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**HOUSE OF COMMONS
OFFICIAL REPORT**

**PARLIAMENTARY
DEBATES**
(HANSARD)

Monday 25 March 2013

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House of Commons

Monday 25 March 2013

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

HOME DEPARTMENT

The Secretary of State was asked—

Human Trafficking

1. **Fiona Bruce** (Congleton) (Con): If she will bring forward legislative proposals to introduce a modern slavery act. [149407]

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mrs Theresa May): The Government have a strong record on tackling the appalling crime of human trafficking. We have a clear strategy, robust legislation, good-quality support for victims, and strong enforcement against offenders, both in country and at the border. We are also working closely with our international partners to tackle the problem at source. Today is the 206th anniversary of the Act for the abolition of the slave trade, as well as the international day of remembrance for the victims of slavery, and it is entirely right that my hon. Friend reminds us of the issue today. We must continue our efforts to eradicate human trafficking, which can indeed be seen as a form of modern-day slavery.

Fiona Bruce: I thank the Home Secretary for that reply. She has stated that fighting human trafficking is a Government priority, but with the number of victims found increasing month on month, what consideration has been given to a new initiative such as an independent commissioner?

Mrs May: I thank my hon. Friend for raising that issue, which has also been raised by others. The Government are not convinced of the need to introduce an independent commissioner and we have, we believe, a very effective inter-departmental ministerial group, chaired by my hon. Friend the Minister for Immigration. Crucially, that group includes not just representatives from Departments across Whitehall, but also from the devolved Administrations, and we believe that that is working well. It is necessary, however, to consider continually our effectiveness in this area, and we will keep the work of the inter-departmental ministerial group under review to ensure that it is carrying out the effective work that we want it to do.

Mr Peter Bone (Wellingborough) (Con): The Prime Minister has made ending modern-day slavery one of his top priorities. Does the Home Secretary welcome, as I do, the fact that he will open the hidden slavery in UK constituencies exhibition in the House of Commons on 22 April?

Mrs May: I am pleased at the excellent news that the Prime Minister will open the exhibition, and I congratulate my hon. Friend on his work in chairing the all-party group on human trafficking and on bringing forward that exhibition. I am sure that it will remind us not just of the hidden trafficking that exists in UK constituencies as a result of cross-border trafficking but also—unfortunately—of the fact that trafficking takes place within the United Kingdom.

Neighbourhood Policing

2. **Simon Hart** (Carmarthen West and South Pembrokeshire) (Con): What assessment she has made of the effectiveness of neighbourhood policing. [149408]

The Minister for Policing and Criminal Justice (Damian Green): We know that the public want a visible police presence, working with them to identify and tackle issues in their communities. Year on year the crime survey for England and Wales shows that that approach to policing is valued by the public, helping to build public confidence and bring crime down by 10%.

Simon Hart: For neighbourhood management to be really effective it requires the active involvement of other Departments such as those for health and housing. That works quite well in Dyfed-Powys, but is the Minister happy that it is working well everywhere else?

Damian Green: I agree with my hon. Friend that, for neighbourhood policing to be completely effective, it requires not just the police to work with others, but also with other Departments. My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary has written to chief constables and police and crime commissioners to emphasise that it is important, particularly in the field of mental health, for the police and the health service to work better together than they have in the past and to improve their response to that particularly vulnerable group of people. There is always more that we can do on that.

Mr David Lammy (Tottenham) (Lab): A few weeks ago the Mayor of London said that he would not close front-office counters in police stations unless he could replace them with a superior—or equivalent—service. Today he closed 63. Does the Home Secretary agree with the assessment of the *Daily Mail*, which a few weeks ago described the Mayor as “faintly ridiculous” and changing his mind “every five minutes”?

Damian Green: I understand that as part of the changes to the overall policing and crime power, which, as I am sure the right hon. Gentleman knows, is the responsibility of the Mayor’s Office for Policing and Crime, 2,600 officers will be redeployed from back offices into neighbourhood policing. There should therefore be more police on the streets of London than before, and I hope the right hon. Gentleman will join me in welcoming that.

Mike Freer (Finchley and Golders Green) (Con): The Mayor of London's redeployment of counter staff will lead to 74 additional bobbies on the beat in a borough such as Barnet. Does the Minister welcome that redeployment of officers on to the streets?

Damian Green: I do welcome that redeployment, and my hon. Friend is right to draw attention to it in his borough and other London boroughs. Getting effective neighbourhood and community policing is about officers rather than buildings.

Mr Gareth Thomas (Harrow West) (Lab/Co-op): Does the Minister believe that someone who is set to leave London with fewer police constables and fewer police community support officers in 2015 compared with 2010 is a suitable candidate for future Prime Minister?

Damian Green: As this is Home Office questions, I will stick to the Home Office's responsibilities, which include keeping our streets safe, which we are doing more effectively than ever before. Crime is down 10%, and it is down in the Metropolitan police area. I am sure the action the Mayor has taken today will make London's streets even safer in future.

Mr David Hanson (Delyn) (Lab): As my right hon. and hon. Friends have said, Boris Johnson, aided by Home Office cuts, is to close 50% of London's police stations, to lose 4,000 police constables and PCSOs, and to reduce police numbers in 17 of the 32 London boroughs. Will the Minister confirm that yesterday's interview on "The Andrew Marr Show", bad though it was, was the lesser of several evils the Mayor is inflicting on London?

Damian Green: I would have hoped that the shadow police Minister would have welcomed the fact that Metropolitan police crime figures are down by 3% in the past year, showing that the effective co-operation between the Home Office at national level and the Mayor's office at London level is making London's streets safer than ever before.

Foreign Nationals (Employment Status)

3. **Gordon Henderson** (Sittingbourne and Sheppey) (Con): What steps she is taking to record the employment status of foreign nationals who reside in the UK; and if she will make a statement. [149409]

The Minister for Immigration (Mr Mark Harper): We are rolling out biometric residence permits to non-European economic area nationals in the UK granted leave for more than six months to make it easier for them to prove their entitlement to live and work. From next year, all non-EEA nationals will require a biometric residence permit, and we expect employers to check a migrant's right to work prior to offering employment.

Gordon Henderson: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's answer, which I find encouraging, but will he explain how the success of that initiative can be monitored unless records are kept of where and by whom foreign workers are employed?

Mr Harper: I have two things to say to my hon. Friend. First, the sponsorship system provides a good mechanism for employers to track and record who is working for them when they come to fill skills shortages. Secondly, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions will, with the roll-out of universal credit, collect as a routine matter the nationality of those who claim benefits.

Pete Wishart (Perth and North Perthshire) (SNP): On the issue of foreign nationals and all others, is the Government's response simply determined by the rise and threat of the United Kingdom Independence party?

Mr Harper: No, not at all—the speech that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister made earlier today was informed by work that has been going on for a number of months in the cross-ministerial committee that I chair. It is a well thought-through policy area as we further tighten the immigration system. The hon. Gentleman will know that, since the Government came to power, we have reduced net migration to the UK by a third and will continue to reduce it.

David T. C. Davies (Monmouth) (Con): Does the Minister agree that the vast majority of people in this country will support his work and the emphasis in the Prime Minister's speech? Nevertheless, there is still a net increase in immigration of 160,000 every year. Will the Minister assure us that he will continue to do all he can to reduce that number further?

Mr Harper: My hon. Friend is right. We committed to reducing net migration from the unsustainable hundreds of thousands that it was under Labour to tens of thousands, which is much more sustainable. That is supported by the vast majority of British people, whomever they vote for. I am glad my hon. Friend also supports that policy.

Chris Bryant (Rhondda) (Lab): I wonder whether the Minister could help me to spot the difference. Currently regulations and Department for Work and Pensions guidance for jobcentres state that EU migrants cannot claim benefits after six months unless they are "genuinely seeking work, and have a reasonable chance of being engaged".

The Prime Minister today, in what is supposedly a new announcement, said that migrants can claim after six months only if they

"can prove not just that you are genuinely seeking employment...but also that you have a genuine chance of getting a job."

Is that not exactly the same? There is no difference at all—it is not a new announcement. How many people exactly does the Minister believe will be affected by this supposed change?

Mr Harper: The Prime Minister set out a number of changes today. The one the hon. Gentleman mentions ensures that there is a statutory presumption in the system, which does not exist today, that, after six months, people have to demonstrate that they are taking all possible steps to seek work and that they have a reasonable prospect of getting it. At the moment, there is no presumption that they must do so. That is a weakness in the system, which is why we will strengthen it.

UK Visas (Chinese Nationals)

4. Mr Robin Walker (Worcester) (Con): What steps she is taking to ensure that the UK's visa system helps tourists and business people from China to come to the UK without a loss of control over immigration. [R]

[149410]

The Minister for Immigration (Mr Mark Harper): Last year, the UK Border Agency processed almost 300,000 visa applications for Chinese nationals, with 97% of visas processed within 15 days. China is a priority market for the UK, and we want to support both tourists and business people coming to our country.

Mr Walker: Following on from the Worcestershire business delegation that I took to southern China late last year, as per my entry in the Register of Members' Financial Interests, in June we have a return delegation visiting Worcestershire from Nanning. While ensuring that we have proper immigration controls, may I encourage Ministers to do everything they can to facilitate business visits that can bring bilateral trade and investment?

Mr Harper: First, let me congratulate my hon. Friend on his personal contribution to increasing UK trade with China. He will want to know that there was an increase in visit visas issued to Chinese nationals of 6% last year. In December, my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary set out a range of improvements to the visa process, particularly to support business customers, and they will be implemented this year.

UK Border Agency

5. Lorely Burt (Solihull) (LD): What steps she is taking to improve the performance of the UK Border Agency. [149411]

The Minister for Immigration (Mr Mark Harper): We have taken a number of steps to improve the performance of the UK Border Agency. As the Prime Minister said earlier today in his speech, we face a big task of turning around the tanker that is the UK Border Agency, and we will be setting out the next stages of those reforms shortly.

Lorely Burt: My constituent, Pooja Ramchandani, has been waiting for more than a year for a decision on her application for further leave to remain. The UK Border Agency target is for 75% of applications to be resolved within four weeks, and it has attributed the delay to additional work caused by the Olympics. Can the Minister confirm when the Olympics will cease to be another excuse given to people such as my constituent, a single mother whose child has permission for leave to remain?

Mr Harper: My hon. Friend raises a specific case, and if she contacts my office afterwards, I will certainly look into it. Generally, on in-country performance, we have acknowledged that the UKBA was not delivering within its service standards in the past year. By the end of this month, however, it will be delivering the required performance standards in those cases, and I hope that that improvement will be sustained.

Keith Vaz (Leicester East) (Lab): May I welcome the helpful comments the Minister made in response to the publication today of the Home Affairs Committee's report, and his commitment to having a service that has the confidence of the British people? It is important that we discuss immigration in an open and transparent way, whether in the Prime Minister's speech this lunch time, or in last Friday's speech on bonds by the Deputy Prime Minister. Does he agree that we cannot implement the proposals unless the UK Border Agency is fit for purpose and we have cleared the backlog of a third of a million cases? Is it not time to take the agency back firmly under the control of Ministers?

Mr Harper: I thank the right hon. Gentleman both for his question and for his work in chairing the Home Affairs Committee. I see the Select Committee as a partner with the Government, challenging us and ensuring that we keep focusing and improving the agency's performance. Although it is an agency, I had not noticed in the past year any difference in the level of accountability that either he expects from me, as a result of its performance, or from this House, as is evidenced by these questions. However, I will reflect further on what he has to say.

Dr Julian Huppert (Cambridge) (LD): It is a pleasure to follow two excellent questions on the same issue. The Home Affairs Committee report on the UKBA published today has some astonishingly poor figures. In quarter 3 of 2012, 18% of tier 1 visas were processed within four weeks—astonishingly bad. I welcome the Minister's commitment to try and fix that. Does he agree that we cannot have a coherent, fair and credible immigration system when the agency is performing so atrociously?

Mr Harper: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his work on the Home Affairs Committee. I agree: the figures for quarter 3 last year were not good, and I acknowledged that in my answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Solihull (Lorely Burt). I am pleased to be able to say that by the end of this month, the UKBA will be making decisions for tier 1 visas and others within the service standards that it sets out to its customers, and which they have a right to expect.

Mr David Winnick (Walsall North) (Lab): Successive Ministers have come to the House of Commons and tried to defend the work of the UK Border Agency. Is the Minister aware that time and time again the agency admits, and has to admit, to a backlog of thousands of cases that have not been dealt with and that go back years—sometimes five, 10 or more? That is a shambles, and the sooner that is recognised by the Government, the better it will be.

Mr Harper: I would say two things to the hon. Gentleman. First, while the Minister for Policing and Criminal Justice was doing this job, and since I have been doing it, we have not gone out of our way to defend the agency. We have acknowledged that it is a troubled organisation, but it has many hard-working and dedicated staff and we should not have broad-brush criticism that neglects the work they do. On his specific question about old cases, particularly legacy cases, I simply say that the Government inherited about 500,000 cases

from Labour, which we have largely got under control. We are working through a relatively small number of cases and will get that done in the next few months.

Cybercrime

6. **Simon Wright** (Norwich South) (LD): What steps she is taking to tackle cybercrime. [149412]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (James Brokenshire): The Government's approach to tackling online crime is set out in the national cyber-security strategy, which is underpinned by a £650 million programme of new investment over four years. This includes strengthening law enforcement capabilities by establishing the national cybercrime unit, which will lead the national and international response to tackling this issue.

Simon Wright: Many security experts report that small and medium-sized businesses are increasingly targeted by cybercriminals, but are not always well equipped to protect themselves. What progress are the Government making to ensure that small businesses get the support they need to pursue new business opportunities online with confidence?

James Brokenshire: My hon. Friend raises an important point about awareness and ensuring that we equip the public and business with the best advice and guidance on how to protect themselves from the threat from online criminals, which we do through Get Safe Online. We are focused equally on small businesses, however, which is the point he makes directly, and this spring the Government are looking to update the advice and guidance to business, focusing on those small businesses.

Kevin Brennan (Cardiff West) (Lab): Cybercrime is not just about fraud; it is also about online bullying, which can devastate people's lives and constitute a criminal offence. How confident is the Minister that local police forces have the expertise and the resources to deal with complaints about such crime?

James Brokenshire: The hon. Gentleman makes a fair point about the expertise within police forces. We are establishing the national cybercrime unit, not simply to deal with the most sophisticated, high-end internet crimes, but to be a centre of expertise and to make that expertise available to police forces up and down the country. That will put in place a more end-to-end approach in dealing with these forms of criminality, which cause so much harm.

Draft Data Communications Bill

7. **John Robertson** (Glasgow North West) (Lab): What assessment she has made of the recommendations of the Joint Committee on the draft Communications Data Bill. [149413]

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mrs Theresa May): The Government have committed to accepting the substance of all the Joint Committee's recommendations. We are currently redrafting the Bill and are engaging with interested parties on our proposals. The Bill is vital to help catch criminals, including

paedophiles, terrorists and members of organised crime, and we welcome the Joint Committee's and the Intelligence and Security Committee's conclusion that we need new law.

John Robertson: The Home Secretary obviously agrees with me that the Bill has been widely drawn and does not contain enough safeguards. What safeguards will she put into the Bill to improve it?

Mrs May: I can only repeat to the hon. Gentleman what I just said, which is that we will accept the substance of all the Joint Committee's recommendations. It considered issues such as how widely the Bill was drawn and that of future-proofing, and we have accepted its recommendations. When it comes before Parliament, the Bill will be much more tightly drawn, in terms of some of the definitions and the issue of future-proofing. We are redrafting the Bill, and if he can be patient for a little while, I think when he reads it he will see that we have indeed responded to the Joint Committee's recommendations.

Michael Ellis (Northampton North) (Con): Does the Home Secretary agree that the Joint Committee, on which I sat, confirmed the desperate need for new laws in this area—for one, to catch paedophiles and other types of criminals and terrorists—and so agreed with the Government's policy of introducing such new laws?

Mrs May: I thank my hon. Friend and all other Members of this House and another place for their work on the Joint Committee ably chaired by my noble Friend Lord Blencathra. Obviously, we have looked at the details of the Joint Committee's proposals, but it was striking that, on a cross-party basis, every member agreed that we needed new legislation in this area.

Illegal Traveller Sites

8. **Henry Smith** (Crawley) (Con): What support her Department is providing to police and crime commissioners and local authorities to tackle illegal Traveller sites. [149414]

The Minister for Policing and Criminal Justice (Damian Green): Both police and local authorities have powers to tackle unauthorised encampments. I understand that the police and crime commissioner in my hon. Friend's constituency, Katy Bourne, is working with the community to understand and respond to its concerns about unauthorised Traveller encampments. This is an example of the value that police and crime commissioners can bring to local policing, getting to the heart of the issues affecting communities on a day-to-day basis.

Henry Smith: I join the Minister in paying tribute to the Sussex police and crime commissioner, Katy Bourne, for getting to grips with the illegal Traveller problem in just four short months. Does my right hon. Friend think that the Human Rights Act is a problem for law-abiding residents in dealing with this issue?

Damian Green: I join my hon. Friend in paying tribute to Katy Bourne's work. I am not an unqualified admirer of the effect of the Human Rights Act 1998, but the clue to what he said was when he talked about illegal Traveller incursions. There is no legal right to

trespass: landowners, local authorities and the police have a range of powers available to remove trespassers and regain possession of land, and I would encourage them all to use them as strongly as possible.

Net Migration

9. Nigel Mills (Amber Valley) (Con): What progress her Department is making in reducing net migration to the UK. [149415]

12. Alun Cairns (Vale of Glamorgan) (Con): What steps her Department is taking better to manage immigration. [149418]

17. Mr John Baron (Basildon and Billericay) (Con): What progress her Department is making in reducing net migration to the UK. [149424]

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mrs Theresa May): As has already been referred to this afternoon, the latest statistics show another significant fall in net migration—down almost a third since June 2010. This shows that we are bringing immigration back under control. Our tough policies continue to have an effect, and this marks a further step towards bringing net migration down from the hundreds of thousands to the tens of thousands by the end of this Parliament.

Nigel Mills: I welcome the fall in net migration. Can the Home Secretary confirm to the House that it was caused by fewer people coming to the UK and not more people leaving, as some have suggested?

Mrs May: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. The figure for net migration is reached by looking at the numbers leaving and the numbers coming in. The Office for National Statistics has been absolutely clear about the statistically significant fall in immigration and net migration, and it is the fall in immigration that has led to the fall in net migration.

Alun Cairns: The new “Life in the UK” test comes into force this week. Does my right hon. Friend agree that it should focus on encouraging immigrants to play a full part in British life, rather than teaching them how best to claim benefits?

Mrs May: I absolutely agree with my hon. Friend, and that is exactly what the new “Life in the UK” test does. We have revamped the requirements for people taking the test. It is no longer about water meters and how to claim benefits, but enables people to participate fully in our society. It has sections on British history. The test enables people to understand what being resident in the United Kingdom is about and how to participate in our society, and I think that is absolutely right.

Mr Baron: The nation has always been tolerant of persecuted minorities—quite rightly—and, indeed, seen the benefits of immigration, but controls under the last Government collapsed into an absolute shambles. What more can the Government do to control immigration for the benefit of public services and how confident are they that the Prime Minister’s proposals, announced today, will be implemented in time for the EU transitional controls, ending at the end of the year?

Mrs May: I thank my hon. Friend for pointing out that, despite the significant falls we have seen in net migration, it is necessary for us to continue to look at the routes for migration into this country and the so-called pull factors and to ensure that we are enforcing our rules. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister’s speech today is important because it sets out the importance of embedding immigration across Government as an issue that is not just for the Home Office, but for other Departments. That includes the Department for Work and Pensions and the Department of Health, and, indeed, local government. We are clear that we will do all we can to deliver those parts of my right hon. Friend’s speech that can be delivered before the end of this year. For anything that requires legislation that goes beyond that, we will maintain our commitment to it, despite the transitional controls coming off at the end of this year.

Diana Johnson (Kingston upon Hull North) (Lab): Can the Home Secretary confirm that net migration of British citizens has fallen by 47,000 under this Government because fewer British citizens are returning home and more are leaving? Does she regard it as a successful immigration policy if two thirds of the reduction in net migration under this Government is down to fewer British citizens in this country?

Mrs May: I have to tell the hon. Lady that her question is based on a false premise. It is not the case that two thirds of the fall in net migration is due to the number of British people leaving. The Office for National Statistics is absolutely clear that the significant fall in net migration is due to a fall in immigration.

Greg Mulholland (Leeds North West) (LD): We need a firm, fair and sensible immigration policy, but that is confused by the inclusion of international students in the net migration figures. Those students contribute about £5 billion to the economy. America does not do that, Australia does not do it and Canada does not do it. Why do we continue to do it?

Mrs May: We continue to keep students who are staying for more than a year in the calculation of those who are immigrants into the UK because it is an international definition. It is the definition used around the world. It is very simple: those who are staying here for more than a year have an impact on public services and on the UK more generally. I am pleased to say to my hon. Friend that our policy of differentiation means that we have been cutting out abuse in the student visa system, while at the same time the number of overseas students applying to our universities has gone up. We are welcoming the brightest and the best.

Refusals of Leave to Remain

10. Simon Hughes (Bermondsey and Old Southwark) (LD): How many requests for a reconsideration of a decision to refuse leave to remain are outstanding; and what the oldest such cases currently being reconsidered are. [149416]

The Minister for Immigration (Mr Mark Harper): The UK Border Agency has approximately 14,000 requests for reconsiderations outstanding. The oldest request

dates back to 3 March 2010. It is worth reminding the House that these are all people who have had a decision on their application and have either exhausted their appeal rights or chosen not to appeal, so they have no right to be in the United Kingdom and they should leave.

Simon Hughes: I am grateful for the Minister's answer. Now that the Home Office has agreed to reconsider all the cases in this category as soon as possible, will the Minister and his colleagues look at whether there could be a system for prioritising those cases that are clearly in urgent need rather than simply working through a date system, which I have to say has been pretty random in the past?

Mr Harper: The point I made at the beginning still stands. These are all people who have had a decision and have been refused the right to remain in the UK after going through the full appeal process. For those who submitted a reconsideration request prior to our policy change last November, we will work through all their cases in order. If the right hon. Gentleman has a clear case of where there is a particularly compassionate reason for looking at it earlier, I would welcome him getting in touch with me; otherwise, we will work through the cases in date order.

Mr Julian Brazier (Canterbury) (Con): Given those answers, will my hon. Friend confirm that the greatest single reason for the backlog in the UK Border Agency is the tendency of courts to go on allowing more and more appeals, thereby lengthening the process?

Mr Harper: My hon. Friend is right that when the UKBA makes decisions, people in settlement cases frequently have a right of appeal. Some of those processes can often be very lengthy, so we will keep on considering whether there are ways of making the system smoother and more streamlined.

CCTV

11. Barbara Keeley (Worsley and Eccles South) (Lab): What steps she is taking to increase the use of CCTV in communities where it is wanted. [149417]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (James Brokenshire): The Government support the effective use of CCTV to cut crime and protect the public. It is for local agencies to determine how best to deploy and use CCTV systems to meet local needs. Our surveillance camera code of practice will help them to do so.

Barbara Keeley: The context in Greater Manchester is that we have lost 825 police officers from the front line since 2010. In fact, Salford is now losing 27 police officers and nine police and community support officers to other parts of Greater Manchester. Given that context of losing such a lot of the visible police presence that reassures the public, why does this Minister and other Ministers also want to make it harder, which it will be, for the police and local authorities to get CCTV?

James Brokenshire: One point on which the hon. Lady might like to reflect is the fact that crime in Greater Manchester is down by 11%. We are not seeking

to make it harder to get CCTV. The hon. Lady may shake her head, but we are not. We are supporting local communities in their approach. The fact is that, yes, CCTV can help to make a difference, but it also needs to command the support of the public. That is precisely what the code of practice seeks to assure.

Gloria De Piero (Ashfield) (Lab): Since the last election, one in five councils has cut the number of CCTV cameras on the streets. Why is that?

James Brokenshire: The hon. Lady has clearly not reflected on the answer that I have just given. Ultimately, it is for local communities to decide what works best in their area. She quotes a figure, but no evidence of widespread reductions in town centre CCTV systems has been brought to our attention. Our code of practice is simply about supporting local communities. We believe in the use of CCTV. The problem under the last Government was that they spent hundreds of millions of pounds without working out whether the CCTV systems actually made any difference to cutting crime. That is our focus; that is what we will support local authorities to do.

Student Visas

13. Lilian Greenwood (Nottingham South) (Lab): What assessment she has made of the number of student visitor visas issued in the last year for which figures are available. [149419]

The Minister for Immigration (Mr Mark Harper): In 2012, 68,372 student visitor visas were issued, 11% more than in 2011. Such visitors come to take short courses or to attend university summer schools. Most can stay for up to six months, but in order to support English language schools, we now allow those taking specialist English courses to stay for up to 11 months on extended student visit visas.

Lilian Greenwood: The UK Border Agency's border inspector has warned that student visitor visas are open to abuse, so why has the number of people entering the UK with them risen by 76% under this Tory-led Government?

Mr Harper: The hon. Lady ought to check what the chief inspector actually said. All he said was that the UKBA should monitor the route to ensure that it was not being exploited, and that is exactly what it is doing. If the hon. Lady looks at the nationalities in relation to which we have reduced the number of tier 4 visas, she will see that there is no sign of any increase in student visitor visas. In fact, nearly 50% of the people using the student visitor route are non-visa nationals, and a large proportion of those coming here with six-month student visitor visas are from the United States of America. There is no risk of abuse, but we remain alert to it and will ensure that we catch it out.

Andrew Bridgen (North West Leicestershire) (Con): Does my hon. Friend agree that the fact that the number of university visas has increased by 3% while at the same time the number of student visas is actually falling

shows that it is possible to strip abuse from the system while also ensuring that the UK is open to the brightest and the best?

Mr Harper: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. There has been a big drop in the number of students coming here, but that is because we have stripped abuse from the system. Five hundred fewer colleges are able to bring in foreign nationals, but, as my hon. Friend says, there has been an increase in the number entering our excellent universities sector.

20. [149429] **Mr William Bain** (Glasgow North East) (Lab): The Government have been caught napping by allowing the number of student visitor visas to rise by 30,000 since June 2010. Moreover, does the Minister accept that, in the words of Universities Scotland, he is damaging the brand of higher education by ensuring that genuine overseas students are included in the Government's net migration target?

Mr Harper: That is a very good example of a Member reading out a question without having listened to my previous answer. The hon. Gentleman clearly did not listen at all to what I said in response to the question from my hon. Friend the Member for North West Leicestershire (Andrew Bridgen). The number of students entering our excellent universities sector has risen, both in the United Kingdom and in Scotland. The hon. Gentleman should also know that the student visitor visa is credibility-based. Entry clearance officers have full powers to say no to students if they believe that they are not genuine student visitors to the United Kingdom.

Domestic Violence

14. **Mr Andy Slaughter** (Hammersmith) (Lab): What progress her Department has made on improving the detection and reporting of incidents of domestic violence. [149420]

The Minister for Policing and Criminal Justice (Damian Green): The Government have introduced new initiatives to improve the reporting of domestic violence. They include the domestic violence disclosure scheme pilot, and domestic violence protection orders to provide better protection for victims. Detections are, of course, a matter for the police, and we will continue to work with them to improve the reporting and resolution of these violent and abhorrent crimes.

Mr Slaughter: Preventing domestic homicides, which are still running at two a week, should be a priority for the Government, but leading victims' organisations such as Standing Together Against Domestic Violence, in my constituency, are frustrated by the fact that the lessons of domestic homicide reviews are not being fed back to practitioners. Why is this essential work being delayed?

Damian Green: It is not being delayed. As I have said, these are indeed abhorrent crimes and continuing improvement is needed, but there has already been a great deal of improvement over the past couple of years. The Government have introduced two new specific criminal offences of stalking, have relaunched the teenage rape prevention and relationship abuse campaigns, and have extended the definition of domestic violence to

include 16 and 17-year-olds and coercive control. All that shows the great seriousness with which we approach the issue.

Deportation of Foreign Criminals

15. **Graeme Morrice** (Livingston) (Lab): What assessment she has made of trends in the number of foreign criminals who have been deported since June 2010. [149421]

The Minister for Immigration (Mr Mark Harper): The UK Border Agency removed over 4,500 foreign national offenders in 2012, and have removed over 11,000 foreign national criminals since June 2010. There has been an increase in the number of appeals being lodged against deportation, which is why we implemented changes in the immigration rules last July to prevent criminals facing deportation from abusing the Human Rights Act.

Graeme Morrice: The fact is that this Government are deporting 900 fewer foreign criminals a year than the previous Labour Government did. Why is this Government's performance so poor?

Mr Harper: If the hon. Gentleman had listened to my previous answer, he would know that there has been a significant increase in the number of appeals lodged by criminals; in 2012, the figure increased by 1,000. That is exactly why we have strengthened the ability to remove criminals by implementing changes in the immigration rules, and to ensure that that is enforced by tribunals. My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary has made it clear that we will take powers in primary legislation to do so.

Mr Philip Hollobone (Kettering) (Con): Jamaicans and Nigerians make up a disproportionately large number of the foreign nationals in our jails. What assistance is my hon. Friend providing to the Secretary of State for Justice in negotiating compulsory prisoner transfer agreements with these two countries, and what progress is being made?

Mr Harper: My hon. Friend will be pleased to know that the Nigerian Parliament has passed the legislation required to implement compulsory prisoner transfer, which means that in due course we will be able compulsorily to move prisoners to Nigeria, which I am sure he will welcome.

Mark Reckless (Rochester and Strood) (Con): Might the trend in this area not be rather better if the Home Secretary had followed the advice of our hon. Friend the Member for Esher and Walton (Mr Raab), rather than that of others who have been consistently wrong?

Mr Harper: I do not agree with my hon. Friend. The amendment proposed by our hon. Friend the Member for Esher and Walton would in our judgment have made it more difficult to deport foreign national offenders, rather than easier. That is why the Government will look at introducing amendments to primary legislation, when we have a suitable legislative vehicle, to implement the commitments that my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary made to the House.

Late Night Levy (Licensed Premises)

16. **Lyn Brown** (West Ham) (Lab): How many local authorities have imposed a late levy on licensed premises to date; and how much income has been raised for policing as a result. [149422]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (James Brokenshire): The late-night levy was introduced in October last year. Since then a number of councils have been actively considering how a levy could benefit their area. The first formal public consultation to introduce a levy began in Newcastle last month.

Lyn Brown: I take that answer as being “absolutely none”. The Home Office told us that 94 of the 100 licensing authorities would impose the late-night levy, which would raise £10 million for police forces in its first year. Six months in, not a single pound has been raised. Is this not another illustration of the Government’s collapsing alcohol policy, and where is the Minister going to get the money from to police our night-time economy?

James Brokenshire: I find it quite interesting that the hon. Lady makes her point in the way she does, given that the last Labour Government promised that we would have a café culture, but instead we had 1 million violent crimes linked to alcohol. A number of councils are taking forward this policy, and we see this as a local issue: it should be for councils, with their police and crime commissioners, to decide if it works for them. That is precisely what we are doing, and I am surprised that the hon. Lady does not support local action to deal with the problems her constituents would like to see addressed.

21. [149430] **Rosie Cooper** (West Lancashire) (Lab): We hear about tough new licensing laws, yet no action is taken on tackling the problem of cheap booze, often consumed at home before going out. The Government’s alcohol strategy is obviously in disarray. Can the Minister tell us whether the Government have finally abandoned their plan to implement a minimum price for alcohol?

James Brokenshire: The Government have already taken a number of important steps to reform the licensing laws and strengthen the powers available to local communities to deal with the problem of alcohol-related crime. The Government have consulted on the important issues of pricing and low-cost alcohol. We are reflecting on the representations that have been received and we will respond to the House in due course.

Serious Sexual Assaults

18. **Mr George Howarth** (Knowsley) (Lab): What assessment she has made of the capabilities of the police to record, investigate and detect rapes and serious sexual assaults. [149425]

The Minister for Policing and Criminal Justice (Damian Green): Rape and sexual violence are devastating crimes that ruin lives. We expect every report to be taken seriously, every victim to be treated with dignity, and every investigation to be conducted thoroughly and

professionally. Our updated violence against women and girls action plan sets out our commitment to take a coherent approach to tackling sexual violence.

Mr Howarth: I am grateful to the Minister for that answer. Does he agree that people are sometimes being let off with a caution for lower-level sexual offences and that that is unacceptable? If he does agree, what is he going to do about it?

Damian Green: The Government will shortly be announcing a review of the caution regime. I am as determined as the right hon. Gentleman is to ensure that cautions, which provide a useful part of the criminal justice system, are used only in appropriate circumstances. I should say that the number of cautions used in cases of serious sexual abuse is low, with such cautions tending to be used for young offenders, for reasons that are clear in each individual case. However, I rather share his concerns about the use of cautions in this field.

Net Migration

19. **Jason McCartney** (Colne Valley) (Con): What assessment her Department has made of public support for reducing net migration. [149428]

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mrs Theresa May): As my hon. Friend will have heard, I have made a number of references, in answer to earlier questions, to what we have done on net migration. I can confirm that the British public see immigration as the third most important issue facing Britain today—that was the response to an Ipsos MORI poll in February.

Jason McCartney: I commend Conservative Ministers for the progress they have made in cutting net migration by a third, as they head towards their target of tens of thousands. May I give them further encouragement by telling them that a recent YouGov poll showed 63% support for that target among Labour voters, even though the Labour party opposes the target?

Mrs May: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for raising that point. I was aware that public opinion polling showed that eight in 10 British adults support the Prime Minister’s pledge to reduce net migration from hundreds of thousands to tens of thousands. I am encouraged by the fact that such a high percentage of Labour voters also support the target—it is just a pity that that message has not got through to Labour Front Benchers.

Topical Questions

T2. [149433] **Lorely Burt** (Solihull) (LD): If she will make a statement on her departmental responsibilities.

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mrs Theresa May): Next month, Sir Jonathan Evans will move on from his role as director general of the Security Service, and I wish to pay tribute to Sir Jonathan for the 33 years he has dedicated to the service. During that time his contributions have varied from investigating counter-espionage, developing and implementing key policies on security, and, most recently, countering the threat of international terrorism. He has experienced the service evolving over the years and as director

general has led the service through particularly challenging times of change and unrest, including the aftermath of the 7/7 bombings. His tireless work helped to ensure the delivery of a safe and successful Olympic and Paralympic games last year. I commend and thank him for his invaluable contribution to public safety and national security.

Lorely Burt: Recent Government legislation seeks to abolish appeals for family visitors, but one third of appeals currently succeed. Would it not be better to get a proper decision in the first place than to go through the whole process all over again?

Mrs May: We looked at this issue closely and what is clear is that in a significant number of cases the initial decision was not wrong on the basis of the information available at the time it was taken; in so many cases further information is put into the system between the initial decision and the appeal, and the appeal is then decided on a different basis. It is slightly cheaper, and it will take less time, for individuals to make a further application rather than going through the appeals process. As this is the only part of the visit visa system that has this appeal, we think it is right that we change the rules for this particular category.

Yvette Cooper (Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford) (Lab): May I, too, give our thanks for the work that Jonathan Evans has done over many years for the security of this country? The Prime Minister has spoken today about immigration, and it is right to have conditions on benefits and public services, but will the Home Secretary confirm that she has no estimate of how many people, if any, will see any change in their jobseeker's entitlement as a result? Will she also tell us why the number of employers fined for employing illegal workers has dropped by 42% since the election?

Mrs May: The Prime Minister has made a wide-ranging speech today, in which he has referred to a number of areas where the Government will be taking action to ensure that the United Kingdom is not seen as a soft touch and that people who come here are coming to contribute to our society and to our economy—that will be across the board in relation to benefits and to matters such as access to the health service.

Yvette Cooper: The Home Secretary did not answer my questions about whether the policies will have any impact, how many people will be affected by the new policies or why enforcement has become consistently worse since the election. Unannounced checks have fallen by more than 30%, the number of foreign criminals deported has fallen by 16% and there has been a 50% drop in the number of those refused entry to Britain since the election as well as a 50% increase in the number of long waits for asylum decisions. There is also the point I raised with her initially: the number of employers employing illegal workers being fined has dropped by some 40% since the election. What will the Home Secretary do to improve enforcement and the effectiveness of the system so that people can have confidence that it is working? It has got worse since the election, not better, so what is she doing to improve enforcement?

Mrs May: The right hon. Lady lists a range of issues, so let me pick one that has already been answered by my hon. Friend the Minister for Immigration—that is, the one about foreign national offenders. My hon. Friend correctly said that the number of appeals from foreign national offenders has increased. In 2012, there were about 1,000 more such appeals, which extends the time it takes to deport those individuals. I will not take any lectures on how to deal with immigration from the party that left our immigration system in such chaos. We have spent three years bringing control into the system and we will continue to do that. On the back of the Prime Minister's speech today, we will enhance enforcement and ensure that people who come to this country do so to contribute to our society and our economy; Labour did not do that over 13 years.

T3. [149434] **Steve Baker** (Wycombe) (Con): Intelligent use of new technology is bound to be vital in the fight against crime, whether through online crime maps or better IT procurement, but will the Government deploy it with due regard to liberty and privacy?

The Minister for Policing and Criminal Justice (Damian Green): I am happy to give my hon. Friend that reassurance, and he is right. Online crime maps are useful in giving citizens knowledge about crime activity in their area; they are still hugely successful and two years after the launch of police.uk in January 2011, the site receives more than 200,000 hits a day. However, with street-level crime maps we have taken great care to ensure that the identities of individuals are protected because the balance between civil liberties and effective crime fighting is very important to us.

T4. [149435] **Lilian Greenwood** (Nottingham South) (Lab): Following the Secretary of State's Government's 20% cuts, Nottinghamshire has lost more police officers than any county in the east midlands and police morale is badly hit. After cutting police numbers and bungling the police and crime commissioner elections, will she apologise to areas such as Clifton in my constituency, where crime and antisocial behaviour are a real problem?

Mrs May: We have published a draft Bill on antisocial behaviour, the aim of which is to make it easier to deal at a local level with the issues of antisocial behaviour that sadly blight too many communities across the country. The hon. Lady talks about reductions in officer numbers, but she might also reflect on the fact that in the past year, recorded crime in Nottinghamshire has gone down by 13%.

T5. [149436] **Eric Ollerenshaw** (Lancaster and Fleetwood) (Con): Further to the earlier questions on student visas, and given that Lancaster is home to one of our top universities, is any extra support available when a university needs speedier visas so that overseas academics can come to conferences and seminars that are vital to the university's international reputation?

The Minister for Immigration (Mr Mark Harper): I thank my hon. Friend for that question and I am sure that he will have been encouraged by what I said earlier about student visas. He might be interested to know

that last April we introduced the visitor route for permitted paid engagements, which is specifically helpful in such cases as it covers experts visiting to give a paid lecture, examine students and participate in or chair selection panels. They can do that for up to one month and receive a fee payment; I hope that is helpful to all those at his excellent local university.

Paul Goggins (Wythenshawe and Sale East) (Lab): I echo the Home Secretary's remarks about Sir Jonathan Evans. On a different subject, the UN convention on the rights of the child clearly states that every individual under the age of 18 should be regarded as a child, yet we still treat 17-year-olds who are arrested as adults. Will the Home Secretary agree to undertake a review of that situation, which sometimes has disastrous consequences, to ensure that any 17-year-old who is taken into police custody is treated as a child?

Damian Green: As I think the right hon. Gentleman knows, I am aware of some individual cases where there have been tragic events after the arrests of 17-year-olds. I assure him that we are keeping this under review.

T6. [149437] **Miss Anne McIntosh** (Thirsk and Malton) (Con): Will the Home Secretary look favourably on a holistic approach to rural crime, so that illegal horse grazing and illegal fly tipping can be treated as what they truly are—rural crimes?

Mrs May: My hon. Friend raises an important point. In various parts of the country, there is real concern about the attention given to a number of issues that corporately come together under rural crime. I will certainly look at the specific issues she raised, but a number of police and crime commissioners were clear last year that they wanted to ensure that greater emphasis was put on rural crime, which blights many of our rural communities.

Bill Esterson (Sefton Central) (Lab): In just the past few months, there have been seven gang-related shootings in Maghull in my constituency—a town with no previous experience of gun crime. The Home Secretary will understand the very real fears of my constituents that it is only a matter of time before an innocent bystander is hurt or killed. Will she make sure that Merseyside police have all the resources they need to protect residents and to stamp out this worrying trend in gun crime?

Mrs May: The hon. Gentleman raises an important issue. Sadly, we have seen problems related to gun crime in a number of parts of the country and, as he says, there has been evidence of completely innocent individuals getting caught in those incidents. We have been looking particularly at offences in relation to guns, and indeed we are introducing a new offence relating to the provision of guns—the intent to supply guns—so that we can catch some of the middlemen who are making guns available. Often they are rented out by middlemen for a variety of crimes. If the hon. Gentleman would like to write to me, I will respond.

T7. [149439] **Andrew Jones** (Harrogate and Knaresborough) (Con): The breach rate for antisocial behaviour orders is running at 57.3%. Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is time to change the law on antisocial behaviour

so that we punish the perpetrators and empower local communities, and through that, cut antisocial behaviour and crime?

