Department of Energy and Climate Change in respect of non-departmental public bodies.

Energy: Barnsley

Dan Jarvis: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change what estimate he has made of the average proportion of household expenditure on energy bills in (a) Barnsley and (b) Barnsley Central constituency in the latest period for which figures are available. [160553]

Gregory Barker: The latest available data cover the years 2009-11, which shows that during this period the average proportion of expenditure on electricity, gas and other fuels in Yorkshire and Humber, was 4.9%. This compares with 4.6% for the UK as a whole.

These data are from the Living Costs and Food Survey, run by the Office for National Statistics (ONS). Data from this survey are not available at a lower level than that of regions. Therefore data for Barnsley and Barnsley Central constituency are not available.

Energy: Meters

Chris Ruane: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change what recent progress has been made on the introduction of smart meters into every home in the UK. [160565]

Gregory Barker: Joint working by DECC, the energy industry and stakeholders during the Foundation Stage of the Smart Metering Implementation programme has enabled good progress to be made. This includes:

the process for procuring smart metering data and communications services, with bidders currently in the invitation to submit final tenders phase;

the process for procuring the Data and Communications Company (DCC) licence holder, with bidders currently in the best and final offers phase;

completion of the first and second EU notification of the technical specifications for smart gas and electricity meters and in-home displays (IHDs);

establishment of the high level regulatory framework for roll-out, including regulations focused on consumer engagement and protection.

We expect energy suppliers to be ready to start their full scale roll-out by autumn 2015, with mass roll-out of smart meters completed by the end of 2020.

Chris Ruane: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change what enforcement measures are in place if a householder refuses to allow an energy company into the property to install a smart meter. [160654]

Michael Fallon: Energy companies will be required to install smart meters and take all reasonable steps to reach everyone. However, we do not expect energy companies to take legal action to fit a smart meter if they cannot get the householder's co-operation.

Energy: Prices

Miss McIntosh: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change what recent assessment he has made of trends on energy prices; and if he will make a statement. [160441]

Michael Fallon: In the publication 'Estimated impacts of energy and climate change policies on energy prices and bills' (March 2013) DECC presented recent trends in wholesale and retail energy prices. This is available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/estimated-impacts-of-energy-and-climate-change-policies-on-energy-prices-and-bills>

Retail energy prices are published on both a monthly and annual basis by the Office for National Statistics, as part of their retail price index series. These data are then republished by DECC in our Quarterly Energy Prices publication. The data can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/monthly-domestic-energy-price-stastics>

The Government is helping households keep their energy bills down through our proposals to get consumers onto the cheapest tariffs and provision of nearly £1 million for the Big Energy Saving Network, the Green Deal and the Warm Home Discount which provides support to the most vulnerable consumers.

Green Deal Scheme: Wales

Chris Ruane: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change how many Green Deal (a) assessors, (b) providers and (c) installers are located in Wales. [160156]

Gregory Barker: The Green Deal Participant Register, with addresses of head offices for assessors, providers and installers, is made publically available by the Green Deal Oversight and Regulation Body (ORB). However the location of head office does not necessarily indicate where organisations operate. The consumer search tool on the ORB website:

<http://www.greendealorb.co.uk/find-a-green-deal-supplier/advanced>

allows you to search for assessors, providers and installers that operate in Wales.

Ministerial Policy Advisers

John Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change how many advisors who had previously worked at (a) British Gas, (b) EDF, (c) npower, (d) Scottish Power, (e) SSE and (f) E.ON have been engaged by his Department in each year since 2010. [160739]

Gregory Barker: Details of previous employers are held on individual staff files and are not held electronically. DECC would incur disproportionate costs in order to obtain the information requested.

Solar Power

Caroline Lucas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change with reference to his contribution of 24 May 2012, *Official Report*, column 1308, on feed-in tariffs scheme, and pursuant to his answer of 6 June 2013, *Official Report*, column 1650, on green investment, what his most recent estimate is of when solar PV will reach grid parity; what plans he has to mitigate the negative effect of EU import tariffs on the UK solar industry and associated businesses; if he will (a) run a public campaign in summer 2013 to highlight the benefits of solar panels to householders and businesses and (b) carry out a review of feed-in tariff (FIT) support and capacity triggers for non-domestic FIT bands for solar PV over 250 kilowatt; and if he will make a statement. [R] [160506]

Gregory Barker: The Department has not made an estimate of when solar PV will reach grid parity.

I have been working with the Solar Trade Association (STA) and the British Photovoltaic Association (BPVA) to ensure that the UK's opposition to potential EU import tariffs is clearly heard. I have urged my counterparts in other member states to oppose the European Commission's proposals. Last month I led a delegation comprising the STA, BPVA and solar companies to Brussels to ensure that the Commission is fully aware of the UK's position and to provide evidence supporting our arguments.

We have no plans for a Government-led campaign on solar PV, but we will co-operate fully with any industry-led campaign.

We have recently completed the first comprehensive review of the feed-in tariff scheme. When I announced the policy in the House on 24 May 2012, *Official Report*, columns 1303-11, I made clear that large-scale deployment of solar will only be achieved if costs come down. There is no plan to review tariffs or the degression policy for any of the technologies supported by the FITs scheme at this time.

HEALTH

Alcoholic Drinks: Young People

Ms Abbott: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many people under 18 years of age in each (a) socio-economic and (b) gender group were admitted to hospital with suspected alcohol-induced conditions in (i) 2013 to date and (ii) each of the last three years. [160071]

Anna Soubry: The following table contains the sum of the estimated alcohol-related admissions, using attributable fractions for those aged under 18 years by socio-economic group and by gender for the years 2009-10 to 2011-12 and April 2012 to February 2013. It should be noted that data from April 2012 are provisional.

Alcohol attributable fractions do not provide a count of episodes with an alcohol related diagnosis or cause code but rather an estimate of the numbers based on the proportion of diseases and injuries that can be wholly or partially attributed to alcohol.

The attributable fractions are not applicable to children under 16. Therefore figures for this age group relate only to wholly-attributable admissions, where the attributable fraction is one.

It should be noted that these data should not be described as a count of people as the same person may have been admitted on more than one occasion.

Sum of alcohol attributable fractions¹ for hospital admissions for people aged 17 and under by (a) socio-economic group² and (b) by gender for the years 2009-10 to 2011-12 and April 2012 to February 2013³: Activity in English NHS Hospitals and English NHS commissioned activity in the independent sector

	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	Provisional April 2012 to February 2013 ⁴
<i>Socio-economic group</i>				
Least deprived 10%	778	754	710	630
Less deprived 10% to 20%	892	843	795	671
Less deprived 20% to 30%	903	894	869	737
Less deprived 30% to 40%	958	916	885	701
Less deprived 40% to 50%	1,037	986	984	830
More deprived 40% to 50%	1,197	1,172	1,072	869
More deprived 30% to 40%	1,346	1,325	1,171	851
More deprived 20% to 30%	1,595	1,468	1,349	1,093
More deprived 10% to 20%	1,852	1,669	1,583	1,181
Most deprived 10%	2,126	2,165	1,784	1,458
Unknown	147	139	102	93
<i>Gender</i>				
Male	5,838	5,563	5,089	3,846
Female	6,993	6,769	6,217	5,268

¹ Alcohol-related admissions

The number of alcohol-related admissions is based on the methodology developed by the North West Public Health Observatory (NWPHO), which uses 48 indicators for alcohol-related illnesses, determining the proportion of a wide range of diseases and injuries that can be partly attributed to alcohol as well as those that are, by definition, wholly attributable to alcohol. Further information on these proportions can be found at:

www.nwph.net/nwpho/publications/AlcoholAttributableFractions.pdf

The application of the NWPHO methodology has recently been updated and is now available directly from HES. As such, information about episodes estimated to be alcohol related may be slightly different from previously published data.

² Socio-economic group

The socio-economic group used is derived from the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD). IMD is a measure of multiple deprivation which ranks the relative deprivation of each area of England in a number of domains (such as crime and income) and then combines the individual scores to produce a composite score for each area. The patient's residential postcode is then mapped to one of these areas, and summarised into 10 groups for presentation.

The version of IMD used is appropriate to the years published, 2009-10 data use IMD the 2007 version, while later years use the 2010 version. For further details see:

www.gov.uk/government/publications/english-indices-of-deprivation-2010 for further details.

³ Assessing growth through time

HES figures are available from 1989-90 onwards. Changes to the figures over time need to be interpreted in the context of improvements in data quality and coverage (particularly in earlier years), improvements in coverage of independent sector activity (particularly from 2006-07) and changes in NHS practice. For example, apparent reductions in activity may be due to a number of procedures which may now be undertaken in out-patient settings and so no longer include in admitted patient HES data.

⁴ Provisional data

The data are provisional and may be incomplete or contain errors for which no adjustments have yet been made. Counts produced from provisional data are likely to be lower than those generated for the same period in the final dataset. This shortfall will be most pronounced in the final month of the latest period, i.e. November from the (month 9) April to November extract. It is also probable that clinical data are not complete, which may in particular affect the last two months of any given period. There may also be errors due to coding inconsistencies that have not yet been investigated and corrected.

Source:

Hospital Episode Statistics (HES), Health and Social Care Information Centre

Health: Research

Ms Abbott: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment he has made of the effects on the Public Health Responsibility Deal of the findings of research carried out by the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, which found that in order for such voluntary agreements to be effective they need to include robust independent monitoring and substantial disincentives for non-participation and sanctions for non-compliance. [160129]

Anna Soubry: The Department's Research and Development Directorate has commissioned leading researchers from the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine to conduct an independent evaluation of the Public Health Responsibility Deal. The evaluation comprises two parts—the scoping study and the main evaluation.