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (James Brokenshire): My hon. Friend makes an important point about the effectiveness of measures to deal with the antisocial behaviour that blights so many of our communities. A lot of measures are slow, bureaucratic and quite expensive; therefore the Government have published a draft Bill to reform antisocial behaviour measures, to support communities. We thank the Select Committee on Home Affairs for the pre-legislative scrutiny applied to the draft Bill and we shall respond to the Committee's recommendations in due course.

Mr David Winnick (Walsall North) (Lab): Has the Home Secretary found it at all embarrassing to be the centre of so much speculation about going for the top job in politics?

Mrs May: The hon. Gentleman is a long-standing Member of the House, so he knows that that is not a matter relevant to the remit of the Home Office.

T8. [149441] **Paul Maynard** (Blackpool North and Cleveleys) (Con): I will make an effort to ask a better question than the last one. Ministers will be aware that alcohol-fuelled crime and antisocial behaviour have damaging consequences in seaside resorts such as Blackpool. Given that we are not proceeding with minimum unit pricing for alcohol, what additional measures, not in the Government alcohol strategy, will they now consider to tackle this social scourge?

James Brokenshire: The Government have already strengthened powers for local authorities in Blackpool and elsewhere; for example, to introduce early-morning restriction orders to control the hours when licensed outlets are able to trade. Indeed, we have given councils extra flexibility to act. As I have already indicated, the Government are reflecting on the representations made on the pricing of alcohol and we will come back to the House with our confirmed position in due course.

Chi Onwurah (Newcastle upon Tyne Central) (Lab): Earlier, the Minister spoke of the Government's commitment to tackling cybercrime, yet that commitment does not seem to include either defining or measuring what cybercrime is, so could the Minister say whether individuals and small businesses are encouraged to report all cybercrime to the police?

James Brokenshire: I know that the hon. Lady has examined the issue over a number of years and I recognise her direct interest. I underline that the Government have acted on national cyber-security by virtue of additional funding, the creation of the national cybercrime unit and the establishment of Action Fraud as the direct means for reporting online cybercrime. I absolutely encourage the public and small businesses to ensure that those crimes are properly reported so that we can provide the most effective advice to prevent crime and bring those responsible to justice.

Philip Davies (Shipley) (Con): The Home Secretary will be aware of the legal case between Leeds United and West Yorkshire police, which was won by Leeds United, leaving West Yorkshire police to pay £1 million back to the football club, leaving us in a situation in which my constituents will be robbed of police officers to police yobs at football matches at weekends. May I urge the Home Secretary to intervene in this case to reverse that intolerable position?

Damian Green: My hon. Friend will be aware that it is not for Ministers to tell judges and courts what decisions to come to. Clearly, it is an operational matter for individual police forces to determine how to police football matches. I part company with him in his description of football fans as yobs, as football is a much safer game to attend for spectators than it was 20 or 30 years ago, largely as a result of better policing and widespread revulsion by respectable football fans at the yobs who used to deface the game.

Fiona Bruce (Congleton) (Con): My young constituent, James Harrold, aged 19, from Middlewich, lost both his legs after being hit by a police car travelling at speed. In 2011-12, police vehicles were the cause of 18 deaths and many serious injuries such as those sustained by James. What are the Government doing to ensure that the number of such tragic incidents is reduced?

Mrs May: I thank my hon. Friend for raising this issue, and certainly the case to which she referred is very distressing. While speed limits do not apply to vehicles used for emergency service purposes if observance of the limit is likely to hinder that purpose, I can assure her that emergency services drivers remain subject at all times to the law on careless and dangerous driving, of which exceeding the speed limit may be a component. The Department for Transport has recently consulted on the issue of extending the exemption to other emergency services, but it has also looked at amending road safety legislation so that emergency drivers will be required to complete high speed driving training before they

are allowed to exceed the limit, and it proposes to base that training on the code drawn up by the emergency services.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Mr Speaker: The hon. Member for Wrexham (Ian Lucas) will have to wait a moment, because the hon. Member for Enfield, Southgate (Mr Burrowes) has been jumping up and down more persistently.

Mr David Burrowes (Enfield, Southgate) (Con): Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. My question follows on from the excellent question asked by my hon. Friend the Member for Lancaster and Fleetwood (Eric Ollerenshaw). I hosted a meeting of health academics from Turkey, who experienced difficulties in visiting the UK because of delays in securing a visa for the visit. Given the economic opportunities flowing from Turkey, will he join my hon. Friend the Member for Enfield North (Nick de Bois) and me in seeking an expedited service for this economic priority nation?

Mr Harper: Our overseas visa and entry clearance services have delivered a very good performance, with over 90% of visas issued within 15 days. If my hon. Friend wishes to raise a specific example—and it sounds as if he does—in which there was a longer delay, I would be grateful if he gave me the details and I can investigate matters with the UK Border Agency.

Ian Lucas (Wrexham) (Lab): Does the Home Secretary agree that police and stewards can effectively control football matches, as they did yesterday at Wembley stadium, when they were able to witness Wrexham football club's glorious victory over Grimsby Town in the FA trophy final?

Damian Green: I feel I should take the opportunity to congratulate Wrexham on its glorious victory yesterday, and agree with the hon. Gentleman. In fact, the way to control football violence comes largely from the fans themselves. The vast majority of football fans are respectable and want to enjoy the game peacefully, and if they do so, the job of the police is made much easier.

Immigrants (NHS Treatment)

3.33 pm

Mr Frank Field (Birkenhead) (Lab) (*Urgent Question*): To ask the Secretary of State for Health what moves the Government intend to take to prevent the national health service becoming an international health service.

The Secretary of State for Health (Mr Jeremy Hunt): The current system of policing and enforcing the entitlement of foreign nationals to free NHS care is chaotic and often out of control. At a time when we are having to face the challenges of an ageing society, it places a significant and unjustified burden on our GP surgeries and hospitals and may well impact on the standard of care received by British citizens.

As the Prime Minister said earlier today, the Government are determined to ensure that anyone not entitled to receive free NHS services should be properly identified and charged for the use of those services. Currently, we identify less than half of those who should be paying and collect payment from less than half those we identify.

We also have some of the most generous rules in the world on access to free health care. Our rules allow free access to primary care for any visitor to the UK, including tourists, and free access to all NHS care for foreign students and temporary visitors. But ours is a national, not an international, health service, so last year, under my predecessor, we began a wholesale review of the rules and procedures on charging visitors for NHS care, with a view to making the regime simpler, fairer and easier to implement. In particular, we focused on who should be charged and how the rules can be applied and enforced more effectively. We have examined the qualifying residency criteria for free treatment; the full range of other current criteria that exempt particular services or visitors from charges for their treatment; whether visitors should be charged for GP services and other NHS services outside hospitals; establishing a more effective and efficient process across the NHS to screen for eligibility and to make and recover charges; and whether to introduce a requirement for health insurance tied to visas.

The initial phase of the review has concluded and we will shortly start a consultation on a range of options, including plans to extend charging to some visitors and temporary residents who were previously exempt so that the default qualification for free NHS care would be permanent, not temporary, residence; ending free access to primary care for all visitors and tourists; introducing a prepayment or insurance requirement for temporary visitors to pay for NHS health care; and improving how the NHS can identify, charge and recover charges where they should apply. We will retain exemptions for emergency treatment and public health issues.

We will work closely with medical professionals, NHS staff and partner NHS organisations during the consultation and then seek to introduce agreed changes as quickly as possible. We will need to take a staged approach, because some changes are likely to require primary legislation before they can be introduced, which will take longer to put in place. However, some changes can be made immediately, and we should proceed with those as quickly as possible.

Mr Field: I thank the Health Secretary for his reply. If he wants us to take him seriously, will he today give a commitment in respect of the directive his Department issued just as the House was rising for the summer recess, compelling doctors, if they have vacancies, to admit all those who have been in the country for 24 hours or more, including illegal immigrants? Will he ensure that someone in the NHS—not doctors—works out whether or not a person is entitled to claim, and will he implement such proposals forthwith?

Mr Hunt: The directive to which the right hon. Gentleman refers was issued by an independent NHS body, not my Department. The sorry truth is that it is consistent with the current rules on access to primary health care, which is what we believe is wrong. I think that one of the big problems in the current system is that we have free access to primary care for anyone visiting the UK, however short their visit is. Through that access to primary care, they get an NHS number, which should not entitle them to free care but is often treated by hospitals as such. That is what we have to put right. He is absolutely right that we need a system that properly identifies whether people should have care that is free at the point of access without impinging on the ease of access for British citizens, which is one of the things they treasure most about the NHS.

Nicholas Soames (Mid Sussex) (Con): Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is through access to primary care that the initial control must take place, but that all hospitals should have an overseas visitors manager who should be designated and required to collect overseas visitors' moneys on a more regular basis and using a more joined-up and coherent way of working with the other agencies involved?

Mr Hunt: What my right hon. Friend says bears very careful consideration. He is absolutely right that primary care is a critical access point, and we need to look at that. We also need to look at the burdens we place on GPs. I think that ultimately the easy way we will do that is through proper digital patient records, which will allow NHS professionals to find out about the medical history of people accessing the NHS at any point, including whether they are likely to be eligible for free treatment.

With regard to hospitals, my right hon. Friend makes a very interesting point about an overseas visitors manager. One of the problems we have is that the incentives in the system positively disincentivise hospitals from declaring foreign users of the NHS. If they declare someone not to be entitled to free NHS care, they have to collect the money from that person themselves, whereas if they do not declare the person not to be entitled to free NHS care, they get paid automatically by their primary care trust or clinical commissioning group. The incentives in the system have acted to suggest that this is a much smaller problem than I believe it is.

Andy Burnham (Leigh) (Lab): The NHS must not be open to abuse. Where people do not have entitlement to free treatment, steps should always be taken to recover the costs from individuals and Governments. That clear principle is shared by Members across this House.

For some time, hospitals have rightly had a legal duty to recover any charges owed from overseas patients. The previous Government proposed a number of further steps, including amending immigration rules so that anyone with substantial medical debts is not allowed back into the country. We welcome efforts to build on that, while always guarding against overblown rhetoric, which does not help the immigration debate. We therefore need more precision and clarity from the Secretary of State. First, on the scale of the problem, as ever with this Government's announcements, there is already confusion to clear up. Earlier today, the Prime Minister's spokesperson put the cost to the NHS of health tourism at £10 million to £20 million. On "World at One" this lunchtime, the Secretary of State said that he thinks it is more like £200 million. So which is it? Will the Secretary of State publish the evidence he has to support his claim?

Secondly, we need more detail on what the Government are proposing. Has the Secretary of State consulted with those in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland on any proposed changes? There are practical questions on which health professionals will need reassurance. We have heard in the news today about the problems in the UK Border Agency. What assurances can the Secretary of State give to health professionals that they will not be used to plug the gaps that have been created by the Government's severe cuts to the front line of the UK Border Force? Will they be given a simple way of checking eligibility and not be burdened by extra bureaucracy? Will these changes apply equally to planned and emergency care? If so, that could put health professionals in a difficult ethical position. Does the Secretary of State agree that care should always be provided in life-threatening situations, and will he take this opportunity to reassure health professionals on that important point?

Finally, the Secretary of State told "World at One" that one of the main reasons he was doing this was to relieve pressure on accident and emergency departments, particularly in London. While we commend moves to prevent abuse of the system, could he not better achieve his aim if he was not planning to close so many A and Es in London?

The Government have made a lot of assertions, but there is a real lack of policy clarity and evidence. Unless the Secretary of State can provide convincing answers to my questions, the House will be left with the distinct whiff of a cooked-up a story to suit the Government's political purposes rather than a real drive to protect the NHS from abuse.

Mr Hunt: The Government are not going to take any lessons in overblown rhetoric when Labour Members talked about this problem for 13 years and did absolutely nothing about it. What was missing from the right hon. Gentleman's remarks was a proper apology for Labour's total failure to control our borders during a period in office that saw a quadrupling of net migration. We do not know how many people are residing in this country illegally, but in January the London School of Economics published a report stating that it could be nearly 900,000 people, in which case the cost will not be a few millions but many, many times that. In 13 years, Labour did not change eligibility for access to free NHS services and did nothing to improve the collection of proper dues from people coming from outside the European Union.

The £20 million figure that the Prime Minister's spokesman used this morning is the amount of uncollected debt that is owed to the NHS by foreign nationals. If the right hon. Gentleman had listened to my response, he would know that we believe—of course it is impossible to get exact figures on this because of the total mess that the previous Government created—that we identify less than half the people who should be paying for NHS care and collect less than half the money that should be collected.

Of course we will work with very closely with Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland to ensure a co-ordinated approach. If the right hon. Gentleman had listened to what I said, he would have heard that the exemption for emergency care and for public health issues will remain in place, which is extremely important.

Let me finish by talking about A and E issues. The reality is that the LSE estimates that about 70% of those living illegally in the UK live in London, where A and Es happen to face some of the biggest pressures. University College London Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust opened a new A and E only in the past few years and it was built for a capacity of 65,000 people a year, but it is now seeing 120,000 a year. If the right hon. Gentleman's Government had done something about this rather than talk about it, A and Es across London would not be facing the pressure they are now facing.

Dr Sarah Wollaston (Totnes) (Con): Will the Secretary of State publish the names of those trusts that are abjectly failing to identify and recover charges from those who are not entitled to free care?

Mr Hunt: My hon. Friend makes a reasonable point. Part of the problem is that when we should be identifying someone as a foreign national who should pay for their NHS care, that does not happen a lot of the time because of the incentives in the system. Under the NHS improvement initiative, which is taking place in London at present—it is worth looking at that closely, because it has a lot of promise—there is a centralised collection of debt from foreign nationals who owe the NHS so that that does not become the responsibility of individual hospitals, which is something that is putting them off registering people as eligible for their NHS care.

Keith Vaz (Leicester East) (Lab): May I invite the Secretary of State to comment on the view that one of the reasons why these proposals are being made at this stage is the conclusion of transitional arrangements for Romanians and Bulgarians at the end of this year? The Minister for Immigration is sitting on his right. Is it possible for the Health Department and the Home Office jointly to commission research so that we can have some actual figures as to how many people might be coming at the end of this year?

Mr Hunt: The right hon. Gentleman will have to raise the matter of the actual number of people coming to the UK with the Home Secretary or, indeed, the Minister for Immigration.

The right hon. Gentleman is right to say that the issues that we are dealing with are not just about foreign nationals from outside the EU or the European economic area. The rules for EEA members are complex. If people come here to work, we have an obligation under

[*Mr Jeremy Hunt*]

EU law to allow them access to free treatment, but if they are economically inactive or if they are temporary visitors, we should be able to reclaim the cost of that treatment from their home country in the EEA. The fact is that we do that very poorly indeed at the moment and that is one of the things we need to change.

Jake Berry (Rossendale and Darwen) (Con): I particularly welcome the linking of visas to health insurance, but will my right hon. Friend explain what will happen if someone who is already in the UK is asked to pay but simply cannot? Will they be refused treatment?

Mr Hunt: No one will be refused treatment in a life or death situation. It is important that we state that up front. However, we also want to remove any expectation that people who are not entitled to NHS care are able to come to the UK and get it, and to ask whether we should be giving free NHS care to people such as foreign students who come to the UK and get it. If they went to Australia or America—our two main competitor countries—they would have to take out health insurance or pay a levy to access the local health care system. If those countries do that, I think we should do the same.

Mr Dennis Skinner (Bolsover) (Lab): Is the Health Secretary aware that when I was in a London hospital some years ago I counted more than 40 staff from different nations? I am proud of my United Nations heart bypass. The message from this Government and many others, including the UK Independence party, is that those of a similar colour, of different colours and of different nationalities can change the bed sheets and operate, but woe betide them if they want to put their head on a pillow when they are ill. What hypocrisy.

Mr Hunt: The hon. Gentleman should do a lot better than that. He should think of his elderly constituents—people with multiple long-term conditions—who are having to wait much longer than they need to because A and Es not just in London, but in many parts of the country, are clogged up with people who may not be entitled to free NHS care because we have a system that culturally and operationally is not able to track these measures. It is in their interests that we must ensure that the NHS is available to people who are entitled to free care. When people are not entitled to free care, the point is not that the NHS is not available to them, but that they should pay for it.

Several hon. Members rose—

Mr Speaker: I have a choice on the Lib Dem Benches between two doctors. Let us hear from the good Dr Julian Huppert.

Dr Julian Huppert (Cambridge) (LD): The former public health Minister, the hon. Member for Guildford (Anne Milton), revealed in a written answer on 17 March 2011 that the sums not collected from overseas patients totalled less than £7 million a year. If we double that and double it again, as the Health Secretary suggests, that is £28 million. Private finance initiative schemes

cost the NHS that much every two weeks. Which issue is more important in ensuring that we have a properly funded NHS?

Mr Hunt: We need to deal with all those issues, and they are all failures of the last Government.

Chris Bryant (Rhondda) (Lab): There is a problem with recruitment in the NHS not only in England, but in Wales. Last year, Welsh NHS trusts tried to recruit 32 A and E consultants from the UK, but failed to do so and had to go abroad. Is there not a danger that the rhetoric in which the Government are indulging will put off the talented doctors that the NHS in this country needs?

Mr Hunt: We owe a great debt to the many talented doctors, nurses and health care assistants who come from overseas and make our NHS what it is. Nothing in our immigration laws will change that.

Conor Burns (Bournemouth West) (Con): My right hon. Friend will be aware that the overwhelming majority of our constituents who travel abroad put in place provision to protect themselves if they fall ill. My constituents and his will be appalled to learn that we do not expect the same of foreign visitors to the United Kingdom. May I congratulate him on his initiative, which began before the Prime Minister's speech today?

Mr Hunt: My hon. Friend is right. We have one of the most generous systems of health provision for overseas visitors of any country in the world. Most other European countries are less generous because they operate a social insurance system, which makes it much easier to collect the money that they are owed by the people who are not entitled to free care. We have to change the system here. The key thing that is wrong with it is free access to primary care, because that is the gateway into the NHS. Although primary care itself is not the most expensive part of the NHS, because of its gateway role, unless we control it, we will not get the overall system under control.

Heidi Alexander (Lewisham East) (Lab): If the child of an asylum seeker who is yet to have their asylum application determined requires NHS primary care, will they still be eligible for free treatment?

Mr Hunt: Yes, they will.

Sir Tony Baldry (Banbury) (Con): I am finding it rather difficult to ask a question, because I have been rendered speechless by the chutzpah of Labour Members in not saying that what the Secretary of State proposes is sheer common sense and in not agreeing with him. I have a simple question. How will GPs know which foreign nationals are entitled to NHS care and which are not?

Mr Hunt: My hon. Friend asks a very important question. We have to recognise the pressure on GPs and must be careful not to increase the bureaucratic burden on them. The long-term answer is to have proper digital patient records. If the first thing that people are asked for when they enter any part of the NHS is an NHS number that allows the person they are seeing to look at

their medical history, that could be a trigger to identify someone who should be paying for their NHS care. We are seeing whether there is a non-bureaucratic way of achieving that in the short term, while we put that technological system in place.

Mr Gerry Sutcliffe (Bradford South) (Lab): The Secretary of State and the Conservative party should remember that the coalition has been in power for nearly three years and nothing has happened on this issue. There are two things that he could do. He could withdraw the circular today and he could consider introducing an entitlement card that people could carry with them.

Mr Hunt: I congratulate the hon. Gentleman on his chutzpah in criticising the Government for not doing anything in two and a half years, when his Government did nothing in 13 years.

Mr David Ruffley (Bury St Edmunds) (Con): The Secretary of State has made it clear why the figure of £20 million a year is a ridiculous underestimate of the true state of affairs. He will be thanked by every British taxpayer in this country, no matter what the saving, because they are getting increasingly tired of services being accessed by people who do not have a proper entitlement to them.

Mr Hunt: I thank my hon. Friend for his comment. Of course I want to do a good job for taxpayers, but also for the 3 million British citizens who use the NHS every week and who find a service that, although the Government have protected its budget, is under increased pressure. I want to ensure that the system whereby people from other countries access those same services is one thing, and one thing only: fair.

Emma Reynolds (Wolverhampton North East) (Lab): It would be useful if the Secretary of State provided clarity and accuracy on the numbers we are talking about. The Prime Minister's spokesperson said that unclaimed costs amount to £20 million, but the Secretary of State seems to be saying £200 million. I wonder whether he can account for the difference. Did he just add a zero?

Mr Hunt: I explained where the figure of £20 million came from, and why I believe that is probably the tip of the iceberg. If the hon. Lady really wants to know the answer, we do not know the full extent of the abuse of NHS services because the previous Government left them in such an appalling mess.

Charlie Elphicke (Dover) (Con): I understand that under the European health insurance card scheme the UK paid out about £1.7 billion for Brits abroad, but claimed only £125 million back. Is that also receiving attention?

Mr Hunt: Yes it is. We are always likely to pay out more than we receive under that scheme because we have a number of pensioners who decide to retire to slightly sunnier climes and there is a cost to the UK under EU treaty law with those decisions. My hon. Friend is right to point out that just as inadequate as our failure to charge people from outside the EU when

we should is our failure to collect money from inside the EU when we are able to, and we must also look at that.

Mr Kevan Jones (North Durham) (Lab): The Secretary of State has clarified the Prime Minister's figure of £20 million, but he used inflammatory language to my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr Skinner) about health tourists clogging up A and Es. He claims that £200 million could be the tip of the iceberg, but if he does not know the figure is that not the worst example of dog-whistle politics?

Mr Hunt: If we do not know the figure, is not the right thing to do to find it out and sort out the problem, unlike what the hon. Gentleman's party did during 13 years in office?

Mr Robin Walker (Worcester) (Con): I congratulate the right hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr Field), who in raising this issue is, as always, streets ahead of those on his own Front Bench.

May I thank my right hon. Friend the Health Secretary for the extra £20 million funding that the NHS in Worcestershire will receive this year, and urge him to take that agenda forward and ensure that as much funding as possible goes to the residents of Worcestershire and to addressing the kinds of pressures that we saw over the last week in A and E?

Mr Hunt: Obviously, I want to ensure that as much money as possible goes to residents throughout the country by tackling abuse, and I would not want to minimise what the issue might be in Worcestershire. I stress, however, that the biggest problem we face is in big urban centres where there are large numbers of illegal immigrants, and we must get a grip of that problem for the sake of the elderly population in those cities.

Barbara Keeley (Worsley and Eccles South) (Lab): If the Secretary of State is concerned to protect NHS budgets, why is he allowing a £2.2 billion raid from the Treasury? Is that not a much more serious cut in the NHS services we can pay for in this country?

Mr Hunt: If the hon. Lady is worried about that, perhaps she might like to complain to her own party leadership, which, during Labour's last five years in office, had an average underspend in the NHS of £2 billion.

Henry Smith (Crawley) (Con): I, too, congratulate the right hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr Field) on his urgent question, and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health on following my private Member's Bill, the NHS Audit Requirements (Foreign Nationals) Bill. When will that primary legislation receive Government time to start its passage through this place?

Mr Hunt: I congratulate my hon. Friend on his excellent private Member's Bill, which looked forward to many of the problems we are trying to address. Our first step is to identify the scale of the problem. We will then identify the right legislative response, but the response will not all be legislative. That is when we will consider including it in the parliamentary timetable.

Kevin Brennan (Cardiff West) (Lab): In answer to the hon. Member for Rossendale and Darwen (Jake Berry), the Secretary of State said that when someone does not have the funds, treatment will not be refused if it is a life-and-death situation. For clarity, will he tell us what the threshold will be? For example, if someone has a broken leg, or if someone needs another treatment that requires hospital admission, and they do not have the funds, will treatment be refused under his scheme?

Mr Hunt: The hon. Gentleman will be relieved to know that that will be a matter for clinicians, not politicians.

Bob Stewart (Beckenham) (Con): Roughly, in percentage terms, how many babies born in maternity wards are born to mothers from the EU?

Mr Hunt: I cannot tell my hon. Friend the answer except for one detail: my two children were not born to a mother from the EU.

Mark Reckless (Rochester and Strood) (Con): The Secretary of State has explained that the July guidance was from an independent body and in line with the existing rules. Who wrote the existing rules? Will he confirm that he will change them?

Mr Hunt: The rules existed for 13 years under the Labour Government, who did absolutely nothing to change them. We are tackling the problem. If Labour Members had any grace, they would thank us for doing so.

John Pugh (Southport) (LD): When I tabled questions last year, I was told that we collect £51 million a year for treatment from EU countries, but that they collect £451 million—nine times more—back from us. Is this an issue not of immigration, but of coding, charging and collecting?

Mr Hunt: My hon. Friend might be right—we need to look at that—but as I have told my hon. Friend the Member for Dover (Charlie Elphicke), one factor is that a number of our pensioners retire to sunnier climates, which leads to that imbalance.

Andrew Selous (South West Bedfordshire) (Con): Is the Health Secretary aware that general practitioners have been calling for the measures to be taken for some time? The Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire local medical committee wrote to me some time ago expressing its concerns that overseas nationals were coming here for expensive operations. It will be very pleased at what he has done today.

Mr Hunt: My hon. Friend speaks wisely. NHS professionals on the front line have been conscious of the problem for a long time, but have been frustrated that nothing has been done. I therefore hope that they very much welcome today's announcement.

Richard Graham (Gloucester) (Con): Now that Labour has realised it is legitimate to discuss immigration, does my right hon. Friend agree that it is time for the Opposition to acknowledge that legitimate charges by the NHS to EU and other residents were not collected

properly for 13 years; that identifying the £20 million as the tip of the unpaid iceberg is the right thing to do; and that a tightening of procedures on debt collection will be welcomed by my constituents and fair to all our constituents throughout the country?

Mr Hunt: Absolutely. It is astonishing that the Labour party complains in one breath about pressures on A and E, and the next moment tries to make light of the serious attempts the Government are making to get a grip of the problem.

David T. C. Davies (Monmouth) (Con): Does the Secretary of State agree that the vast majority of people in the UK will welcome these long-overdue proposals? Will he explain what he will do to ensure that those who are denied treatment because they are here illegally and not entitled to it cannot simply slip over the border to Wales or Scotland, which, unfortunately, are in the throes of an NHS run by socialist Governments?

Mr Hunt: We will work closely with the devolved authorities to ensure we have a co-ordinated response to the problem, but I agree that today's announcement will be welcomed by the vast majority of people in the country, who will be astonished that the Labour party, even now, seeks to minimise the problem.

Andrew Bridgen (North West Leicestershire) (Con): Given that the UK has one of very few genuine free-at-the-point-of-need health care systems, does my right hon. Friend agree that, without his sensible reforms, the UK will continue to be seen as the destination of choice for anyone around the world seeking high-quality, free medical treatment paid for by the UK taxpayer?

Mr Hunt: I agree with my hon. Friend. It is because I support the principle of free-at-the-point-of-use health care that I do not want anything to undermine it, and abuse of the system by people who are not entitled to free NHS care is the single thing that would most shake the public's trust in an important part of what the NHS has to offer. That is why we must tackle this problem.

Harriett Baldwin (West Worcestershire) (Con): The Secretary of State rightly recognises that accident and emergency is a special case, but when I broke my fingers in Brussels I was asked to pay by credit card at the end of my treatment. A lot of people who present at A and E have non-life threatening conditions. Is that something we could do here?

Mr Hunt: I understand my hon. Friend's sense of unfairness at being asked to pay for her treatment by credit card, when we do not do that to foreign nationals who are treated in the NHS. I do not, however, want the NHS to become a service where the first question people are asked relates to their credit card or cheque book. If we are going to protect that much-cherished principle of NHS treatment, we need to get a grip on the kind of abuse that has run unchecked for far too long.

Mr Peter Bone (Wellingborough) (Con): Does the Secretary of State agree that the House is divided by two schools: the Opposition, who believe that the NHS

should not charge anyone, which is why they did nothing for 13 years; and Government Members, who believe that foreign nationals who should pay, must pay.

Mr Hunt: I agree, and nothing we have heard this afternoon will give the British public any comfort at all that the Opposition get this problem.

Andrew Jones (Harrogate and Knaresborough) (Con): I welcome my right hon. Friend's statement. Does he agree that the previous Government's failure to tackle health tourism encouraged overseas visitors to abuse our NHS?

Mr Hunt: My hon. Friend is right. One reason we are tackling this problem is not just because of the health agenda we have been discussing this afternoon, but because abuse of NHS services fuels broader immigration problems. That is one of the core reasons the previous Government failed to get a grip of net migration in particular.

Jason McCartney (Colne Valley) (Con): Calderdale and Huddersfield NHS Foundation Trust spent £305,341 on interpreter services between 2009 and 2011. Will my right hon. Friend include the costs of translation services when working out the costs of health tourism?

Mr Hunt: I would want to be careful to discriminate between the needs of British citizens and people who are entitled to free NHS care who have not had the education or support they need to learn English but who should still continue to receive free, high quality NHS care, and foreign nationals who are not entitled to free NHS care and who should pay the cost of any translation required.

Mr Philip Hollobone (Kettering) (Con): My constituents are absolutely furious that non-entitled foreign nationals are effectively getting free access to our NHS, and I welcome the steps my right hon. Friend is making to tackle this issue. Will he ensure that Her Majesty's Government fast-track legislation, with an announcement in the Queen's Speech, and challenge the Opposition either to bring down or pass that legislation in the next parliamentary year?

Mr Hunt: I have visited Kettering hospital, and I know just how hard its front-line professionals work and the pressures they are under. All I can say to my hon. Friend is that the Leader of the House of Commons is sitting here and has heard what he has said, and I would certainly support the early introduction of legislation on this matter.

Points of Order

4.8 pm

Graham Jones (Hyndburn) (Lab): On a point of order, Mr Speaker. May I seek your advice on the tragic death of my constituent, Lucy Meadows, a transgender teacher who was vilified by the *Daily Mail* and other newspapers? The cause of death is not yet clear and we await the coroner's report, but the police have said that there are no suspicious circumstances. Miss Meadows apparently complained to the press about their harassment—about them being camped outside her house, their attempts to pay parents to obtain photographs of her, and, failing that, downloading photographs from her family's Facebook pages. To be on the receiving end of such behaviour must have been tortuous for her. An online petition against the actions of the *Daily Mail* has now received in excess of 110,000 signatures in just two days. The Press Complaints Commission failed her and is widely considered to be discredited. Therefore, can you, Mr Speaker, advise MPs on how complaints can and should be taken forward in such cases?

Mr Speaker: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for notice of his point of order, and I am sure that I speak for the whole House in expressing our sorrow at his constituent's tragic death. I hope he will also appreciate that I am not familiar with the details of this case and that it would be wrong for me to comment on it. Suffice it to say that abuse and vilification of the kind he describes are despicable and intolerable in a civilised society. It is not, however, clear to me that there is a point of order here for the Chair to address. Nor is it obvious to me that it is for me to advise him on how he and other right hon. and hon. Members should proceed in these circumstances. Suffice it to say that he has aired the matter today. The facilities of the Table Office and the Order Paper are open to him, and if, as more information emerges or his interest is extended, he wishes to bring these matters to the House's attention, he can be sure of having the opportunity to do so.

Succession to Hereditary Peerages and Estates

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

4.10 pm

Mary Macleod (Brentford and Isleworth) (Con): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to remove male-preference primogeniture in succession to hereditary peerages and estates.

This motion is about building fairness, modernity and equality in our society. All hon. Members will agree with the simple premise that women play an integral role in society and that we want them all to have the opportunity to achieve their potential. I congratulate the Government on what they have done so far to increase fairness and equality in society since 2010, through initiating the Lord Davies women on boards review; encouraging women to set up businesses through business mentors; setting up the Women's Business Council; setting the target that 50% of new appointments to boards of public bodies should be women; announcing a new system of shared parental leave; extending free child care; closing the gender pay gap; and extending the right to request flexible working. All these things will give women a better chance to play their full part in society, in the workplace and in public life.

Today's motion is another step that needs to be taken to promote gender equality in our society. Currently, for most hereditary peerages, there is male-preference cognatic primogeniture, which means that the firstborn son will, in most cases, inherit the entire estate and that, if there are no sons, it will go to another male descendant. Now is a good time to consider this issue, as the Succession to the Crown Bill makes its way through Parliament. Like the majority of hon. Members, I welcome the changes it will bring. Her Majesty the Queen is leading the way and showing us how the monarchy can change and adapt for modern times, without losing the history and tradition that make it so special and fundamental to our culture.

During the debate on the Bill, many of my hon. Friends in this Chamber and the other place, including the noble Lord Lucas and Baroness Symons, asked why male-preference inheritance would continue to apply in hereditary peerages after being removed from the monarchy. I agreed with the Government that the Bill should focus on the monarchy, but we now have an opportunity to get rid of the current discrimination. The recent changes in the monarchy leave the aristocracy two steps behind, because, as it stands today, a woman such as Her Majesty the Queen can inherit the throne in the absence of men.

The 9 million viewers of "Downton Abbey" will no doubt be familiar with the story where the Earl of Grantham is unable to leave his title and estate to his eldest daughter, Lady Mary. We might think of "Downton Abbey" as depicting a quaint historical era, but that remains the situation today, and I believe that the time is right to address this issue. Hon. Members might ask, "Why bother to change something that affects only very few people?" I personally believe that this is about much more than titles and the aristocracy; this is symbolic. It is about the principles of fairness and equality. I urge the Government to consult, because it is another way to

show how important women are to society and how much we need women to have an equal role in business, in the community and in the nation.

As many have pointed out, the current situation in the aristocracy is complex, with different rules applying in different family situations. Indeed, the noble Lord Strathclyde, the former Leader of the House of Lords, responding to a question on this issue, said:

"The Government believe that it is time to deal with the issue of succession to the Crown, and there is no simple read-across to succession to the hereditary peerage, which is infinitely more complicated and affects many more families."—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 20 October 2011; Vol. 731, c. 380.]

He was absolutely right, but I was brought up to believe that anything is possible, and I believe we can change things, no matter how complex. Frankly, if we can get 16 Commonwealth realms to agree to Crown succession, I am sure we can achieve this, too.

The current situation is complex. Older baronies were created by means of a writ of summons to Parliament. These baronies became heritable over time and tend to descend through the bloodline, with preference for males, but not excluding females. Later peerages were mostly created by patent. These peerages typically descend to the male heir; however, special remainders have sometimes been granted for war leaders such as Nelson, Kitchener and Mountbatten that give the peerages an extra chance of survival. In Scotland, peerages vary according to their limitation, which could be to a male heir, an heir of either sex or a series of named individuals.

According to "Debrett's Peerage and Baronetage 2011", there are just 13 hereditary peeresses in their own right: six in England and six in Scotland, while one—Countess Mountbatten—is a peeress of the United Kingdom. In the majority of cases these days, a peerage is a dignity only and is not necessarily bound up with real estate. However, in some cases there is a direct link, known as an "entail". I will not dwell at length on any individual story that brings to life this unfairness, as these are personal, family situations. However, there are many examples that we can consider, such as Baron Braybrooke, whose title will go to his fourth cousin once removed, rather than one of his eight daughters, whom I am sure are more than competent to succeed. The Duke of Rutland's three daughters will not inherit their family seat, Belvoir castle. Of the 92 hereditary peers taking their seats in the House of Lords, there are only two women: Lady Saltoun and the Countess of Mar. This is clear evidence that there is something not right about the current system.

I am calling for a consultation on the issue today because I believe that in society we should have equality when it comes to gender. Women have proved time and again that they are more than capable of any task in business, politics, the community or public life. The role of women has changed dramatically in the course of history. In this day and age, it is therefore quite wrong that women are so unlikely to inherit peerages. I agreed wholeheartedly with the noble Lord Fellowes of West Stafford, who put it perfectly:

"If you're asking me if I find it ridiculous that...a perfectly sentient adult woman has no rights of inheritance whatsoever when it comes to a hereditary title, I think it's outrageous".

Gone are the days when daughters in the nobility were simply married off, with titles and estates left to their "warrior-like" sons, who alone were considered trustworthy

enough to protect the future title and estate. Frankly, that sounds rather laughable now, in a world where girls are significantly outperforming boys in education and where the skills of financial management and accountancy are far more important than those of physical warfare. We have come a long way in terms of women's rights in many areas—the right to vote, to become a Member of Parliament and even to be Prime Minister. As chairman of the all-party group on women in Parliament, I want to increase the numbers of women in the House of Commons and the other place. This Bill may even be a way of achieving that.

Given that this is a complex issue, I believe the first step is to have a consultation, to find the best approach to bring about this change. Different approaches could be considered, including asking the monarch to change the patent for particular titles; sponsoring a private Bill relevant to a particular case; creating a new statutory framework that allowed families to change the rules voluntarily; or passing an Act of Parliament to create a new statutory framework. The UK would not be trail-blazing in taking this issue forward. In 2006, King Juan Carlos I of Spain issued a decree reforming the succession to noble titles. He said:

“Men and women have an equal right of succession in Grandee of Spain and nobility titles, and no person may be given preference in the normal order of succession for reasons of gender”.

Personally, I would favour the final option: a new statutory framework that would cover all situations, to ensure clarity and efficiency.

The role of women over the centuries has changed in society. The monarchy is about to change to recognise the important role of women. I believe hereditary peerages need to change, too. This is a matter of fairness and it is right that we as Members of Parliament did our best to get rid of discrimination and ensure fairness in all aspects of society. Today, let us celebrate the modern role of women and look to promote equality in all parts of society, so that every woman in this country can aspire to and achieve her potential. I hope the House will support this Motion and give me leave to introduce it.

Question put and agreed to.

Ordered,

That Mary Macleod, Oliver Colvile, Penny Mordaunt, Yasmin Qureshi, Jane Ellison and Mrs Eleanor Laing present the Bill.

Mary Macleod accordingly presented the Bill.

Bill read the First time; to be read a Second time on Friday 3 May, and to be printed (Bill 153).

Caroline Lucas (Brighton, Pavilion) (Green): On a point of order, Mr Speaker.

Mr Speaker: I wondered whether the hon. Lady was hailing a taxi. I am afraid that I am not available for that purpose, but I am happy to respond to her attempted point of order.

Caroline Lucas: I am grateful to you, Mr Speaker. I know that colleagues will want to get on with the main business, but I wish to raise a brief point of order.

The Justice and Security Bill goes to the other place for its final stages tomorrow, but this House has still not been informed whether the introduction of secret courts affects habeas corpus. Indeed, the House has had no fewer than four different answers from the Minister without Portfolio, ranging from “yes”, “no” and “not sure” to “I’ll check”. Will you rule, Mr Speaker, on whether the Minister without Portfolio should come back to the House before the Bill gets its Royal Assent to tell us what the right answer is?

Mr Speaker: I am grateful to the hon. Lady for her point of order. It is not actually a point of order for the Chair, but I would say that the Minister without Portfolio, the right hon. and learned Member for Rushcliffe (Mr Clarke), has been in this House, if memory serves, for more than 42 and a half years and it will be 43 years in June. I think he takes his responsibilities to the House very seriously. If, as a result of the matters described by the hon. Lady, there is a requirement for clarification, I feel sure that the Minister without Portfolio will provide it at the appropriate time. We will leave it there for today.

Ways and Means

Budget Resolutions and Economic Situation

AMENDMENT OF THE LAW

Debate resumed (Order, 22 March).

Question again proposed.

(1) That it is expedient to amend the law with respect to the National Debt and the public revenue and to make further provision in connection with finance.

(2) This Resolution does not extend to the making of any amendment with respect to value added tax so as to provide—

(a) for zero-rating or exempting a supply, acquisition or importation;

(b) for refunding an amount of tax;

(c) for any relief, other than a relief that—

(i) so far as it is applicable to goods, applies to goods of every description, and

(ii) so far as it is applicable to services, applies to services of every description.

4.22 pm

The Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government (Mr Eric Pickles): In common with the right hon. Member for Bermondsey and Old Southwark (Simon Hughes), I too drive a London taxi, and no reasonable offer will be refused.

This is the coalition Government's fourth Budget—a Budget determined to stay the course and fill the sink-hole of debt left to us by the last Administration. Thanks to our actions, the deficit is down by a third—from 11% of gross domestic product under Labour to a forecast 7% this year. It is set to fall even lower to as little as 2% by 2017-18. All the while, we have kept interest rates at a record low and created 1.25 million new jobs while reducing the number of workless households by 250,000.

Local government, which accounts for a quarter of all public spending, is doing its bit to help to pay off Labour's deficit—and the result? Since the general election, according to the Local Government Association's own polling, residents' satisfaction with their councils has increased. Ipsos MORI has found that two thirds of residents have not noticed any changes in the quality of council services. Well-run councils are making sensible savings, protecting front-line services and keeping council tax down. Of course more savings need to be made to pay off Labour's debt, but we are on the side of people with gumption who protect and enhance public services, so this Budget is about rewarding aspiration and boosting growth; it is about helping businesses to create jobs, and about giving a leg up to wannabe home owners.

The housing market is critical to Britain's economic success, yet one of the most tragic effects of Labour's toxic legacy was its impact on that market. Whereas Margaret Thatcher gave a generation the hope of owning their own homes, Labour crushed their dreams, leaving us with a planning system bogged down by arcane rules and regulations, house building falling to its lowest peacetime rate since the 1920s, rising prices, falling mortgages, and tenants with no hope of buying. A lost generation of people were forced to stay where they were, living their best years in the hope that their lottery numbers might come up or the bank of mum and dad would bail them out. This is truly a toxic legacy.