The Health Policy journal article, a copy of which has been placed in the Library, reports on the findings of a scoping review on voluntary agreements. It found that voluntary agreements, if properly implemented and monitored, can be an effective policy approach. The review findings will help inform the main evaluation which is currently under way. The evaluation will include formative research to help further develop the Responsibility Deal.

Muscular Dystrophy

Caroline Lucas: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what progress has been made by NHS South on ensuring the long-term future of the neuromuscular care pathway co-ordinator and patient advocate post for the South East Coast region; and if he will make a statement. [160042]

Sir Roger Gale: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what progress has been made by NHS South to secure the long-term future of the neuromuscular care pathway co-ordinator and patient advocate for the South Coast region; and if he will make a statement. [160371]

Norman Lamb: From April 2013 all services included within the Manual for Prescribed Specialised services are commissioned directly by NHS England. Services provided by Adult Neurosciences or Neurology Centres are included in the Manual and will be governed by the NHS England's national service specifications and include the role of a Regional Care Advisor embedded within the Centres. However, there remain critical interdependencies with other organisations and providers.

The Muscular Dystrophy Campaign is working with both NHS England and Clinical Commissioning Groups on developing the patient pathway across the South East Coast. A vehicle for supporting this is the new strategic clinical network, which has a remit to provide clinical expertise and guidance to all commissioners on the whole care pathway, to ensure that NHS outcomes are delivered.

The Care Pathway Coordinator post is employed by the Muscular Dystrophy Campaign. The former South East Coast Specialised Commissioning Group provided funding and oversight of this role, for a two year fixed

term period. The aim of the post was to deliver the improvement plan contained within 'Better Co-ordination: Better Care' which was published in the autumn of 2010. NHS England has confirmed that the national health service specifications for specialised neuromuscular care services now cover the navigation of unclear and fractured care pathways, thereby negating the need for separately funded care advisers.

NHS: Conditions of Employment

Shabana Mahmood: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether his Department has considered developing an NHS Staff Outcomes Framework for the purpose of improvement in the care and support provided to staff by the NHS as an employer; and if he will make a statement. [160036]

Dr Poulter: National health service trusts are responsible for the care and support they provide their staff. The Department has commissioned NHS Employers to support the NHS in implementing five high impact changes (HICs) to help them improve staff health and wellbeing. These HICs were developed following the 2009 Review NHS Health and Wellbeing which, the Department commissioned from occupational health specialist Dr Steve Boorman CBE.

As a result the Department has not considered developing an NHS Staff Outcomes Framework for the purpose of improvement in the care and support provided to staff by the NHS as an employer. The purpose of the Outcomes Frameworks for the NHS, adult social care and public health is to focus on key measures for improving patient and client experience of these services.

The five HICs, which NHS Employers is supporting NHS trusts in implementing are: developing local evidence based improvement plans; with strong visible leadership; supported by improved management capability; with access to better, local, high quality accredited occupational health services; where staff are encouraged and enabled to take more responsibility for their health.

NHS Employers current main efforts to support NHS trusts implement the five HICs include: the identification; production, promotion and mobilisation of good practice; supporting more than 100 trusts, with most to "gain from reducing their sickness absence rates; developing performance in parts of the NHS with particular challenges e.g. mental health trusts; supporting the development of occupational health services and developing good practice on staff engagement.

Official Hospitality

Ms Abbott: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much his Department has spent on refreshments since January 2013. [159968]

Dr Poulter: The Department's policy is not to provide refreshments for internal meetings. These costs include the provision of refreshments for external meetings and visitors hosted in the Department's buildings. The Department has spent £119,808 (including VAT) on these types of refreshments since January 2013. The average monthly spending on refreshments has fallen from £78,131.55 in 2009-10 to £15,705.50 in the first two months of this financial year.

Speech and Language Disorders

Stephen McPartland: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans he has to ensure that augmentative and alternative communication services are appropriately commissioned by NHS England. [160455]

Norman Lamb: NHS England is committed to ensuring national consistent commissioning of high quality, equitable and effective specialised services for our patients. The specialised services that fall within the direct commissioning of NHS England were agreed by Ministers in September 2012.

From 1 April, NHS England became responsible for the direct commissioning of specialised assessment and provision of Augmentative and Assistive Communication Aids (AAC) for Adults, Children and Young People.

Prior to 1 April, there was no national commissioning of AAC services. There was no standard or nationally consistent definition of those services that were the commissioning and funding responsibility of the national health service. The effect of this was variation in how organisations commissioned and funded specialised AAC services and inequitable access to AAC services. There was a mix of non NHS commissioning agencies including social care and education sector, charity and third sector funding agencies who were commissioning the assessment and provision of specialised AAC aids.

From 1 April 2013, specialised AAC assessment and provision is commissioned nationally by NHS England. A single NHS contract with specialised providers of AAC services will be held by one of 10 Area Teams (ATs). ATs will lead the contract and performance management of providers in their area for all specialised services for all patients in England, using a single national set of service specifications, standards, policies and quality measures.

Strokes

Helen Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what steps he is taking to increase access for patients in stroke units to psychological services; and if he will make a statement; [160483]

(2) what estimate he has made of the potential health and economic benefits of investment in psychological services for stroke survivors and the potential effect on rates of (a) cardiovascular disease and (b) mental health problems. [160484]

Anna Soubry: NHS England has responsibility for stroke services.

The Cardiovascular Disease (CVD) Outcomes Strategy sets out that stroke services which incorporate psychological care deliver best outcomes for people who have had a stroke. There are also National Stroke Strategy recommendations and evidence based national guidance that patients should be routinely screened for mood and cognition after their stroke, and these recommendations are included in the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence quality standard on stroke.

NHS Improving Quality will support Strategic Clinical Networks to implement the quality outcomes in the National Stroke Strategy and the CVD Outcomes Strategy.

These include the delivery of psychological services where appropriate to patients who have suffered from a stroke.

The CVD Outcomes Strategy also considers the economic benefits of investment in psychological services for CVD patients.

The CVD Outcomes Strategy sets out key actions for commissioners and providers to improve outcomes in stroke and other CVDs and challenges the national health service to bring CVD outcomes up to the level of the best of the rest of the world.

Surgery

Mr Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what his policy is on the publication of surgeons' performance data; and if he will make a statement. [160594]

Dr Poulter: NHS England is committed to building a modern health and care data service through the care data programme, which will provide timely, accurate data linked across the different components of the patient journey and the outcomes resulting from treatment. This underpins the rights and pledges set out in the NHS Constitution, including the right to choose the most appropriate provider and setting of care. Part of this will include the NHS England's planning document "Everyone Counts: Planning for patients 2013/14" offer of publishing consultant level quality and outcomes information for 10 key specialties by summer 2013.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE

Bahrain

Katy Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of the Bahrain Youth Society for Human Rights' report *Protesters in Bahrain Behind Bars*; and if he will make a statement. [160085]

Alistair Burt: I have not seen the report. The Bahrain Youth Society is an unregistered non-governmental organisation in Bahrain, and its credibility is untested.

Katy Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of the conviction of Mohammed Mirza in Bahrain and his subsequent treatment in detention. [160086]

Alistair Burt: We are not aware of the case of Mohammed Mirza.

Chemical Weapons Convention

Stephen Phillips: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent assessment he has made of the efficacy of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons in implementing the Chemical Weapons Convention. [160159]

Alistair Burt: Since it was established in 1997, the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) has verifiably destroyed 78.57% of the world's declared stockpile of 71,196 metric tonnes of chemical

agent; conducted 5,076 inspections on the territory of 86 States Parties; verified 100% of the declared chemical weapons stockpiles; and declared 100% of the chemical weapons production facilities as inactive.

The United Kingdom continues to attach great importance to the OPCW and the role that it plays in the implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention.

Mali

Lindsay Roy: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of the current political situation in Mali; and if he will make a statement. [160196]

Mark Simmonds: As the French and African-led military operation in Mali comes to an end and a UN Peacekeeping Operation prepares to deploy, a political settlement between north and south is needed to ensure long-term stability. Progress has been slow but steady. Burkina Faso, the lead mediators for the Economic Community of West African States, with the support of the international community, is currently brokering negotiations between the Malian transitional authorities and representatives of non-terrorist armed groups (including the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad—MNLA). The UK position has been clear throughout: the impasse over the MNLA's continued control of the northern city of Kidal must be solved through dialogue. We are hopeful that an inclusive political settlement, which recognises the territorial integrity of Mali, will soon be reached. This will represent a major step towards a sustainable peace agreement, which will enable national presidential elections to be held on 28 July, and provide the start to a long-term solution to the challenges facing Mali. Another important factor will be the work of the newly-created National Commission for Dialogue and Reconciliation.

Occupied Territories

Jeremy Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs pursuant to the answer of 3 June 2013, *Official Report*, column 862W, on Occupied Territories, what assessment he has made of the level of indirect finance provided by the Government to Israeli settlements through procurement, tax benefits or participation in bilateral programmes since 2005; and what assistance is planned for the future. [160211]

Alistair Burt: I refer the hon. Member to my answer of 3 June 2013, *Official Report*, column 862W. Due to the complexity and cost to the taxpayer, we have not made an assessment of possible indirect finance through the cited mechanisms since 2005.

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office has no assistance planned for indirect finance of Israel settlements.