Mr Edward Leigh (Gainsborough) (Con): As usual, the Secretary of State is making a very good case. If most people do not notice any difference in the service provided by local government despite all the cuts, does that serve as a lesson for central Government as well?

Mr Pickles: My hon. Friend makes a very reasonable point. My own Department in central Government has reduced its running costs by 41% in real terms, so we have led by example.

The Government have set about turning things around. This is a complex area, and the solution requires action on multiple fronts. We have taken three important steps. First, we are radically reforming the planning system to crank up the engine and get things moving. Secondly, we are giving builders certainty so that they can get Britain building. Thirdly, we are intervening dramatically to help people step on to the first rung of the housing ladder. It may be helpful if I set out our approach to each of those issues.

Mr David Hanson (Delyn) (Lab): Will the Secretary of State tell me how under-occupancy relates to the mortgage relief schemes that the Treasury announced last week? If, for example, one individual buys a house with three bedrooms, will that person be subject to the under-occupancy tests that apply to those in social housing?

Mr Pickles: I think that only the Labour party would confuse taxation with entitlement to benefit. As the right hon. Gentleman knows, since coming to office we have made great play of the need to release a number of unoccupied houses, and thus far we have made quite a push towards that. Every household in the right hon. Gentleman's constituency is now paying £900 to subsidise housing benefit. If his council wants to pay more, it can do so.

Mr Hanson: Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mr Pickles: No. The right hon. Gentleman has had his chance to intervene, and his intervention was not very good.

Let me deal first with our reforms of the planning system. Labour's top-down, centralist approach built nothing but resentment. Its regional strategies added a layer of red tape that paralysed planning. By the time of the general election, six years after Labour's Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, only one in six councils had adopted a core strategy and only one in four had a five-year land supply.

Nor did Labour's approach lead to better co-ordination. The regional spatial strategies of the unelected regional assemblies contradicted the regional economic strategies of the unelected regional development agencies. Fortunately, the Localism Act 2011 is now scrapping Labour's regional planning. The national planning policy framework has streamlined 1,000 pages of confusing Whitehall guidance and placed local plans in pole position—safeguarding the green belt, introducing a new protection for valuable green spaces, amending bureaucratic change-of-use rules to make it easier to get redundant and empty buildings back into productive use, and kick-starting brownfield regeneration.

Kate Green (Stretford and Urmston) (Lab): One innovation that has been introduced is a simplified planning system for business neighbourhoods, but very little progress seems to have been made in implementing that in Trafford Park, in my constituency. What will happen to speed up that process?

Mr Pickles: I will certainly have a look at the particular circumstances to which the hon. Lady refers. I have been pleased to see the growth in neighbourhood plans, which are analogous to what she is suggesting. Indeed, I visited a village in my constituency that is looking forward to introducing them. They give people and businesses a much bigger say.

David Wright (Telford) (Lab): Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mr Pickles: Of course I will give way to my favourite Labour MP.

David Wright: I am grateful. City deals offer real flexibility for local communities, and we would like to work with the Department to secure a city deal for Telford. There is Homes and Communities Agency land on the ledger that could be shifted off, through a profit-sharing agreement with the Department, to make sure we get housing land and business development land. Is the Secretary of State willing to meet to talk about a city deal for Telford?

Mr Pickles: This is the second time the hon. Gentleman has asked whether I am willing to see him. I am; indeed, only this morning I sent out, at my own expense, for some high-quality tea and better biscuits for him. We are looking forward to seeing him.

Seven out of 10 councils have published a local plan, and the figure continues to rise. Nearly nine in 10 planning applications are approved—a 10-year high. Indications are that there are fewer planning appeals, meaning that local decision making is to the fore. The latest data from Glenigan show that planning approvals for new homes are up 62% year on year, and 33% up on the previous quarter.

However, brushing the cobwebs off the planning system is only part of the plan. As a result of Labour's inaction, this country is crying out for more homes to meet that desperate demand, so this Government are helping to get development off the ground. Locally supported, once-mothballed large-scale sites—such as in Cranbrook, in Milton Keynes, in Eastern Quarry and in Wokingham—are now being kick-started. We should contrast that with Labour's top-down eco-towns, which delivered not a single home.

Our programme is set to deliver 170,000 new affordable homes, almost 63,000 of which are already completed, by 2015. The Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors says that home sales have reached their highest level in more than two and a half years, while builders from Barratt to Bovis say that Government schemes are driving increased sales, putting people back on the property path.

Mr Geoffrey Robinson (Coventry North West) (Lab): We can give moderate support to the expansion of the Firstbuy scheme, which sounds good. Indeed, I recently

visited such a scheme on the old Jaguar site in my constituency, which has proved a great help. However, does the Secretary of State not agree that making the mortgage expansion scheme available to second home buyers would be quite obscene, given that we are imposing a bedroom tax on those who can ill afford it?

Mr Pickles: The hon. Gentleman makes a reasonable point, and if that were a way in which Mrs Pickles and I could obtain a second home in Frinton, it would indeed be a scandal, but that is certainly not the Government's intention. However, in our endeavours to ensure that I do not end up with a nice little flat in Frinton, we have to be careful not to rule out people whose marriage has just broken down, or situations in which parents are acting as part-guarantors. By September, we will be able to satisfy the hon. Gentleman on this issue.

We know that the demand is there, but it is also clear that for many individuals in very good jobs the housing ladder simply remains out of reach. Under Labour the number of first-time buyers plummeted to a 30-year low. Labour's 2005 manifesto promised 1 million more home owners, but home ownership fell by a third of a million in the last Parliament. The industry is clear about what lies at the root of the problem. The British Property Federation says:

“Helping people needing a deposit has for some time been cited as the missing piece of a coherent housing policy”.

Mr Angus Brendan MacNeil (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP): What does the Secretary of State think the mortgage guarantee scheme will do to house prices? Is there a danger of increased demand and no increase in supply, and prices going up?

Mr Pickles: The hon. Gentleman makes a reasonable point. However, housing prices are at a more reasonable level now, we will be increasing supply and of course there will be a check on the scheme, through the Bank of England, to see that it is renewed every three years. So the worries that he raises are not correct—

Mr Barry Sheerman (Huddersfield) (Lab/Co-op) rose—

Mr Pickles: The hon. Gentleman is jumping up and down. I have not said that I will give way, but I will.

Mr Sheerman: It is very kind of the right hon. Gentleman, who knows that I love intervening on him because I always get such a good response! It is supply that is wrong in this country; there is a national emergency in the supply of affordable housing. There are 1.5 million people on the minimum wage in this country. The waiting list in Kirklees has zoomed to having 17,500 people on it. These people do not have much money, they have little hope of ever buying their own home and they need a good affordable home now.

Mr Pickles: Of course they do, and it is a matter of regret that the number of affordable houses fell by 420,000-odd during Labour's period in office, and we see a way in which we can achieve a number of affordable houses. As I said, we are well on track to deliver 170,000 and I hope that the hon. Gentleman will be pleased about that. I wish to make this contrast for him, because we have the benefit of the Leader of the Opposition's remarks on Labour's housing plans. He says:

[*Mr Pickles*]

“We didn’t do enough... I don’t have a solution for this, but in the end government has to invest in housing, and...it’s a massive challenge”.

I think we can all agree with that—we can all unite behind those principles—so where the last Administration wrung their hands, this Government are stepping in. In the past couple of years, we have made sure that first-time buyers and those looking to buy a brand-new property have been given a helping hand. We also reinvigorated the right to buy, building mixed communities, more affordable homes and giving social tenants a chance to move up the housing ladder. This Government believe in extending opportunity to everyone who works hard and wants to do so.

The Home Builders Federation has said:

“If people can’t buy, builders can’t build”.

It has also said that “people’s inability to buy” has been the biggest “constraint” on house building. That is why in the Budget we announced our help to buy scheme. It is here to help in two ways: it is offering an equitable loan and a mortgage guarantee.

Clive Efford (Eltham) (Lab): Given that 60% of homes built in central London are being sold to overseas buyers, how does the Secretary of State think that the help to buy scheme will affect the prices of those properties and people’s ability to enter the housing market if he does not deal with that problem?

Mr Pickles: This scheme will not be available for foreign buyers; this is a scheme to help people from this country. That situation did not happen overnight, and the hon. Gentleman’s own Government signally failed to do anything about it. It is perhaps apposite for me to raise the issues to do with social housing.

As well as rewarding those who want to get on, we are taking tough action to tackle those who want a free ride and who are abusing the housing system. We are announcing today new measures to stop rogue landlords cashing in from renting homes to illegal migrants and we are also ensuring fair play in the allocation of taxpayer-funded social housing. We are tackling the widespread perception that the way social housing is allocated is unfair and favours foreign migrants over local people and members of the armed services.

It is true that one in 10 of all the new social housing tenancies in England go to a foreign migrant whereas in London one in five social housing tenancies belong to a foreign migrant. That is not fair to people who have worked hard and paid their taxes in Britain, so new rules will ensure that councils give priority to local people and to the armed forces when allocating social housing. That tough action will tackle the pull factors that led to unsustainable immigration under Labour and it will help community cohesion by ensuring fair play and removing the perception of unfairness that extremists exploit.

Dame Anne Begg (Aberdeen South) (Lab): I am sure the right hon. Gentleman is very keen that the work force should be mobile and able to move around the country to where there is work. However, would that

not make the person moving into an area no longer a local, meaning that they would not qualify for social housing?

Mr Pickles: As the hon. Lady knows, under this Government and the previous Government a number of schemes have enabled tenants in social housing to swap between local authorities. Those schemes will continue to operate.

We are offering a simple and proportionate response to housing needs. As my second favourite member of the Labour party, Lord Mandelson, remarked last week:

“I can’t quite remember which member of the government it was who claimed to have abolished boom and bust. Well, we abolished boom”.

Last week, Labour was again playing the politics of envy and division, attacking the fact that we are helping hard-working families in middle England, in both the north and the south. Let me be clear for Labour’s benefit. We are not about to introduce 110% or even 100% mortgages for those who cannot afford to pay, but 95% mortgages for people who, but for the financial crisis, could have put enough money aside.

The checks are in place. Applicants will need to prove they can repay the loan before they pick up the front door key. As I said to the hon. Member for Coventry North West (Mr Robinson), this is not a scheme for second home owners, but the rules need to be carefully worded so we do not slam the door on parents who want to do a bit for their kids or prevent people from rebuilding their lives after family breakdown. Unlike Labour, this Government have not given up on growing families who are in properties too small for their needs, buyers looking to make that first step, or tenants who believe they can aim higher. We will continue to work closely with the industry to do everything in our power to make sure home hopefuls realise their dreams.

Bob Stewart (Beckenham) (Con): Will my right hon. Friend educate me, as I am probably mistaken, but will it be possible for a first-time buyer to buy a house that is not a new build?

Mr Pickles: Two schemes will be available. The first is the homebuy scheme, which will start from 1 April and is for new construction. From January next year, it will also be possible for buyers to purchase properties other than new builds.

The Government are giving the housing market a kick-start and are maintaining momentum on supply. On planning, we will be reducing planning burdens, making better use of empty buildings, bringing people back to live in town centres and supporting shops. There will be funding of more than £1 billion for thousands of new affordable and privately rented homes, for which we know there is demand. We are putting spades back into the ground and more workers back on site, and giving people more options over where they live.

We are also building on the success of our rejuvenated right to buy. Between July and September last year, numbers doubled, but we will go further. That is why we have put before Parliament regulations that will increase the discount for Londoners, where house prices are highest, to £100,000. The measure will come into effect from midnight tonight.

We are reducing waiting lists for tenants who are ready to move on. Under our schemes, new homes will be built to replace those sold. What is Labour's response? The Local Government Association Labour group says that the new right to buy is

"a cynical move by the government which is in effect forcing a fire-sale of community assets."

I am sorry that the shadow communities Minister, the hon. Member for Derby North (Chris Williamson), is not in the Chamber. He too attacked the scheme and bemoaned the fact that in the 1980s,

"we saw council houses being sold off in their millions, and now the Government are at it again."—[*Official Report*, 6 March 2012; Vol. 541, c. 241WH.]

As the late Alan Freeman would have said, "Not half we ain't."

Labour are the enemies of aspiration. Every council tenant on every council estate who wanted to work hard and move up had the ladder of opportunity kicked away from them under Labour. It will be restored by the coalition. The Government have accepted Michael Heseltine's proposals for devolving power to local areas, a natural extension of the measures in the Localism Act 2011. The Government are taking decisive action in favour of families with ambition.

The head of the CBI said that

"our call for a focus on the short-term boost of housing has been heeded, alongside an increase in longer-term big ticket infrastructure spending...by shifting £6 billion to housing and infrastructure, the Government has sowed the seeds for growth and jobs."

The Budget is tackling Labour's toxic legacy. It is prising open the door of opportunity and heralding a day long overdue, when those who have put everything into this country finally get the chance to own a little piece of the place they call home.

I commend the Budget to the House.

4.47 pm

Hilary Benn (Leeds Central) (Lab): I draw the attention of the House to an indirect interest, declarable but not registerable, as my wife receives rental income from a property.

We welcome this opportunity to discuss the Budget and housing. The housing crisis has come upon us over many years—people living longer, a rising population, the breakdown of relationships and new families looking for a secure home. There is rising demand but not enough supply. The well housed—the majority—are affected only when they think about where their children can afford to live, whether they want to rent or to buy; while the younger generation, priced out of the market, see their dream of home ownership recede into the distance.

The Minister responsible for planning, the Under-Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, the hon. Member for Grantham and Stamford (Nick Boles), expressed the consequences eloquently in his Policy Exchange speech earlier this year, when he talked about the misery of young families forced to grow up in tiny flats with no outside space, and working men and women in their 20s and 30s having to live with their parents or share bedrooms with friends. Doing something about that is a task for all of us. We have to harness

land, money and consent to build the communities we need so that young people and families can build a better future.

Ministers have made big claims for what was announced in the Budget. Of course we welcome steps that will enable people to get a foot on the housing ladder, and where they work, we will support them; after all, helping people to get a home is exactly what we have been calling on the Government to do. But the proof will lie in the detail of the schemes and on progress in actually managing to build more homes. As always with the Secretary of State, the issue is not so much his stated intention as his delivery. Perhaps that explains why we have had four major housing launches over the past three years and more than 300 announcements on housing; and why, in his recent speech to the Conservative spring conference on what he had actually achieved, the Secretary of State devoted three words to building more houses, and 194 words to talking about closing down a bar in the basement of his Department.

In the past few days, headline after headline has queried the Government's grasp of the detail of its latest scheme. The Chancellor did not seem to know, and neither did the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills, whether the scheme could indeed act as a spare-home subsidy, as my right hon. Friend the shadow Chancellor memorably christened it; whereas they certainly know that they are forcing social tenants out of their own homes because they have a spare room.

Let us begin by examining the facts about the Government's record. Housing starts fell by 11% last year to 98,000. The number of private homes started was down; the number of local authority homes started was down; and the number of housing association homes started was down—indeed, the figure of 19,460 was the lowest for eight years.

Sir Bob Russell (Colchester) (LD): Will the right hon. Gentleman confirm that in 13 years of Labour government fewer council houses were built than in the entire period of the Thatcher Government?

Hilary Benn: I will happily confirm that we did not build enough council houses, although that began to change in 2007. Indeed, 70,000 affordable homes for which this Government have tried to take credit in their target of 170,000 were started by the Labour Government.

Andrew Gwynne (Denton and Reddish) (Lab): I urge my right hon. Friend to resist the temptation raised by the Secretary of State to be too political, and commend to him the partnership work of Labour Tameside council and New Charter housing trust, which together have set the ambition and the reality of producing one affordable home a day for the next three years. That is Labour in action.

Hilary Benn: I welcome the efforts that my hon. Friend has described. I said a moment ago that this is a responsibility for all of us, but I cannot promise to resist the temptations presented by the Secretary of State, given what he had to say.

Ministers do not want to talk about housing starts, because the figures are bad, so instead they want to focus on completions. Let us have a look at them. The facts are pretty stark. The number of completions in

[*Hilary Benn*]

England in each of the first two years of the coalition Government was lower than in any one of the 13 years of the Labour Government. In other words, we completed more homes in every one of those years than the Government have managed in either year since they were elected. Indeed, the Secretary of State has the dubious distinction of presiding over the lowest level of completions by any peacetime Government since the mid-1920s. That is some achievement. No wonder the construction industry has been so hard hit. Eighty thousand construction workers are out of work, and output has fallen by 8.2%, contributing a great deal to the absence of growth in the British economy. The rate of home ownership has fallen, and there are 136,000 fewer home owners than when the Government came to power. That is hitting the youngest hardest, because the average age of a first-time buyer is now 37.

Official statistics from the Secretary of State's Homes and Communities Agency show that affordable housing starts collapsed in the last financial year by 68%; homelessness and rough sleeping are up by a third since the election; the number of families with children and/or a pregnant woman housed in bed-and-breakfast accommodation for six weeks or more has risen by over 800% since the coalition came together; and 125 councils have had families in bed-and-breakfast accommodation for six weeks or more. As private rents have continued their relentless rise and incomes are squeezed, more people in work have to claim housing benefit to help them pay the rent.

Alun Cairns (Vale of Glamorgan) (Con): I am struggling with an inconsistency on the Labour Benches. The former Prime Minister, the right hon. Member for Kirkcaldy and Cowdenbeath (Mr Brown), said that housing was essentially a private sector operation and that the public sector need not be involved in it.

Hilary Benn: I simply say to the hon. Gentleman that if he cares to look at the record of the Labour Government, he will see that 2 million more homes were built during those 13 years, 500,000 of which were affordable homes that we provided, and 1 million more families were able to buy their own home. That stands in comparison to the Government's miserable record over the past two years.

Clive Efford: In response to the previous intervention, I remind Members that this Government inherited the biggest council house building programme for 20 years, but one of their first decisions was to scrap it, which is why we have so few social housing starts.

Hilary Benn: My hon. Friend is correct. That is a consequence of the 60% cut.

The number of people on housing benefit has gone up by 300,000, almost entirely accounted for by people in work. When the Prime Minister launched NewBuy, the previous scheme, in March last year, we were told that it would help 100,000 people to get a mortgage. A year on, how many people has it actually helped? The answer is 1,500. Firstbuy, which was slightly more successful, has helped 6,000 people against a target of 16,500.

Then there is the strange case of the remarkably reclusive infrastructure guarantee. It was launched by the Chancellor in the autumn statement. He said that he would set aside £10 billion for investment in housing. It sounded good and we supported it, but we now know that not a single penny of it has yet been used to support house building. The facts are clear: lots of promises, precious little delivered, and not a lot for the Secretary of State to crow about.

Mr Sheerman: Many of my constituents are fed up with listening to Punch and Judy debates like this. They are getting tired of hearing, "They did this, but we didn't do that." Could we not offer the Government a proper agreement to discuss the way forward to deliver affordable housing now, because it is a national emergency? Is there not a possibility that the parties in this House could get together for a change?

Hilary Benn: Well, I have already told the Secretary of State that when he has proposals that will work and succeed, I will support them. If he wants the benefit of further advice from the Opposition, I would be happy to see him in his office, especially if he is buying the tea and biscuits himself.

Richard Graham (Gloucester) (Con): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Hilary Benn: If the hon. Gentleman will bear with me, I wish to make a little more progress.

I will now turn to the Budget. I have some questions to put to the Secretary of State. We know that the Government have a soft spot for people who earn a lot of money, but why is he proposing that his new deposit and mortgage scheme should be made available to anyone earning any amount, including millionaires, so that they can buy a house worth up to £600,000? Why is he changing the rules in that way, given that Firstbuy is currently only for those with family incomes below £60,000, and given that the Treasury document published last Wednesday states that the scheme is meant to help "households struggling to save for the high mortgage deposits required by lenders"?

How many struggling top rate taxpayers does he expect to take advantage of the new scheme? No doubt they will be very grateful to him for his generosity.

In respect of the mortgage guarantee element of the help-to-buy scheme, can the Secretary of State clarify once and for all whether people who already own a property will be able to use it to buy a second home? He did not quite answer that earlier—[*Interruption.*] No, he did not. On Thursday, the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills could not answer the question. When asked, he simply said:

"The scheme has not yet been designed in detail."—[*Official Report*, 21 March 2013; Vol. 560, c. 1102.]

At the same time, the Minister for Housing told "The World at One" that second-home purchases would not be allowed. The BBC then reported that No. 10 had had to clarify the position. It seemed that the Housing Minister had been referring to another part of the help-to-buy scheme relating to equity loans. So yesterday we all turned on "The Andrew Marr Show" to watch

the Chief Secretary to the Treasury, and far from ruling it out categorically, he said, in a formulation that the Secretary of State has repeated today:

“Our intention is not to help people to buy second homes”.

If the Government do not want it to happen, why do Ministers not simply make it clear that it is not going to happen? Otherwise, reminiscent of last year’s Budget, we will have fanfare followed by farce.

In the event that these schemes are over-subscribed, what criteria will be used to determine which applicants are going to get assistance? I listened very carefully to the Secretary of State when he said that foreign nationals would not be eligible for assistance from the scheme, but where in the Government’s scheme description does it say that foreign nationals will not be eligible? I have looked at the mortgage eligibility criteria, and they do not say that. Has he taken any advice on whether EU nationals who are resident in the UK will be barred by law from taking part in the scheme?

What estimate has the Secretary of State made of the impact that “help to buy” will have on the housing market, given that we know that it is the lack of supply that has led to high house prices? The Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors has warned that the Government must be careful not to create “another housing bubble”. It seems that the scheme is not even a done deal with the lenders, because the Council of Mortgage Lenders has set out certain conditions that it wants to be met, or else, it warns, the scheme could be made “uneconomical”. How many additional homes, in total, does the Secretary of State think will be built as a result of the scheme?

Fiona O’Donnell (East Lothian) (Lab): Will my right hon. Friend also seek clarity on whether, in the event of a family break-up and a parent wishing to buy a home, that parent will be restricted in the number of bedrooms they can have in that home, or is aspiration only for some and not for others?

Hilary Benn: That is a very good question that has already been asked. I am very happy to give way to the Secretary of State if he wishes to answer it. Does he wish to answer? No, he does not.

We need a lot of new affordable homes because of the decision taken by the Government nearly three years ago to slash the affordable housing budget, when £4 billion was taken away. We are then asked to be grateful to the Secretary of State when we hear in the Budget announcements that an additional £225 million will be made available, although it seems that only £125 million of it will be spent before 2015. That figure is dwarfed by the original £4 billion cut. We are told that this is a time for tough choices. A quarter of a billion pounds was identified by the Secretary of State to try to persuade councils to collect the bins in the way that he thinks is correct. It was such a failure that only one council took him up on his offer. A quarter of a billion pounds and one council: think how many affordable homes that money could have been used to build! If the Government want to be taken seriously on affordable housing, they have to will the means. That is why we called for the 4G auction proceeds and the bankers’ bonus tax repetition to be used to build 125,000 new affordable homes to get the economy moving.

The Secretary of State referred to councils. We know that he is presiding over cuts to the local authority sector that are bigger than in any other part of the public sector and that the cuts are being unfairly applied. Councils need as much money as they can find to help, in part, to build homes. When the Secretary of State was asked about these cuts earlier this year in front of the departmental Select Committee, he said that in his view the cuts were “modest”. In private, however, it seems that his views are rather different. When it was reported last month that the Chancellor was looking for further cuts from certain Departments, including CLG, *The Times* said that

“sources close to Mr Pickles”—

[*Interruption.*] It certainly was not me. *The Times* said that

“sources close to Mr Pickles made clear that he was not accepting the latest reductions, arguing that council services had already been cut to the bone.”

It seems, therefore, that the Secretary of State’s private views are rather different from his public views. We are used to hearing Liberal Democrats say one thing to one audience and another thing to another, but I am surprised that the Secretary of State is also doing so.

This is a familiar record. The Secretary of State, as the statistics show, is not very good at getting things done. It is not just me who thinks that; the Chancellor does, too. Apparently the Chancellor was in a fiery mood at the Cabinet meeting following the loss of the triple A credit rating and challenged Ministers about the poor rate of growth. *The Daily Telegraph* reported:

“Eric Pickles, the Communities and Local Government Secretary, was given a ‘dressing down’ for failings in the Government’s flagship enterprise zone programme, according to sources.

With less than a month until he unveils his Budget, the Chancellor criticised Mr Pickles over figures that show that one in three enterprise zones is failing to attract enough businesses. Mr Pickles is then said to have attempted to deflect the blame on to Vince Cable, the Business Secretary, by accusing him of failing to convince foreign businesses to invest in the schemes.”

It is a very familiar story: Cabinet members are so busy fighting and blaming each other that it is no wonder that they cannot sort out the problems facing the country.

The reforms to the national planning policy framework were supposed to streamline the planning system, but it seems that they have left councils less able to decide applications quickly. The national rate of decisions taken on major applications within 13 weeks has fallen from 62% in 2011 to 57% in 2012, and the same is true of minor applications determined within eight weeks, which are down from 72% to 69%, and the transition period is about to finish.

The planning Minister, the Under-Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, the hon. Member for Grantham and Stamford, said recently that he wants further relaxation of the planning laws. We would be very interested to hear what he has in mind.

Richard Graham: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for giving way. May I confirm for him that the relaxation of planning laws introduced by the new planning Minister has been incredibly helpful to my constituents? It has ensured that work on three brownfield sites is now going ahead, which will be a great boon to the people of Gloucester.

[*Richard Graham*]

The right hon. Gentleman also made a point earlier about the Secretary of State's problems with delivery. Given that the right hon. Gentleman agreed earlier with one of my Liberal Democrat friends that delivery was a problem for his party when it was in power, is it not better to focus on the Budget announcements and—

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Lindsay Hoyle): Order. Mr Graham, please keep interventions short. Sixty-one Members wish to get in and speak. If we are going to get on, we must have short interventions.

Hilary Benn: I am grateful to the hon. Member for Gloucester (Richard Graham) for agreeing that the Secretary of State is having problems with the delivery of housing. I have already indicated that we will support any measures that will help.

Councils will have to make proper assessments of their housing need. On the Prime Minister's announcement today on council and social housing and migration, the Secretary of State knows that people cannot just get off a plane and get a council house. He will be familiar, of course, with section 160A of the Housing Act 1996, and he will know that councils already have the power to put in place allocation schemes, because the previous Labour Government issued guidance in 2009 and an increasing number of them are doing so. It would be helpful if we could get clarity about precisely what is being proposed, given that the housing lead of the Local Government Association, Councillor Mike Jones, who is a Conservative, has queried the need for the guidance, and given that this morning's papers reported that the Government plan to impose an expectation on councils. How exactly is it possible to impose an expectation on councils? [*Interruption.*] I say to the planning Minister that I have a little bit more experience of Government than him—and it shows.

Ministers are looking to councils to identify housing need, but I say to them that the Growth and Infrastructure Bill will not assist councils in doing so, because clause 1 threatens to take away the power of local communities to decide whether housing is provided. The planning Minister, who is being very vocal, said that “vanishingly few” councils would be caught by that provision. However, to judge by the latest figures, as many as 21 local authorities could be stripped of their democratic accountability in taking decisions on housing planning applications if developers choose to go straight to the Planning Inspectorate.

How does the planning Minister think that will assist communities to take responsibility for housing provision? All of us have to face up to the need to provide more homes. That is the point that he has been making. However, is it better to let developers decide where houses should be built or to allow communities to take that responsibility for themselves?

I turn, finally, to one of the effects of what the Government are doing, which was not mentioned by the Chancellor in his speech on Wednesday. That is the effect that the decisions taken by the Chancellor, the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government and the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions will have on people on low incomes and their homes. So far in this debate, we have talked about the need to build

homes so that people can move into them. I want to turn to the problem of people being forced out of their homes because of the Government's bedroom tax and the Secretary of State's poll tax.

One consequence of what the Government are doing is likely to be rising rent arrears. That is exactly what councils and housing associations up and down the country are anticipating. Last week, the evidence from the universal credit pilot showed rising rent arrears. That is creating a lot of uncertainty, not least for housing associations. A number of them have had credit rating downgrades recently. If lenders think that housing associations will have difficulty collecting rent, it could put up their borrowing costs, which could impact on their balance sheets and their ability to borrow. Ultimately, it will affect their ability to build the homes that the Secretary of State says he wants to see. All of that will create huge challenges for families, councils and housing associations, not least because of the debt that people will get into.

At the very time when the Chancellor has decided that the most important thing to do is to cut the top rate of tax, the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government has brought in his new poll tax and the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions has brought in the bedroom tax. What is so astonishing is that they are both singling out one group of people in our society. Whether they are working, seeking work or unable to work, the people who will be affected are those on the very lowest incomes, because that is why they get council tax benefit and housing benefit.

Given that the fundamental problem in the country is a lack of growth in the economy—the Chancellor's crowning failure—have Ministers paused for a second to consider what impact those two taxes will have on the economy? All the evidence shows that when people who are on low incomes have money, they tend to spend it. In Leeds, £9.4 million—[*Interruption.*] I know that the planning Minister, who is chuntering from a sedentary position, does not want to hear this, but the people on the lowest incomes in Leeds are going to lose £9.4 million that they do not have because of rent increases and council tax rises.

Incredibly, last week the Secretary of State tried to blame local authorities for his policy, when he said that they

“seek to persecute and to tax the poor.”—[*Official Report*, 18 March 2013; Vol. 560, c. 611.]

That is extraordinary. The only person who is to blame is the Secretary of State. It is his legislation. He is the reason why bills are landing on people's doorsteps that many of them will find hard to pay. Ministers know that people will do their best to stay in their own home—indeed, the Government's assessment expects that to happen—because they want to stay with their friends, family and community.

Kate Green: Is my right hon. Friend interested in research just released by the Centre for Local Economic Strategies which shows that the Government's welfare reforms, and the loss to family incomes, mean that on average 80% of money lost will be lost to the local economy as a result of reduced local shopping, reduced use of local transport, and reduced socialising?

Hilary Benn: My hon. Friend is absolutely right: the reforms will have a damaging economic impact and be bad for families who cannot afford it, although they will try to stay if they can because they value community, friends, neighbours and a sense of place. Ministers know that even if people downsize, there are not enough smaller properties for them to move into. That is why this is a tax: people cannot avoid it because they cannot move.

Yasmin Qureshi (Bolton South East) (Lab): On the bedroom tax, does my right hon. Friend agree that Nos. 10 and 11 Downing street are social housing? Will the occupants of those homes be moving out in light of the fact that—*[Laughter.]*

Hilary Benn: My hon. Friend is right on the first point, although I am not entirely sure that the occupants are claiming housing benefit. We wait to be informed.

People with disabilities will be forced to move and the new home will have to be adapted all over again. Divorced dads who are trying to keep in contact with their children will be told that they have to pay the bedroom tax on the spare bedroom where they stay at the weekend, but as we know, some people will have no choice but to move. The final absurdity—the Chief Secretary should be interested in this—is that if people do move to the right sized property in the private rented sector, because of higher rents the housing benefit bill is likely to be bigger than that paid on the social home from which the family was forced out.

Andrew Stunell (Hazel Grove) (LD): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Hilary Benn: I will conclude now, because many other Members want to speak. I have been generous in giving way but I want to finish on this point.

Last Friday a constituent came to see me in my surgery. He is a man in his late 50s who has worked for the past 42 years, until last December when he became unwell. He currently has to live on £71 a week and has just received a council tax bill for £108.25. He is not sure how is going to pay it and he asked me—it is quite something when someone says this to a Member of Parliament, because we had not met before—“Can I tell you that I can no longer keep the heating on in my flat because it costs me £25 a week and I do not have the money to pay it?”

The Chancellor, the Secretary of State and other Ministers are fond of telling us that we have to make really tough decisions, but I wonder how difficult it was to decide to give those on highest incomes a tax reduction at the beginning of next month, while imposing a reduction in council tax benefit and the bedroom tax on people. They are taking money from those who are poor—that is what we are talking about—and giving it to those who are rich. That is why they should scrap the cut to council tax benefit and get rid of the bedroom tax.

The Secretary of State was full of his usual bravado and occasional bluster in what he had to say, but the cold hard reality of the collision of his policies with people’s lives shows that those policies are not well thought out and are incapable of being delivered. Because of that record, we have a promise of growth that has not

materialised, a promise of localism that is not what it seems, and a promise of homes that have not been built. This Chancellor, this Secretary of State, and this Budget have nothing to offer the people of Britain.

Several hon. Members rose—

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Lindsay Hoyle): Order. I remind hon. Members that there is a limit of five minutes on speeches. If we could have short interventions, that would help to get everybody in.

5.18 pm

Mr David Ruffley (Bury St Edmunds) (Con): The Chancellor is a fiscal Conservative and monetary activist, and as such he eschewed shock and awe measures in this Budget, opting instead for sensible targeted relief that is welcome on this side of the House. Cuts to income tax mean that by 2015 a large number of income tax payers will receive a £700 cut compared with their tax bill of 2010. On child care, average two-child families with working mothers and fathers will get £2,400. Fuel duty has been frozen, and it is the longest freeze for two decades. The national insurance contribution cut of £2,000 is equivalent to someone just under average median earnings being taken on at no national insurance cost to an employer.

I support the house building programme that we have heard about. As someone on the dry end of the Conservative party economically, I have heard the criticism that it is Fannie Mae all over again. People wonder whether there will be lots of defaults when the interest-free period runs out, and whether the policy could lead to higher house prices because of supply constraints. I am sure I will hear those concerns again, but the reality is that we need an injection of confidence into British households. There is no question but that the ability to get on the housing ladder, including the encouragement to spend money, because consumer spending frequently attends the purchase of a new house, is the kind of confidence that the British consumer wants at this stage of the economic cycle.

Oliver Colvile (Plymouth, Sutton and Devonport) (Con): Does my hon. Friend recognise that the key issue is the blockage in getting money to people and giving them the ability to borrow it in the first place? We expect our banks to ensure that they not only rebuild their balance sheets, but lend money and make it available.

Mr Ruffley: My hon. Friend makes an interesting point.

There were no shock-and-awe measures in the Budget, because the Chancellor is probably right to believe that we are not approaching a lost Japanese decade. Nevertheless, I am concerned about the Office for Budget Responsibility growth projections; it forecasts growth of 2.3% in 2015, 2.7% in 2016 and 2.8% in 2017. The forecast turns on one central OBR assumption that might be wrong. The OBR assumes that there is quite a large negative output gap—that, in simple terms, there is a lot of slack in the economy. Forecasting or estimating the output gap is very difficult. If its assumption is wrong, and if the output gap is smaller than it says, a huge amount of the £120 billion a year last year and the coming year is structural rather than cyclical. If that is the case, we will

[*Mr Ruffley*]

need shock-and-awe measures—deeper cuts than those implied in the spending envelope and, yes, a fiscal stimulus in deeper tax cuts.

Mr MacNeil: On the one hand the hon. Gentleman calls for deeper cuts, but on the other hand, he spoke a few moments ago of the importance of consumer spending. In an earlier intervention, the hon. Member for Stretford and Urmston (Kate Green) said that 90% of the money for which those who are being penalised by the bedroom tax are responsible circulates locally. Surely if the Government take money out of the economy, we will see not consumer-led spending, but further contraction in the economy and further gaps.

Mr Ruffley: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman did not hear the second part of my statement, when I mentioned deeper cuts in public spending and a fiscal stimulus with deeper tax cuts.

If we do not have the growth we want in the economy in the next 12 or 18 months, I would like capital gains tax holidays of the kind suggested by my right hon. Friend the Member for Wokingham (Mr Redwood), to get investment moneys circulating. I also believe there could be a case for deeper cuts in corporation tax to approximate more closely the Irish model; Ireland has 12.5% corporation tax, which makes it more of a magnet for foreign direct investment.

That said, the Conservative party has indicated that it has the technology should we need to go further and faster in fiscal consolidation. The Conservative economic affairs committee, which is chaired by my right hon. Friend the Member for Wokingham, has discussed proposals from colleagues for a suspension of the carbon price. A key cost that is undoubtedly hampering business confidence is that, in 2011, about one fifth of the energy bill paid by small and medium-sized enterprises was attributable to green, renewable policies. Considering whether we want a holiday from that, and certainly not going further than European countries, would seem sensible.

On Budget day, the Chancellor said two important things about monetary policy. First, he explicitly said that the Financial Policy Committee must co-ordinate better in future, under Mark Carney, with the Monetary Policy Committee. At the moment, the regulators are pulling in different directions. The MPC has pumped in £375 billion by printing electronic money in exchange for purchasing gilts from the commercial banks, but that credit is not flowing into the real economy. On the other hand, the Financial Services Authority, and its successor body the FPC, are telling the banks not to lend any of that money and to rebuild their capital position to de-leverage. Those two impulses fight against each other and it is entirely sensible for the Chancellor to say that the FPC and the MPC must co-ordinate better.

Secondly, the Chancellor talked about forward policy guidance via thresholds to commit to looser monetary policy for a set period. That has had a good effect in Canada and the United States, and it will give British business the confidence that interest rates will not be jacked up just as the recovery begins and that economic activity will not be choked off.

I support the Budget with qualifications.

5.26 pm

Mr Alistair Darling (Edinburgh South West) (Lab): I shall follow up shortly the points made by the hon. Member for Bury St Edmunds (Mr Ruffley) on the Bank of England, but first I draw the attention of the House to my entry in the Register of Members' Financial Interests.

The big problem we face at the moment is lack of growth. Here we are, five years since the crisis hit most western developed economies, yet contrary to what has happened in the past, there is absolutely no sign that growth will return to this country.

Richard Drax (South Dorset) (Con): One of the many reasons we do not have growth is that the Opposition made the country such a client state that we are indebted up to our eyeballs and there is no room for growth.

Mr Darling: With due respect to the hon. Gentleman, I anticipated that predictable nonsense. I am grateful to him for intervening, however, not least because he has given me another minute in which to make my case.

As the Office for Budget Responsibility points out, the recession is taking far longer to come out of than any we have seen previously. The principal factor is that in 2007-08 we had a complete collapse of our GDP and that situation has not been recovered in the past five years. Frankly, on the evidence presented by the Chancellor last week, I see little evidence that it is going to happen. As a result, we are borrowing very large sums of money: £120 billion last year, this year and next year.

As I was saying before the hon. Gentleman interrupted, in Chancellor's forecasts, yet again in the back three years of the forecast period we see an expectation that growth will go from 2.7% to 2.8% in 2017. That is exactly the same profile that we have seen in each of the Chancellor's Budgets and autumn statements. The problem is that these sunny uplands are moving to the right each time he stands up. I cannot for the life of me see why anything will be any different in 2017 from the bleak outlook we see today. The problem is that as long as we have low growth we will have high levels of borrowing, and debt is now expected to peak at 85% of our GDP. When we advocate a different approach, the Conservatives and the Liberals say that we are talking about borrowing more, but this Government are borrowing more than they ever imagined they would in 2010, and they are doing so not to invest in things such as infrastructure, but because of the price of their economic failure. That is what many of us have a problem with.

Mr MacNeil: Surely by boasting that he would cut harder and deeper than Thatcher, the right hon. Gentleman set the tone for the cult of austerity that we are now living through.

Mr Darling: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his intervention, but not in the way he intended, because that is nonsense too. Incidentally, in the leaked document from John Swinney, the Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Employment and Sustainable Growth, the Scottish Government too faced up to some difficult decisions. The difference is that I and—to give them credit—the coalition Government were open about the difficulties we faced, whereas the Scottish National party wanted to keep them secret from the Scottish people.

It seems that the Chancellor has given up on doing anything. As I said last week, we are in the middle of a lost decade—it happened to Japan and it is happening to us now—and there is no sign that the Government have any idea how to get out of it. The Government's Budget response on infrastructure is fine, but it does not come along for two or three years. On housing, I agreed with everything that my right hon. Friend the Member for Leeds Central (Hilary Benn), the shadow Secretary of State, said. The problem is that last week's announcement is more likely to create yet another housing bubble by driving up asset prices. Indeed, some of it might even sow the seeds that gave rise to the sub-prime mortgage problem we saw in the United States, because we are suffering from an acute lack of housing in just about every town and city in the country.

I was encouraged by what the planning Minister, the Under-Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, the hon. Member for Grantham and Stamford (Nick Boles), said over the summer. Unless we break through this logjam and get more housing built, prices will go up and up and people will face the same difficulties they did in the past. The irony is that we are not prepared to build houses, but we are prepared, it seems, to finance the inflation of a bubble in housing prices. That is absolutely the wrong thing to do. The bedroom tax illustrates the problem; there simply are not the houses for people whose income is being cut to move to. That illustrates the need to improve our housing infrastructure, although the problem applies to transport and energy as well. I do not object to some measures in the Budget, but nothing in it is likely to get our economy going.

The hon. Member for Bury St Edmunds referred to the Bank of England and said that the Chancellor of the Exchequer had effectively said, “I can't do anything further in fiscal terms. It's all up to the Bank of England now.” Most Members have warmly welcomed the appointment of Mark Carney. I think he will be a very good Governor, but with the best will in the world we cannot expect him to do everything the Government are supposed to be doing. It is useful that we can tell the markets what we think will happen to interest rates. I suspect that most people do not expect them to rise for the next two or three years, although they might rise in the United States, given that the US Government are following a different policy from that being followed here and in Europe.