Jeremy Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs pursuant to the answer of 3 June 2013, *Official Report*, column 862W, on Occupied Territories, whether he has obtained legal advice on the due diligence required of the Government to avoid breaching international law through aiding and assisting illegal Israeli settlements by indirect payments via procurement, tax benefits or bilateral programmes. [160212]

Alistair Burt: Our position on Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territories is clear: They are illegal under international law, an obstacle to peace and make a two-state solution, with Jerusalem as a shared capital, harder to achieve. The British Government ensures it acts in accordance with our international law obligations, but as the hon. Member will appreciate, in accordance with long-standing convention followed by successive governments, I am not able to comment on legal advice to Ministers.

Swaziland

James Duddridge: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of preparations for the forthcoming elections in Swaziland. [159780]

Mark Simmonds: We are deeply concerned about reduced freedom of political expression and increasing human rights violations in Swaziland, ahead of scheduled elections due to take place in the autumn. We also remain concerned about the continued refusal by the Government of Swaziland to engage in a genuine process of national dialogue about the role of political parties ahead of the elections. As I made clear in my reply to my hon. Friend's question on 30 October 2012, *Official Report*, column 142, the UK continues to urge for all political parties to be allowed to operate freely and participate in the forthcoming elections.

Tanzania

Paul Farrelly: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received from UK investors regarding the current environment for foreign investment in Tanzania. [159829]

Mark Simmonds: UK investors have raised a number of challenges to doing business in Tanzania, including corruption, the weak legal and regulatory environment, and bureaucratic obstacles. We are committed to working to support the Government of Tanzania's efforts to address them, including through programmes run by the Department for International Development. I met representatives of UK businesses for discussion of the issues on my visit to Tanzania in March 2013.

Ukraine

Pauline Latham: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make it his policy to work with the International Court of Justice to recognise the Ukrainian holodomor as genocide. [160595]

Mr Lidington: As I said during a Westminster Hall debate on 11 June 2013, *Official Report*, columns 25-30WH, Government policy is that recognition of genocides should be a matter for judicial decision and so it should be for judges, rather than Governments or non-judicial bodies, to make a designation of genocide. Such decisions should be based on a credible judicial process, and the courts are best placed to judge what are essentially criminal matters.

The British Government will not forget or overlook what happened, and we will continue to demonstrate our solidarity with the people of Ukraine in remembering this tragedy.

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Anti-Slavery Day

Angie Bray: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what plans she and Ministers in her Department have to mark Anti Slavery Day on 18 October 2013; and if she will take steps to ensure that Ministers and officials in her Department are offered opportunities to be involved in various events organised by her Department, local authorities and non-governmental organisations. [160557]

Justine Greening: DFID takes slavery and human trafficking very seriously. The Department will look carefully at ministerial and official activities to mark world slavery day.

Developing Countries: Food

Caroline Lucas: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what assessment she has made of the representations sent to the Prime Minister on 3 June 2013 from (a) African civil society organisations and the Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa and (b) the Coalition of UK Campaign Groups, regarding their concerns that the G8's New Alliance for Food Security and Nutrition poses dangers to smallholder farmers and efforts to combat hunger in Africa, undermines the work of the UN Committee on Food Security and should be rejected in favour of alternative strategies to protect sustainable agricultural techniques already in development across Africa which puts food security before profits; and if she will make a statement. [160218]

Justine Greening: The UK Government believes the New Alliance can make an important contribution to tackling the underlying causes of poverty and hunger in Africa. Promoting growth in African agriculture is critical in many countries to create jobs in rural areas, raise smallholder farmer incomes and to increase the availability and affordability of nutritious food. The New Alliance for Food Security and Nutrition is a joint initiative involving African governments, African and global companies, donors and civil society organisations aimed at accelerating agriculture sector growth. Its topline goal is to lift 50 million out of poverty in Africa by 2022, by promoting increased responsible investment in African agriculture by smallholder farmers as well as small and large agribusinesses.

Developing Countries: Poliomyelitis

Mr Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development (1) what recent discussions she has had on the eradication of polio; [160267]

(2) what support her Department is offering the Global Polio Eradication Initiative. [160268]

Lynne Featherstone: DFID has been a long-standing contributor to the polio eradication effort and remains deeply committed to this goal. The Minister of State, the right hon. Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr Duncan), represented the UK at the Global Vaccine Summit in Abu Dhabi on 24-25 April 2013 where he announced a commitment of up to £300 million over six years for global polio eradication. DFID Ministers and officials are in frequent contact with Global Polio Eradication Initiative (GPEI) staff, and other stakeholders. A large proportion of the UK's £300 million commitment will be channelled through GPEI.