I do not think, however, that the sort of measures the Chancellor has in mind and which the new Governor might announce in relation to forward guidance will do the trick and get our economy going. I have said before that quantitative easing has played its role and stabilised the banking system—I have supported what has been done so far—but there is little evidence of what additional QE would do for our economy. The risk is that the money simply goes into the bank vaults, not into the wider economy. The Bank will play its part, but monetary policy and fiscal policy have to be complementary, otherwise they simply will not work.

Time does not allow me to mention the eurozone, other than to say that the last week has confirmed my suspicion that the eurozone is almost psychologically incapable of sorting out its problems. Unless it does so, it will hold back growth not only in this country, but elsewhere. At the same time, I am committed to this country remaining part of the European Union—that

is very important—although we need to use our influence. Governments can make a difference. In 2008-09, through the G20, Governments from across the world, from communist China to the Republican-led United States, came together and we did what was necessary to support our economies. And guess what? Our economy was growing in 2010. Look at it now.

5.34 pm

Andrew Stunell (Hazel Grove) (LD): I am delighted to take part in this debate. It is a pleasure to follow the right hon. Member for Edinburgh South West (Mr Darling). Some of his remarks would have had more bite if he had not left us borrowing £428 million every day of 2010. It is a credit to this coalition Government that that figure has been substantially reduced.

As the first Liberal Democrat speaking in this debate, I would not be doing my duty if I did not praise the Chancellor for the decision to raise the income tax threshold to £10,000. This is a long sought-after victory, which I very much welcome, which will see 2.5 million taxpayers—many of them low-paid women—taken out of tax and 20 million taxpayers getting a £700 smaller tax bill than they did under Labour.

I want to use my time primarily to talk about two measures that appear on page 40 of the Red Book. The first is the major step forward announced on zero-carbon homes and the achievement of the target in 2016, which appears in paragraph 1.109. I am delighted to see that. I am delighted, too, to see that the intention is now to increase the standard of energy efficiency of new buildings from October this year. I very much look forward to the announcement by the Department for Communities and Local Government, which is prefigured in the Red Book. I also very much welcome the statement that a decision on allowable solutions will be taken by the summer; the construction industry is certainly ready for this measure. The Zero Carbon Hub has done the preparatory work and the Green Building Council has been pressing for it. I would like to think that the decision reported in the Red Book is at least in part a response to what they have said and to early-day motion 1004, which covers the same ground.

I asked the Prime Minister at Prime Minister's Question Time last November whether the Government still intended to be the greenest Government ever. I was pleased that he replied emphatically, “Yes”. I was even more pleased when, in a speech to the Royal Society on 4 February, he reiterated the Government's commitment. I want to say to the Chancellor, the Chief Secretary and the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government that, given the Prime Minister's support, there can be no excuse for delay. We need an urgent decision on the carbon price for offsite generation for zero-carbon homes. The Red Book says that the decision will be taken by the Department for Communities and Local Government. I am sure that the DCLG and Her Majesty's Treasury can sort out their respective responsibilities, but can we ensure that there is no delay in taking that decision?

The second point I want to bring to the House's attention is the excellent news of more investment in homes for rent, with £225 million and 15,000 starts planned before 2015. That comes on top of 170,000 new homes planned for rent and 150,000 decent homes brought up to standard. There are many positive features to our housing programme. Like everybody else in the

[*Andrew Stunell*]

Chamber, I wish it was going further and faster, but I do not believe we should listen for a moment to the shadow Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government and his complaints, when his Administration reduced the stock of affordable homes by 420,000 and sold so many homes without having a replacement policy—a policy that Labour itself now admits was a failure. I welcome these housing measures in the Budget, but there is still much more to do to improve the quality of our 20 million existing homes and to build the many more we need to the highest environmental standards. I look forward to the coalition making yet more progress in the remaining two and a half years before the general election.

5.38 pm

Mr Jim Cunningham (Coventry South) (Lab): Listening to Government Members this evening, one would think that there was no economic situation in 2008, but in fact it started in America because of the irresponsibility of the bankers—not only in this country, but in America. It is also worth reminding the House, when the Government try to blame those on the Labour Benches, that in his last four or five weeks as President, George Bush pumped billions into the American economy, because he realised right away that the fault lay with the American banks.

I remind Members, too, of the catastrophe associated with Lehman Brothers, with Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, for example. We need to remind the Government of those aspects because the Government were very light, to say the least, when it came to dealing with the bankers who caused the problem in the first place. What they have tried to do is to blame the previous Government for things that they never understood at the time. I remember that when we were in government, their solution to the problem was “Oh, well, we have too much red tape and we must cut it”. I do not remember any Members now on the Government Benches providing any solutions whatever at the time, yet they are pretty good at coming here and trying to blame us for a situation that their friends, the bankers, caused in the first place.

Mike Thornton (Eastleigh) (LD): Under whose regulatory system did those failures take place?

Mr Cunningham: It was the previous Conservative Government, and that has never been acknowledged, so the hon. Gentleman should not rewrite history.

Another interesting aspect of the present economic situation is that local government has taken the brunt—33.3%—of the cuts. People talk about growth, without realising that it is only through local government that growth will happen. It is worth noting that in the west midlands, for example, unemployment is probably the highest in the country with about 8.5% unemployed, while for young people up and down the country it is as high as 21%. Given those levels of youth unemployment over which this Chancellor is presiding, I think it is offensive when he talks about aspiration and the aspiration nation. The UK has the third worst level of youth unemployment in the developed world; of the OECD countries, only Spain and Greece have higher levels. Since the recession started, the UK has experienced the fastest rise in youth unemployment of the G8 countries.

Speaking about aspiration, the Chancellor is dividing people into “aspirants” who aspire to prosperity and others. It is as though he does not know or does not care that there is a national lack of job opportunities available to young people. It is simply disgraceful for the Chancellor to talk about aspiration when one in five young people leaving school might not find work. The Government need an extensive programme to create jobs for young people and should support them in finding those jobs and training them.

Let me deal with manufacturing. I have often spoken about the west midlands and its success in manufacturing, and I strongly believe that the manufacturing sector can drive local economies and boost growth. I was therefore alarmed at the Budget’s lack of discussion of manufacturing industry. The Chancellor’s only mention of it was his claim that for the first time in 40 years we are manufacturing for export more cars than we import. Well, that started under the Labour Government and certainly not under the present Government. The Government try to take the credit for the success of Jaguar Land Rover, but Labour Members know that the previous Labour Government supported that industry.

Mr MacNeil: Will the hon. Gentleman take this opportunity to congratulate his old friend on these green Benches—Alex Salmond—on presiding over youth unemployment in Scotland that is at a 20-year low, recently going down from 25% to 17%?

Mr Cunningham: Obviously, I—

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Lindsay Hoyle): Order. I am not sure that we need to be dragged around the Scottish Parliament and Scottish leaders. This is supposed to be a Budget debate, and I do not see a true connection.

Mr Cunningham: I will accept your ruling, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Why was there nothing in the Budget about manufacturing green technology? If that was the Budget’s intention, it could hardly be any less green than it is. This Government launch initiatives, but then seem to forget them. In 2001, the Chancellor of the Exchequer pledged that 100,000 people would be able to buy their own home; 18 months later, only 1,500 had done so. I hope that this will not be the fate of the schemes announced in last week’s Budget, too.

Public sector workers have had yet another 1% pay cut levied on them. As I understand the Chancellor’s Budget statement, this will probably last until 2015. I believe that 1.4 million public sector workers, including nurses, paramedics, midwives and prison staff, are affected by that policy. Those jobs are spread out across the country rather than being just London-based. Rather than cutting those people’s pay by 1%, putting more money in the pockets of these workers would be an excellent way to stimulate demand across the country. Instead, the Government are stifling those workers’ spending ability. Furthermore, a high proportion of women in the public sector will be affected. I fear that the Government’s approach will hurt working women disproportionately. It certainly does not encourage aspiration.

Cuts in funding for Coventry city council will hit the most vulnerable people in the city. The council’s community services director must make a third of its £63 million

budget cuts by 2016. Last week cuts of £6 million were announced, which will mean the closure of day care centres used by hundreds of elderly and disabled people, the axing of subsidies for transport to day centres, the ending of housing-with-care bedsit schemes for the vulnerable, and the cutting of housing-related support that is currently provided for the elderly and disabled. Roughly 160 carers are expected to lose their jobs. It is predicted that thousands of elderly people will be affected, as well as people with learning disabilities, Alzheimer's and mental health problems.

We should judge our society according to how we treat the most vulnerable, the old, the sick and the young, not according to how we treat our millionaires. We are failing fast, and this Budget will do nothing to help those people.

5.45 pm

Alun Cairns (Vale of Glamorgan) (Con): In the limited time available to me, I intend to explain why I welcome the measures in the Budget, and also why I consider the views of Opposition Members to be highly inconsistent.

Given the lack of growth in our largest trading nations, it is easy to understand why the Chancellor was left with so little room for manoeuvre. After all, growth projections in Germany and the United States—just two examples—have been downgraded. We need to recognise the context of the present position: the scale of debt inherited in 2010, the major issues that confront the eurozone, the local impact of the high prices of commodities such as oil, gas and food and the inflationary pressures that that involves, and the lack of growth in other nations.

Oliver Colvile: Did not the last Labour Government create a structural budget deficit as long ago as 2001?

Alun Cairns: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. I shall say more about Labour's inconsistency later.

All the issues I have mentioned have had impacts on the living standards of families throughout the United Kingdom. Decisions such as these are difficult to take, but they must be seen in context.

What I welcome most is the Chancellor's drive to create the most competitive of economic environments. That will attract investment, and will also continue to encourage the private sector in the UK to invest. The further reduction in corporation tax goes to the heart of a sustained economic recovery, and underlines the economic imbalance that we inherited. The 20% corporation tax rate means that we now compare exceptionally well with our major competitors. In Germany the rate is 29%, in France it is 33%, and in Italy it is 31%. Those are material considerations for anyone who is thinking about where to invest, and for any United Kingdom investor who is thinking of expanding. We should also bear in mind the uncompetitive position that we inherited. The increase in employers' national insurance rates led to the term "jobs tax", with which we are now familiar.

The ultimate judgment will come in the grades that the World Economic Forum confers on the competitiveness of the various nations. Having ranked fourth in 1997, we were dragged down to 13th by the Labour party. At last, however, we have recovered enough to rank eighth—and that happened before the announcement

of the welcome changes in the Budget. Neither the 20% corporation tax rate nor the employers' national insurance relief were taken into account.

Other Budget measures that I welcome include the "help to buy" mortgage guarantee schemes. That is an area of policy in which no Government would ideally become involved. However, bearing in mind the context I referred to earlier, the Chancellor had little choice other than to get involved. The scheme will provide a welcome boost to the construction and retail industries and various elements of the service sector, and it will make a significant difference to many families who want to buy their own home.

Wayne David (Caerphilly) (Lab): On "help to buy", does the hon. Gentleman think it morally correct that millionaires can get support to buy second homes?

Alun Cairns: The hon. Gentleman recognises, I hope, that the economy needs to be kick-started. He always refers to the changes to the highest income tax rates and the 5% reduction that will take place next week. However, I remind him that the rate Labour introduced was temporary. If so, when was Labour planning to abandon it? The ultimate question that Labour Members have to answer is, will they reintroduce for the next general election the 50% rate that was in their manifesto? I will happily give way to the hon. Gentleman if he wants to intervene again. Obviously, he does not, because they are not prepared to say whether they will commit to doing that.

I am pleased that the homebuy scheme will be limited to three years because as I said, it is not a policy area that any Government would want to be involved with in perpetuity, because of some of the risks that have been highlighted. It simply is not a public sector initiative that any Government would want to undertake all the time.

If those who want to criticise such initiatives are to have any credibility, they need to offer some form of alternative. It is hard to believe the audacity shown by some Labour Members. Less than three years ago, they were responsible for, or were the loudest cheerleaders for, the policies that led us into this position, giving this country the most debt-ridden, overspent, unbalanced economy in modern history. Manufacturing had declined by more than 20%, public sector job numbers had ballooned and we had the highest debt level of any G20 nation. I notice that the Labour Members who were seeking to intervene and criticise earlier are now staring at their boots.

These initiatives are aimed at promoting growth and freezing or cutting spending. [*Interruption.*] The Labour critics really need to come up with some alternatives. Until they have accepted their responsibility, they will lack credibility and no one will listen. Even Lord Mandelson recognised that just last week. They came up with some sort of plans in the past. Spending the 4G auction money on 100,000 new affordable homes was one option; a two-year freeze on stamp duty was another. However, that money has already been used—on the national debt—so I look forward to hearing their alternatives.

This Budget will make a difference to families, and help to kick-start the housing sector and to make Britain's economy much more competitive. I look forward to hearing the solutions that Labour Members will try—

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Nigel Evans): Order. I call Brian Donohoe.

5.53 pm

Mr Brian H. Donohoe (Central Ayrshire) (Lab): I became a Member of this House in 1992, and I have to say that this is the worst Budget I can remember—that is, since last year's omnishambles of the pasty tax and the caravan tax. It will do nothing to reverse the decline of the economy, nothing for jobs, nothing for taxpayers and nothing for those forced on to benefits by this Government's policies. The February unemployment figures show that any decline in unemployment during the previous three-month period is now faltering.

In my constituency, the picture is bleak. There has been an increase in unemployment, including among those aged over 50, and the number of people on jobseeker's allowance for more than 12 months has also increased. Those in their 50s, in particular, will suffer when they retire because they will be unable to build up an occupational pension and will have to rely on the state pension.

I recently visited one of my constituency's Work programme providers. Advisers there told me that most of the jobs they were helping people into were part time and paid the minimum wage, involving basic skills and offering limited prospects. However, the bigger problem is that the number of people who have been unable to find work after 12 months has grown by more than a third during the past year.

The Chief Secretary to the Treasury, who is in his place, might be interested to hear about the effects of the Government's policy on excise duty. The Chancellor has knocked a penny off a pint of beer, and he made a big deal of it. When I heard about that, I thought back to the days of Denis Healey, when a penny off a pint meant something. Today, it is the equivalent of 0.2% or 0.3% off the cost of a pint. In other words, someone would have to buy 200 to 300 pints to get an extra pint for their money, so it is hardly going to have a huge impact on the pub trade.

As far as I am aware, there are no wine producers in my constituency—although there are some who brew at home—but Scotch whisky is a major industry, as it is for the UK as a whole. It is worth £4 billion a year and employs more than 35,000 people across Scotland, yet the Chief Secretary and his Treasury cohorts have done nothing whatsoever to support it. When I entered Parliament in 1992, the average price of a bottle of Scotch was £10.42, of which VAT and excise duty accounted for 68%. The average price after this Budget will be £12.89, of which VAT and excise duty will account for 78%. In other words, since 1992 the price of a bottle of Scotch has increased by £2.47, but the amount of VAT and excise duty has increased by £2.95. The industry is therefore producing whisky more cheaply, yet the customer has to pay more. The beer industry complains about this issue, but imagine the uproar if it had to bear the same tax burden as the Scotch whisky industry has to bear.

The Chancellor has responded to public pressure on fuel duty, but has totally ignored air passenger duty. The aviation and tourist industries have complained—as has the travelling public, in mass numbers—about this unfair penalty on those who want to travel.

Mr MacNeil: It is reputed to be the world's most onerous tax on air travel, and I am sure the hon. Gentleman will agree that it is damaging Scottish airports terribly.

Mr Donohoe: I do agree with the hon. Gentleman on this occasion; it is not very often I can say that. The Government are doing absolutely nothing for air passengers, the aviation industry and those who work in it. They continue with this tax, while our competitors throughout the world are laughing at us. The Government are prepared to examine other measures, but not the tax that affects not only my constituency but others throughout the United Kingdom.

The Chancellor says that he wants to boost house building, but how is the bedroom tax going to help to do that? Surely it will add to the confusion about the sort of housing stock we require. I predict that it will be worse than the poll tax for people in my constituency; indeed, I am already seeing signs of that. It will prove to be the Government's Achilles heel, just as the poll tax was for Margaret Thatcher.

Future growth forecasts have had to be revised, and the Office for Budget Responsibility says that in 2015 most people will be worse off. All in all, the Budget offers the British people nothing other than more of the same failed policies of the last three years. The approach simply is not working, and the Government should own up to that and change tack today, for the sake of the UK economy as a whole.

Reflecting on it, this is the worst Budget I have witnessed since being elected in 1992.

5.59 pm

Alok Sharma (Reading West) (Con): I welcome this responsible Budget, which targets help to individuals and businesses intelligently. Our time is short, so I wish to focus on three points: personal allowances, the employment allowance and exports.

Like my right hon. Friend the Member for Hazel Grove (Andrew Stunell), I welcome the raising of personal allowances to £10,000. That is being delivered by a Conservative Chancellor and, as a result, more than 42,000 people in my constituency will be paying less tax and more than 4,000 will be taken out of paying tax altogether. Before the Budget, I suggested to the Treasury that we set an aspiration for future years that nobody on the minimum wage should pay income tax. I know that the Chief Secretary to the Treasury, who is not in his place, shares that aspiration. It will take some years to deliver and it will be an expensive measure, but it is fair and it is the right thing to do. I hope that aspiration will be set and I hope it will be in the 2015 Conservative manifesto.

Small and medium-sized businesses in my constituency welcome the employment allowance, which is a big boost to job creation. The private sector is the engine of growth, and Reading, the town I represent, is an economic powerhouse in the south-east. No matter what the Opposition may say, the private sector is creating jobs. This morning, I met the chief executive of Huawei, a Chinese IT and telecoms group, which is opening its head office in my constituency in the next few months. It is bringing hundreds of new jobs to Reading and creating several hundred more over the next few years.

In the past few weeks, Tesco has confirmed that it is starting recruitment at a new distribution centre in my constituency, and I am pleased that this brownfield redevelopment is taking place. I have been discussing it with Tesco and its advisers since 2011, and it means more than 1,000 new jobs in my constituency.

A couple of months ago, I met Ross Snape, the chief executive officer of United Asphalt, a successful independent business located in Theale in my constituency. He said:

“All too often we hear politicians and the press talking down the economy, which can have really negative effects on business and the decisions we make on investment and employing people...it is time to move on and face the challenges we have with confidence.”

I could not agree more. Many billions of pounds have been sitting on UK corporate balance sheets as deleveraging has been going on, but businesses based in my constituency have decided that it is now time to invest. They realise there are no easy fixes to the economy because of the problems that had built up.

James Morris (Halesowen and Rowley Regis) (Con): My hon. Friend is giving good local examples of job creation. Does he agree that as the Budget contains one of the proposals relating to the single pot of funding, a recommendation of the Heseltine review, his local area will be helped to develop even further?

Alok Sharma: My hon. Friend is absolutely right about that proposal, which will help not only my local area, but other areas. It also advances the whole aspect of localism, on which this Government are very keen, as I am. As I was saying, companies in my constituency have decided that it is time to start investing, and I hope that many others up and down the country will follow suit.

Mr MacNeil: The hon. Gentleman says that some companies are starting to invest, but is that not related to what Keynes and, latterly, Paul Krugman have said: in the absence of government doing anything substantial, recessions will sort themselves out in the end, but years of unnecessary pain will have been experienced by many people because of government inaction or wrong policies?

Alok Sharma: Thanks to the measures taken by this Government, the deficit is coming down, we have record employment and interest rates are at record lows. I would have thought the hon. Gentleman would welcome all those things, just as businesses in my constituency do.

The Chancellor made the point in his Budget statement that for the first time in more than two decades we are exporting more goods to non-EU countries than to EU ones, and I welcome that. The right hon. Member for Edinburgh South West (Mr Darling), for whom I have huge respect, said that there is no growth, but, as he well knows, there is growth; we are expanding our exports to some of the world's key economies, which is a result of the policies that this Government have put in place and of the good work being done by UK Trade & Investment and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

Small and medium-sized businesses still tell us that there is a fear factor when they are looking to enter new markets. UKTI and the FCO have been great at targeting high-growth nations and opening new offices, but we

need to turbo-charge that expansion. We need not only to target three, four or five cities in these huge economies such as India and Indonesia, but to go into the 15 or 20 top tier 1 and tier 2 cities. In those economies it is not only the national Governments who make decisions; the state governments make many of the big decisions on investment, which is why we need to turbo-charge our approach and get these offices across these countries quickly. The Government, together with UKTI, should provide practical help by taking on office space in these key cities, basing sector experts from the UK Government and UKTI there, and working with local enterprise partnerships to get out there and allow SMEs low-cost desk and office space for three, six or 12 months. The synergies that will be created as a result of all these companies coming together in one location, with sector focus and where we can also get local advisers involved, will do a huge amount to boost our exports. We want to go from having one in five SMEs exporting to having one in four, which is the European average. That will add billions of GDP to our economy. UKTI is doing a great job with the headstart scheme, but we need to build on such initiatives.

The final point I wish to make is about the local Labour party in Reading—

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Lindsay Hoyle): Order. I am not sure that this is totally relevant to the Budget, and I am sure that the hon. Gentleman would not want to stray from what the good people of Reading want to hear about the Budget.

Alok Sharma: Of course not, Mr Deputy Speaker. What I wanted to say was about jobs. We have really good news coming out of Reading, but I never hear people from the local Labour party welcoming new jobs or celebrating business success. They do not do good news. They are anti-aspiration and anti-business, very much like many of the Opposition Members who have spoken in these Budget debates. Let me tell hon. Members what Geoff Foley in my constituency says about Labour Reading council:

“Reading Borough Council do not really give a thought to local businesses”—

Mr Deputy Speaker: Order. I am sure that Reading borough council knows exactly what it is talking about, but I am not sure that this is relevant to today's Budget debate. I am being very generous and I think we are going to run out of time, so one quick mention of Reading without the Labour party would be helpful.

Alok Sharma: Let me conclude, Mr Deputy Speaker, by commending this Budget and urging everyone to support it.

6.7 pm

Mr Geoffrey Robinson (Coventry North West) (Lab): May I draw the House's attention to my entry in the Register of Members' Financial Interests?

I listened attentively to the Budget statement and tried to hear something that was positive, not just for exports, but for manufacturing, for business and for productive industries. There were just two things that we, of course, welcome: the £2,000 off national insurance contributions and the increase to 10% of the research

[*Mr Geoffrey Robinson*]

and development credits for those investing, which I am pleased to say several companies in my constituency have already welcomed. The trouble is that those two things pale into insignificance when we look at the scale of the problem we face; they just are not going to tackle it.

The problem can best be measured by looking at the plan from 2010 and the Office for Budget Responsibility forecasts attached to it. Two crucial elements were going to support that plan and those forecasts. I recall saying in the debates that followed that they seemed to be the two most solid pillars on which the Government were building, but that, as far I could see, there was nothing underneath to support them or the OBR's very optimistic forecasts. Those two elements were: manufacturing exports—exports on the visible account; and the increase in output from manufacturing. We were told to expect a 10%—I believe the figure given was 9.8%—increase in output from the business sector, but what have we had in the two years to the end of 2012? An increase of less than 5%—barely half what was projected. The hon. Member for Reading West (Alok Sharma) said that we are doing well on exports—I am not sure whether we were more interested in exports or Reading—but compared with what was projected and with what we need the outcome in those two years has been terrible. I believe that the projected figure was 6% and we achieved minus 0.3% to December last year in the value and volume of exports.

I am not saying it is easy, but one thing I am sure about is that either the OBR has no idea about forecasts or we need to reconsider the OBR model, as it continually gets everything so wrong. My right hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh South West (Mr Darling), the former Chancellor, was kind enough to say that he thought the estimates were optimistic—that the sunny uplands kept moving to the right and that the further out the OBR went, the more optimistic it became, but that was the case from the very beginning and nothing has changed. We should now be in those sunlit uplands. I do not understand why the OBR, with its much-vaunted independence, continues to get things so hopelessly wrong. Somebody needs to rethink that model. It is not enough to take responsibility out of the Treasury and pop it somewhere down Victoria street—one should not think that that will put everything right. There we are; that is one problem.

One part of the Budget that I thought might lead to some positive movement concerned the construction industry and the house building sector in particular. In an intervention on the Secretary of State, I welcomed the Firstbuy initiative, and a development on the old Jaguar site in Coventry has made quite a contribution, but the extension of the mortgage scheme, which is much bigger, is—yet again—a measure that has not been thought through. The problem with this Government is that they are totally incapable of thinking anything through. They should not be consulting on whether millionaires can have subsidised mortgages for second homes. That should have been ruled out in principle right from the beginning, before the consultation began. Many things require consultation, but not that. I cannot imagine why it was left in as an option—well, I can; things were not thought through.

We are in real need with housing starts down 11%, 70,000 construction workers unemployed and the lowest house building programme since the '20s. That is the scale of the problem and such tiny measures show that the Government are fiddling around the edges—fiddling while Rome burns, as it were. Central to it all is the attitude of the Treasury and the Chancellor. If the Chancellor has lost self-confidence to such an extent that it impacts on confidence in the business community and consumers in the UK, he must consider whether he any longer has the vision, courage and self-confidence—whether he ever had those things is, of course, another question—to do what is necessary and change course.

6.12 pm

Eric Ollerenshaw (Lancaster and Fleetwood) (Con): I am grateful to follow the hon. Member for Coventry North West (Mr Robinson). I think it was the late Harold Macmillan who talked about economists telling people this and that, and about statistics. However, there are some realities in this Budget, which other Members have referred to, and I will also do so in terms of the impact on my constituency.

Let me begin with the general point about the £10,000 income tax threshold for next year. That is reality; that is not statistical. It means that next year, 4,000 individuals in my constituency will not be paying tax. More important for hon. Members to understand is the fact that the average total family income across Lancashire is approximately £26,600, and next year those people will pay no tax on their first £10,000 of income. To me, that is a huge selling point in increasing confidence. People will be able to go out to work and the Government will promise that we will not touch the first £10,000. It seems remarkable that we are in such a state that we can say that that is marvellous, but compared with what has gone on before it is extremely good news for constituents across Lancaster and Fleetwood.

Fuel duty has been frozen. In a huge rural area such as my constituency, where people have no choice, whatever their income, but to be dependent on their car to travel to work and to the shops, the ending of Labour's plans to increase fuel duty provides massive support for the local economy.

There is the new employment allowance. Most businesses in my area are small, made up of two or three—if not six—people. The national insurance promises in the Budget will be a massive fillip to new employment and to encouraging people to get out there, set up their own business and start moving with the support of this Government.

Hon. Members will bear with me while I discuss a local theme that they would expect me to mention: shale gas. Many hon. Members have looked at shale gas as the great nirvana and something that will fill the energy gap, but that will affect Lancashire. Let me underline yet again that we in Lancashire are still not satisfied that the regulatory regime is right. We welcome the Chancellor's commitment to an office for unconventional gas and the tightening up of those regulations, but people in Lancashire need to see that the regulations are thorough and tight. Given that farmers still take water directly from the water table through boreholes, Members will be able to imagine the worries in parts of my constituency.

More important than that is the question of who will earn money from shale gas. Lancashire people are quite generous, like me, in their commitment—*[Interruption.]* Well, we are far more generous than the people from the other side of the Pennines. We are generous in our commitment to the United Kingdom and in our willingness to support it, but as the law stands, the people who own the land, including the farmers on whose land this fracking might—I still say might—take place will earn precious little from it.

Mr MacNeil: Is the hon. Gentleman advocating an equivalent to a sovereign wealth fund for Lancashire? That was the source of the reason why all Norwegians feel they own the oil; is there a similar feeling in Lancashire towards this gas?

Eric Ollerenshaw: The hon. Gentleman anticipates me and for once—in fact, not for the first time—we agree. If Lancashire is to be used to fill the energy gap and if Lancashire will see fracking across the county, we need to understand that it is not Texas and landowners in Lancashire do not own the mineral rights. The Chancellor will gain through the tax system, companies will gain through their profits and, presumably, the Duchy of Lancaster or the Crown Estate will gain through the tax on mineral rights, but the local councils will gain precious little. I was pleased that the Chancellor said in his Budget that there would be specific proposals to allow local communities to benefit, but I tell the Ministers on the Front Bench that Lancashire expects more than one or two parish hall roofs to be fixed. We want to see something that will return money to Lancashire when the gas has been fracked, if that fracking is to go ahead. I need to make that clear.

Finally, on infrastructure, hon. Members talked about growth. For me, the key point was the Chancellor's phrase about “clearing the economic arteries”. In the north-west, that means something substantial and we have had that from this Government. We have had the biggest investment in rail for the last 30, 40 or 50 years. It was all right Opposition Members saying that that would happen in future—it is happening now. I point to my own station in Lancaster, where £8.5 million is already being spent to vary the signalling so that trains can turn around in Lancaster and more platforms can be used. That is the small-scale work. Only last week, the Department for Transport finally agreed the M6 link road, which will be a bypass for Lancaster to the port of Heysham. It will bring thousands of jobs through a scheme for which the first plans were produced in 1948—that is perhaps a lesson to us all. It has taken this coalition Government to agree the money to get things moving and get the growth.

As the Secretary of State mentioned, there is still a great deal more for local councils to do. I am pleased that the Conservative councils in my area, Wyre borough council and Lancashire county council, have kept the council tax frozen. Not only that, but Lancashire has cut it by 2%—

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Lindsay Hoyle): Order.

6.18 pm

Anas Sarwar (Glasgow Central) (Lab): The Budget the Chancellor delivered was not the Budget that my constituents or the city of Glasgow needed. The Budget

Glasgow needs is one that gets the economy moving, helps people back into work and looks after the most vulnerable in our society. Instead, the Government are willing to give millionaires a £40,000 tax cut at the same time as 17,000 Glaswegians will have to cope with the impact of the bedroom tax. Thousands more will have to mitigate the damage to their family budget of the cuts to child tax credits, cuts to working tax credits and drastic cuts to the local services that many people rely upon. Wages are falling, jobs are being lost, household budgets are being squeezed and there is still no sign of a rethink. Just when will the Chancellor wake up and smell the Starbucks coffee?

Mr MacNeil rose—

Anas Sarwar: I will give way to the hon. Gentleman. He has made many interventions, so let us hope that this one is sensible.

Mr MacNeil: Is the hon. Gentleman not disappointed, and should he not be ashamed, that he supports a Westminster Government over independence, so we have the bedroom tax imposed on Scotland? If he supported independence, we would not have the bedroom tax in Scotland at the moment.

Anas Sarwar: That shows us the myth of the Scottish National party. The hon. Gentleman says that the only way to stop the bedroom tax is independence; the bedroom tax will be introduced on 1 April 2013, but according to the SNP timetable, independence day will be 31 March 2016. Members can work it out for themselves.

Plan A clearly is not working. For some time, the Opposition have been calling for additional infrastructure investment to boost the construction sector and we have been urging the Government to act. The Chancellor could have used the funds from the 4G auction to build 100,000 affordable homes, stimulate the economy and help tackle the housing crisis, but instead he decided that public services and public sector workers should bear the burden. Not content with imposing a 1% pay freeze until 2015, he has extended it to 2016. Given the rate of inflation, that is an effective pay cut for hundreds of thousands of people across the country.

With 80,000 construction workers out of work, construction output has fallen by 8.2%. The Government announced an extra £225 million for affordable housing, but only £125 million of that will be spent before 2015 according to the OBR, and it is dwarfed by the £4 billion cut in funding for affordable housing that the Chancellor made in his first Budget. Even after that investment the coalition Government's record will still be a cut of around £10 billion in infrastructure projects.

It says everything about the Government's attitude that they cut real-terms pay for millions of public sector workers, while giving the green light to slash corporation tax for big business. Research by the House of Commons Library, published today, confirms that the reductions in corporation tax will cost £29 billion in total, £10 billion over the life of the current Parliament alone. That policy enjoys the full support of the Scottish nationalists, who want to see a future independent Scotland at the front of a race to the bottom, a low tax country with an economy like Iceland—or perhaps like

[Anas Sarwar]

Ireland. I have not seen the latest Scottish Government press release, so I do not know which country they are modelling their assessment on this week.

Kwasi Kwarteng (Spelthorne) (Con): Am I right in assuming that the hon. Gentleman favours a high-tax economy for Britain?

Anas Sarwar: No, I am suggesting that while people across the country—especially the most vulnerable—see their household income slashed and the poorest people are having to live in more difficult circumstances, the Government see their priority as giving millionaires a tax cut and cutting taxes for the biggest businesses in the country. I know whose side I am on. I am sad to say that I know whose side the hon. Gentleman is on, and I am sure people will punish him appropriately come the next general election.

Mr MacNeil: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Anas Sarwar: I have given way twice already, but if I have any spare time at the end of my speech I might let the hon. Gentleman entertain the House.

The Chancellor claimed the Budget showed he was on the side of people who want to get on; instead it has shown just how out of touch this Government really are. The low-paid workers the Government say will pay less income tax will still be worse off at the end of the month, when that saving is clawed back many times over—clawed back through VAT, clawed back through cuts to tax credits and clawed back from thousands of my constituents through the scandalous bedroom tax.

Yes, the Liberal Democrats can celebrate lifting the threshold to £10,000, but household income for many families in that bracket will fall as a result of the Government's measures. At the same time, the value of an average worker's pay has fallen by more than £1,000 and persistently high inflation continues.

In these difficult economic times, the Chancellor should certainly accept our proposals for the funding for lending scheme to be enhanced to target small and medium-sized enterprises better by rewarding banks that expand SME lending regardless of their mortgage book. Now is the time when our banks should be supporting SMEs, not hitting them harder. Throughout my constituency, whether I am speaking to small or large businesses, they all make the same complaint: the banking sector is holding back investment in this country, not promoting it. If we can get our banks lending again and get people investing, we will get more people back to work and see growth and regeneration in some of the hardest-hit communities.

The Chancellor should seriously explore our proposals for new regional banks that are committed to their regions and in touch with local business, making it easier for firms to secure the capital investment they require to create the growth and jobs Britain needs. Sadly, my constituents continue to suffer, trapped between this coalition Government, who continue to look out for the wrong people, and a Holyrood Government, who are distracted by their referendum obsession and happy to double Tory cuts and pass them on to local government, washing their hands of all responsibility

and removing £250 million from Glasgow's economy. We heard earlier from one of the SNP Members that we should recognise that the fall in unemployment was thanks to action taken by the Scottish Government. It is amazing that when unemployment goes up, it is all Westminster's fault but when it goes down it is all thanks to the Scottish Government. It cannot be both.

The reason why I and countless others in the House went into politics was to help build stronger communities, not to use the poorest and most vulnerable people as electoral or political dividing lines, writing off millions of people as a drain on the economy for electoral advantage. We want to help to create a sustainable economy to fund world-class public services, ensure that society's resources are distributed equitably and protect the most vulnerable people in our communities.

Last Wednesday I sat and listened to the Chancellor lay out his vision for the coming years. It is a vision that I and, I am confident, the majority of people in Britain reject.

6.26 pm

Mike Thornton (Eastleigh) (LD): I want to talk about three things: mortgages and how we support them, how local authorities can help and what can be done on commercial lending.

We should strip out all the fancy schemes. I talked to some of the people I used to work with at Simply Finance, and apparently there are about 100 viable 90% loan-to-value schemes. The situation is not quite as bad as it was in the past, but the credit-scoring system for those mortgages tends to be so severe that only about 10% of applicants ever get a mortgage. My only concern about our new scheme is that we should make absolutely sure that it results in people being able to borrow money, rather than having their application turned down. The Opposition believe that the scheme will provide second homes for millionaires. I agree with the Secretary of State that that can be sorted out easily.

If mortgage schemes work, they increase demand, but if demand goes up without an increase in supply, prices will increase. I am sure that is not the intention. We need to develop and build houses. To ensure appropriate development while protecting our country's green spaces, we must innovate. At Eastleigh borough council we work with developers to purchase properties that would not otherwise be bought. We then rent them out. It would be a real help if the Government could lift the borrowing cap on councils building new homes to rent, which would supply an economic boost and provide affordable homes. In places such as Eastleigh, 30% of every new development is reserved for affordable housing. We have 5,830 people on the housing list, so it is vital that we do something about it.

To achieve a significant increase in house building, we need to reverse the banks' failure to fund it properly, especially for small and medium-sized builders. Before 2007, the inability of banks to assess the true risks resulted in massive losses. Now the situation is reversed. It is the same old story; the banks go from one extreme to another.

We need to co-ordinate our housing policies, our commercial and mortgage lending policies and our planning policies. There is no point in keeping them separate. Banks, local government and builders are all

part of the same whole. I am confident that this Liberal Democrat-Conservative coalition can act accordingly, but we need to find a way for us all to work together.

6.29 pm

Mr Peter Hain (Neath) (Lab): Contrary to the Chancellor's mantra, Britain's return to recession was not made in Europe. It was made in Britain by the severe fiscal squeeze that the Chancellor launched nearly three years ago. Problems in the eurozone spell trouble for the UK economy—of course they do—but the Chancellor never mentions the fact that Britain has benefited from the recovery of the USA economy, which accounts for 20% of our trade, and is currently growing four times faster than the eurozone is slowing, because the USA took the route of economic stimulus and stuck to it. Britain set out on the same path under Labour after the banking crisis, and the economy began to pick up. However, the coalition veered off as soon as the Tories and Lib Dems took office, turning the road to recovery under Labour into the road to ruin.

Cutting too far and too fast means that the Chancellor has missed all his key targets. In the year that is ending, his target deficit—the cyclically adjusted current deficit as a share of gross domestic product—is twice what he originally said it would be. Next year, the Office for Budget Responsibility expects it to be four times what he planned. He has also missed his public sector debt target: instead of falling to 67% of GDP in 2015-16, under the Budget it will fall to 85% two years later, in 2017-18. That is a surreal definition of success: debt falling upwards. Salvador Dali would be proud.

Zero growth has forced the Chancellor to accept higher borrowing targets—more than £200 billion higher over five years than he planned in 2010. Most of the cuts that have been announced have yet to hit home. Cuts and austerity will continue Britain's economic inertia, with more disastrous, scorched earth economics to come. Growth, not cuts, should be the priority. Sadly, there is plenty of spare capacity in the UK economy, which could easily grow quite quickly for a few years by taking up the slack, with borrowing, the deficit and debt falling. Jonathan Portes, former chief economist at the Cabinet Office, said:

“A few years of 3% growth—and given the amount of spare capacity in the UK economy, there is no reason that should be infeasible...—and much of the problem will simply vanish”.

Growth is the magic bullet for overcoming our deficit and debt problems.

Mr Leigh: If, as the right hon. Gentleman says, the cuts have not yet hit home, which is quite right, why does he think that they have fuelled the recession?

Mr Hain: Cuts have fuelled the recession because they have driven demand out of the economy. Getting the economy growing again, as I said, is the key to cutting the deficit, then stabilising and bringing down the debt burden. Once the economy is growing again, it will be much easier to deliver any remaining tax rises or spending cuts that may still be necessary because, as Jonathan Portes says, jobs will be plentiful, real incomes will rise and companies will invest again.

The Tory charge is that Labour would increase borrowing. The answer is, yes, in the short term, we would, but to reduce borrowing in the long term. Borrowing

more today can mean borrowing less tomorrow by getting the economy growing again. President Obama's 2009 stimulus package added to the US federal deficit in the short term, but as US interest rates fell, spending and output rose, and dole queues shortened. As a proportion of America's expanding GDP, its overall deficit has shrunk every year since 2009, contrary to what has happened to our deficit. A budget boost that triggered real recovery in Britain could follow the same pattern, speeding up the growth of UK national income, cutting the deficit as a proportion of GDP and causing the debt burden to fall.

That is what the Budget should have been about, but old habits die hard as the coalition partners continue to peddle their big deceit. First, they said that the entire global banking crisis was caused by Labour recruiting far too many nurses, doctors, teachers and police officers, and that the trigger for the world financial collapse—sub-prime mortgage defaults in the USA—was all Labour's fault. The second big deceit is their claim that today's public sector deficit was caused by excessive Labour spending. To quote utterances of almost every Conservative MP as if on a dreary looped tape, too much Labour borrowing led to too much national debt, so the cuts are all Labour's fault. They never admit the truth. They never say why, if spending was “out of control” and wildly excessive, the Chancellor in September 2007 committed a Tory Government to matching Labour's public spending plans for the next three years, up to 2010.

The Chancellor knew only too well that Labour's spending was affordable, otherwise he would not have signed up to that. The Tories never acknowledge that, until the global banking crisis, British Government debt was low, below that of France, Germany, the USA and Japan, and lower than when we took over from the Tories in 1997. Ten years of steady economic growth under Labour allowed us to pay down debt by the equivalent of £90 billion today, saving taxpayers some £3 billion a year in interest payments. We did fix the roof while the sun was shining.

Between 1997 and 2007, annual Labour borrowing averaged only one third of annual borrowing by the Thatcher and John Major Governments. This is the fourth dreadful Budget by a dreadful Government. It is the same old story from the same old Tories: Budget day blues for Britain. The Chancellor is playing a peculiar game of leapfrog with himself. Every Budget brings worse news. Every autumn statement confirms that things are worse than expected. The Government are failing on growth, failing to improve living standards, and failing on their debt, borrowing and deficit targets. They have got to make way for Labour.

6.35 pm

Richard Graham (Gloucester) (Con): Brushing aside the unhappy attempt by the right hon. Member for Neath (Mr Hain) to rewrite recent history, I shall move on swiftly to discuss the Budget.

Let us begin with the introduction of £10,000 tax-free income.

Mr Hain: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Richard Graham: The right hon. Gentleman has had his chance.