Mr Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development if she will support the Global Polio Eradication Initiative by helping to enhance coordination between civilian and security services in target countries to (a) better inform the programme's local risk assessments and (b) provide security and protection of vaccinators and the programme's facilities. [160269]

Lynne Featherstone: DFID supports the Global Polio Eradication Initiative's 2013-18 Polio Eradication and Endgame Strategic Plan. DFID staff were involved in its development, and will monitor its implementation. The Plan has been designed to take specific operational challenges including security into account, and recognises the importance of mitigating and addressing the risks that the GPEI faces.

Mr Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development if she will support the Global Polio Eradication Initiative by encouraging local demand for vaccinations by facilitating awareness-promotion programmes in target countries. [160270]

Lynne Featherstone: DFID supports the Global Polio Eradication Initiative's (GPEI) 2013-18 Polio Eradication and Endgame Strategic Plan. The Plan sets out a clear strategy to build demand for all vaccinations and to strengthen routine immunisation as well as polio vaccinations. It will be important to successful implementation of the strategy for GPEI and all partners, including country Governments, to improve communications and advocacy around best practice and lessons learned especially to build the acceptability of vaccinations in general among local communities. DFID staff were involved in the Plan's development and will monitor its implementation.

Mr Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development if she will support the Global Polio Eradication Initiative by encouraging international, national and local Islamic leaders in (a) Pakistan and (b) Nigeria to promote the importance of polio eradication and the neutrality of health workers. [160271]

Lynne Featherstone: DFID recognises the important role for Islamic leaders in supporting the eradication of polio, including those activities that the Global Polio Eradication Initiative (GPEI) is undertaking. GPEI's Islamic Advisory Council is a new forum set up to discuss ways in which Islamic leadership can help communities to ensure protection for all Muslim children in both countries. The UK supports this initiative.

Disciplinary Proceedings

Mr Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development how many staff were suspended from her Department and its associated public body on full pay in (a) 2010-11, (b) 2011-12 and (c) 2012-13; and what costs were incurred as a result of such suspensions. [160419]

Justine Greening: Information on the total number of staff (Home civil servants or staff appointed in country) suspended from DFID on full pay for the financial years 2010-11, 2011-12 and 2012-13 is provided in the following table. Where the total number of staff concerned is fewer than five we are unable to provide more specific data as this could potentially identify the individuals involved and so breach confidentiality.

	<i>Number of staff suspended</i>
2010-11	1 ¹
2011-12	1 ¹
2012-13	8

¹ Under five.

All suspensions were on full pay for the period of the suspension and no additional costs were incurred.

Iran

Jonathan Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what representations she has made to the Iranian Government about its commitments under Article 3 of the 1958 Convention concerning Discrimination in Respect of Employment and Occupation and its treatment of the Baha'i community. [160442]

Alistair Burt: I have been asked to reply on behalf of the Department for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs.

Despite being a signatory to the 1958 Convention in Respect of Employment and Occupation and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the Iranian regime systematically excludes Baha'is from economic and social participation and higher education. I have repeatedly expressed publicly my concern at the treatment of the Baha'i; and called on Iran to stop their persecution, and abide by its international obligations. I did this most recently on 14 May when I accepted an interfaith delegation's letter on the Baha'i and in the House of Commons on 18 June. We will continue to monitor closely the situation of the Baha'i in Iran and to condemn any violations of their rights.

St Helena

Andrew Rosindell: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development how many endemic invertebrate species will be affected by the St Helena airport project; and which of such species have global populations which are entirely located within the confines of the airport development area. [160136]

Lynne Featherstone: It is estimated that 54 endemic invertebrate species occur in the eastern arid area of St Helena, which includes Prosperous Bay Plain where the airport runway and terminal complex are to be

located. 15 of these species are likely to be directly affected by the airport project, but only one species, the beetle *Homoeodera scolytoides*, has its known global population exclusively within the construction footprint of the airport.

Vietnam

Angie Bray: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development (1) what plans she has to enable established non-governmental organisations in Vietnam to support victims of human trafficking returning to their country of origin from the UK with accommodation, education and training; [160555]

(2) if she will consider funding a network of non-governmental organisations in Vietnam to provide accommodation, education and training for victims of human trafficking returning to their country of origin from the UK. [160556]

Lynne Featherstone: Through the Returns and Reintegration Fund (RRF), DFID provides financial support to two non-governmental organisations to implement pilot projects to support Vietnamese returnees, including those from the UK. The forms of support include assistance with accommodation, training, and some basic skills to help them better integrate back in to society after their return. This effort is being led by the British embassy in Vietnam.

Though DFID bilateral aid programme in Vietnam does not have any existing or planned programme to directly support such activity, we do however provide funds specifically targeted at supporting the gender work of United Nations (UN) agencies, especially UN Women. The focus of those activities is on ensuring the effective implementation of Vietnam's gender equality law and law on domestic violence, which will consequently help reduce women trafficking and other abuses.

CABINET OFFICE

Government Contracts

8. **Mr Spellar:** To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office what steps he is taking to assist British firms to secure Government contracts. [160381]

Miss Chloe Smith: The Government is providing industry with visibility of up to £79 billion of potential procurement opportunities across 18 sectors by publishing pipelines of future demand, meaning that British firms will be in a good position to gear up in order to deliver Government's needs.

In addition, we are working with businesses to identify and address any key capabilities needed to meet future demand; actively helping them to remove barriers; and supporting growth through additional benefits that boost exports and drive innovation.

13. **Jeremy Lefroy:** To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office what recent steps he has taken to give small- and medium-sized enterprises greater access to Government contracts. [160387]

Miss Chloe Smith: It is this Government's policy to increase the Government's direct spend with SMEs to 25% and spend with SMEs across Government has steadily increased since 2010 as a result of the steps we have taken. We have required all Departments to put in place plans to ensure that their spend with small companies continues to increase.

Civil Service: Diversity

9. **Nia Griffith:** To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office what steps he is taking to increase diversity in the civil service. [160382]

Mr Maude: To win the global race we need world-class civil servants providing excellent services and the best possible value for the taxpayer. By recruiting on merit the civil service can draw its pool of talent from a wide range of backgrounds.

The civil service is already diverse and the majority of staff are women. I am working with senior officials to improve talent management to ensure the most effective and capable can get to the top.

Charity Commission

10. **Helen Jones:** To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office what recent discussions he has had on the work of the Charity Commission. [160383]

Mr Hurd: I discuss, the important work of the Charity Commission regularly with its chair, William Shawcross. Our most recent meeting took place last week.

Charitable Organisations: Financial Prospects

11. **Sarah Champion:** To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office what discussions he has had with the heads of charitable organisations on their financial prospects in the next 12 months. [160385]

Mr Hurd: I have regular discussions with voluntary and community sector leaders and the outlook is mixed. The environment continues to be very tough but recent quarterly statistics from the Charity Commission shows charitable income has grown by 4.4% in the year to March.

Official Statistics also suggest that giving of money is stable and volunteering has grown. Finally, a new pillar of funding for the sector—social investment—is showing encouraging signs of growth.

Public Sector Pay Cap

12. **Mr Raab:** To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office what steps he is taking to ensure compliance with the pay cap in the public sector. [160386]

Mr Maude: I instructed my officials to provide Departments with guidance on the application of the 1% pay cap at the time of the Chancellor's announcement and to monitor the application of Government pay policy in Departments.

We have worked to ensure Departments consistently apply public sector pay policy for their work force and I can confirm that the policy is being applied across the civil service.

Efficiency and Reform Group

14. Rehman Chishti: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office what savings to the public purse have resulted from the work of his Department's efficiency and reform group to date. [160388]

Miss Chloe Smith: In May 2010 this Government inherited the biggest fiscal deficit of any developed country as a proportion of GDP. We took swift action to address inherited levels of waste and inefficiency. As a result:

In 2010-11 the Government reported savings of £3.75 billion.

In 2011-12 the Government built on this success delivering savings totalling £5.5 billion.

And only this month the Minister for the Cabinet Office and Paymaster General, my right hon. Friend the Member for Horsham (Mr Maude), was able to report savings totalling £10 billion, which were made in 2012-13. This is 25% over our £8 billion target.

Big Society Network

Mr Thomas: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office pursuant to the answer of 3 June 2013, *Official Report*, columns 956-7W, on Big Society Network, what the purpose was of each grant or contract the Big Society Network and its subsidiaries received; what evaluation has been concluded as to whether the objectives behind each contract and grant have been achieved; he will make a statement. [158794]

Mr Hurd [*holding answer 10 June 2013*]: Grant agreements and contracts were made with Big Society Network and the funding was paid to their charitable arm, the Society Network Foundation.

In 2012, £199,900 of the allocated £299,800 in grant funding was paid to the Society Network Foundation to deliver the 'Get In' campaign, which aims to increase children's fitness levels through physical activity and uses volunteers as a means to achieve this. In accordance with Social Investment Business' standard process, Society Network Foundation were required to submit three pieces of evidence to demonstrate satisfactory progress against their objectives—management accounts, confirmation of monies spent in accordance with the grant agreement and progress against expected outcomes.

A decision was made to put the project on hold in December 2012 as, despite considerable activity, they had not yet achieved enough progress against stated objectives. No further part of the allocated grant was paid. The Cabinet Office has now taken the decision to end support for this project, giving priority to other social action.

In 2012-13, £350,000 was paid to Society Network Foundation for the delivery of aspects of the Big Society Awards and promotion of the Big Society. Objectives under this grant agreement were achieved.

In 2012-13, a contract for £12,000 of services relating to the Giving Summit was awarded. Objectives under this contract were achieved.

In the current financial year the Cabinet Office has awarded grant funding of £150,000 to the Society Network Foundation for delivery of aspects of the Big Society Awards. The first performance report under this grant agreement is not yet due.