[Richard Graham]

I absolutely relate to my hon. Friend the Member for Reading West (Alok Sharma) and his aspiration that everyone on the minimum wage should in due course pay no income tax. That was a magnificent announcement of Conservative and coalition policy to help those who work hardest on the lowest incomes, and we should all applaud it.

Secondly, the Leader of the Opposition made a great deal recently of apologising for Labour's axing of the 10p rate, and he now wants to bring it back, but while he is busy executing a second U-turn on 10p tax, my constituents, especially the many thousands who will benefit from the changes in the Budget, prefer the simple Conservative and coalition approach of zero tax for the lowest paid.

The whole House should unite in applauding the Government for announcing an employment allowance of £2,000, which can be used by small businesses for apprentices or new employees who are older, and can help to continue to bring down youth unemployment, which in my constituency of Gloucester, as a result of all the new apprenticeships that started last year, fell by 18% in 2012. Ten days ago, during national apprenticeships week, I visited three new apprentices in Gloucester, in real estate, golf clubs and ski centres, and if ever there was an example of how apprenticeships have spread through previously unknown sectors those three new apprentices proved it. That is why the Government should go on supporting apprenticeships and bringing the young into employment.

Today, housing is at the core of the debate, and I believe that it is the key to growth stimulus, as it was after the recession of the 1930s and the recession of the second world war. The Centre for Cities rightly said in its recent note that

"there is one area where effective interventions have the potential to generate jobs and growth in the short term: housing."

It went on to say that

"100,000 new houses...could boost Gross Domestic Product by 1% and support up to 150,000 jobs."

The Centre for Cities, which recently moved Gloucester up the ratings for cities from 49th to 21st, is clearly a research institute to be followed closely, and I agree with its conclusions on the ratings and with its analysis on the importance of housing.

The right hon. Member for Leeds Central (Hilary Benn) said that he believed that the response to the Budget on housing was largely critical. He was right in one respect, as the National Housing Federation said:

"The Government should be focusing on unlocking investment to build more new homes".

However, we cannot new build new homes unless there is a market for them, which is why the Government's policy, through help to buy, of providing £3.5 billion for new homes, will make a significant difference to make sure that people can afford to buy those new homes. The National House Building Council said that it is

"great news that housing has been the centre piece of this Budget. This is a positive step for homebuilders and homeowners alike."

Both Barratt and Persimmon welcomed the development, and Barratt said:

"We are now gearing up to meet the increase in inquiries that we expect to see."

Mr MacNeil: The hon. Gentleman said that we cannot have new homes unless there is a market for them, but the problem is not the market but price and affordability; it is the supply of homes.

Richard Graham: That is precisely why the help to buy scheme, which guarantees 20% of deposits on new homes, will make a significant difference.

There is one aspect on which I agree with the right hon. Member for Leeds Central and on which I hope the Government will be able to move faster: the need to restructure some of the arm's length management organisations that provide social housing and enable them to use their balance sheets to build and regenerate, rather than just adding to the public sector borrowing requirement. My right hon. Friend the Financial Secretary to the Treasury knows well that I hope that that will move forward fast, and that discussions between the Homes and Communities Agency, the Department for Communities and Local Government and the Treasury, which have been ongoing on for almost 18 months, will move forward swiftly so that we can deliver new housing in the social sector to my constituents as soon as possible.

New housing worked in the 1930s and 1950s and it can work today, so let us get on with it and build those new homes as soon as possible so that the economic growth that the Centre for Cities research anticipates can happen as soon as possible. I will be supporting the Budget to achieve that.

6.40 pm

Julie Elliott (Sunderland Central) (Lab): I am grateful for the opportunity to speak in the debate. I intend to focus on three central issues emanating from the Budget: housing, infrastructure and employment practices.

Increasing the level of house building is vital to any economic recovery and to assisting families and young people to get on to the housing ladder, yet under this Government house building has fallen while rents have risen. Young people in Sunderland, where house prices are not as high as in other parts of the country, still face massive challenges in getting into the housing market. Those difficulties are augmented by the Government's wider economic failures, and banks remain reluctant to give mortgages, even to financially secure applicants. Renters in Sunderland can only hope that the Government's help to buy scheme will be more successful than the new homes bonus, which has led to housing starts falling by 11%, or the NewBuy scheme, which has helped just 1.5% of the 100,000 people who the Prime Minister claimed would be able to buy their home.

I welcome any action to help people get on to the housing ladder, but increasing credit without increasing supply will simply raise house prices, further widening the gap between those who own their own home and those who want to. Gentoo, the largest social housing provider in my constituency, manages over 29,000 properties in Sunderland, but it has over 22,000 people on its waiting list, and that is without taking into account new and emerging need. Simply put, Sunderland needs more homes.

In his Budget speech, the Chancellor used the phrase "work hard and get on" three times. What he does not understand is that people are working hard, despite stagnant wages, and they are getting on, despite cuts to vital services.

The Government are dithering on improving energy efficiency standards for new homes. Those delays are hugely damaging for investment in new homes and signal the Government's abandonment of their "greenest ever" commitment.

I will now turn my attention to infrastructure and the Government's response to the Heseltine report. Two things were clear from Lord Heseltine's evidence to the Business, Innovation and Skills Committee: first, his passionate belief in Government's ability to boost growth, create jobs and raise living standards; and secondly, his concern about the Government's direction and the fact that

"the UK does not have a strategy for growth and wealth creation".

I agree that local leaders are best placed to understand the opportunities and obstacles to growth in their own communities. That the Chancellor has finally committed to investment in infrastructure projects is welcome, but those projects should have been announced in his first budget, not his fourth. I welcome the single local growth fund, but it will not be operational until 2015. We simply cannot wait that long. We cannot accept a five-year gap between the announcement of the abolition of the regional development agencies and the devolution of funds proposed by Lord Heseltine. We will not see economic growth until our regional economies are growing.

Where growth takes place matters, too. A report on foreign direct investment by the Institute for Public Policy Research North shows that since the Government announced the closure of the RDAs, FDI decreased by 31% in the north-east from 2010 to 2011, while it has increased in the south-east by 102%. We do not yet know the size of the "devolved pot". Lord Heseltine recommended that a fund of £49 billion was needed, but Government sources now suggest that it will be in the low billions. The success of the Heseltine plan will be determined not by the quantity of recommendations that the Government will implement, but by the size and timing of the investment.

My final point in response to the Budget is on employment practices. The Chancellor looked particularly pleased to announce that the private sector had created 1.25 million new jobs since 2010. Although I welcome new jobs, I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries and Galloway (Mr Brown) will get an answer to his question on what sectors those jobs are in and what hours people are working so we can understand better what is happening in the labour market, because I fear that many of the jobs are low-wage and low-hours. People on zero-hour contracts cannot take advantage of the Government's child care help because they do not know when they will need child care. They cannot take advantage of the mortgage policies because they will not be eligible for mortgages.

It is vital that the Prime Minister and the Chancellor change course so that a lost Government do not lead to a lost decade.

6.45 pm

Fiona Bruce (Congleton) (Con): I refer to my entry in the Register of Members' Financial Interests.

I welcome the Budget on behalf of the almost 4,000 hard-working small and medium-sized enterprises in my constituency—companies such as Dutton Contractors in Middlewich, which I visited on Friday and had the privilege of opening two new warehouses for. It is a

family business that was started in 1974 by the father, John Dutton, who is a farmer. It sells and transports building construction materials. The son, Richard Dutton, has so developed the business recently that it now has 80 employees. The decision in the Budget to further stop Labour's planned fuel rises is worth £7 to every family each time they fill up a family car, but it is worth considerably more to companies such as Dutton Contractors, which has a fleet of vehicles, so it very much welcomes the Budget.

Dutton Contractors also welcomed the £2,000 national insurance allowance. It was also welcomed, in particular, by Neon Freight Ltd, which is based in Holmes Chapel. Honours go to Ian Mallon, the proprietor of that freight forwarding company, and currently its sole employee, for giving the fastest response to the Budget. He sent me an e-mail at 1.28 pm—the Chancellor can barely have sat down. The e-mail's subject was, "Employers tax/Budget", and it reads:

"Great news... please send my thanks to G.O... I will be taking on staff this year."

That is what I call a result.

Having said that, however, I am disappointed that the Government appear once again to have done nothing to honour their manifesto commitment—it is a coalition commitment and certainly a Conservative manifesto commitment—to recognise marriage in the tax system through transferable tax allowances for couples where one partner stays at home. Many people are genuinely bemused that such an important commitment should remain completely untouched well into the second half of this Parliament. They are increasingly bemused by the announcement of the introduction of tax-free child care worth up to £1,200 every year for children aged up to 12, but obtainable only by either single parents working or couples where both partners work. The Prime Minister said:

"This is a boost direct to the pockets of hard-working families in what will be one of the biggest measures ever introduced to help with childcare costs."

But do families with one parent who stays at home not work hard, too? That has not sent out a positive message to mothers and fathers who stay at home and commit themselves to parenting; it does not say to them, as I think we should, "We value you."

Mr Leigh: One advantage of the child tax allowance announced in the Budget is that it makes it almost inevitable that we will have to fulfil our coalition promise on a transferable tax allowance for married couples.

Fiona Bruce: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. I am not criticising the Government's decision to support child care costs; I am saying that they have got the balance wrong by doing that while not at the same time honouring the coalition commitment for transferable tax allowances for married couples.

I have massive respect for those mothers and fathers who stay at home. I have never stayed at home to work and have always worked outside the home, but many parents do so sacrificially, and many parents in one-earner families, as Department for Work and Pensions figures clearly show, stay at home because they have to. Many have significant child care responsibilities for very young children, or care for sick or disabled relatives. It is interesting that the Government quoted OECD figures

[*Fiona Bruce*]

in support of its decision last week. Let me quote some OECD figures: the tax burden on a one-earner, married couple family on an average wage in the UK is now 42% greater than the OECD average.

I have raised this issue in respect of every Budget since I have been in this House. Two years ago, having tabled an appropriate amendment to the Finance Bill, I received from my hon. Friend the Exchequer Secretary to the Treasury a letter that said:

“Dear Fiona

I am writing to about the new clause on transferable personal allowances for married couples that you have tabled for the Finance Bill. I agree entirely that marriage is a positive institution and it is clear from our manifesto that we believe this should be recognised in the tax system.

We are keen to send a clear message that family and marriage matters and that strong and healthy families help create a strong and healthy society. We must do more to support families and the tax system is one way in which this can be achieved...you can rest assured that our commitment to bringing forward these changes remains firm and that we are assessing various options with a range of different costs and will bring forward proposals at the appropriate time.”

I believe that that time is now. If we genuinely believe in choice—a word much trumpeted last week on the announcement of support for child care costs—we should not be making it more difficult for mothers to stay at home but should give them that choice, too. The Prime Minister has said:

“If we are going to get control of public spending in the long term...we should target the causes of higher spending, one of which is family breakdown. We should do far more to recognise the importance of families, commitment and marriage”.—[*Official Report*, 2 June 2010; Vol. 510, c. 429.]

This year, I again call on the Government, at the third time of asking—it sounds a bit like calling the banns of marriage, but that is quite appropriate—to insert a provision into the Finance Bill, this time by way of their own amendment, to introduce transferable allowances for married couples. That is quite simply the right and honourable thing to do.

6.51 pm

Dame Anne Begg (Aberdeen South) (Lab): As time is short and lots of hon. Members still want to speak, I will concentrate my remarks on two matters: something I was disappointed not to find in the Budget and something I was completely surprised to find in it.

The thing I was disappointed not to find was any change in the Government’s attitude to what has become known as the bedroom tax. I was not naive enough to think that they would make a complete volte face having realised it is such an insidious and wrong-headed policy, but I did think there might be some movement on the kinds of people in households who should be completely exempt. I am thinking of households with a profoundly disabled child or where a house has been specially adapted for someone with a disability. The Government say that people who have had their house adapted can apply for a discretionary housing payment, but it should not at the discretion of the local authority to decide whether it is affordable to pay the rent on a house that has been specially adapted for an individual.

As someone who has had to adapt a number of houses, I know how difficult it is, how expensive it can be, and how upsetting it can be for the individual. I also

know that very often the adaptations are made specifically for the individual, so if the family has to move out of their home as a result of not getting their housing benefit paid in full, the house will not necessarily be any good for any other disabled person. This is wrong-headed—it should never be discretionary. I hope that it is not too late for the Government to make sure that that group of people is exempt from the bedroom tax.

The thing I was surprised to see in the Budget was the change in the date for the introduction of the new single-tier pension. I recognise that this might be a bit academic for hon. Members in the Chamber today, but my Select Committee, the Work and Pensions Committee, was asked to carry out the pre-legislative scrutiny of the changes to the state pension. The Bill that was published had a start date of April 2017, and we had taken all our evidence on that basis. We had asked the industry whether it could be ready by April 2017 and asked the various user groups whether that was a reasonable time scale.

Having taken all that evidence and done the scrutiny work that the Government had asked us to do, it came as a complete surprise when we found in the Budget that the date was to be brought forward by a whole year and the measure will now be implemented from April 2016. It makes a mockery of the pre-legislative scrutiny process that we were not able to do our job properly and ask the right questions. Just a week before, the Minister responsible had said that there would be no slippage in the timetable and that April 2017 would be the implementation date.

One might think that perhaps, because the Budget was covered by all the usual purdah arrangements, the Government were unable to tell us that the measure was going to come in a year earlier, but the information was leaked and was all over the papers the Sunday before. Clearly, the Government knew they were going to change the date. This was obviously very tempting for the Chancellor given that some £5.9 billion is generated by bringing in the change to contracting out, because no one will be contracted out under the new single-tier pension. I am very angry, as you can tell, Mr Deputy Speaker, that this was landed on my Committee at the very last moment.

6.56 pm

Henry Smith (Crawley) (Con): The Budget reaffirmed the Government’s economic strategy of focusing on reducing the deficit, restoring stability, rebalancing the economy and equipping the UK to compete globally. With over 1.25 million new private sector jobs created and the deficit reduced by a third since the general election, Great Britain is clearly on the right course.

There is one issue, however, that I would have liked my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer to address—tackling the severe inherited levels of air passenger duty. That was a missed opportunity to boost UK competitiveness further still, to reduce the cost of business travel to stimulate trade and investment, and to help hard-working families who want to visit their friends or family or to take a well-earned family holiday.

The previous Labour Government inherited a very modest level of APD and, over time, significantly increased the rates, particularly for long-haul travel. Since taking office, my right hon. Friend has recognised this problem by delivering a temporary one-year freeze and limiting

increases to the level of inflation. While this action has been very welcome, we should be going further to undo Labour's damage. Most countries do not charge an international air travel tax at all, but of the handful that do, the UK has by far the highest such tax—more than double that of the next highest charging country, which is Germany. Levying the world's highest air passenger tax is not a sustainable position for an island nation seeking to increase international trade and to attract millions of new in-bound visitors.

There is significant public concern about APD. Hon. Members have received hundreds of e-mails from constituents, and over 200,000 people have contacted their Member of Parliament to say that APD rates are too high. However, public concern has not, until now, been supported by detailed and credible evidence. Four airlines, including Virgin Atlantic, which is headquartered in my constituency, and EasyJet, the majority of whose services go from London Gatwick airport, commissioned an independent report by PriceWaterhouseCoopers that provides that missing analysis. It makes interesting reading with regard to the nature of APD and its role in the UK economy. It finds that APD is the highest tax of its type in the world by a considerable margin; that it is a highly distortive tax that is at least as damaging to the economy—and probably more so on a pound for pound basis—than corporation tax, and second only to fuel duty among major UK taxes; and that UK businesses in aggregate pay about £500 million in APD each year.

The report's main analysis relates to the impact on the economy and tax revenues if APD were to be abolished. The report's modelling suggests that by abolishing APD the UK could boost its gross domestic product by 0.45% in the first year, with continuing benefits through to 2020. Abolishing APD would also increase investment by 6% and exports, including earnings from foreign tourism, by 5% between 2013 and 2015. Abolishing APD would pay for itself, with increased business growth leading to higher tax receipts from other sources, outweighing the lost APD revenue, and it would lead to the creation of up to 60,000 jobs between now and 2020. The report acknowledges that it is uncommon but not unprecedented for tax cuts to pay for themselves.

Even though this has been a step too far for this Budget, I hope that I have made the case that abolishing APD would have been a significant contributor to the UK economy and the Exchequer and to boosting growth in what was otherwise an excellent Budget for hard-working families and businesses in my constituency and throughout the country.

7.1 pm

Naomi Long (Belfast East) (Alliance): All of us who sat in the Chamber throughout last week's Budget statement will be acutely aware of the context in which this debate is taking place. Global economic conditions remain extremely challenging and the impact on the UK economy has led to the downgrading of many of last year's Budget predictions.

The people we represent, who listened to the statement outside this place, were realistic about the Budget, but they also hoped for measures that would encourage inward investment and growth; give businesses confidence and access to finance to create new jobs and help grow their export markets; ease the pressure on family budgets and small businesses alike; tackle inequality in society; and stimulate desperately needed growth.

Although talk of an aspiration nation is great rhetoric and a worthy aim, it is the job of Government not only to ensure that people are encouraged to have aspirations, but, if there is to be real improvement, to create the context in which they have the opportunities and support to fulfil them.

In the brief time available I want to focus on a few aspects of the Budget, welcoming some of the positive measures and highlighting a number of areas where more could be done.

I commend the Government for upholding their commitment to spending 0.7% of gross national income on international development. Given the current economic climate, it is understandable, though regrettable, that, despite the fact that this allocation represents a small fraction of overall Government expenditure, it comes under continuing pressure. However, by standing by the commitment, the UK is showing leadership in the international community. Aid well spent is a powerful tool to tackle severe global poverty, to assist some of the poorest nations in becoming more self-sustaining and to support global justice, human rights and security. Moreover, although it is spent abroad, it also contributes to protecting our own national interest.

In that vein, I also welcome the fact that at the same time as the Treasury is seeking to tackle tax avoidance in the UK—which we all welcome—it has also committed to prioritising dealing with international tax avoidance by UK companies, which is depriving many nations from the transition from aid to trade. I hope that it will be robust in its actions.

I also welcome the increase in the personal tax allowance, which will lift many of those in the lowest paid employment out of tax altogether. If it were part of a package of measures to tackle poverty more comprehensively, it would be even more welcome. However, as I noted last year, as an anti-poverty measure it is neither the most effective nor the most targeted approach. Although the poorest working families will benefit, raising the personal allowance will also benefit many others.

In the time remaining, I want to comment briefly on measures that will impact on Northern Ireland in particular. I welcome the reduction in corporation tax, which is a particularly sensitive issue given our land border with the Republic of Ireland, where corporation tax is significantly lower at 12.5%. Although it would not be a silver bullet, the devolution of corporation tax has been identified by industry, the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee and the Northern Ireland Executive as an important tool in stimulating the economy and attracting inward investment. The UK-wide reduction, though modest, is a step in the right direction and will also lower the potential cost to the Northern Ireland Assembly should this tax power be devolved, as many of us wish. It is disappointing that that devolution was not announced in the Budget. I trust that the Prime Minister will have more positive news for the First and Deputy First Ministers when he meets them to discuss the matter tomorrow.

Mr Nigel Dodds (Belfast North) (DUP): The hon. Lady can be assured that virtually all the Northern Ireland Assembly parties support what she has just said. Does she agree that it is important that their meeting with the Prime Minister tomorrow has the endorsement of all major business groups, major community groups and people who are concerned about jobs and employment in Northern Ireland?

Naomi Long: I agree entirely that they have that endorsement, and the Prime Minister's Twitter feed today suggests that all of those sectors are engaged in lobbying activity.

Being geographically more remote adds to household bills and business costs. The cost of fuel, for example, is a particular pressure, with Northern Ireland consumers facing the highest petrol and diesel prices in the UK and some of the highest in Europe. This impacts on households, business and our international competitiveness, so I welcome the cancellation of the fuel duty increase that was planned for September. The cost of energy generation more widely is also greater in Northern Ireland and the exemption from the carbon price floor is a welcome measure for energy producers and consumers alike.

Regrettably, the Chancellor offered no good news on another significant cost of our peripherality—air passenger duty. I recognise the previous work done to devolve APD for direct long-haul flights from Northern Ireland, but if we are to support essential connectivity, reduce business costs and grow our inbound and outbound tourism sectors, both of which contribute significantly to the Northern Ireland and UK economy, the Treasury needs to look at the issue again. A recent report by PricewaterhouseCoopers, which has been referenced by the hon. Member for Crawley (Henry Smith), indicated that reducing or abolishing APD could stimulate growth and lead to the raising of more revenue, rather than less. The Treasury appears to have dismissed that analysis, but I urge it to do its own study on the impact of APD on growth.

There are many other issues that I would like to raise, but little further time to do so. In conclusion, talk of creating an aspiration nation is a good thing but, at a time when unemployment figures in Northern Ireland are at their highest for 15 years, taking action that will match aspiration with real opportunity is much more important. I remain to be convinced that this Budget will do that for the people whom I represent.

7.7 pm

Mr Edward Leigh (Gainsborough) (Con): I hope that the hon. Member for Belfast East (Naomi Long) will forgive me if I do not follow on from what she said, but she spoke a lot of sense about air passenger duty and I agree with her.

One of the most powerful points made by the right hon. Member for Leeds Central (Hilary Benn), who led for the Opposition, was when he mentioned somebody who visited his constituency surgery only last week who, after serving in a job for 30 years, had been made unemployed. As it happens, I had a similar case of somebody who had served for 30 years but who had now, through no fault of her own, been made unemployed, could not find a job and was in negative equity. That brings home to all of us the human nature of what we are dealing with. Although we may bandy statistics across the House, we are dealing with a desperate situation—for which, by the way, I do not blame the Chancellor—and we should put at the forefront of our minds the appalling human tragedy of ordinary people who are being put out of work and who cannot find work.

In my view, the best way to recreate the conditions in which people can find work is to create a balanced economy that can recreate confidence. Unfortunately,

our public spending is unbalanced: half of our £730 billion or £750 billion budget is taken up by health and welfare, which are ring-fenced, and that puts enormous stresses and strains on all other budgets.

Despite the attempt by the right hon. Member for Neath (Mr Hain), with characteristic chutzpah, to rewrite history, I am not sure that it is possible to argue that austerity has caused this recession when, in fact, we are spending more than ever before—despite the fact that the figures were manipulated for this Budget—and borrowing more than ever before. The central thrust of the Labour party's argument, which is that the problems have been caused by this Government, does not add up and the British people do not think that it adds up. They want more positive suggestions from the Labour party that show what it would do better in the face of the desperate international situation.

Richard Graham: Did my hon. Friend find it curious that the hon. Member for Coventry North West (Mr Robinson) seemed to be unclear about why our exports are effectively stagnant, when they had been expected to rise by 6%? Surely he must know that exports to the EU have fallen off a cliff while other exports have risen.

Mr Leigh: Absolutely. That shows the sort of difficulties in the Labour party's arguments. If it is to form a Government, it must come up with a viable alternative.

I do not support cutting for the sake of cutting. If Tesco has a problem in its bread department, it sells bread more efficiently; it does not cut the number of loaves it sells. I agree about that, but the Labour party cannot give simplistic solutions based on more wasteful spending, nor can it constantly say that our problems would be solved if we restored the 50% tax band, when every study proves that it reduced revenues to the Treasury. As we know, the top 1% of earners pay 24% of all tax revenues. Labour has to come up with something more intellectual and rational if it is to convince the British people that it is ready for government.

The situation is dire. The incomes of 2007 will not be seen again until 2019. According to the Institute for Fiscal Studies, we will need a further £9 billion of cuts to public services after the next election. In 2015, there will be £70 billion more borrowing than was predicted in 2010. Any Budget giveaways—I accept that this Budget is politically astute—will be soaked up by inflation rising faster than wages. That point has already been made about the 1p cut in beer duty. One would have to drink five pints every night for seven nights to save 35p a week. I am not sure that will impress anybody. The cut in corporation tax is welcome, but that is only a small part of the total cost to business. Business rates have increased by 13% in three years and are the prime motivator against growth in the small business economy.

The problems that we face are difficult, complex and international. I am still firmly convinced that we need a strategy based on levelling taxation as much as is possible. The attempt to bring corporation tax more in line with small business tax is a first step. We should try to flatten all capital taxes and business taxes. We should then move on to income taxes and get rid of the plethora of allowances, which fuels an industry based on evasion and avoidance.

At first sight, the excellent scheme that the Chancellor is trying to bring together to help with home loans is very good if it does not lead to a property bubble. However, it is a bit like somebody climbing a ladder with loads of our money, throwing it over the edge and saying, “May the fittest come and get it.” It is a bit like the person rushing towards the pool of Bethesda.

It would be much better to have a flatter, simpler form of taxation so that people make their own decisions and do not rely on Government handouts, and so that we do not have a huge industry based on evasion and avoidance.

We are creating a special child care allowance for people who want to put their children into child care. That is great, but why have we not fulfilled our pledge to introduce a married person’s tax allowance?

Fiona Bruce: Does my hon. Friend agree that we are out of line with international best practice in not recognising marriage in our income tax system?

Mr Leigh: We are out of line. I am quite prepared not to hold the Government to account on their solemn promise to bring in a married tax allowance if they get rid of the other allowances and restore universal child benefit and all the other things. They cannot have it both ways. They cannot make it tax and benefit advantageous for a mother—it is usually a mother—to go out to work if they do not help mothers who want to stay at home and add to the economy by looking after their own children. That is unfair and something has to be done about it.

We cannot carry on with Budgets that simply tweak things. We need a long-term strategy based on simplifying the tax system and on budgetary reform. We must remove as many of the allowances as possible. We must change the culture of constantly tweaking things with Budgets and instead look to the long term and create a more simplified and effective tax system.

7.15 pm

Sarah Champion (Rotherham) (Lab): Last Wednesday was my first Budget since entering the House and I had high expectations. [*Laughter.*] I know that shows my naivety. We all know how much our constituents are suffering financially as the economy continues to flatline, so I was expecting a Budget that would jump-start growth. I was hugely disappointed, and I believe that my disappointment was shared by the country.

We face the biggest housing crisis in a generation, but the Government’s housing and economic policies are making it worse. House building is crucial to this country, both to bring economic recovery and to get families on the housing ladder.

Henry Smith: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Sarah Champion: No, I am sorry.

Initially, I broadly welcomed the Government’s schemes to encourage people to buy new builds and to assist people with mortgage deposits. With the demise of building societies, banks have a virtual monopoly on mortgages. The percentage that is required for a deposit has been rising steadily, especially for first-time buyers. That has created an environment in which people who

are more than able to pay for a mortgage cannot get one because the tens of thousands of pounds that they need for a deposit are unachievable.

However, I then started to consider the broader picture and the details of the schemes. First, it has been revealed that the Government’s mortgage scheme will not exclude people who are buying a second home. What about a third or a fourth home? How does that help people who are starting out? Not only are the Government pressing ahead with tax cuts for millionaires, it now seems that the mortgage scheme will help people, no matter how high their income, to buy a subsidised second home worth up to £600,000. Secondly, what interest rate will be charged, or will it be an interest-free loan? Thirdly, is it right that the taxpayer will effectively be underwriting the banks? The state will be facilitating banks to make profits on these mortgages.

My main question is, where are all the new homes for people to buy? The Government’s schemes mean that more people will be trying to buy the same number of houses. That will just push up the cost of a house unless more homes are built. The Government announced an extra £225 million for affordable house building, but according to the OBR only £125 million will be spent before 2015. That figure is dwarfed by the £4 billion cut in the funding for affordable housing that the Chancellor made in his first Budget. That stopped a very successful affordable housing scheme in Rotherham that was run by Transform South Yorkshire.

House building is at its lowest rate since the 1920s and the situation is getting worse. Housing starts fell by 11% in 2012 to below 100,000. The impact of that is that the Government have put 80,000 construction workers out of work and construction output has fallen by 8.2%.

Labour has proposed some practical measures to address that problem. We called on the Chancellor to use the money raised from the 4G mobile auction to build thousands of affordable homes to stimulate the economy and tackle the housing crisis. To improve the housing stock, we recommended that VAT on home repairs, maintenance and improvements should be cut to just 5%. To help young people who want to get on to the property ladder, the CBI’s proposal of a housing individual savings account should be considered. We also advocate giving first-time buyers a stamp duty holiday on properties worth up to £250,000. Finally, I support Labour’s recommendation to bring forward long-term infrastructure investment in schools, roads and transport to get construction workers back to work and to strengthen our economy.

Those measures would boost growth, get builders back to work building the homes that we need, and create apprenticeships for young people. I urge the Government to look more closely at the details of their schemes and to find ways to build more affordable homes and genuinely help first-time buyers. We need action now to get Britain building and to kick-start our economy.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Nigel Evans): I thank Sarah Champion for taking less time than she was allowed, which will mean that other Members can get in.

7.19 pm

Annette Brooke (Mid Dorset and North Poole) (LD): Overall, I think the Budget contains some helpful measures to help families with the cost of living, and it invests in

[*Annette Brooke*]

the future of our economy within a responsible framework. As a Liberal Democrat, I am naturally proud of the rise in the personal allowance to £10,000 from April 2014—one year earlier than planned—which will give 24.5 million people a tax reduction of £700. I was also pleased at the introduction of the employment allowance, particularly for small and medium-sized enterprises. My constituents will certainly be pleased with the freeze in fuel duty, the scrapping of the beer duty escalator and the cut in duty on beer.

I wish to concentrate in my short speech on the overall £5.4 billion boost to housing, but I will make a slight digression to talk about child trust funds—I should declare that I am a grandparent with a granddaughter who has a child trust fund. I have received a number of representations on those funds recently, and I have been sent details from a campaign by *Money Mail* under the headline:

“The £34,000 curse of child trust funds: Six million children are barred from best savings deals”.

One could interpret that as stating that the next generation of young people might be deprived of a deposit for a house, and at the other end of the scale, for lower income people, there are clearly children with trust funds who are not receiving the levels of interest that they should in terms of equity. I wanted to raise that issue with my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary to the Treasury who is sitting on the Front Bench.

The housing package is part of building a stronger economy and a fairer society, and includes a number of measures to support home ownership, new development and affordable housing. Over the past year or so, there has been agreement across the House that stimulating the construction sector is key to stimulating growth. It is a win-win situation with more jobs and more money created for our economy, without particularly sucking in imports. It is estimated that each extra home built each year creates jobs for three to four construction workers and those in associated industries, thereby improving business confidence.

During previous debates we have identified issues on the demand and supply sides of the housing market, and many have argued that the problem is not with planning as such. On the demand side, measures in the Budget have the potential to extend the supply of new houses, perhaps converting some of the hundreds of thousands of non-implemented planning applications into homes. Meeting the needs of those willing and able to buy, and the aspirations of those wishing to be home owners, is important, and will give this generation the same opportunities as my generation. At times tonight I have wondered whether the Labour party actually believes in encouraging home ownership.

Of course, home ownership is not the whole solution to our housing problem. I represent an area—Purbeck—that has a very high house-price-to-wages ratio and a high proportion of second homes. Although I am keen on the two schemes to stimulate mortgages, I am not keen on them subsidising second homes as that would make the situation in Purbeck and Dorset even worse. I like both schemes, however, because they involve first-time buyers and second steppers, and I think that we must put a shock through the whole market.

But—and there is a but—I think we have to do a lot more. I like the buy to rent stimulus, but we need to increase the supply of affordable housing over and above what we want to do and have done already. In the next phase we ought to look at the capacity of councils to borrow money for building housing, at direct building by councils, and at supporting arm’s length management organisations, which is incredibly important. An ALMO in my constituency is ready to start building but cannot get the borrowing capacity.

7.24 pm

Graeme Morrice (Livingston) (Lab): I welcome the opportunity to speak in this important debate, because the Budget last week revealed the true scale of the Government’s economic failure. As the next election grows closer, the Chancellor faced a test. He needed to boost household incomes and help cut the cost of essentials, but neither of those was forthcoming and his Budget failed to do enough for low-income households.

With an eye fixed firmly on the next general election, the Chancellor is pinning his hopes on a housing boom. His make-or-break blueprint for rebuilding the economy is unlikely to make a difference to the nation’s finances, as the focus has clearly shifted towards manifesto writing, positioning and early electioneering ahead of 2015. More than ever, taxpayers will now underwrite the mortgages of hundreds of thousands of home buyers, and take stakes in newly built houses in a multi-billion pound attempt to stimulate the struggling economy. However, he risks causing another unsustainable boom in the housing market, putting billions of pounds of taxpayers’ money at risk and offering little hope to hard-pressed working families who are struggling to get on the housing ladder for the first time.

We face the biggest housing crisis in a generation, but the Government’s housing and economic policies will make it worse by stoking house prices rather than helping families find a home. The Government have insisted that homes sold through the right to buy scheme will be replaced with more affordable housing on a one-for-one basis, but the Budget included £4.5 billion of funding for housing, with only £225 million of that to be spent on affordable homes. If we do not tackle the fact that we are still not building enough homes, we will create another housing bubble that will continue to push house prices out of reach of the majority.

Not only is the Chancellor pressing ahead with a tax cut for millionaires, it now seems that his mortgage scheme will help people, no matter how high their income, to buy a subsidised second home worth up to £600,000. Surely people struggling to get a mortgage, and those who want to own their first home, must be the priority for help, rather than the small number who can afford to buy a second home. If the Government concentrated at least some effort on collecting taxes from international corporations that operate in this country, and closing some of the loopholes in the tax system, there would be more money to go around.

With the coalition’s axe in full swing, I am appalled that the Government place so much effort on reforming the benefits system and punishing the sick and most vulnerable in our society, while those at the very top have seen their incomes rise as never before. The financial sector is at the heart of the economy. Huge, multi-million pound payouts to “banksters”, while citizens cannot

even afford to feed themselves, undermine any efforts to break with the past and are a timely reminder that the country is being run by the rich for the rich. As the rest of the country faces austerity, just an hour after the Chancellor delivered his Budget speech, Barclays bank paid nine fat cat bosses £40 million in share payments. That makes a complete mockery of claims that banks are cleaning up their act when it comes to their bonus culture.

At exactly the same time as the bedroom tax comes into force, the Government are prepared to give 13,000 millionaires, including the Prime Minister and the Chancellor, a tax cut of £100,000—£3 billion in total a year—while more than half a million households that are home to a disabled person will lose £700. That is simply not right.

Mr Leigh: Does the hon. Gentleman not agree with the Mandelson-Blair approach that the way forward for the Labour party is not to worry about how public services are funded, but to let the rich go on funding those services through taxation? What is wrong with that?

Graeme Morrice: The hon. Gentleman clearly indicates how his Government have got their priorities wrong.

It is time for this Government to recognise what is very much evident: that they have got this horribly wrong and need to think again before it is too late. We need a lasting change of direction by the Government, to one that demonstrates compassion, puts ordinary people first, and recognises the right priorities, or—ideally—a change of Government itself.

7.29 pm

James Morris (Halesowen and Rowley Regis) (Con): Few things are as natural as the aspiration to own a home, but for too many of our constituents, the aspiration is too often out of reach. The high cost of housing is one of the most frequently raised issues at my surgery. The problem affects not only would-be first-time buyers, but many going through family breakdown. The deposit typically required for a mortgage on even a small starter home is higher than many working families' annual income. Without parental support, raising that sort of money can be nearly impossible. The “help to buy” schemes announced last week will help to put home ownership back within the reach of hundreds of thousands of our constituents.

I am delighted that the Chancellor is extending right to buy further, so that council tenants can buy the homes in which their families live and local authorities will receive receipts from the sales, to be used to build new social housing. I am proud that, while under Conservative leadership, Dudley built some of the first new council housing in the area for a generation. Right-to-buy receipts, and the doubling of the affordable homes guarantee programme, will mean that more councils and housing associations will be able to build new social housing for local residents.

Last week's jobs figures showed another increase in the number of people in work—the number in Halesowen and Rowley Regis is now the highest ever—but the fact remains that many people aspire more than anything else to a job that will give them more independence and create a better life for themselves and their families. I remember from I was setting up my own small businesses

that nothing was more rewarding than being able to offer somebody their first job, or to offer work to a person who had been unemployed for some time. Hon. Members know that Governments cannot magically create sustainable jobs, but they have a responsibility to do everything possible to avoid putting barriers in the way of those who can. Every £1 that we add to non-wage costs represents an additional barrier to small and medium-sized businesses taking on extra employees. That is why I am pleased that the Chancellor has launched his scheme. The £2,000 employment allowance is a direct boost for new jobs. It will help to bring more people into work and open up a new set of possibilities and aspirations.

Shortly before the Budget, I attended the launch of the youth budget in Parliament with a number of other right hon. and hon. Members, including the Chancellor. Fourteen to 18-year-olds from around the country came together to discuss young people's priorities, which were drawn up following a national vote. That generation wants to get on, and the conclusion they came to in their youth budget could not have been clearer: they want the Government to bring down the deficit more quickly.

The House spends a lot of time talking about the economic effects of unsustainable deficits. The continuing turmoil in the eurozone is a current reminder of the dangers of failing to address the deficit. However, the young people gathered together for the youth budget remind us that, as well as being economically foolish, it is morally wrong for one generation to expect the next pay for its overspending.

Members on both sides of the House will recognise that growth remains weaker than had been hoped for or expected, as it does in most other developed countries. There was much in the Budget and the Chancellor's autumn statement that will help wealth creators to deliver the economic activity that we need to provide growth, but there is also much to help to make things that little bit easier for the millions of families who are working hard to get on and build a better life for themselves and their families. I believe that those who strive and those who aspire will see this Budget as a Budget for them.

7.34 pm

George Galloway (Bradford West) (Respect): That speech, much of this debate and this Budget demonstrate the parallel universe in which the governing class in this country is living. Earlier in the debate, nearly four hours ago—it feels like four days—we had the full vaudeville, music hall treatment. They chuntered and they chortled and they laughed—how they laughed!—until their tummies wobbled about the state we are in.

But there were some genuinely funny moments, the funniest of which was when the Secretary of State said that the Budget had sowed the seeds of growth and jobs in this bleak midwinter, which has now frozen out the spring. In the very month in which 4,000 grandmothers and grandfathers froze to death in Britain—froze to death in Britain, in 2013—and the very month in which millions of our citizens had to make a choice between eating and turning on their heating, the Secretary of State believes that this Budget sowed seeds for growth and jobs. No seeds can grow in this climate; hon. and right hon. Gentlemen on the Government Benches should know that.

[George Galloway]

The truth is that this Budget, produced by a Cabinet of millionaires, governing in their own interests and the interests of a very narrow class, has lost the confidence of the country. Indeed, the political system and the political class as a whole have lost the confidence of the people, who see their own situation, with mass unemployment and poverty stalking the land. Bradford, my constituency, is an almost perfect example. Youth unemployment has tripled in two years; one in eight is unemployed; our child poverty statistics are the second worst in the country; our schools are the third worst in the country; our hospitals are the seventh worst in the country; our young people walk the shuttered-up streets without education, training or jobs; and the Government and others in the media cry surprise when the devil finds work for their idle hands.

The Government have done nothing for Bradford—the Budget does nothing for Bradford—because Bradford is entirely beyond their ken. [*Interruption.*] Do I know where Bradford is? I am the person who, just one year ago, won a landslide election result—a by-election of historic proportions. I defeated the Labour party, the party of the hon. Member for Tynemouth (Mr Campbell), precisely because it thinks that yah-boo politics of the type we have seen in the debate is sufficient to meet the gravity of this situation. He should come to his seat and join the debate.

Here is the truth of the matter: our country is in grave danger. It is a country on the slide, which cannot keep its pensioners warm in the winter time, but can fly around the world setting fire to other people's countries, apparently at the drop of a hat. It is a country that cannot pay for its young people's education without charging them £9,000 a year to take shelter from the economic winds and study at universities, thanks to the betrayal of the yellow Liberal Democrats.

I have only 15 seconds left. Do you know, Mr Deputy Speaker, how many times in this House just this afternoon the words "immigrant", "foreigner", "alien" and "foreign migrant" have been mentioned? There is no U-turn by the Government, but there is no deviation to the right so low that they will not make.

7.39 pm

Andrew George (St Ives) (LD): It is, of course, a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Bradford West (George Galloway). His speech was a oratorical interlude that demonstrated his perspective on the world and suited his style: blacks, whites and no greys. Although he denies practising yah-boo politics, I am afraid to say that that was pretty much what we heard.

Today, we are concentrating primarily on housing, and I want to make a constructive contribution on the narrow issue of developing the construction industry, trying to kick-start the economy in the process and meeting desperate housing need. I welcome any intervention by the Government, including the Budget announcement on the promotion of home ownership for those seeking, in many cases in desperate circumstances, to get their first toe-hold on the housing ladder. In particular, I want to look at the special circumstances faced by many people living in rural areas.

My own part of the world is, of course, west Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly. Cornwall as a whole has seen the number of houses double in the past 40 years, yet

housing problems for local people have become significantly worse. What we have learned in Cornwall applies to many other parts of the country that are attractive to wealthy people—we have many such places in Cornwall—who can afford second homes. On its own, building houses is not the problem. In places that are highly desirable to those with large wallets, something more sophisticated is required than merely heaving in a load more houses and turning the place into a developers' paradise. There is a big mismatch between earnings levels and house prices in our area.

Mr Gregory Campbell (East Londonderry) (DUP): The hon. Gentleman's area, like mine, has a number of second homes on coastal development routes. Does he agree that we need the Government to plug this massive loophole, so that people do not take advantage of what appears to be there at the moment and build large buy-to-let properties with a significant subsidy from the public purse?

Andrew George: I entirely agree. As the Government introduce their proposals, I hope that they will discount any chance of the loan guarantee being used to support the purchase of second homes, and that it will go only to families that otherwise would not be able to buy a first home of their own. After I was first elected in 1997, I campaigned against the policy that had been introduced by the Conservative Government of providing a 50% council tax discount for second homes. In that case, hundreds of millions of pounds were being used every year to subsidise the wealthy buying second homes, when thousands of local families could not afford their first. This Government are finishing off the job. I persuaded the previous Labour Government to remove as much as they possibly could of the second home council tax discount, and that was the right step forward.

Before I was elected to this House, I worked with housing associations and others to find a way of constructing a new lower rung on the housing ladder through shared equity and shared ownership schemes. The rural exceptions policy allowed exceptions to be made on the edges of villages and towns, where planning permission would not normally be granted, to meet local housing need. It allowed the schemes to go ahead and meant that the development price of land was significantly lower than would have been the case if they had been given unfettered permission to develop the land and build properties at prices that local people could not afford. The exceptions approach and shared ownership were clearly the way forward. The problem was that in rural areas only two lenders, Nationwide and Halifax, were prepared to put money into shared ownership developments.

A lot of lenders question whether they are prepared to put their money in and support local families who are trying to get on to the housing ladder. Such properties do not result in the level of default—the amount is 0.45% in shared ownership as a whole, which is significantly less than that for rural housing stock—that a lot of lenders pretend. If the Government are looking at ways to tighten the definition and develop their loan guarantee scheme so that it will apply to families who desperately need help, I urge them to look at the shared ownership sector. They should find ways to enable the situation to come to life, but not just on the first, initial purchase;

they should try to ensure that on the second and subsequent purchase they can facilitate and work with housing associations so that these families can move on. The lack of confidence that this market can have a life of its own is holding it back.

I hope the Government will look at ways of having, in effect, a rural housing investment bank through this measure, and I hope that they will see this as a constructive contribution to the debate.

7.45 pm

Mr Barry Sheerman (Huddersfield) (Lab/Co-op): I am glad I met a man from St Ives on this journey, because I agree with much of what the hon. Member for St Ives (Andrew George) said about shared ownership.

I suppose it is because I have been in this House too long—there is usually a chorus after any Member says that—and because I have heard a lot of Budget and autumn statements that I have become more cynical about them as time goes on, but I want to start by saying that, as co-chair of the associate parliamentary manufacturing group, I believe that some of the concessions and planned changes affecting manufacturing industry in the autumn statement and the Budget were good for manufacturing, and were welcomed by people in the sector.

The Budget was supposed to be about aspiration. I would like that aspiration to be lifted much higher. Our country is changing fast, and my irritation with Budgets and autumn statements is that there seems to be no time for politicians to get together in a sensible way and think strategically about policy making and the direction of our country. Our country is changing fast. The social and economic structure is changing rapidly and fundamentally within my lifetime. I was talking recently to students at Northampton university, and their knowledge of the social structure of Britain is amazing. I asked them what percentage of people worked in manufacturing and some of them said 30% or 40%. They had no idea that about 9.5% of people work in manufacturing; it is 10.5% in Huddersfield. Some 30% work in what people call public services—education, health and local government—and roughly 60% work in private services.

Working in early years or later years care in private services means earning minimum wage or minimum wage plus. Working in retail and distribution also means earning minimum wage. No one can live the good life on minimum wage. I came into politics so that my constituents could live the good life. We all know the good life: we can put food on the table and have a nice house or flat, whether it is rented or bought through a mortgage. We all know the essential ingredients for a good life, but many of the good jobs that provided it, including in manufacturing, for example, have gone. They have been replaced by minimum wage jobs in retail and distribution, and in caring for patients.

Universities, apprentices and education were mentioned only once in the Budget, and that is a real worry. I care passionately about giving young people jobs and opportunities, and 90% of firms do not take on apprentices. That is a real concern and it was not addressed enough in the Budget.

Manufacturing is important in our country. My vision is of a high-skilled, high-paid Britain, but at the moment many of our people are heading towards a low-skilled, low-paid economy. In fact, those two can live side by

side, and as Lord Heseltine told us, there is a grotesque change in our country that should be worrying every Member—the way in which London and the south-east are sucking the life out of our great towns and cities. The Budget has not addressed that, but we must address it if we are to get strategic policy right. This Budget did not do enough in that direction.

Mr David Ward (Bradford East) (LD): Does the hon. Gentleman also agree that demographic changes and the rising numbers of young people in certain communities make it even more important to have specific policies targeted at them in order to get them into workplaces and apprenticeships?

Mr Sheerman: The hon. Gentleman knows of my passion for skills training and apprenticeships. We should abolish unemployment until the age of 25. The Netherlands did it, so why cannot we? There was not enough in the Budget to address youth unemployment. When I was a shadow Home Affairs Minister, I knew the importance of putting money into deterring young people from crime. If someone is not a criminal by the age of 25, they do not become one, so if we keep young people in employment, training or education until then, they never get into inter-generational worklessness.

Those are the sorts of bold policies I wanted in the Budget. I wanted higher aspiration and for my constituents to see us not lobbing insults at each other, but finding common cause to get the country ready for the 21st century and to make ours a society of high skills and high pay.

7.51 pm

Sir Bob Russell (Colchester) (LD): The announcement to help first-time home buyers is great, but the wording needs to be tight to prevent it from being misused as a licence for people to buy a second home or to add further to the buy-to-rent racket that has led to so much misery for those trapped in the private rented sector, while others have become property millionaires by sponging on funds from housing benefits paid for by taxpayers to help people who cannot afford to buy or who cannot get a council house. It would make more sense to spend this money on new council houses—or social housing as it is now known.

Next, there are mixed messages on alcohol tax and the coalition Government's desire to tackle binge drinking and improve the health of the nation. One minute there is disagreement about whether there should be a minimum unit pricing of alcohol; then the Chancellor knocks 1p off the price of beer, rather than raising it by 3p, as would have happened under the ever-rising structure inherited from Labour. Thus the cost of a pint of beer has gone down by 4p on Labour's pricing policy. This is not going to help tackle binge drinking or the growing health problems associated with excessive drinking.

We need a variable price structure to help traditional, community and village public houses, which would fit well with the coalition Government's localism agenda and the last Government's sustainable communities legislation. Tax on beer and lager should be raised significantly in the mega-pubs and to stop irresponsible discount pricing in supermarkets, but reduced in our neighbourhood public houses, which are closing at a rate of 18 a week, owing, in no small part, to the lack of

[*Sir Bob Russell*]

a level playing field. It is these neighbourhood hostilities that, in the main, are less likely to cause antisocial problems. On 1 November last year, I told the House:

“We need to amend the tax levy on beer sold in our traditional public houses. We should have a tax-neutral approach to keep the Treasury happy and bring huge social benefits, including job retention and creation, rather than there being the loss of jobs that we continue to witness in the sector. Most publicans of neighbourhood and village public houses run responsible establishments. Their customers should be rewarded, not financially penalised because of the irresponsible marketing carried out by supermarkets and mega-drinking establishments.”—[*Official Report*, 1 November 2012; Vol. 552, c. 429.]

On tackling binge drinking and the often associated incidents of people being injured, deliberately or accidentally, from broken glasses or beer bottles, sometimes used as weapons in fights, I urge the Chancellor to give a tax discount to brewers who put their product in plastic bottles—more accurately polycarbonate bottles. Likewise, I urge him to encourage major drinks venues to use the same material for the glasses in which alcoholic drinks are served. This would dramatically reduce the number of people taken to hospital for injuries caused by broken beer bottles and glasses. I refer the House to the ten-minute rule Bill in the name of the hon. Member for Wrexham (Ian Lucas), which he brought in on 4 September last year. In his speech, he pointed out that according to the Home Office there are about 87,000 violent incidents involving glass every year. Just think how much it costs the NHS to deal with the vicious wounds inflicted.

I urge the Chancellor to introduce a levy on football television rights. There is already too much money sloshing around in professional football, and it is only going to get worse. The next television deal will bring in £5 billion to inflate still further the obscene payments to premiership footballers and a big creaming off by their parasitic agents. I suggest a 20% levy, which the Chancellor could ring-fence and direct to be spent, as a £1 billion Olympic legacy, on school and grass-roots sport.

Thank goodness we have not had a repeat of the pasty tax nonsense, although we are left with the unfairness of VAT being levied on the Subway toasted sandwich. I urge the Chancellor to try a little harder with his attempts to be the common man and axe the 20% tax on toasties and the like.

Finally, how about this for a new income stream? I am grateful to Mr Richard Spendlove, doyen of the BBC evening radio airways across the eastern counties, for this suggestion. He points out that people will pay a small fortune for so-called personalised or elite registration number plates for vehicles, so why not, he asks, re-issue all those abandoned and forgotten numbers from the early years of motoring? Whenever such live number plates come on the market, they can fetch as much as £4,300, which was the asking price yesterday for registration number 88 VR. Mr Spendlove suggests that the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency dusts down its records, identifies the tens of thousands of similar historic numbers that decades ago ended their days in the scrap yards of yesteryear and makes them available. The revenue generated could, I suggest, be used for road safety measures outside schools.

If the Chancellor wants to be popular, he should adopt all those suggestions.

7.56 pm

Mr Michael Meacher (Oldham West and Royton) (Lab): To fill a Budget with populist gimmicks while wholly ignoring the economic fundamentals that are remorselessly driving this country into a semi-permanent stagnation is to degrade the high office of Chancellor. The home loans scheme has more than a whiff of sub-prime about it, luring those without the means to buy a house they cannot afford and thereby fuelling a housing bubble. The child care voucher is limited to where both parents are working and offers five times more to the richest fifth than the poorest fifth. And the penny off a pint of beer does not do much to compensate for the 9% cut in real wages that the OBR now expects by 2015 compared with 2009.

All this populist flannel misses the point. The real point is the total abandonment of any serious attempt in the Budget to tackle the fundamental problems of a desperately ailing economy. The tragedy for the people of this country is that during this depression we have Herbert Hoover at the controls, when the whole country is crying out for a Franklin Roosevelt. The harshly unrelenting facts of Britain’s inexorable decline speak for themselves. The OBR has been forced to halve the growth prediction this year, which it made only three months ago, from 1.2% to 0.6%. The deficit reduction—the ostensible aim of the whole brutal austerity machine—is going into reverse. The deficit now expected in 2014 is £120 billion—twice what it was expected to be just three years ago. By the time of the election in 2015, the Government will have been forced to borrow an extra £250 billion more than was forecast in 2010. With the plans in the Budget, any hope of the Chancellor’s achieving a firm and sustainable recovery is simply delusional.

The heart of any Budget is its macro-economic strategy. Uniquely, in this Budget, there was no credible strategy. The Chancellor’s policy is still so destructive and the failure so massive that it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the real objective is not deficit reduction, but to dismantle the public sector and shrink the state. One simply has to ask, “Why is the Chancellor so wilfully blind to an alternative?”

An alternative must start from recognising that when the household and private sectors are deleveraging, there cannot be a recovery if the public sector does the same. It starts from recognising also that monetary policy alone—throwing £375 billion of quantitative easing at the banks, dropping interest rates to the floor and letting the exchange rate fall by 25%—cannot by itself produce growth; or, as Mark Carney would put it, not much “escape velocity” there. An alternative also starts from accepting that until the collapse in aggregate demand is tackled, there will be no recovery.

How can that be engineered and paid for? There has to be, initially, a public sector-driven investment programme in house building, infrastructure, energy, transport and low-carbon technology until such time as the private sector can take over. That can be paid for by borrowing £30 billion at the dirt-cheap interest rate of 0.5%, or £150 million a year, which would rapidly pay for itself by taking back into employment 1 million workers, whom it is currently costing the country £10 billion to keep on the dole. However, this does not have to involve any public borrowing at all. The nationalised banks, RBS and Lloyds, could be instructed to prioritise lending

to key infrastructure manufacturing projects, or the ultra-rich—the 14,000 millionaires who are about to get a £2,000 a week tax give-away—could be capital gains taxed on the £155 billion of gains they have made over the last three years, according to *The Sunday Times*. Or, instead of hosing down the banks with another huge tranche of quantitative easing, the money could be diverted to direct investment in industry.

8.1 pm

Iain Stewart (Milton Keynes South) (Con): I very much welcome the opportunity to contribute to this Budget debate.

We have heard much in contributions from both sides of the House about the level of the housing supply and the building that is going on. I am happy to report that in Milton Keynes we are getting on with it. We have 28,000 housing permissions in place and the Government have intervened to unlock some of the developments that have been gummed up in the system for too long, thanks in part to our friend the great crested newt—which, for an endangered species, seems to appear with remarkable frequency whenever there is a planning application. Those housing developments are not part of the hated regional spatial strategy, but are now part of a locally decided and locally managed strategy, which is just one component of our successful growth strategy—not the old, blunt housing targets, but economic growth alongside housing growth and infrastructure planning.

I warmly welcome the measures in the Budget and earlier announcements that will underpin and enhance Milton Keynes's position as the part of the country that will lead in the rebuilding our economy. All right hon. and hon. Members will want claim that their home area is the best and is leading the country, but I can cite three recent independent surveys that confirm that Milton Keynes is leading the way. In November, the Experian company ranked Milton Keynes as No. 1 in a survey of towns that will lead growth in this country. In each of the next four years, annual employment will grow by 2% and output will grow by 3%, and this is sustainable and balanced growth, not just in the retail and service sectors but in manufacturing and high-tech industries as well.

More recently, March's economic outlook report by PricewaterhouseCoopers put Milton Keynes's growth ahead of the UK average. Mike Robinson, partner at PwC, said that

“businesses should be encouraged to capitalise on the expected upturn in consumer spending and opportunities created by local infrastructure investment.”

Finally, just the other week the business location index—part of the inward investment guide to England—ranked Milton Keynes as the best place in Britain to do business, based on its scoring highly on economic, human resources, environmental and infrastructure indicators.

Companies House records show that more than 2,000 new businesses started up in Milton Keynes in the last year, up 10% on the year before. Our inward investment is booming. Milton Keynes is already home to 700 international companies, and that is growing. We have a winning formula that is based on our local factors and the UK's competitive tax strategy. Our strong position will be underpinned and enhanced by the policies announced in the Budget and other measures. The city deal and the Heseltine proposal for a single

pot of money to decentralise decision making will help, boosting our infrastructure, particularly with the east-west rail project, which will link Milton Keynes to Oxford and, ultimately, Cambridge and is forecast to generate 12,000 jobs in the local region.

Our apprenticeship schemes are doing well. We have already doubled the number of apprenticeships locally to 2,000—that will increase further—and not just in traditional sectors, but in accountancy, law and manufacturing. That will develop our skills base for the future and make us even more attractive to inward investors. Finally, the policies to help people buy their first home and go further up the housing ladder will ensure that our housing strategy is linked to what we need locally. Of course there are many challenges ahead, but Milton Keynes is doing well. This Budget gives us the tools to get on with the job.

Let me finish by referring to the contribution from the hon. Member for Bradford West (George Galloway). He criticised the Government for talking about sowing seeds in frozen weather. A horticulturalist will tell us that it is not only possible to sow seeds on frozen ground, but often desirable, because that can lead to the healthiest growth.

8.6 pm

Dr William McCrea (South Antrim) (DUP): I thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to speak in this Budget debate.

Like all right hon. and hon. Members, we waited to hear the Chancellor's proposals that would kick-start the economy, lifting it out of the despair in which it finds itself. The Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government opened today's debate, outlining Government policy in the Budget for a house building programme. I appreciate that our constituents across the United Kingdom have a difficulty in getting on to the housing ladder. Having listened to my colleagues here in England, I can say that there is undoubtedly a social housing build problem, with affordable housing described as a national emergency.

Members of Parliament from Northern Ireland have a difficulty in offering proposals to resolve the housing problem, because housing is devolved to the Northern Ireland Assembly. However, the Chancellor has offered some hope to homebuyers in the Budget, with interest-free loans of up to 20% of the value of a new build property. I appreciate that there is some confusion about the proposal, but I trust that homebuyers seeking to get on the housing ladder will not be lost in the midst of a policy that seems not to have been thought out before being announced.

On Budget day, my hon. Friend the Member for East Antrim (Sammy Wilson) rightly welcomed a number of acceptable announcements. He endorsed the decision to protect Government front-line services in health and education. He also acknowledged that the Government had recognised the key role that capital infrastructure enhancement plays in stimulating economic growth. That is important not only for short-term economic growth, but for our country's long-term prosperity. However, we face a serious problem, with little or no economic growth across the United Kingdom but, sadly, no sign of it changing in the near future. We need to stimulate our economy. The Secretary of State told the House today that we needed to give business a leg up.

[*Dr William McCrea*]

To do so, we need to bring confidence back into the business community. Businesses need to be sure that the Government have a plan to take us out of the mess we are in. No one can deny that there is a lack of confidence. As a result, those who have money are not spending or making the investments in industry that we need so much in our economy.

Anne Marie Morris (Newton Abbot) (Con): Has the hon. Gentleman read the latest report from the Federation of Small Businesses bureau, which says that the level of enthusiasm and belief that we are heading towards a recovery is higher than it ever has been? Confidence is at an all-time high.

Dr McCrea: I thank the hon. Lady for her remarks. I think that if we really went out into the community, we would still find a lack of confidence. If confidence were out there, those who have the money—and some certainly do—would be investing. We need to get those people to spend that money within our economy. On the other side, there is not only a lack of confidence, but a lack of finance. Small and medium-sized businesses are being starved and crippled by denial of finance.

I do not believe that we should talk down our economy, but we must be realistic about the economic situation in our United Kingdom. We want inward investment and we need to kick-start the economy. I would certainly like to see the Chancellor giving more encouragement. Many businesses are crying out for finance. They go along to the banks, but no matter how many times the Chancellor and even the Prime Minister have assured us that they are encouraging the banks to give them the money, that needed money is not getting into the coffers of SMEs. We have got to do more about that.

My constituents welcome the cancellation of the 3p increase in fuel duty, which would have been an additional tax burden not only on businesses, but on virtually every other person and family in our community.

Mr Gregory Campbell: Does my hon. Friend agree that if the Chancellor were in the business of freezing one duty and reducing another, it might have been more cost-effective and beneficial to the economy if he had frozen the beer duty and reduced the fuel duty?

Dr McCrea: I thank my hon. Friend for that suggestion. In fact, that suggestion would have been profitable for the economy, especially bearing in mind that we in Northern Ireland already pay higher fuel prices than any other region of the United Kingdom. We also welcome the low cost of borrowing from the banks over a sustained period, but I have to say that there is another side to that because we should have some sympathy for many pensioners and other savers who depend on savings to supplement their income. They are suffering greatly from the very low interest rates.

I acknowledge the reduction of corporation tax to 20%, ensuring a single rate for businesses in April 2015. In welcoming this step, however, I would ask the Chancellor when corporation tax is going to be devolved to the Northern Ireland Assembly, particularly bearing in mind the fact that we compete with the Irish Republic, which has a 12.5% rate. We want to be able to compete on a

level playing field, or better, to bring inward investment into our Province. Northern Ireland's population has a strong work ethic, but we need policies that will build confidence, bring that inward investment and help industries in the local community to invest in the future.

Air passenger duty is another issue. I believe it is detrimental to our economy. I acknowledge that APD exists for transatlantic flights from Northern Ireland, but we need to challenge this, so I call on the Chancellor to reconsider his position. There is anger, too, over the millionaires' tax cuts, while at the same time there is the hurt over the bedroom tax. Where will our constituents find the houses for the downsizing? It is easy to talk about these imaginary houses, but that offers no relief to families that face turmoil in getting a roof over their heads.

8.13 pm

Oliver Colvile (Plymouth, Sutton and Devonport) (Con): Before I go any further, I should like to declare that I retain an interest in a small communications company, which I set up before I was elected to this place, that gives advice to developers on how to manage planning procedures and the planning system. For the last 20 years, I have been following the whole issue of development and planning.

I very much welcome the Chancellor's proposals to introduce "help to buy", which I hope will stimulate our economy as well. To my mind, however, the planning process is not the issue that has created many of the problems for development. We need to unlock credit availability and make mortgages much more available, especially for those first-time buyers who cannot raid the bank of mum and dad.

I am not going to pretend that I am an economist or that I necessarily understand banking regulation or the complexities that go with it, but I think that we cannot ignore the reasons why we are in this mess. To my mind, it was Bill Clinton and the American Administration who, wanting to encourage the less well off, especially among the Afro-Caribbean community in the United States, to buy their own homes, consequently created a sub-prime market in the 1990s. By weakening financial regulation, the US and British Governments created a new class of specialised mortgage lenders that subcontracted their liability. By failing to put up interest rates, the US Federal Reserve and the Bank of England allowed the housing market to overheat. That is the reason why we created this major crash.

In 2001, when the Labour Government created a budget deficit, they continued to make our problems much more disastrous than they needed to be, and they failed to control public expenditure, adding to our financial woes. In addition, the Bank of England failed to manage our inflation target and our monetary framework. Not only the Treasury, but the Office for Budgetary Responsibility have some way to go because they have failed to get their forecasts right in the process.

As my hon. Friends know, the Bank of England is responsible for managing the inflation target, but it is the Treasury that actually sets that target in the first place. For the last two years, I have been banging on and asking how those criteria have been set, but I have failed to get a reply. Plainly, something has gone very wrong indeed. The Bank of England is consistently failing to hit its inflation target. In producing a Budget, monetary policy cannot be divorced from the economics.

In the years before the credit crunch, monetary conditions were too loose. There was an asset price bubble, house prices rose very sharply and if the banking crises had not erupted, general inflation would have been an even more serious problem. The Bank of England accommodated a serious asset price bubble with a huge and unsustainable level of domestic household debt. People have rightly criticised bank and financial market regulation, but much less attention has been given to defective central banking and overly loose monetary conditions that made possible the household borrowing and financial leverage.

I believe that the time has now come when the role of the central banks should be scrutinised properly. We must learn the lessons, the limitations and the defects of the inflation target regime. There has been a serious lack of transparency in the way the Bank of England conducts monetary policy. The details of its forecasting model, the assumptions it uses and the forecasts it generates have not been publicly available. Its public documents have been disappointing in respect of their clarity and presentation, and I am afraid that the inflation report has failed. I am firmly of the view that we need a proper review of the inflation target, how it is set out and how the central bank conducts its business.

8.18 pm

Yasmin Qureshi (Bolton South East) (Lab): They say, “If you tell a big enough lie and repeat it constantly, people will believe it”—and that is what the Tory-led Government have done. We are constantly told that the last Labour Government left the biggest debt in the developed world. That is an odd thing to say when the Chancellor admitted to the Treasury Committee in 2011 that he did not even know that the UK had the lowest debt in the G7.

Of course the UK will have a higher debt and deficit than some other countries, and Government Members often make a comparison with Greece, but Greece has a totally different economy from ours; we are the sixth largest in the world. Of course our debt will be higher than Greece’s, but the real figure to look at—one that relates to economic competence—is the ratio of GDP to national debt.

Let me remind the House—I know Government Members have a collective amnesia about this—that in 1997, when the Labour Government came to power, the national debt was 42% of GDP; after 11 years of the Labour Government and before the global recession of 2008, the ratio of GDP to national debt was 35%. That is a reduction of 11%, and it was not achieved by a Government who were financially incompetent. In fact, that Government achieved an even greater reduction than the Conservatives.

The second claim that we hear is that Labour created the biggest deficit in the developed world by overspending. If that was the case, why did Germany, Japan, the United States and other similar economies have a problem? Why did they have banking crises? Why were they not in deficit? We know the answer. We know that there were global economic problems. We know that the financial crisis began in the United States with the sub-prime mortgages. In fact, it was a former Chancellor, my right hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh South West (Mr Darling), who took a bold initiative, saving our banking systems and, subsequently, saving half a million jobs as well.

Those are not just my views. The International Monetary Fund concluded that

“the UK experienced an increase in the deficit as result of a large loss in output/GDP caused by the global banking crisis and not even as result of the bank bailouts, fiscal stimulus and bringing forward of capital spending. It’s basic economics: when output falls the deficit increases.”

The deficit increase was not due to any of the actions taken by the Labour Government. In fact, all those actions made the economy better, and saved more jobs. In contrast, this Government’s policies over the past three years have done nothing to help the economy to grow.

Another reason for our financial loss was the fact that we are one of the main financial centres in the world. Given that there was a global banking crisis, of course we were likely to take the hit more than other countries. We should also bear in mind that up to 2008, while Labour was in power, the actual borrowing costs were low. Indeed, they are still low. That is because in the United Kingdom our bonds are strong and are performing well, because people know that the Bank of England is there to step in if there is any problem, and, of course, because over the last 300 years the UK has never defaulted on its debt. The Government try to blame austerity, saying, “We must introduce all these measures because we need to balance the books,” but the truth is that they are using austerity as a justification for downsizing the state, which, in ideological terms, the Conservative-led government have always wanted to do.

Even the Chancellor’s budget deficit programme is not working. Everyone knows that a budget deficit occurs when expenditure exceeds income, but one way of securing income is taxation, direct or indirect. When people are being laid off and are not working, they are paying no taxes. They are having to be supported by a benefits system, which is why—

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Nigel Evans): Order. I am terribly sorry, but the hon. Lady’s time is up.

8.23 pm

Paul Uppal (Wolverhampton South West) (Con): It is not normally my habit to comment on earlier speeches, and I had intended to stick to the main ethos of what I was going to say, but I feel that I must draw something to the attention of the hon. Member for Bolton South East (Yasmin Qureshi). She began by talking about GDP ratios. Let me gently remind her that during the early years of the last Labour Government, they stuck to Conservative spending principles. Does she remember golden economic rules, and the end of boom and bust?

Yasmin Qureshi: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Paul Uppal: I will gladly give way.

Yasmin Qureshi: Eleven years later, it was the Labour party that reduced the GDP ratio to 35%.

Paul Uppal: No; not 11 years later. [Interruption.] If Labour Members disagree, perhaps they will recall the views of Hamish McRae, the economist who writes for *The Independent*, who has commented on the issue at length. However, I digress.

[*Paul Uppal*]

The essence of today's debate concerns housing policy. I am glad that the Government have confirmed that they will make up to £12 billion of guarantees available to support more than £130 billion of mortgages for new-build and existing homes in January for three years. I also welcome the Chancellor's commitment to realigning the Government's policy on the private rented sector by increasing the £200 million build to rent fund to more than £1 billion, and providing a £225 million funding boost to support a further 15,000 affordable homes in England by 2015.

Members on both sides of the House have made various points, but it might be wise at this juncture to refer not to politicians, but to housing and property experts. I do not know whether anyone has taken the time to read this week's edition of *Estates Gazette*, which is the bible when it comes to real estate and housing issues. According to Richard Threlfall, KPMG's head of infrastructure, building and construction,

"the Chancellor has thrown the UK house building industry a new lifeline."

Nick Jopling, executive director of property at Grainger plc and chairman of the Urban Land Institute's UK Residential Council, added:

"Stimulating the housing market through further mortgage support...will help improve transactions and liquidity in the market, which has for some time been constrained."

Stewart Baseley, executive chairman of the Home Builders Federation, said:

"A lack of affordable mortgage availability remains the biggest constraint on housing supply".

He also said:

"Government must be praised for its attempts to stimulate activity".

Gerry Hughes, senior director at GVA, said:

"We welcome the healthy five fold increase in the Build to Rent fund. This will undoubtedly assist a sector that is struggling severely."

I will cut my quotations short at this point, but let me emphasise that those are not the views of politicians, but the views of property professionals.

I think that last week's Budget statement was seminal in many respects, and that the opening line was crucial. The Chancellor said:

"This is a Budget for people who aspire to work hard and get on. It is a Budget for people who realise there are no easy answers to problems built up over many years—just the painstaking work of putting right what went so badly wrong."—[*Official Report*, 20 March 2013; Vol. 560, c. 931.]

I believe that blue-collar workers out there, and the general population, understand the challenging economic climate, and agree that we need to tackle the deficit. The Chancellor stated that it had now been cut by one third, not one quarter, and that according to the Office for Budget Responsibility, we are on course to fulfil our fiscal mandate. However, tackling the deficit, although right and necessary, cannot be our only message. We need to reinforce and go further in regard to some of our flagship policies, taking low-paid workers out of tax and freezing fuel duty. Above all, blue-collar workers want to see more money in their wallets at the end of the month, and I believe that we are on course to achieve that. The Budget demonstrates that our priorities—the Government's priorities—are in the right place.

The Leader of the Opposition often comes to the Dispatch Box and accuses the Government of being "out of touch". The Budget shows that we are on the side of workers, of families, of people who want to get on and make a better life for themselves. It shows that the Government have their priorities at heart—the right priorities. Our priorities are in the right place when a Budget raises the personal tax allowance to £10,000 from April 2014, which means a tax cut for 24 million people. As a result, some people will pay £700 less in income tax than they did in 2010, and 2.7 million will be taken out of tax altogether. Our priorities are in the right place when fuel duty is being frozen once again, which makes this the longest freeze for over 20 years. Pump prices will be 13p lower than they would have been as a result of Labour's plans, leaving the average motorist with £170 more in his or her pocket. We are helping the aspirational workers, but we are also helping the entrepreneurs, the risk-takers and the employers. The small businessman has faced, and still faces, numerous challenges. Things are not easy, but, as a Government, we can help to make things easier, and help to make those businesses succeed. The fall in fuel duty will help them, too, but more importantly the package of business reforms will make a real difference in the pockets of businesses up and down the backbone of this country.

We will cut the jobs tax for every business by £2,000 in 2014. We are taking people out of tax: 450,000 small businesses—one third of all employers—will pay no jobs tax at all. I hope the Chancellor takes similar steps to increase the allowance in future Budgets. Taking more small businesses out of paying the jobs tax will provide a greater incentive to take on more workers during the continuing long-term rebalancing of our economy.

In talking about entrepreneurs and employers, I would like to commend the Government for cutting corporation tax even further. Under the previous Government, business taxes were at 28%. Now we have the lowest rate in the G7, and next month it will fall to 23%. When it reaches 20% in April 2015, we will have the lowest rate in the G20. This is great news for people who wish to invest and bring jobs to this country.

This is a Budget for aspiration and ambition and for all those who wish to work hard.

8.29 pm

Jonathan Reynolds (Stalybridge and Hyde) (Lab/Co-op): It is a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Wolverhampton South West (Paul Uppal). He asked us about the debt to GDP percentage ratio. Looking at the 1996-97 financial year, after 10 years of a Labour Government we not only had a lower debt to GDP percentage ratio, but our deficit was lower.

Paul Uppal: I appreciate the hon. Gentleman's response, but does he not accept that for the first half of that Labour Government they stuck to Conservative spending plans laid down by the previous Conservative Chancellor?

Jonathan Reynolds: In the rare years since the end of the second world war when there has been a surplus, not a deficit, it is Labour Governments who have traditionally delivered that. That proves we are much better at the national finances, as well as at providing for the people of this country.

David Wright: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Jonathan Reynolds: I will; I am getting a lot of extra time, here.

David Wright: Does my hon. Friend recall that the Conservatives were wedded to our spending plans right up until the global recession hit? They have never explained which action they would not have taken to save the banks.

Jonathan Reynolds: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. Just last week, when listening to the Chancellor deliver his fourth Budget and its dreadful assessment of the state of the British economy, it was hard to believe that if everything had gone to plan for him and we had managed to pull off what he proposed in the emergency Budget, we would be well down the road to balancing the books and debt would be peaking this year as a percentage of GDP. Such a plan now seems nothing more than a fantasy.

Larry Summers, the distinguished American economist and Treasury Secretary under President Clinton, told a conference I attended last year about the response he gives when asked what one event would make him completely reassess everything he believes to be true about modern economics. He said that since 2010, his answer has been, “If the UK Government manage to bring about a rapid recovery through their deficit reduction plan.” I thought that was quite a bold statement when I first heard it, but of course, Mr Summers knew what he was talking about.

When the Chancellor took office in 2010 and first came to the House, he said we would have five years of pain to eradicate the deficit, but then we would have done it. Last week, he came back to the House to say that there will be another five years of pain, and then we will have eradicated the deficit—maybe. There has been almost no progress, but the pain for our constituents has been very real.

Stripping away all the partisanship in this Chamber, there are surely Government Members who thought last week, “What if we had done things slightly differently?” The truth behind all that misplaced rhetoric in 2010 about the UK being on the verge of bankruptcy or that we would be the next Greece, all but destroyed business and consumer confidence, before the measures in the emergency Budget were even on the statute book. When the Government’s agenda did bite, the combination of that, the collapse of confidence they had already fostered and the worsening eurozone produced an economic disaster. We all see the casualties of that every day in our constituencies. We needed more from this Budget.

There are three issues I would like to address in the brief time available to me, the first of which is manufacturing. I agree entirely with my hon. Friend the Member for Huddersfield (Mr Sheerman) that this Government have done some good things in that regard. I am pleased that there are Members on both sides of the House who, like me, are passionate about manufacturing, a sector in which a fifth of my constituents still work. However, the Budget speech made no mention of the “march of the makers”, and it did not address the two main issues that still remain: that such businesses cannot borrow money when they need to; and that they feel that the Government do not give them sufficient

strategic direction, be it on renewable energy, High Speed 2, aviation policy or anything else. I hope the Chancellor has had time to read the excellent report by the former director of the Institute of Directors, Sir George Cox, on short-termism in the UK economy. I hope he will take on board its main recommendation: that we need to develop a coherent and workable modern industrial strategy if we are to remain competitive. I agree with Government Members when they say we are in a global race, but at the moment we do not even have a map of the course.

Secondly, despite the job creation record that Government Members like to emphasise, unemployment, particularly youth unemployment, is still a major problem. We know enough about the Work programme to know that it has not been a success. Due to the combination of a lack of jobs generally and an inadequate payments system, it has not had the impact it should have had. We had on the statute book a range of measures that were getting people back into work; the future jobs fund, for example, should never have been dropped. Much of the Government’s borrowing—they announced £245 billion on top of their 2010 figure—is paying for the costs of failure. It is not unreasonable to wonder what might have happened if we had invested a fraction of that sum in putting people back into work.

My third point is about the equity of the Government’s agenda and how things have been shared, because the lower down the income scale people are, the harder they have been hit. The contrast between the tax cut for millionaires in the next few days and the bedroom tax is startling. The latter is a tax on people struggling with their child’s disability, struggling with their own or their partner’s ill health, or struggling to be a good parent in the event of the breakdown of their relationship. The fact that it may lead to higher costs for the Exchequer, as families are forced to move into higher-cost private accommodation, flies in the face of all reason. On this measure, more than any other, we need another famous Budget U-turn.

Let me deal with some specific Budget measures. I welcome the concessions on fuel duty, which does have a real impact on household income, and the scrapping of the beer tax escalator, which will benefit real ale towns such as Stalybridge. The nod towards the Heseltine report is also good, but it could have gone so much further. Had the Government pursued the previous Government’s Total Place community budgeting reforms, they could have improved public services while saving billions of pounds. However, Lord Heseltine’s logic that regional leaders are best placed to determine spending which will lever in private sector investment is surely correct.

I also welcome the commitment to spend 0.7% of our GDP on international aid, and here I have the opportunity to qualify remarks that got me on to page 2 of *The Sun* a few weeks ago. I am a supporter of international aid, but we have to acknowledge that it is contentious to increase it when our constituents are facing hardship. I just want the focus to be on what aid will achieve, rather than simply patting ourselves on the back for what goes into it. That is a reasonable way to build support for aid among the British people.

There is no doubt that whoever was in charge right now would face difficult choices about where the pain that the British people face should lie. However, the deal we have to offer them is that the pain will be worth it,

[*Jonathan Reynolds*]

and that the distribution of that pain will be equitable and will show empathy with people's lives. On all those criteria the Chancellor has failed, and it is surely time for a new approach.

8.36 pm

Richard Drax (South Dorset) (Con): In the short time I have—five minutes is a very short time—I will just rattle through a few points.

I welcome a large part of this Budget—it is very good news. It sounds more like a Conservative Budget, which is why the press have, on the whole, welcomed it; I believe that the Chancellor was transformed into a former Prime Minister, because there was a feeling that this is, at last, what the country needs. My question to our Front-Bench team, which they can perhaps answer later, is this: why has it taken nearly three years for us to do this? I suspect that their answer will be, “Because we are in a coalition.” I am a little tired of hearing that. I want a lot more blue narrative and less coalition narrative, because that is the way forward on sorting out our economy.

I welcome the reduction in taxes. Raising the income tax threshold to £10,000 is a wonderful way to go, but we should go further; how many constituents have we heard say, “If I do a bit more work, I will lose my benefits”? Let us give them income they have earned—let them keep it. Let us keep on that path, encouraging people back to work and off welfare. That is the right direction to take.

The beer escalator has gone—hurrah! A great friend of mine, who sadly had a heart attack, used to run the Hall and Woodhouse brewery in Blandford and before he died he said to me, “Richard, when you get into the House, please try to get rid of this beer escalator because we are losing thousands of jobs across the country as a consequence.” It is now gone—well done the coalition Government. I am absolutely delighted about that, and, in addition, 1p was taken off the pint of beer so we could all celebrate a bit on the night.

I am also delighted about the freezing of fuel duty. I am not going to be partisan and say that it would be much higher if we still had a Labour Government; it is frozen and that is good. But we should go much further and cut into that vast amount of tax that the Government take off the normal man and woman in this country, who, in many cases, simply cannot afford to fill up their car—the situation is ludicrous.

On the ceramics industry, I am delighted that the levy has been removed. May I put in a small request on behalf of the aggregate industry? A constituent of mine is paying £2 a tonne to take aggregate out of the ground, which is costing him £160,000 a year. That is a tax on a small family business employing 48 people in South Dorset that cannot afford that huge burden. Dare I say it—common sense must replace green taxes when jobs will be lost.

My concern is about the Government's planned equitable loan, or mortgage guarantee—whatever we call it, those are the two arms of the new policy. I hope it works and that more houses are built as a result, but I am concerned that taxpayers' money is being used to guarantee mortgages. If that goes wrong, we will not want to carry it with us in the years to come.

As for solutions, as a Conservative I believe that the supply side must be boosted. We must cut taxes further. As I have mentioned, we must get more people back to work by raising the welfare threshold. I believe that that is working extremely well in Sweden, although it went much against public opinion. We are still spending more than we earn and although we lecture the Opposition about what they did, we are doing the same thing. We must live within our means. We cannot go on printing money. Billions of pounds are being printed because there is no charge on interest. That is an inflationary move and could lead in months or years to come to interest rates rising. If that happens, our constituents, businesses and councils will be bust. It is as simple as that. We must tell the country the truth. We are in a hole and we must stop spending money we simply do not have.

Lastly—how time flies—we must consider the ring-fencing of budgets. Surely austere times are not the time to ring-fence budgets. If any budget should be ring-fenced, it should be defence, in my view, but even the Ministry of Defence must be looked at. All budgets should be open to consideration and, if needs be, to being changed. On the whole, I welcome the Budget, but we have a lot further to go—and, please, may we have a lot more blue narrative in the future?

8.41 pm

Jonathan Edwards (Carmarthen East and Dinefwr) (PC): The UK economy continues to bump along the bottom with little or no growth in GDP and the revised OBR figures of only 0.6% growth for this year was a dark cloud over the whole Budget. In Wales, the situation is bleak, with the Office for National Statistics reporting 8,000 fewer jobs in the Welsh economy in the three months up to January. The austerity strategy set out in the 2010 comprehensive spending review aimed at the elimination of the deficit by the end of the Parliament has failed. The fiscal position is considerably worse than that forecast three years ago and worse even than that forecast this time last year—and that is with nearly 80% of the cuts yet to be delivered. We estimate that up to another 50,000 public sector jobs will be lost in Wales in the coming years, following the 24,000 already lost. The Budget noted that Wales will get £161 million towards capital spending, but that conveniently masks the fact that there has already been a 40% cut to the capital spend budget from the CSR and that the re-allocation announced last week would come from strained revenue budgets.

Plaid Cymru welcomes some of the measures announced in the Budget. We welcome the freeze in fuel duty, but argue that it would be much better to have a long-term solution based on a stabilising mechanism. The announcement on when the £10,000 income tax personal allowance will be reached is welcome, as that is a long-standing Plaid Cymru policy. The £3 billion in infrastructure spending is also to be welcomed although, admittedly, it is a fraction of what is needed and was more of a political gesture than a serious economic intervention. We support the announcement of the introduction of an allowance of £2,000 a year from April 2014 for all businesses and charities to be offset against their employers' national insurance contributions, as it will give businesses incentives to take on extra workers. We also support the move to change the terms of reference of the Monetary Policy Committee of the Bank of England to include a growth target. That is

potentially the most significant announcement of the Budget and, again, is something that we have long called for.

I have some concerns about the second-home subsidy, not least because it would fuel another house price boom and after the inevitable crash, there will be serious consequences for the public finances.