Charities

Dan Jarvis: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office how many registered charities there are in (a) Barnsley Central, (b) South Yorkshire and (c) England. [160550]

Mr Hurd: The information requested falls within the responsibility of the Charity Commission. I have asked the Commission's chief executive to reply.

Letter from Sam Younger, dated 18 June 2013:

I have been asked to reply to your Parliamentary Question asking how many charities there are in Barnsley Central, South Yorkshire and England respectively.

There are 140 charities registered in Barnsley Central and 2,256 in South Yorkshire.

The Charity Commission is the regulator for charities in England and Wales, in total there are 163,083 charities on the register. We estimate that approximately 7,800 of these have correspondence addresses in Wales, the remaining will have correspondence addresses in England.

Dan Jarvis: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office what plans he has to make the Charity Commission refer applications to become charities to HM Revenue and Customs before organisations are accepted onto the register. [160551]

Mr Hurd: All charities that wish to benefit from UK charity and donor tax exemptions and reliefs must apply to HM Revenue and Customs.

The Charity Commission and HM Revenue and Customs are considering better ways to share information and work together to tackle abuse of charity—such as a single point of submission for applications to HMRC and the Charity Commission, recommended by Lord Hodgson in his report on his review of the Charities Act 2006.

Dan Jarvis: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office on how many occasions the Charity Commission has passed information to law enforcement authorities which has led to a prosecution in each year since 2010. [160554]

Mr Hurd: The information requested falls within the responsibility of the Charity Commission, have asked the Commission's chief executive to reply.

Letter from Sam Younger, dated 18 June 2013:

I have been asked to reply to your Parliamentary Question on how many occasions the Charity Commission has passed information to law enforcement authorities which has led to a prosecution in each year since 2010.

The following refers to the number of times we have passed information to law enforcement agencies such as the police, but also including the National Fraud Intelligence Bureau, HMRC and others, in each year since 2010.

2010/11: 832

2011/12: 735

2012/13: 1,164

2013/14: 258 (since April 1)

As a non-prosecuting authority we do not hold figures for prosecutions, the police hold these. A manual search has shown that, over the past three years, we have also made over 30 referrals about suspected serious criminal activity connected to charities to the police and other law enforcement agencies. Our staff have also provided over 100 police witness statements. For example, in July

2012 Tyrone Pooley, a former charity trustee of the charity Fund for the Blind and Partially Sighted (now removed from our register) was convicted of charges of theft and supplying false/misleading information to the Commission as a result of our referral to the police.

We have further examples of action we have taken that has led to prosecutions in our annual report that will be laid before Parliament ahead of recess. You will receive a copy of this report, which will also be made available on our website:

www.charitycommission.gov.uk

ICT

Mr Thomas: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office how many (a) computers, (b) mobile telephones, (c) BlackBerrys and (d) other pieces of IT equipment were lost or stolen from his Department in (i) 2010-11, (ii) 2011-12 and (iii) 2012-13; and if he will make a statement. [156420]

Mr Hurd: As was the case under the previous Administration, there are occasional incidents where equipment is reported lost or stolen. Staff are required to report such incidents, and cases are investigated. Laptops which will hold sensitive equipment are encrypted and mobile phones disabled as soon as an incident is reported.

It is not possible to make a like-for-like comparison for the period covered by this question because there has been a substantial increase in the number of mobile phones and laptops issued to staff and the Department has been affected by various machinery of government changes.

Details of items for the Cabinet Office are as follows:

Items	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13
Computers/ laptops	1	9	15
Mobile phones/ BlackBerrys	5	28	59
Other IT equipment	0	2	10

Ministerial Policy Advisers

John Robertson: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office how many advisers who had previously worked at (a) British Gas, (b) EDF, (c) npower, (d) Scottish Power, (e) SSE and (f) E.ON have been engaged by the Prime Minister's Office in each year since 2010. [160742]

Mr Maude: The Prime Minister's Office is an integral part of Cabinet Office. The information requested is not held centrally.

PRIME MINISTER

ICT

Mr Thomas: To ask the Prime Minister how many (a) computers, (b) mobile telephones, (c) BlackBerrys and (d) other pieces of IT equipment were lost or stolen from No. 10 Downing Street in (i) 2010-11, (ii) 2011-12 and (iii) 2012-13; and if he will make a statement. [156433]

Mr Hurd: I have been asked to reply on behalf of the Cabinet Office.

As was the case under the previous Administration, there are occasional incidents where equipment is reported lost or stolen. Staff are required to report such incidents, and cases are investigated. Laptops which will hold sensitive equipment are encrypted and mobile phones disabled as soon as an incident is reported.

It is not possible to make a like-for-like comparison for the period covered by this question because there has been a substantial increase in the number of mobile phones and laptops issued to staff and the Department has been affected by various machinery of government changes.

Details of items for the Cabinet Office are as follows:

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