There are several measures that Plaid Cymru would have liked to have seen included in the Budget. We wanted the Government to use the Budget and subsequent Finance Bill to implement the recommendations of the UK Government's Commission on Devolution in Wales. We would have wanted the Government immediately to set about devolving minor taxes as well the income tax-sharing arrangements. We want the Treasury to implement the findings of the Welsh Government-commissioned Morgan report on devolved business rates, to incentivise Welsh local authorities to develop their local economy and expand their tax base. I will be tabling amendments to that effect to the Finance Bill, to test the will of the House.

The precedent for devolving taxes via the Budget was set with the devolution of air passenger duty to Northern Ireland in last year's Finance Bill. On Thursday evening, I was amazed to see a senior Labour Assembly Member on the ITV political programme "Sharp End" dismiss the Finance Bill as an appropriate legislative vehicle to implement Silk. It just shows how visionless Labour has become in my country.

The measures I have just outlined would immediately trigger the borrowing powers—*[Interruption.]* That is the policy of the Labour party; they want borrowing powers in Wales. How will we get them without devolving fiscal levers? That just shows that Labour Members have no ideas.

The measures I outlined would immediately trigger the borrowing powers agreed during the bilateral negotiations between the Welsh and UK Governments, and are essential if Wales is to invest in infrastructure and create the economic boost that is so badly needed. We also want Wales to receive powers over corporation tax, as advocated by Silk, if they are devolved to Northern Ireland. Today, I read with interest in the *Financial Times* about the unanimous lobby for those powers in Northern Ireland, and the strong letter sent to the Prime Minister by the Northern Ireland CBI.

The tax cut for those earning more than £3,000, due to come into force next week, should have been overturned in the Budget. The renewal of Trident should be scrapped, thus saving £100 billion over its lifetime. A financial transaction tax, which would raise up to £20 billion per annum according to the Institute for Public Policy Research, should have been introduced. Plaid Cymru would have liked to see a mansion tax on domestic properties.

The Chancellor is boxed in by his own rhetoric and has run out of ideas. It is clear that the Treasury's only economic strategy is to build up the barricades and hope that the rock star central banker can use monetary policy to turn things around.

8.46 pm

Anne Marie Morris (Newton Abbot) (Con): I welcome the Budget. It is a Budget for business and I am pleased that it is particularly good for micro-businesses, which have done especially well.

Today, we are talking principally about housing, where what the Government have done is commendable, but unless people have jobs and earn good salaries they will not be able to take up those good initiatives. The highlight is the employment allowance. The national insurance win is £2,000 off the employer's NI bill. In my book, the Government could not have done anything better. That really plays to the agenda of micro-businesses. It enables them to get started. A very small business will be able to take on its first employee.

Many of the smallest businesses are run by women, so the reduction in child care costs in 2015, when 20% of the costs for the under-12s will be met by Government, is very welcome. For the first time, there is something that will help women running their own business; it will help the self-employed, not just those who are employed.

Many small businesses are in rural communities, and fuel is a huge issue. The fuel duty freeze is absolutely what this country needs. In September, petrol prices will stay the same and that is welcome. Clearly, we need to look at making fuel duty and the price of petrol predictable. Perhaps in a future Budget there will be an opportunity to look at a proper stabiliser, whereby when the price of fuel goes up, the tax comes down. Stability is vital, especially for small businesses. Likewise, a rural rebate on fuel duty would be welcome in some of our more out of the way communities.

The measure that will take corporation tax down to 20% faster and align it with the small companies rate is very welcome. I encourage the Chancellor and his team to look at what we could do to make that even easier for the very smallest companies. Perhaps he would support my all-party group working with the Office of Tax Simplification on the concept of a new flat tax for the smallest businesses, through the format of the business structure, so that whether it is a company, a sole trader or a partnership, there is a new mechanism. I appreciate that corporation tax as currently structured cannot fall below 20% because it would then be at the same rate as income tax, which would give rise to all sorts of problems, including people rushing to incorporate when it was not the right thing for them.

Here is another thought for the Chancellor for his next Budget: for the very smallest businesses, business rates can really cause a problem. I should like to see in the next Budget an extension of small business rate relief until the election, as that would be extraordinarily welcome. The Government could also look at trying to show those businesses that are paying business rates what they get for their money. The Chancellor and his team have been keen to enable those of us who pay income tax to see where that income tax is going, but the same argument ought to be true of business rates. Many business people say to me, "But I don't get my bins emptied in the same way that I can see is the case if I pay council tax." We should look at where those business rates go, and show the value for money that businesses obtain in paying them.

I had an interesting meeting last week with the valuation office. I asked it whether there was a way of making the valuation process fairer and, as I understood the explanation, it appears that the technology is there to enable revaluation to take place more frequently. A frustration that businesses share with me is that because of the time line—there is a five-year gap—there is a big difference when the valuation is made and when people

[*Anne Marie Morris*]

have to pay the new rate. I would not wish to underestimate the challenge, and I appreciate that the multiplier makes that not entirely straightforward.

That, for me, is the key to getting the country to move forward—helping our micro-businesses—and I welcome what the Chancellor's team have introduced. I am delighted. Well done, and I hope that the Chancellor will perhaps take on board some of the thoughts that I have set out for the next Budget.

8.51 pm

Roberta Blackman-Woods (City of Durham) (Lab): I am very pleased to be able to participate in this debate, not least to demonstrate how little the Budget will do for the economy of the north-east. We need no further evidence of the failure of the Government's economic policies than the forecast on growth and GDP outlined by the Office for Budget Responsibility.

In June 2010, the OBR forecast that growth in the UK would be 2.8%. In fact, as we know, it was minus 0.1 %. We have also recently heard that the growth forecast this year, bearing in mind that it is only March, has been cut in half from 1.2% to 0.6%. Given all of that, the Government needed to shake off their complacency and take responsibility for the flatlining economy that they have created. They should introduce measures that would support growth, both nationally and in areas that are suffering most under this incompetent Government, such as County Durham.

The number of job seekers in my Durham constituency has fallen by just 69 in a year, but it is still up by 450 since the general election. Some 25% of those claimants are young people, unable to take their first step on the career ladder. What is equally worrying is the types of jobs that have been created compared with those that have been lost. Information that I have received from the House of Commons Library shows that the new jobs that have been created are predominantly non-skilled or low-skilled. At the same time, the number of jobs in skilled trades and administration is falling—by 2,000 in the last period. That shows a worrying trend of downskilling the north-east economy, just as we need to up our game to compete with emerging economies internationally.

What did the Budget do to rectify that? Absolutely nothing. The North East chamber of commerce said:

“The Government has fallen short of providing the raft of measures that businesses and investors need in order to kick-start growth”.

Ed Cox, director of IPPR North, said:

“George Osborne has missed an opportunity today to enable the North to play its part in leading us out of our economic stagnation.”

We can look at two aspects of that, the first of which is housing in the north-east. Again, we heard a number of lip-service announcements made in the Budget. I am pleased that the Government finally seem to be waking up to the fact that there is a housing crisis, but they appear to be stoking demand for housing, rather than looking at how to increase supply urgently and drastically. The Chancellor—he is probably the only one who thinks this—says that the fundamental overhaul of planning laws is helping homes to be built and businesses to expand. I think that he is wrong on both counts. House

building is falling and, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Leeds Central (Hilary Benn) said earlier, so is the speed with which planning decisions are being made. Research from the House of Commons Library confirms that no peacetime Government since the 1920s have presided over fewer housing completions than this Government have over the past two years. And it is getting worse; house starts fell in 2012 by 11% to below 100,000.

It does not get any better when we look at infrastructure. In their first three years, this Tory-led Government have spent £7.7 billion less in capital investment compared with the plans inherited from Labour, and over the course of this Parliament they are set to spend £2.1 billion less on capital investment than would have been spent under Labour's plans. That has knock-on effects for constituencies such as mine, which are getting practically no investment whatsoever in the basic infrastructure to support either the housing that is urgently needed or the new roads and transport links that are necessary if we are to grow the economy.

It also does not get any better for families in my constituency. The measures in the Budget relating to child care will not come into effect until 2015. Families in my constituency need jobs, growth and hope now.

8.56 pm

Kwasi Kwarteng (Spelthorne) (Con): I am pleased to have the opportunity to contribute to this debate.

Last week's Budget was a successful one politically. It worked because it identified that the cost of living affects all our constituents. I particularly welcome the fact that the Chancellor, by getting rid of the beer duty escalator and checking the fuel duty escalator put in by the previous Government, for example, recognised the rising cost of living for many of our constituents.

Before proceeding, I would like to refer to some of the remarks made by the right hon. Member for Edinburgh South West (Mr Darling), who, as we all know, was a prominent member of the previous Labour Government. He mentioned the fact that the OBR had consistently failed in its forecasts over the course of this Parliament. He also mentioned the fact that we are borrowing at record levels. That is all true. But what he did not mention, or make any apology for, was the share of responsibility that he and the previous Government must admit to in the creation of our largest peacetime deficit. People will look back on the period between 2001 and 2007 in this country as one of the most, if not the most, profligate and irresponsible periods in the management of our public finances.

David Wright: If that is the case, why did the Conservative party support the Labour Government's spending plans throughout that period? The Conservatives stopped supporting the spending plans only just before the global financial crisis. Can the hon. Gentleman explain what action he would not have taken to save the banks?

Kwasi Kwarteng: I happen to be a balanced budget Conservative. Even at the time, before I was elected to this House, I completely disavowed any move to stick to Labour's spending. I thought that it was a big mistake at the time and I am quite happy to say that in this House. I think that it was entirely a mistake to do what

the Labour Government did and run deficits at a time when the economy was growing at 3%. It was absolute madness to run deficits at 3% of GDP when the economy itself was growing at 3%. Not even the most starry-eyed Keynesian has ever suggested that we should be running deficits while the economy was expanding. As a direct consequence of this irresponsible period, in 2010 we were left with the largest peacetime deficit and the highest deficit-to-GDP ratio of any of the OECD countries. That period of stewardship marks the ultimate disgrace of the Labour party in terms of managing the national economy. We have now reached the point where we are borrowing £100 billion a year and the national debt is going up, as people have mentioned. As a consequence of this high level of deficit financing, we are going to leave a national debt in years to come that is higher than it has been for generations.

What serious proposals have Labour Members come up with during this four-day debate? Their answer is simply to borrow more money and to spend more money. They would accelerate our downward path and we would end up, as one economic commentator has said, with Club Med levels of debt similar to those of Portugal and Greece—without, unfortunately, the good weather. That is what Labour Members are leading this country towards. Members of the public will be absolutely astounded that Labour Members have expressed not one shred of remorse, regret or acknowledgement. They live in a world in which they did nothing wrong. Everything has been blamed on the coalition Government, who have tried to clear up the appalling mess—*[Interruption.]* Labour Members are chuntering from sedentary positions. They do not like to hear the facts.

People up and down the country realise and acknowledge that the Labour Government were entirely irresponsible. What solutions have the Labour Members come up with? Absolutely none. It is embarrassing to listen to some of their speeches. They talk about more growth despite the fact that the eurozone is flat on its back. They talk about more investment despite the fact that we are borrowing more money than we ever have before. When one asks them where this money is going to come from, they repeat, “The bankers’ bonus tax”, as though that would pay for absolutely everything they wish for, although it has already been spent about 100 times. It is depressing to see Labour Members, who fancy themselves as the next Government—they are very confident, I notice—offering such poor, ill-thought-through and pathetic solutions to a grave national crisis. People watching this debate at home will be appalled, frankly, by the level of argument, contribution and solutions that Labour Members have contributed.

I welcome this Budget. In very difficult times, the Chancellor has identified weaknesses and has managed to alleviate some of the distress that we suffer.

9.3 pm

Fiona O’Donnell (East Lothian) (Lab): I draw the House’s attention to my entry in the Register of Members’ Financial Interests.

It is a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Spelthorne (Kwasi Kwarteng), who is now, we hear, a self-declared fan of a balanced Budget. No doubt his disappointment in his own Government has kept him out of the Chamber for the vast majority of today’s debate.

I do not know if you noticed, Mr Deputy Speaker, but on the day of the Budget this Chamber was colder than I have ever felt it before. It was as though a cold, chilly winter breeze was rolling through the Chamber as an ailing, failing, flailing Chancellor came to the Dispatch Box—but it was all too little, too late. I am so pleased to see the Business Secretary in his seat, because he will agree with me—or I will agree with him, most humbly—that the mistake that this Government made was to choke off the recovery. Just as the snow across this country is choking off the green shoots of spring, so this Government, by cutting too quickly and too deeply, have choked off the recovery.

What really chilled me to the bone was when the Chancellor spoke about an aspirational Britain, because I am old enough to remember aspirational Britain the first time around. It was aspiration for some, but not for others.

This Government are out of touch. I apologise for being late for today’s opening speech, Mr Deputy Speaker, but as a trustee of my local food bank my time was being taken up by people who are aspiring to put food on their table, aspiring to heat their homes and aspiring to stay in their homes.

Kwasi Kwarteng: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Fiona O’Donnell: No, thank you.

When people look back on this Government, they will see five wasted years. The two greatest evils that they have committed are the bedroom tax and the cut for millionaires. They still have time to make more mistakes, but this country will never forgive them for those measures because they go to the heart of this Government.

I want to make some pleas on behalf of my constituency.

Martin Horwood (Cheltenham) (LD): Will the hon. Lady give way?

Fiona O’Donnell: No, thank you.

I want a more joined-up approach to government. Iberdrola is currently investing £10 billion in this country, but it is sitting on £3 billion because of the mess that is this Government’s energy policy. The coal-powered power station at Cockenzie in my constituency has closed and Iberdrola is not willing to invest until it gets some clarity from the Government. Some 1,000 construction jobs are on hold in my constituency, as are apprenticeships in a year when youth unemployment has risen by more than 7%. Will the Treasury team get together with the Department of Energy and Climate Change and get this in order, so that Iberdrola can invest in my constituency and the UK?

I pay tribute to my right hon. Friend the Member for Barking (Margaret Hodge) for the work that her Public Accounts Committee has done to let some sunshine on the disgraceful practice of tax avoidance in this country. I also praise the Government for meeting their commitment to spend 0.7% of our gross national income on development aid. I welcome that, but I want them to go further in the Finance Bill. There was outrage in this House and across the country at the practices of some companies headquartered overseas, and people in developing countries have the same right to be outraged if British companies do not pay their fair share of tax there. Will the Government

[*Fiona O'Donnell*]

take the opportunity provided by the Finance Bill to ensure clarity and transparency and that developing countries have the right to money that has been earned at the expense of their natural resources—the labour of their people—to be invested in their countries so that they can make their own choices? I hope that such a commitment will eventually be made.

The judgment on this Government has been set not by hon. Members, but by the Office for Budget Responsibility, the 200,000 children who will be in poverty at the end of this Government's time in office who were not in poverty before, and the people who will be worse off in 2015 than they were in 2010. I urge the Government's Front-Bench team to listen to the Opposition and to the people of this country, and to get their act together.

Several hon. Members rose—

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Nigel Evans): Order. I hope to be able to call Members who wish to speak, but to assist the House I should state that the winding up speeches will start no later than 9.36 pm.

9.8 pm

Debbie Abrahams (Oldham East and Saddleworth) (Lab): Last Wednesday's Budget was more of the same. In spite of failing every economic test they have set themselves, the Government have just carried on regardless. I want to recap their economic journey and absolute failure over the past three years.

After signs of a recovery at the end of 2010, the economy has been flatlining and we will be lucky if we escape a triple-dip recession. Growth has been downgraded at every turn. Amazingly, just over three months since the autumn statement, the Government have had to halve their growth forecast for this year to 0.6%. Borrowing is up £250 billion since 2010 and the deficit will not be eradicated by 2015 as promised. In spite of the Government telling us how important austerity was to economic confidence and low interest rates, they have lost the confidence of Moody's credit rating agency, which downgraded our triple A status, and we have been put on notice by two other agencies.

The Government have tried, as has happened again this afternoon, to blame everybody except themselves. They told us that austerity was the only way, only to receive a very embarrassing rebuke from the chair of the Office for Budget Responsibility, who said that public spending cuts wiped 1.4% from growth last year. We only have to look at how we are doing on growth compared with the other G20 nations. We are 18th out of 20. What the Government have been saying is absolute rubbish.

I could go on. Inflation, whether using the consumer prices index or the retail prices index, is well above the Bank of England's 2% target. The Government have tried to say that we have more employment than ever before, but the rate of employment is lower than in 2008. One in 10 people is underemployed. Whatever indicator we go by, the Chancellor and the coalition Government are clearly failing. The public are starting to see that as well, with earnings falling by 2% a year in real terms. A recent poll showed that four out of five people feel that austerity is not working.

The Government are carrying on regardless. Is that really just down to economic incompetence? In the words of the Cambridge economist, Ha-Joon Chang, “the coalition government isn't as stupid or stubborn as it appears. It is sticking to its plan A because spending cuts are not about deficits but about rolling back the welfare state.”

If we look at this Budget, as with the other Budgets and autumn statements, we can see exactly what is happening.

The IFS analysis of the Budget shows that the Chancellor is funding some of his give-aways with underspends from across Whitehall Departments, including £2.2 billion of NHS savings. However, the IFS and others have shown that even with an increase in revenue from national insurance contributions, from 2015 we will need to make further public spending cuts or increase taxes to meet a £9 billion shortfall.

The housing measures are too little, too late. They reflect the Chancellor's inability to sort out lending for mortgages, as well as for small businesses. Many people, including property developers, will welcome the measures, but I wonder what the impact will be on demand and on house prices at a time when earnings are still constrained. They have the potential to take us back to the financial conditions of 2008.

Most alarmingly, the Budget completely fails the anti-poverty test. The IFS, the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, the Child Poverty Action Group, the Resolution Foundation, the New Economics Foundation and others have concluded that the poorer people are, the worse off they will be following the Budget. Raising the personal allowance does little for the million lowest-paid workers, many of whom do not pay tax in any case. Some 682,000 working families who receive child tax credit earn less than £6,420. If next week's welfare cuts are also taken into account, the lowest-earning taxpayers will receive an income boost of just 32p a week. Of course, that does not take into account the impact of the 20% VAT hike, the 26% rise in food prices or the 20% rise in energy prices.

The Chancellor's distributional analysis shows that the cumulative impact of the tax, tax credit and benefit measures means a net reduction in income for the poorest 40% of households in the country. Although there is strong evidence that increasing the spending power of the poorest families is a way to boost the economy, the Government have failed to do that. This is about the Government's choices and they have clearly failed.

9.13 pm

Mr Virendra Sharma (Ealing, Southall) (Lab): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, for allowing me to speak in this crucial debate.

While this country faces the biggest housing crisis in a generation, the Government are using the Budget to help their millionaire friends buy second homes. Once again, the Chancellor of the Exchequer has left hard-working people who are on lower wages struggling and hurting. Building new homes is central to this country's economic recovery and to getting hard-working families on the housing ladder, yet in Budget after Budget the Government have come up far short of the mark. In this Budget, the Chancellor introduced “help to buy”. Last year, he introduced NewBuy. It is clear that the policies that have been introduced to help people get on the property ladder have failed and that they are not the solutions that the country urgently needs to end the housing crisis.

In my constituency of Ealing, Southall, families are desperately struggling to find suitable and affordable homes. Just last week I heard from a family who have been waiting more than a year to find a bigger and more suitable home for them and their three children. Sarah has been sharing a two-bedroom flat with her husband, her two sons—one of whom suffers from a severe form of Asperger's—and her two-year-old daughter. They have been told that they will have to make do with their two-bedroom flat for the foreseeable future because no new housing is coming up.

More needs to be invested into building affordable homes to meet demand; that is a sound, logical and reasonable investment for the future of our housing market and economy. Building more housing is not only a solution to end this housing crisis, but an effective way of boosting growth. For every £1 invested by the public sector, 56p returns to the Treasury. Removing the cap on housing revenue account borrowing in London could add 0.5% to GDP—growth that is much needed. By investing in the capital's housing infrastructure, more than 19,000 jobs would be created. Why will the Chancellor not invest in housing and growth?

Throughout the Budget the Government have repeated that they are committed to helping those who aspire to work hard and get on, to caring for families and helping them with the cost of living, and to creating more growth. Why, therefore, do they not commit to build more affordable homes, thereby creating more jobs and growth and allowing hard-working families to live in better conditions, rather than helping millionaires buy second homes through their slapdash flagship policy?

The Government had the opportunity to invest in housing, create more jobs and provide a decent living to all those working hard to achieve, and to allow children living in overcrowded accommodation to have a better education. If children have extra space in their house, they will get more education and an improved place in which to live; their health will be improved and they will be able to contribute more to society.

9.17 pm

Paul Blomfield (Sheffield Central) (Lab): It was good to see the Chancellor pop into the Chamber a few moments ago, although I wish he had been here a few moments before that to hear the hon. Member for Spelthorne (Kwasi Kwarteng) accuse him of “absolute madness” for saying in opposition that he would back Labour’s spending plans, right up to the world financial crisis in 2008. That was the case, however, and the truth is that it was not Labour’s spending, which repaired the damage of the Thatcher years, that caused sub-prime lending, the collapse of Lehman brothers or the world financial crisis.

Kwasi Kwarteng: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Paul Blomfield: No, I will not, simply because of time; I would love to otherwise.

That crisis created choices, and the Conservative-led Government have consistently made the wrong choices. The Liberal Democrats also have something to answer for because during the election they argued—rightly, and alongside Labour—that the post-2008 Tory austerity plans were wrong: wrong because they caused pain and wrong because they would damage the economy. They

were elected on that basis; they have no mandate for this ideological assault on public spending and the welfare state.

The Secretary of State opened the debate by talking about housing. That is a good topic because it says a lot about this Government’s wider economic policy: wrong choices and missed opportunities, epitomised by the lack of investment in housing. The Government have cut direct support for affordable housing by 60%. The stagnating economy has limited private sector investment, and as my hon. Friend the Member for City of Durham (Roberta Blackman-Woods) said, there was an 11% fall in housing starts last year.

The Secretary of State, who is currently checking his BlackBerry, attacked Labour’s record on housing. The Labour Government did not do enough, but let us set the record straight—*[Interruption.]* He should keep checking his BlackBerry. It is worth remembering that housing starts have been lower in every quarter since April to June 2010, the last quarter that Labour was in power.

The Chancellor claims he will solve the housing crisis with his latest right to buy scheme, but we have heard that before. Back in November 2011, we heard that the NewBuy scheme would help 100,000 people to buy their own homes. How many did it help? Only 1,500 people, just 1.5% of the target.

For many young families, the alternative would be social housing, but it is not. With nearly 5 million people on local authority waiting lists, the Homes and Communities Agency has reported that affordable housing starts collapsed in the last financial year by 68%. It has been estimated that as many as 60,000 extra homes would have been built had the Chancellor used the Budget to lift borrowing restrictions on councils and arm’s length management organisations. He could have done that, but he failed to do so.

Ideology and not practical policies drive the Government, so instead of helping with social housing, the Chancellor extended the right to buy, which is at the root of much of the problem of social housing supply. As private landlords win out, we lose vital social assets. When the Government extended the right-to-buy scheme in April 2012, the Secretary of State—he does well to smile—promised one-for-one replacement. How many have we seen? Three hundred and eighty-four new homes have been built to replace 3,495 sold, which is a 90% loss of socially rented stock.

Finally, the new homes bonus has an unfair impact. It is designed to incentivise local authorities to approve new housing development but is calculated on the value of property, which means that areas with low property values lose out. In my case, resources moved away from Yorkshire to wealthier areas, and from Labour councils to Conservative and Liberal Democrat councils. For example, it is estimated that Sheffield council lost more than £3.5 million as a consequence of the scheme. The Secretary of State might well smile, but people in Sheffield are not smiling.

As with the economy overall, so with housing: we need a plan B, and we need it now.

9.22 pm

Mr Iain McKenzie (Inverclyde) (Lab): The coalition Government have spent their time in office since 2010 telling us over and over again that they are trying to get

[*Mr Iain McKenzie*]

the country's finances in order. We have had their austerity, their new taxes and their extreme cuts, and yet two years later, our borrowing is still growing at an alarming rate. Despite the Government's austerity, the Chancellor is expected to add billions to the national debt over his five years in office. Since his spending review in 2010, the UK economy has grown by just 0.7%, compared with the 5.3% forecast at the time.

Last year, the UK economy went through a double-dip recession. The Government's failure on deficit and debt reduction is colossal. Lack of growth has meant huge Government borrowing to pay for the cost of their economic failure. The Chancellor has failed the test he set for himself. The economy is flatlining, prices are rising a lot faster than wages, the deficit is going up, and the UK has lost its triple A credit rating. Instead of delivering a credible Budget that demands confidence in our economy, the Chancellor delivered a downgraded Budget with no plan for jobs and growth, and a Budget that hits hard-working households further.

A wiser Chancellor would have been less dogmatic about the rightness of his policies and so left room to manoeuvre when he saw them failing. However, last Wednesday's Budget was the work of a Chancellor who is in a hole but continues to pretend that the only way forward is to keep digging. We needed bold and decisive action last week, and a Budget that would kick-start the economy and help millions of people up and down the country who have been struggling to cope financially. I wonder whether Government Members know what that means: it means broken Britain, it means businesses closing their doors, it means small communities struggling to create local growth, it means a choice between paying the bedroom tax and eating, and it means national failure at the hands of this Government.

In my constituency, more than 1,000 people are being referred to local food banks. Food banks in 21st-century Britain is the reality of this coalition. Instead of borrowing to help millionaires, the Government should be borrowing to help jobs and opportunities, and to stimulate economic growth across the country. The Chancellor could have brought forward infrastructure investment in schools, roads and transport to get construction workers back to work and to strengthen our economy for the future. Those measures would boost growth, get builders back to work, build the homes we desperately need and create apprenticeships for our young people.

Britain needs a radical Budget for homes, jobs and growth, not another false dawn. We face the biggest housing crisis in a generation and the Government's housing and economic policies are just making it worse. House building is crucial to economic recovery. Helping families to get on to the housing ladder should be a priority for the Government, and that is why we have been calling for this action for more than two years. The Government's record on housing offers little hope to hard-working families who are struggling to get on to the housing ladder. Under this Government, house building has fallen, rents have risen, home ownership is becoming a harder goal for young people to achieve and, most worrying of all, homelessness has risen. The Government failed to back Labour's call to use the money raised from the 4G mobile spectrum auction to build 100,000 affordable homes to stimulate the economy and help tackle the ever-growing housing crisis. The

Chancellor could also improve existing housing stock by cutting VAT on home repairs, maintenance and improvements to 5%. I might add, however, that without a job it is impossible to buy a home or to improve it.

Next month's planned tax cut for millionaires should be scrapped. When the Government came to power in 2010, the message was that we are all in this together. I wonder if my constituents who have lost their jobs and the millions who rely on food banks would agree that we are all in this together. What about the millionaires looking forward to a tax cut? Well, they are definitely in it all together.

Companies are not investing and people are not spending because they lack confidence in the UK economy. Economic confidence comes from believing that tomorrow will be better than today. The problem the Government have created is that the country no longer believes in a better tomorrow. In short, we desperately need a Labour Chancellor to deliver a Budget that supports hard-working families and struggling businesses. We need a Government who have a long-term plan for jobs and growth to build a better and fairer tomorrow.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Nigel Evans): I thank Members for their co-operation. We now will get the last two Members in.

9.27 pm

Kate Green (Stretford and Urmston) (Lab): Not everything in the Budget is unwelcome, but the cumulative effect of this Budget and previous Budgets and spending reviews is dire. I am fearful that in some respects we will never escape their effects—family lives have been blighted and futures lost as a result.

I was startled at the total lack of ambition and vision for the economy expressed in the Budget. There were one or two welcome announcements—the employer national insurance break is welcome—but where is the strategy for improving the quality of jobs that is so necessary to improve our productivity and competitiveness? The rise in private sector employment that Ministers trumpet is, to a degree, illusory. It represents, in part, the fact that the working-age population has grown, so it is hardly surprising that more people are in work. It represents to a degree a re-characterisation of public sector jobs into the private sector. It is a reflection of wage cuts and freezes that mean that people are in work, but worse off, and that 80% of the increase in jobs is in involuntary part-time work.

As the hon. Member for Newton Abbot (Anne Marie Morris) said, business rates remain a serious burden. They have risen by 13% in the north-west in the past three years. There was deep disappointment in my region at the decision last year to delay the revaluation, and disappointment last week that there was nothing in the Budget to help in the meantime or to take the opportunity to use the period of the freeze to review totally the purpose and structure of the business rate.

As I said in an intervention, business will also be hit by the impact of welfare reform on household budgets. Work by the Centre for Local Economic Strategies has shown that for every £1 cut in social welfare reform, 63p is being lost to Stretford's town centre economy, as people cut back on shopping, socialising and the use of taxis and local transport, while the loss to the local economy across the whole of Greater Manchester is

estimated at £400 million. The business announcements in last week's Budget will not put that money back into our local economy, and I am concerned by the warning of further restrictions on annually managed expenditure in the June spending review.

I am glad that the Government recognise the pressures on those trying to buy their own home, and I recognise that home ownership is the aspiration of many of my constituents, but the Government refuse to recognise that renting is a valid and, indeed, necessary option for many families. The support being offered to renters is minimal and the policies divisive. If it is right to offer a public subsidy to enable a young person to get a mortgage to buy their first home, why is it wrong to give a proper subsidy, via housing benefits, to another young person aged under 35 to rent a home of their own? Let us remember that both young people could be in work.

If it is right to provide a public subsidy to a young couple wanting to buy a new and perhaps larger home for a growing family, why is it wrong to subsidise the same family if they want to remain in social rented accommodation and also need more space as kids grow and develop? As my hon. Friend the Member for Inverclyde (Mr McKenzie) said, Government support to buy a home or get a mortgage will be of no use to those of my constituents who are either not working or in short-term insecure employment, which means that they are not attractive to mortgage lenders and have no choice but to rent.

Failure to support working families on the lowest incomes and those on out-of-work benefits feeds across to other policy areas. The child care announcements will benefit many better-off families, but as the Resolution Foundation pointed out, only 40% of those on universal credit will benefit from the maximum 85% rate, while those looking for work will not get any help at all when engaged in a job search. The same is true of the increase in the personal tax threshold, which is of no help to those on very low wages whose earnings are too low for them even to pay tax. The poor and the working poor have therefore once again totally missed out in the Budget, and as a result deprived families and communities will become more deprived.

Mr Speaker: I will call the Opposition Front-Bench speaker no later than 9.36 pm.

9.32 pm

Jim Shannon (Strangford) (DUP): I welcome the many good things in the Budget, but I want to focus on one omission. The Prime Minister and the coalition have suggested that marriage should be recognised in the tax system, but yet another Budget has not recognised it. Other countries across the OECD have recognised it, but Great Britain has not. That point has to be underlined. The Prime Minister was right to commit to bringing us back into line with international best practice, and the benefits of marriage to individuals, families and society are considerable and plain to see, yet the Government have again singularly failed to deliver.

The greater benefits of marriage reach out beyond the family structure, leading to stronger and more cohesive communities. The Relationships Foundation has shown that the cost of family failure has increased to a staggering £44 billion, which means that failed relationships across the United Kingdom cost the taxpayer £1,470 each per

year. In that context, the Government should be doing all they can to support family stability, and that is best secured by supporting marriage. They should be encouraging and supporting marriage and the bond of commitment, not making it harder to marry in this country than across the rest of the OECD. Again, the Government have failed to address that issue.

In recent years, the Government have said repeatedly that they back recognising marriage in the tax system, but the reality is very different. It was a headline commitment in both the Conservative manifesto and the coalition agreement. If that is not enough, public support for a transferable allowance is plain. A 2012 YouGov poll showed that 70% of people who expressed an opinion supported a tax allowance for married couples. So why the inaction?

On 3 July 2012, I asked the Exchequer Secretary two questions on this matter. First, I asked whether the Government would honour their commitment to recognise marriage in the tax system. He did not answer. Then I asked him about implementation. Nine months later, I hope to get an answer to that question. I want to quote what I said that day:

"Recognition of marriage in the tax system will require HMRC to make various operational changes, particularly in the IT systems. Can he reassure us that this preparatory work is already under way so that when the Government bring forward legislation to recognise marriage in the tax system there is no further delay? If he cannot do so tonight, will he make it an urgent priority to make a statement to the House setting out the time that will be required to change the IT systems and announce that he has instructed that work to begin in readiness for the introduction of the transferable allowance legislation?"—[Official Report, 3 July 2012; Vol. 547, c. 880.]

This issue is even more pressing today because, unlike the last Budget, this Budget is quite possibly the last opportunity the Government will have to introduce the necessary Budget resolution if transferable allowances are to be up and running by the next election. If they take more than 12 months and the Government wait until the 2014 Budget, that means there will almost certainly be no transferable allowance in place at the next election. That would be tragic. I very much hope that the Minister will be good enough to answer the question today and explain either that the process will take significantly less than 12 months, so that the system can be introduced at the Budget and fully implemented within the time frame of the coalition agreement—that is, before May 2015—or that the Government will amend the Finance Bill so that the IT changes can start now.

People feel alienated when manifestos are not delivered on and promises are not kept. It is not too late to put it right tonight.

9.35 pm

Chris Leslie (Nottingham East) (Lab/Co-op): Before I start, hon. Members will be pleased to join me in congratulating my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds West (Rachel Reeves) on the arrival of her new baby daughter Anna at 6 o'clock this morning—which might explain why she is not replying to this evening's debate.

There can be no doubt that last week's Budget certainly lived down to the low expectations that were billed for it. This was a Budget for lower wages and downgraded credit ratings; a Budget for lower confidence but higher debt; a Budget for poorer productivity, low growth or no growth at all in the economy. The Chancellor has

[*Chris Leslie*]

been forced by his own failure to extinguish his deficit reduction plan, but keeps on whistling in the wind to convince his Back Benchers—perhaps even to convince himself—that he is sticking with it. This Government—or at least the largest part of this Government—were elected promising painful decisions in the short term, but said it would all be worth it in the end. As my right hon. Friends the Members for Neath (Mr Hain) and for Oldham West and Royton (Mr Meacher) said, although there has been pain for some—especially the most vulnerable in society—three years on, Britain has not advanced one jot.

The economy has flatlined, the country's debts are mounting and now even the Office for Budget Responsibility says that deficit reduction has “stalled”. So much for the Chancellor's plan A. After three years of austerity, stagnation and ever higher national debt, where has it left Britain? The triple A credit rating has been humiliatingly downgraded. The OBR says that this Budget will reduce, not increase, the prospects for growth this year, and all the time the Chancellor's borrowing plans are being revised upwards, now reaching an astronomical £245 billion higher than forecast.

When the Chief Secretary to the Treasury replies, he will pretend that this is a Budget to build an aspiration nation, but it is just more of the same failed plan from a desperation Chancellor, presiding over a stagnation nation. As a result of his failure, the UK economy has grown by just 0.7%, compared with the 5.3% forecast at the time of the 2010 spending review. Now the failed plan of this failing Chancellor stands squarely in the path of progress, holding back the economy, making the situation far worse and digging us even deeper into the mire. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh South West (Mr Darling) said, Britain now faces the real prospect of a lost decade of economic decline, with confidence sapped and businesses retreating from investment in the productivity we need to keep pace with our competitors.

Yet after four days of debate on this Budget, those on the Government Benches are still in denial, while mystery surrounds some of the details of the Treasury's accounts and the measures announced. As my hon. Friends the Members for Aberdeen South (Dame Anne Begg) and for East Lothian (Fiona O'Donnell) said, we know that the Government plan a bedroom tax on some of the least well-off in the country, starting next week, which contrasts with their plans to offer subsidised mortgages, potentially to those who want to buy a second or third property for themselves—the spare-homes subsidy, as Ministers might like to characterise it. Under this Government, it seems that there is one rule for the rich, but only one room for the poor. Despite all the other competing priorities for tax and deficit reduction, the Chancellor has failed to propose any change to the obscene timing of the millionaires' tax cut—a cut in income tax for the richest 1%, which will we vote against this evening.

When the Chief Secretary stands to speak, I am sure he will trumpet the changes to the personal allowance—it is what the Liberals believe they have achieved in their short period of collaboration. Before the right hon. Gentleman gets too excited with his achievement, let us take a look at it for a moment. The changes to direct

taxes and benefits, including cuts to tax credits and child benefit, mean that the typical family will be £600 a year worse off by the next election—and that is before we include the hike in VAT to 20%, the cuts to maternity pay or the education maintenance allowance, or the Office for Budget Responsibility forecast of lower wages by the time of the next election. Those tax rises and cuts more than offset what the Government are promising in several years' time on child care or changes to the personal allowance. Even the 1p taken off a pint of beer sinks without trace compared with the 5p the right hon. Gentleman has added through VAT.

When the right hon. Gentleman gets to his feet, perhaps he will explain to the House what sort of an achievement he thinks it is for him and his Liberal Democrat colleagues to prop up the failed plan of this failing Chancellor, which lightens the load for the typical millionaire by £100,000 while making life tougher for ordinary families up and down the country. Perhaps he will explain why there is no return yet of the 10p starting rate of tax to help millions of low and middle-income families, as we had hoped, and no sign of a mansion tax to pay for it, as the right hon. Gentleman's Liberal colleagues had promised. [*Interruption.*] Will he tell hon. Members why there is no bank bonus tax to fund a jobs guarantee for young people out of work? [*Interruption.*] I will happily give way to the Chancellor if he wants to intervene on this particular point. [*Interruption.*] I was simply asking some questions.

As well as missing out on the chance to repeat the bank bonus tax, the Chancellor has gone soft on the bank levy. The banks paid £900 million less this year than the Chancellor said they would, on top of the £700 million less than they should have paid in the bank levy in the year before. Never mind the Chancellor; I would like to ask the Chief Secretary to explain his own support and that of his Liberal colleagues for the squalid plan to give away company shares to workers who sign away their employment rights, which even several former Tory Ministers, including Lord Lawson, could not stomach—and again, we will vote against that this evening.

Above all else, perhaps the right hon. Gentleman will set out for us just how far he is prepared to support the failing Chancellor in pretending that things are getting better on borrowing when quite plainly they are not.

We all know that the Chancellor has crafted his reputational *raison d'être* around reducing the national debt, yet it has risen by 38% on his watch. We know that his woeful performance, placing the UK in the relegation zone of G20 nations on economic growth, has unsurprisingly torn his deficit reduction promises to shreds. We know, too, that the Office for Budget Responsibility says that borrowing this year will be the same as last year and the same next year—“stalled” is the word it uses. Frankly, there is no improvement. There is no longer a deficit reduction plan; it has failed; it is no more.

Let us for a moment just pause and reflect on the Chancellor's overriding political desperation to prove that the deficit is still falling. This incredibly coincidental, manufactured figure of £100 million is the sum total of deficit reduction he has sweated buckets to achieve from last year to this. This is not a deficit reduction of 1%; it is not even one tenth of 1%. At that rate, it will take more than 1,000 years to clear the deficit and balance

the books. That is not a deficit reduction plan; it is a millennium goal. A deficit reduction from £121 billion to £120.9 billion is something that should embarrass the right hon. Gentleman, not delight him. That is not getting the deficit down; it is just rounding it down.

The Chancellor's embarrassment demands that the whole of the Budget should revolve around that one desperate political fig leaf. Everything has been sacrificed in the failing Chancellor's drive to spare his blushes. There has been the last-minute dash for £11 billion of in-year cuts in health, education, transport and local services in recent weeks—all in time for midnight next Sunday—including the axing of at least 800 nursing posts from the NHS so far this month. There has been the invention of what the Chancellor called “exceptional inter-period flexibility” to push at least £1.6 billion of this year's spending into next year's accounts. There has been the reclassification of the UK's contribution to the European Investment Bank in the accounts, which helpfully takes £1.3 billion out of the spending totals for this year. The whole House knows that if the normal accounting conventions had remained unchanged, Government borrowing would be up, not down, as sure as night follows day.

Tonight, the only deficit deniers sit on the Government Benches. I believe that these distortions and manipulations are so serious that they merit not just the usual Treasury Committee inquiry into the Budget, but a review of it by the National Audit Office, and a Public Accounts Committee inquiry into the extraordinary so-called “Budget exchange” practices.

This is a Budget that can only serve to hold Britain back. The few positive measures that it includes will not come into force for a year or more. Its many negative consequences—lower growth, lower investment, lower productivity and lower pay—will delay, or will deny Britain, the recovery that we need. The accounting devices that it deploys simply serve to shift today's spending into tomorrow's deficit, while the deficit reduction plan itself has now stalled.

This is a Budget which delays the growth and recovery that our economy requires, and which puts off the stimulus that our economy demands. It is a Budget not for aspiration, but of procrastination. Far from building the goal of one nation that we all share, it will result only in the stagnation that we all fear.

9.46 pm

The Chief Secretary to the Treasury (Danny Alexander): Let me begin by joining the shadow Financial Secretary in his congratulations to the hon. Member for Leeds West (Rachel Reeves) on the birth of her child, as I think will Members in all parts of the House.

The debate has been very well attended. I think that there were 46 Back-Bench speeches. It has also been very well considered and, at times, passionate. I thank Members on both sides of the House for their contributions.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government opened the debate in his usual pugnacious style. He talked about planning, housing, mortgages and the help to buy scheme, which he described in some detail. He did not mention the announcement on zero-carbon homes, but my right hon. Friend the Member for Hazel Grove (Andrew Stunell) referred to it in detail.

There were contributions from Members representing all parts of the United Kingdom, and, I think, from all parties in the House except the Scottish National party. The hon. Member for Carmarthen East and Dinefwr (Jonathan Edwards)—

Jonathan Edwards rose—

Danny Alexander: Will the hon. Gentleman give me a moment? I am going to say something about him. He made some serious points about borrowing powers. As he knows, they are being considered in the light of the Silk commission recommendations.

Many Government Members celebrated both the reaching of the £10,000 income tax personal allowance and the reductions in fuel duty, which one or two Opposition Members also welcomed. I will not single out every contribution, but my hon. Friends the Members for Halesowen and Rowley Regis (James Morris) and for Mid Dorset and North Poole (Annette Brooke) spoke passionately about those subjects. They also mentioned housing, including the important role played by affordable housing in the Budget.

Chris Leslie rose—

Danny Alexander: I am going to press on.

Chris Leslie rose—

Danny Alexander: Will the hon. Gentleman just let me finish the point?

The hon. Members for Huddersfield (Mr Sheerman) and for Stalybridge and Hyde (Jonathan Reynolds) made passionate speeches about manufacturing. The hon. Member for Coventry South (Mr Cunningham) celebrated the presidency of George Bush, which was somewhat surprising. My hon. Friend the Member for Colchester (Sir Bob Russell) called for a tax on television rights relating to football matches, which is not a suggestion that I shall be following up immediately.

Now I will give way to the shadow Financial Secretary.

Chris Leslie: The Chief Secretary mentioned housing. May I ask him about the new homes subsidy? In yesterday's *Daily Telegraph*, he was quoted as saying:

“I do not want to get into all the details.”

Has he decided tonight to rule out making that scheme available for second or third homes?

Danny Alexander: We have made it clear throughout that there is no intention that this scheme should work to the benefit of second-home owners, but as I said yesterday and as the Chancellor has said repeatedly, we will consult on the detail of the scheme to make sure it benefits those whom it needs to benefit.

There is a very serious problem in this country: many people, especially young couples, can afford the monthly repayments on their mortgage but cannot afford the large deposits that are now required by mortgage—

Chris Leslie: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Danny Alexander: No, I am going to press on.

Chris Leslie rose—

Danny Alexander: Sit down; I am going to press on. The help to buy scheme, in its several manifestations, is designed to provide support.

We heard no apology whatsoever from Opposition Front Benchers for the mess they got this country into when in government. That is what we were looking for from the shadow Secretary of State for Local Government and the shadow Financial Secretary.

There were contributions from a number of distinguished members of the—

Sheila Gilmore (Edinburgh East) (Lab): What does the Chief Secretary have to say about the *Financial Times* editorial which said that the Budget offered too little to boost growth now?

Danny Alexander: I disagree with it, for reasons that I will come to. I will now make some progress.

The right hon. Member for Edinburgh South West (Mr Darling) made a characteristically thoughtful contribution to the debate. He has made it clear, not least through his leadership of the Better Together campaign but also in response to an intervention, that the Scottish National party is not being open about the scale of the problems that an independent Scotland would face.

It was not the presence on the Opposition Front Bench of members of the former Government that was most noticed last week. Many Members will have sensed a presence in the Chamber, and looking up they would have seen Lord Mandelson, a former member of the previous Government, looking down. Afterwards, he gave his views on the Budget. He said in a speech the following night:

“I can’t quite remember which member of the government it was who claimed to have abolished boom and bust. Well, we abolished boom...The whole argument about whether we’re cutting too far and too fast, it’s in the past. It is rather predictable party political stuff from over the despatch box, and it is a bit tiring to the public.”

The shadow Chancellor would do well to take note. Lord Mandelson then said the following, which is particularly significant in the context of an earlier intervention:

“I don’t think you can really take a chance, I think the markets, whose confidence in us to pay back what we borrow—that confidence is the determining factor. If that was seriously damaged by a lurch in policy I think that would be quite a risk which I would not blame the chancellor for refusing to take.”

That is sage advice from a former member of the previous Government, which Opposition Front Benchers would do well to take.

Last week’s Budget sent a message to hard-working families in each and every constituency up and down the country: if people want to get on in life, this Government will support them. If, in the short term, people want more money back in their pockets, we are taking measures to help them. They will pay less to fill up their car; they will pay less for a pint of beer; and, most importantly, if they earn less than £10,000 they will soon pay absolutely nothing in income tax.

If, in the near future, Mr Speaker, a constituent of yours wants to own their own home, this Government are making that a very real possibility through low-deposit

mortgages, through mortgage guarantees and through doubling the affordable homes guarantee programme. For those who, in the distant future, do not want their children or grandchildren to still be paying off this generation’s debts, we are taking the steps to ensure that they will not. We are reducing the structural deficit, creating a tax landscape for economic growth and building an infrastructure for the UK to compete in the global race.

This evening, I want to talk about the steps this Government have taken to build a stronger economy and a fairer society. We are putting our faith in the private sector to help us build that stronger economy. We believe that the best way to do that is to create the most competitive tax regime in the G20. Further reducing the rate of corporation tax, which we announced in this Budget, will not only send a clear message that Britain is open for business, but will increase the return on those businesses’ investments and incentivise economic growth. Meanwhile, our £2,000 employment allowance, welcomed on both sides of the House, will be a real help for small and medium-sized businesses that want to expand and to employ more staff.

The Government know that if we want to see growth we cannot, as our predecessors did so catastrophically, look to one industry or one city. Several Opposition Members mentioned the importance of manufacturing industry, but when in government Labour became over-dependent on one square mile, thanks to the shadow Chancellor’s prawn cocktail offensive. We know that for a stronger, more balanced economy, we need growth across different sectors, and we need growth up and down the country. That is why we are taking forward the measures from the Heseltine review; it is why my right hon. Friends the Business Secretary and the Deputy Prime Minister unveiled our aerospace investment in Bristol before the Budget; it is why we are supporting the asset management sector, which is so important, particularly to the Scottish economy and to Edinburgh; and it is why, as well as supporting renewables, we are developing proposals so that communities can benefit from any shale gas discovered in their area. It is right that local communities see the benefits of natural resources in their locality.

We also need to make sure that our industrial base is broad, as we have seen only too clearly the dangers of over-reliance on one specific sector. That is why my right hon. Friend the Business Secretary is overseeing £1.8 billion of funding to support strategies in 11 key sectors, working to ensure that our economy makes the most of its potential in life sciences, construction and many other areas. While we build this stronger economy, we are also making sure that we build a fairer society. The Labour party likes to portray itself as the party of taking from the rich and giving to the poor, but everyone who was paying income tax at the 10p rate and was then paying income tax at double that rate will soon, thanks to this Government, be paying no income tax at all. That policy comes straight from the Liberal Democrat manifesto to the pockets of millions of hard-working families up and down the country, thanks to this coalition Government.

Of course we recognise that, despite these actions, times are still difficult for many families up and down the country. For that reason, we have taken the decision to cancel this September’s fuel duty increase, which was

baked into the public finances by the Labour party. That cancellation has been welcomed across the House, but especially by Members with more rural constituencies such as mine.

I must also congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds North West (Greg Mulholland) on his tireless and passionate campaigning on beer duty. I know that he has some wonderful pubs and a very good beer shop in his constituency, I know how many excellent breweries we have up and down the country, and I know that our scrapping of the beer duty escalator will be a real boon both for the pub trade and for the brewing industry.

Jim Sheridan (Paisley and Renfrewshire North) (Lab): The Chief Secretary has mentioned the beer tax, but does he have anything to say to the Scotch whisky industry, which is suffering as a consequence of the Budget?

Danny Alexander: I say, as I said directly to the Scotch whisky industry, that this Government are giving considerable support to it as it seeks to broaden its reach into export markets across the world. The work of UKTI, in particular, is of great assistance to that industry.

We are building a stronger economy and a fairer society, and we are also helping people that want to get on in life. If you want to get on in life, last week's was a Budget that will support you. It was a Budget that will give thousands of people the opportunity to step on to the housing ladder or step up the housing ladder. Our £5.4 billion housing package will boost home ownership and kick-start the building of new homes. The intention of the help to buy scheme is to provide help to people who want to get their first home or move home but cannot afford the deposit that today's mortgages now require. This is a complex policy area, and we are working with the industry to find a practical and sensible way of taking the scheme forward without blunting its radicalism or its reach. I am sure we will achieve that.

Chris Leslie rose—

Danny Alexander: I am going to press on, as there is no time left.

There are many other ways the Government are helping people to get on in life. Our tax-free child care measures, for example, will ensure that from autumn 2015 vouchers supporting 20% of child care costs will be available to families when both parents or a single parent is working, neither parent is earning more than £150,000 a year and the parents are not already receiving a more generous level of support through the tax credit system.

The Government are helping people to get on in life and plan for their financial futures. Thanks to the excellent work of my the Minister of State, Department for Work and Pensions, my hon. Friend the Member for Thornbury and Yate (Steve Webb), we have already brought in auto-enrolment, which will help bring 9 million people into a workplace pension scheme, and we are also radically simplifying the state pension system and bringing that simplification forward through the single tier.

Of course, there is a lot of work to do in the longer term to strengthen our economy, but we must start by cleaning up the mess made by the Labour party. We believe that we are putting the right measures in place to

bring the deficit down and to speed up growth. The Budget is another step towards building a stronger economy and a fairer society to help those people who want to get on, and I commend it to the House.

Question put.

The House divided: Ayes 299, Noes 243.

Division No. 196]

[9.59 pm

AYES

Adams, Nigel	Crabb, Stephen
Afriyie, Adam	Crockart, Mike
Aldous, Peter	Crouch, Tracey
Alexander, rh Danny	Davey, rh Mr Edward
Andrew, Stuart	Davies, David T. C. (Monmouth)
Arbuthnot, rh Mr James	Davies, Philip
Bacon, Mr Richard	Davis, rh Mr David
Baker, Norman	de Bois, Nick
Baker, Steve	Dorrell, rh Mr Stephen
Baldry, Sir Tony	Dorries, Nadine
Baldwin, Harriett	Doyle-Price, Jackie
Barker, rh Gregory	Drax, Richard
Baron, Mr John	Duddridge, James
Barwell, Gavin	Duncan Smith, rh Mr Iain
Bebb, Guto	Ellis, Michael
Beith, rh Sir Alan	Ellison, Jane
Bellingham, Mr Henry	Ellwood, Mr Tobias
Benyon, Richard	Elphicke, Charlie
Beresford, Sir Paul	Eustice, George
Berry, Jake	Evans, Graham
Bingham, Andrew	Evans, Jonathan
Binley, Mr Brian	Evennett, Mr David
Birtwistle, Gordon	Fabricant, Michael
Blackman, Bob	Fallon, rh Michael
Blackwood, Nicola	Featherstone, Lynne
Blunt, Mr Crispin	Field, Mark
Boles, Nick	Foster, rh Mr Don
Bone, Mr Peter	Fox, rh Dr Liam
Bottomley, Sir Peter	Francois, rh Mr Mark
Bradley, Karen	Freeman, George
Brady, Mr Graham	Freer, Mike
Brake, rh Tom	Fullbrook, Lorraine
Bray, Angie	Garnier, Sir Edward
Brazier, Mr Julian	Garnier, Mark
Bridgen, Andrew	Gauke, Mr David
Brine, Steve	George, Andrew
Brookshire, James	Gibb, Mr Nick
Brooke, Annette	Gilbert, Stephen
Bruce, Fiona	Gillan, rh Mrs Cheryl
Buckland, Mr Robert	Glen, John
Burley, Mr Aidan	Goldsmith, Zac
Burns, Conor	Goodwill, Mr Robert
Burns, rh Mr Simon	Gove, rh Michael
Burrowes, Mr David	Graham, Richard
Burstow, rh Paul	Grant, Mrs Helen
Burt, Alistair	Gray, Mr James
Byles, Dan	Grayling, rh Chris
Cable, rh Vince	Green, rh Damian
Cairns, Alun	Grieve, rh Mr Dominic
Carmichael, rh Mr Alistair	Griffiths, Andrew
Carmichael, Neil	Gummer, Ben
Carswell, Mr Douglas	Gyimah, Mr Sam
Chishti, Rehman	Hames, Duncan
Chope, Mr Christopher	Hammond, rh Mr Philip
Clark, rh Greg	Hammond, Stephen
Clarke, rh Mr Kenneth	Hancock, Matthew
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey	Hands, Greg
Coffey, Dr Thérèse	Harper, Mr Mark
Collins, Damian	Harris, Rebecca
Colvile, Oliver	Hart, Simon
Cox, Mr Geoffrey	

Harvey, Sir Nick	Morris, David	Syms, Mr Robert	White, Chris
Haselhurst, rh Sir Alan	Morris, James	Thornton, Mike	Whittaker, Craig
Hayes, Mr John	Mosley, Stephen	Thurso, John	Whittingdale, Mr John
Heald, Oliver	Mowat, David	Tomlinson, Justin	Wiggin, Bill
Heath, Mr David	Mulholland, Greg	Truss, Elizabeth	Willets, rh Mr David
Heaton-Harris, Chris	Mundell, rh David	Turner, Mr Andrew	Williams, Mr Mark
Hemming, John	Munt, Tessa	Tyrie, Mr Andrew	Williams, Roger
Henderson, Gordon	Murray, Sheryll	Uppal, Paul	Williams, Stephen
Hendry, Charles	Murrison, Dr Andrew	Vaizey, Mr Edward	Williamson, Gavin
Hinds, Damian	Neill, Robert	Vara, Mr Shailesh	Wilson, Mr Rob
Hoban, Mr Mark	Newmark, Mr Brooks	Vickers, Martin	Wollaston, Dr Sarah
Hollingbery, George	Newton, Sarah	Villiers, rh Mrs Theresa	Wright, Jeremy
Hollobone, Mr Philip	Nokes, Caroline	Walker, Mr Charles	Wright, Simon
Holloway, Mr Adam	Norman, Jesse	Walker, Mr Robin	Young, rh Sir George
Hopkins, Kris	Nuttall, Mr David	Ward, Mr David	Zahawi, Nadhim
Horwood, Martin	O'Brien, Mr Stephen	Watkinson, Dame Angela	
Howell, John	Offord, Dr Matthew	Webb, Steve	Tellers for the Ayes:
Hughes, rh Simon	Ollerenshaw, Eric	Wharton, James	Mark Hunter and
Hunt, rh Mr Jeremy	Osborne, rh Mr George	Wheeler, Heather	Joseph Johnson
Huppert, Dr Julian	Paice, rh Sir James		
Hurd, Mr Nick	Parish, Neil		
Jackson, Mr Stewart	Patel, Priti		
James, Margot	Paterson, rh Mr Owen	Abbott, Ms Diane	Cruddas, Jon
Javid, Sajid	Pawsey, Mark	Abrahams, Debbie	Cryer, John
Jenkin, Mr Bernard	Penrose, John	Ainsworth, rh Mr Bob	Cunningham, Alex
Johnson, Gareth	Percy, Andrew	Alexander, Heidi	Cunningham, Mr Jim
Jones, Andrew	Perry, Claire	Ali, Rushanara	Cunningham, Sir Tony
Jones, rh Mr David	Phillips, Stephen	Allen, Mr Graham	Curran, Margaret
Jones, Mr Marcus	Pickles, rh Mr Eric	Anderson, Mr David	Danczuk, Simon
Kawczynski, Daniel	Pincher, Christopher	Ashworth, Jonathan	Darling, rh Mr Alistair
Kirby, Simon	Prisk, Mr Mark	Austin, Ian	David, Wayne
Knight, rh Mr Greg	Pugh, John	Bailey, Mr Adrian	Davidson, Mr Ian
Kwarteng, Kwasi	Raab, Mr Dominic	Bain, Mr William	Davies, Geraint
Laing, Mrs Eleanor	Randall, rh Mr John	Balls, rh Ed	De Piero, Gloria
Lamb, Norman	Reckless, Mark	Banks, Gordon	Denham, rh Mr John
Lansley, rh Mr Andrew	Redwood, rh Mr John	Barron, rh Mr Kevin	Dobbin, Jim
Laws, rh Mr David	Rees-Mogg, Jacob	Bayley, Hugh	Dobson, rh Frank
Leadsom, Andrea	Reevell, Simon	Beckett, rh Margaret	Docherty, Thomas
Lee, Jessica	Robertson, rh Hugh	Begg, Dame Anne	Dodds, rh Mr Nigel
Lee, Dr Phillip	Robertson, Mr Laurence	Benn, rh Hilary	Donohoe, Mr Brian H.
Leech, Mr John	Rudd, Amber	Benton, Mr Joe	Doughty, Stephen
Lefroy, Jeremy	Ruffley, Mr David	Betts, Mr Clive	Dowd, Jim
Leigh, Mr Edward	Russell, Sir Bob	Blackman-Woods, Roberta	Doyle, Gemma
Leslie, Charlotte	Rutley, David	Blenkinsop, Tom	Dromey, Jack
Letwin, rh Mr Oliver	Sanders, Mr Adrian	Blomfield, Paul	Dugher, Michael
Lewis, Brandon	Sandys, Laura	Blunkett, rh Mr David	Durkan, Mark
Lewis, Dr Julian	Selous, Andrew	Brennan, Kevin	Eagle, Ms Angela
Lidington, rh Mr David	Sharma, Alok	Brown, Lyn	Eagle, Maria
Lilley, rh Mr Peter	Shelbrooke, Alec	Brown, rh Mr Nicholas	Edwards, Jonathan
Lord, Jonathan	Simmonds, Mark	Brown, Mr Russell	Efford, Clive
Loughton, Tim	Simpson, Mr Keith	Bryant, Chris	Elliott, Julie
Luff, Peter	Skidmore, Chris	Buck, Ms Karen	Engel, Natascha
Lumley, Karen	Smith, Miss Chloe	Burden, Richard	Esterson, Bill
Macleod, Mary	Smith, Henry	Burnham, rh Andy	Farrelly, Paul
Main, Mrs Anne	Smith, Julian	Byrne, rh Mr Liam	Field, rh Mr Frank
Maude, rh Mr Francis	Smith, Sir Robert	Campbell, Mr Alan	Fitzpatrick, Jim
Maynard, Paul	Soames, rh Nicholas	Campbell, Mr Gregory	Fleello, Robert
McCartney, Jason	Soubry, Anna	Campbell, Mr Ronnie	Flint, rh Caroline
McCartney, Karl	Spelman, rh Mrs Caroline	Caton, Martin	Flynn, Paul
McIntosh, Miss Anne	Spencer, Mr Mark	Champion, Sarah	Fovargue, Yvonne
McLoughlin, rh Mr Patrick	Stephenson, Andrew	Chapman, Jenny	Francis, Dr Hywel
McPartland, Stephen	Stevenson, John	Clark, Katy	Galloway, George
McVey, Esther	Stewart, Bob	Clarke, rh Mr Tom	Gardiner, Barry
Mercer, Patrick	Stewart, Iain	Coaker, Vernon	Gilmore, Sheila
Metcalfe, Stephen	Streeter, Mr Gary	Coffey, Ann	Glindon, Mrs Mary
Mills, Nigel	Stride, Mel	Connarty, Michael	Godsiff, Mr Roger
Milton, Anne	Stunell, rh Andrew	Cooper, Rosie	Goggins, rh Paul
Mitchell, rh Mr Andrew	Sturdy, Julian	Cooper, rh Yvette	Goodman, Helen
Moore, rh Michael	Swales, Ian	Corbyn, Jeremy	Green, Kate
Mordaunt, Penny	Swayne, rh Mr Desmond	Creagh, Mary	Greenwood, Lilian
Morgan, Nicky	Swinson, Jo	Creasy, Stella	Griffith, Nia
Morris, Anne Marie	Swire, rh Mr Hugo		Gwynne, Andrew

Hain, rh Mr Peter
 Hamilton, Mr David
 Hamilton, Fabian
 Hanson, rh Mr David
 Harman, rh Ms Harriet
 Harris, Mr Tom
 Havard, Mr Dai
 Healey, rh John
 Hendrick, Mark
 Hepburn, Mr Stephen
 Hermon, Lady
 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
 Jamieson, Cathy
 Jarvis, Dan
 Johnson, rh Alan
 Johnson, Diana
 Jones, Graham
 Jones, Helen
 Jones, Mr Kevan
 Jones, Susan Elan
 Kaufman, rh Sir Gerald
 Keeley, Barbara
 Kendall, Liz
 Khan, rh Sadiq
 Lammy, rh Mr David
 Lavery, Ian
 Lazarowicz, Mark
 Leslie, Chris
 Llwyd, rh Mr Elfyn
 Long, Naomi
 Love, Mr Andrew
 Lucas, Caroline
 Lucas, Ian
 MacNeil, Mr Angus Brendan
 Mactaggart, Fiona
 Mahmood, Mr Khalid
 Mahmood, Shabana
 Malhotra, Seema
 Mann, John
 Marsden, Mr Gordon
 McCabe, Steve
 McCarthy, Kerry
 McCrea, Dr William
 McDonagh, Siobhain
 McDonald, Andy
 McDonnell, Dr Alasdair
 McDonnell, John
 McFadden, rh Mr Pat
 McGovern, Jim
 McGuire, rh Mrs Anne
 McKechin, Ann
 McKenzie, Mr Iain
 McKinnell, Catherine
 Meacher, rh Mr Michael
 Meale, Sir Alan
 Mearns, Ian
 Miliband, rh David
 Miliband, rh Edward
 Miller, Andrew
 Mitchell, Austin
 Moon, Mrs Madeleine
 Morden, Jessica

Morrice, Graeme (*Livingston*)
 Morris, Grahame M. (*Easington*)
 Mudie, Mr George
 Munn, Meg
 Murphy, rh Mr Jim
 Murphy, rh Paul
 Nandy, Lisa
 Nash, Pamela
 O'Donnell, Fiona
 Onwurah, Chi
 Osborne, Sandra
 Owen, Albert
 Paisley, Ian
 Pearce, Teresa
 Perkins, Toby
 Phillipson, Bridget
 Pound, Stephen
 Qureshi, Yasmin
 Reed, Mr Jamie
 Reed, Steve
 Reynolds, Emma
 Reynolds, Jonathan
 Riordan, Mrs Linda
 Ritchie, Ms Margaret
 Robertson, Angus
 Robertson, John
 Robinson, Mr Geoffrey
 Rotheram, Steve
 Roy, Lindsay
 Ruane, Chris
 Sarwar, Anas
 Sawford, Andy
 Seabeck, Alison
 Shannon, Jim
 Sharma, Mr Virendra
 Sheerman, Mr Barry
 Sheridan, Jim
 Shuker, Gavin
 Skinner, Mr Dennis
 Slaughter, Mr Andy
 Smith, rh Mr Andrew
 Smith, Angela
 Smith, Nick
 Smith, Owen
 Spellar, rh Mr John
 Straw, rh Mr Jack
 Stringer, Graham
 Stuart, Ms Gisela
 Sutcliffe, Mr Gerry
 Thomas, Mr Gareth
 Thornberry, Emily
 Timms, rh Stephen
 Turner, Karl
 Twigg, Derek
 Twigg, Stephen
 Umunna, Mr Chuka
 Vaz, Valerie
 Walley, Joan
 Watson, Mr Tom
 Watts, Mr Dave
 Weir, Mr Mike
 Whiteford, Dr Eilidh
 Whitehead, Dr Alan
 Williams, Hywel
 Williamson, Chris
 Wilson, Phil
 Winnick, Mr David
 Winterton, rh Ms Rosalie
 Wishart, Pete
 Wood, Mike
 Woodcock, John

Wright, David
 Wright, Mr Iain

Nic Dakin and
Alison McGovern

Tellers for the Noes:

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

(1) That it is expedient to amend the law with respect to the National Debt and the public revenue and to make further provision in connection with finance.

(2) This Resolution does not extend to the making of any amendment with respect to value added tax so as to provide—

(a) for zero-rating or exempting a supply, acquisition or importation;

(b) for refunding an amount of tax;

(c) for any relief, other than a relief that—

(i) so far as it is applicable to goods, applies to goods of every description, and

(ii) so far as it is applicable to services, applies to services of every description.

The Speaker put forthwith the Questions necessary to dispose of the motions made in the name of the Chancellor of the Exchequer (Standing Order No. 51 (3)).

2. INCOME TAX (CHARGE)

Question put,

That income tax is charged for the tax year 2013-14.

And it is declared that it is expedient in the public interest that this Resolution should have statutory effect under the provisions of the Provisional Collection of Taxes Act 1968.

The House divided: Ayes 299, Noes 243.

Division No. 197]

[10.14 pm

AYES

Adams, Nigel
 Afriyie, Adam
 Aldous, Peter
 Alexander, rh Danny
 Andrew, Stuart
 Arbuthnot, rh Mr James
 Bacon, Mr Richard
 Baker, Norman
 Baker, Steve
 Baldry, Sir Tony
 Baldwin, Harriett
 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
 Binley, Mr Brian
 Birtwistle, Gordon
 Blackman, Bob
 Blackwood, Nicola
 Blunt, Mr Crispin
 Boles, Nick
 Bone, Mr Peter
 Bottomley, Sir Peter
 Bradley, Karen
 Brady, Mr Graham
 Brake, rh Tom
 Bray, Angie
 Brazier, Mr Julian
 Bridgen, Andrew
 Brine, Steve
 Brokenshire, James
 Brooke, Annette
 Bruce, Fiona
 Buckland, Mr Robert
 Burley, Mr Aidan
 Burns, Conor
 Burns, rh Mr Simon
 Burrowes, Mr David
 Burstow, rh Paul
 Burt, Alistair
 Byles, Dan
 Cable, rh Vince
 Cairns, Alun
 Carmichael, rh Mr Alistair
 Carmichael, Neil
 Carswell, Mr Douglas
 Chishti, Rehman
 Chope, Mr Christopher
 Clark, rh Greg
 Clarke, rh Mr Kenneth
 Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
 Coffey, Dr Thérèse
 Collins, Damian
 Colvile, Oliver
 Cox, Mr Geoffrey
 Crabb, Stephen
 Crockart, Mike
 Crouch, Tracey
 Davey, rh Mr Edward

Davies, David T. C.
 (Monmouth)
 Davies, Philip
 Davis, rh Mr David
 de Bois, Nick
 Dorrell, rh Mr Stephen
 Dorries, Nadine
 Doyle-Price, Jackie
 Drax, Richard
 Duddridge, James
 Duncan Smith, rh Mr Iain
 Ellis, Michael
 Ellison, Jane
 Ellwood, Mr Tobias
 Elphicke, Charlie
 Eustice, George
 Evans, Graham
 Evans, Jonathan
 Evennett, Mr David
 Fabricant, Michael
 Fallon, rh Michael
 Featherstone, Lynne
 Field, Mark
 Foster, rh Mr Don
 Fox, rh Dr Liam
 Francois, rh Mr Mark
 Freeman, George
 Freer, Mike
 Fullbrook, Lorraine
 Garnier, Sir Edward
 Garnier, Mark
 Gauke, Mr David
 George, Andrew
 Gibb, Mr Nick
 Gilbert, Stephen
 Gillan, rh Mrs Cheryl
 Glen, John
 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
 Gummer, Ben
 Gyimah, Mr Sam
 Hames, Duncan
 Hammond, rh Mr Philip
 Hammond, Stephen
 Hancock, Matthew
 Hands, Greg
 Harper, Mr Mark
 Harris, Rebecca
 Hart, Simon
 Harvey, Sir Nick
 Haselhurst, rh Sir Alan
 Hayes, Mr John
 Heald, Oliver
 Heath, Mr David
 Heaton-Harris, Chris
 Hemming, John
 Henderson, Gordon
 Hendry, Charles
 Hinds, Damian
 Hoban, Mr Mark
 Hollingbery, George
 Hollobone, Mr Philip
 Holloway, Mr Adam
 Hopkins, Kris

Horwood, Martin
 Howell, John
 Hughes, rh Simon
 Hunt, rh Mr Jeremy
 Huppert, Dr Julian
 Hurd, Mr Nick
 Jackson, Mr Stewart
 James, Margot
 Javid, Sajid
 Jenkin, Mr Bernard
 Johnson, Gareth
 Jones, Andrew
 Jones, rh Mr David
 Jones, Mr Marcus
 Kawczynski, Daniel
 Kirby, Simon
 Knight, rh Mr Greg
 Kwarteng, Kwasi
 Laing, Mrs Eleanor
 Lamb, Norman
 Lansley, rh Mr Andrew
 Laws, rh Mr David
 Leadsom, Andrea
 Lee, Jessica
 Lee, Dr Phillip
 Leech, Mr John
 Lefroy, Jeremy
 Leigh, Mr Edward
 Leslie, Charlotte
 Letwin, rh Mr Oliver
 Lewis, Brandon
 Lewis, Dr Julian
 Lidington, rh Mr David
 Lilley, rh Mr Peter
 Lord, Jonathan
 Loughton, Tim
 Luff, Peter
 Lumley, Karen
 Macleod, Mary
 Main, Mrs Anne
 Maude, rh Mr Francis
 Maynard, Paul
 McCartney, Jason
 McCartney, Karl
 McIntosh, Miss Anne
 McLoughlin, rh Mr Patrick
 McPartland, Stephen
 McVey, Esther
 Mercer, Patrick
 Metcalfe, Stephen
 Mills, Nigel
 Milton, Anne
 Mitchell, rh Mr Andrew
 Moore, rh Michael
 Mordaunt, Penny
 Morgan, Nicky
 Morris, Anne Marie
 Morris, David
 Morris, James
 Mosley, Stephen
 Mowat, David
 Mulholland, Greg
 Mundell, rh David
 Munt, Tessa
 Murray, Sheryll
 Murrison, Dr Andrew
 Neill, Robert
 Newmark, Mr Brooks
 Newton, Sarah
 Nokes, Caroline
 Norman, Jesse
 Nuttall, Mr David

O'Brien, Mr Stephen
 Offord, Dr Matthew
 Ollerenshaw, Eric
 Osborne, rh Mr George
 Paice, rh Sir James
 Parish, Neil
 Patel, Priti
 Paterson, rh Mr Owen
 Pawsey, Mark
 Penrose, John
 Percy, Andrew
 Perry, Claire
 Phillips, Stephen
 Pickles, rh Mr Eric
 Pincher, Christopher
 Prisk, Mr Mark
 Pugh, John
 Raab, Mr Dominic
 Randall, rh Mr John
 Reckless, Mark
 Redwood, rh Mr John
 Rees-Mogg, Jacob
 Reevel, Simon
 Robertson, rh Hugh
 Robertson, Mr Laurence
 Rudd, Amber
 Ruffley, Mr David
 Russell, Sir Bob
 Rutley, David
 Sanders, Mr Adrian
 Sandys, Laura
 Selous, Andrew
 Sharma, Alok
 Shelbrooke, Alec
 Simmonds, Mark
 Simpson, Mr Keith
 Skidmore, Chris
 Smith, Miss Chloe
 Smith, Henry
 Smith, Julian
 Smith, Sir Robert
 Soames, rh Nicholas
 Soubry, Anna
 Spelman, rh Mrs Caroline
 Spencer, Mr Mark
 Stephenson, Andrew
 Stevenson, John
 Stewart, Bob

Stewart, Iain
 Streeter, Mr Gary
 Stride, Mel
 Stunell, rh Andrew
 Sturdy, Julian
 Swales, Ian
 Swayne, rh Mr Desmond
 Swinson, Jo
 Swire, rh Mr Hugo
 Symes, Mr Robert
 Thornton, Mike
 Thurso, John
 Tomlinson, Justin
 Truss, Elizabeth
 Turner, Mr Andrew
 Tyrie, Mr Andrew
 Uppal, Paul
 Vaizey, Mr Edward
 Vara, Mr Shailesh
 Vickers, Martin
 Villiers, rh Mrs Theresa
 Walker, Mr Charles
 Walker, Mr Robin
 Ward, Mr David
 Watkinson, Dame Angela
 Webb, Steve
 Wharton, James
 Wheeler, Heather
 White, Chris
 Whittaker, Craig
 Whittingdale, Mr John
 Wiggin, Bill
 Willetts, rh Mr David
 Williams, Mr Mark
 Williams, Roger
 Williams, Stephen
 Williamson, Gavin
 Wilson, Mr Rob
 Wollaston, Dr Sarah
 Wright, Jeremy
 Wright, Simon
 Young, rh Sir George
 Zahawi, Nadhim

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mark Hunter and
Joseph Johnson

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
 Abrahams, Debbie
 Ainsworth, rh Mr Bob
 Alexander, Heidi
 Ali, Rushanara
 Allen, Mr Graham
 Anderson, Mr David
 Ashworth, Jonathan
 Austin, Ian
 Bailey, Mr Adrian
 Bain, Mr William
 Balls, rh Ed
 Banks, Gordon
 Barron, rh Mr Kevin
 Bayley, Hugh
 Beckett, rh Margaret
 Begg, Dame Anne
 Benn, rh Hilary
 Benton, Mr Joe
 Betts, Mr Clive
 Blackman-Woods, Roberta
 Blenkinsop, Tom
 Blomfield, Paul
 Blunkett, rh Mr David
 Brennan, Kevin
 Brown, Lyn
 Brown, rh Mr Nicholas
 Brown, Mr Russell
 Bryant, Chris
 Buck, Ms Karen
 Burden, Richard
 Burnham, rh Andy
 Byrne, rh Mr Liam
 Campbell, Mr Alan
 Campbell, Mr Gregory
 Campbell, Mr Ronnie
 Caton, Martin
 Champion, Sarah
 Chapman, Jenny
 Clark, Katy
 Clarke, rh Mr Tom
 Coaker, Vernon

Coffey, Ann
 Connarty, Michael
 Cooper, Rosie
 Cooper, rh Yvette
 Corbyn, Jeremy
 Creagh, Mary
 Creasy, Stella
 Cruddas, Jon
 Cryer, John
 Cunningham, Alex
 Cunningham, Mr Jim
 Cunningham, Sir Tony
 Curran, Margaret
 Danczuk, Simon
 Darling, rh Mr Alistair
 David, Wayne
 Davidson, Mr Ian
 Davies, Geraint
 De Piero, Gloria
 Denham, rh Mr John
 Dobbins, Jim
 Dobson, rh Frank
 Docherty, Thomas
 Dodds, rh Mr Nigel
 Donohoe, Mr Brian H.
 Doughty, Stephen
 Dowd, Jim
 Doyle, Gemma
 Dromey, Jack
 Dugher, Michael
 Durkan, Mark
 Eagle, Ms Angela
 Eagle, Maria
 Edwards, Jonathan
 Efford, Clive
 Elliott, Julie
 Engel, Natascha
 Esterson, Bill
 Farrelly, Paul
 Field, rh Mr Frank
 Fitzpatrick, Jim
 Flollo, Robert
 Flint, rh Caroline
 Flynn, Paul
 Fovargue, Yvonne
 Francis, Dr Hywel
 Gardiner, Barry
 Gilmore, Sheila
 Glindon, Mrs Mary
 Godsiff, Mr Roger
 Goggins, rh Paul
 Goodman, Helen
 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
 Harris, Mr Tom
 Havard, Mr Dai
 Healey, rh John
 Hendrick, Mark
 Hepburn, Mr Stephen
 Hermon, Lady
 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
 Jamieson, Cathy
 Jarvis, Dan
 Johnson, rh Alan
 Johnson, Diana
 Jones, Graham
 Jones, Helen
 Jones, Mr Kevan
 Jones, Susan Elan
 Kaufman, rh Sir Gerald
 Keeley, Barbara
 Kendall, Liz
 Khan, rh Sadiq
 Lammy, rh Mr David
 Lavery, Ian
 Lazarowicz, Mark
 Leslie, Chris
 Llwyd, rh Mr Elfyn
 Long, Naomi
 Love, Mr Andrew
 Lucas, Caroline
 Lucas, Ian
 MacNeil, Mr Angus Brendan
 Mactaggart, Fiona
 Mahmood, Mr Khalid
 Mahmood, Shabana
 Malhotra, Seema
 Mann, John
 Marsden, Mr Gordon
 McCabe, Steve
 McCarthy, Kerry
 McCrea, Dr William
 McDonagh, Siobhain
 McDonald, Andy
 McDonnell, Dr Alasdair
 McDonnell, John
 McFadden, rh Mr Pat
 McGovern, Jim
 McGuire, rh Mrs Anne
 McKechnie, Ann
 McKenzie, Mr Iain
 McKinnell, Catherine
 Meacher, rh Mr Michael
 Meale, Sir Alan
 Mearns, Ian
 Miliband, rh David
 Miliband, rh Edward
 Miller, Andrew
 Mitchell, Austin
 Moon, Mrs Madeleine
 Morden, Jessica
 Morrice, Graeme (*Livingston*)
 Morris, Grahame M. (*Easington*)
 Mudie, Mr George
 Munn, Meg
 Murphy, rh Mr Jim
 Murphy, rh Paul
 Nandy, Lisa
 Nash, Pamela
 O'Donnell, Fiona
 Onwurah, Chi
 Osborne, Sandra
 Owen, Albert
 Paisley, Ian
 Pearce, Teresa
 Perkins, Toby
 Phillipson, Bridget

Pound, Stephen
 Qureshi, Yasmin
 Reed, Mr Jamie
 Reed, Steve
 Reynolds, Emma
 Reynolds, Jonathan
 Riordan, Mrs Linda
 Ritchie, Ms Margaret
 Robertson, Angus
 Robertson, John
 Robinson, Mr Geoffrey
 Rotheram, Steve
 Roy, Lindsay
 Ruane, Chris
 Sarwar, Anas
 Sawford, Andy
 Seabeck, Alison
 Shannon, Jim
 Sharma, Mr Virendra
 Sheerman, Mr Barry
 Sheridan, Jim
 Shuker, Gavin
 Skinner, Mr Dennis
 Slaughter, Mr Andy
 Smith, rh Mr Andrew
 Smith, Angela
 Smith, Nick
 Smith, Owen
 Spellar, rh Mr John
 Straw, rh Mr Jack
 Stringer, Graham

Stuart, Ms Gisela
 Sutcliffe, Mr Gerry
 Thomas, Mr Gareth
 Thornberry, Emily
 Timms, rh Stephen
 Turner, Karl
 Twigg, Derek
 Twigg, Stephen
 Umunna, Mr Chuka
 Vaz, rh Keith
 Vaz, Valerie
 Walley, Joan
 Watson, Mr Tom
 Watts, Mr Dave
 Weir, Mr Mike
 Whiteford, Dr Eilidh
 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:
 Nic Dakin and
 Alison McGovern

Question accordingly agreed to.

3. INCOME TAX (PERSONAL ALLOWANCE FOR THOSE BORN AFTER 5 APRIL 1948)

Resolved,

That—

(1) For the tax year 2013-14 the amount specified in section 35(1) of the Income Tax Act 2007 (personal allowance for those born after 5 April 1948) is replaced with “£9,440”.

(2) Accordingly section 57 of that Act (indexation of allowances), so far as relating to the amount specified in section 35(1) of that Act, does not apply for that tax year.

And it is declared that it is expedient in the public interest that this Resolution should have statutory effect under the provisions of the Provisional Collection of Taxes Act 1968.

4. INCOME TAX (BASIC RATE LIMIT)

Resolved,

That—

(1) For the tax year 2013-14 the amount specified in section 10(5) of the Income Tax Act 2007 (basic rate limit) is replaced with “£32,010”.

(2) Accordingly section 21 of that Act (indexation of limits), so far as relating to the basic rate limit, does not apply for that tax year.

And it is declared that it is expedient in the public interest that this Resolution should have statutory effect under the provisions of the Provisional Collection of Taxes Act 1968.

5. CORPORATION TAX (CHARGE AND MAIN RATE FOR FINANCIAL YEAR 2014)

Resolved,

That—

(1) Corporation tax is charged for the financial year 2014.
 (2) For that year the rate of corporation tax is—

- (a) 21% on profits of companies other than ring fence profits, and
- (b) 30% on ring fence profits of companies.

(3) In paragraph (2) "ring fence profits" has the same meaning as in Part 8 of the Corporation Tax Act 2010 (see section 276 of that Act).

6. CORPORATION TAX (SMALL PROFITS RATE AND FRACTIONS FOR FINANCIAL YEAR 2013)

Resolved,

That—

- (1) For the financial year 2013 the small profits rate is—
 - (a) 20% on profits of companies other than ring fence profits, and
 - (b) 19% on ring fence profits of companies.
- (2) For the purposes of Part 3 of the Corporation Tax Act 2010, for that year—
 - (a) the standard fraction is 3/400ths, and
 - (b) the ring fence fraction is 11/400ths.
- (3) In paragraph (1) "ring fence profits" has the same meaning as in Part 8 of that Act (see section 276 of that Act).

7. CONTRIBUTIONS TO REGISTERED PENSION SCHEMES

Resolved,

That provision may be made amending section 308 of the Income Tax (Earnings and Pensions) Act 2003.

8. TAX ADVANTAGED EMPLOYEE SHARE SCHEMES

Resolved,

That provision may be made amending the SIP code, the SAYE code, the CSOP code or the EMI code.

9. PATENT ROYALTIES

Resolved,

That provision (including provision having retrospective effect) may be made about income tax relief in respect of payments of patent royalties.

10. LIMIT ON INCOME TAX RELIEFS

Resolved,

That—

(1) In Chapter 3 of Part 2 of the Income Tax Act 2007 (calculation of income tax liability) after section 24 insert—

"24A Limit on Step 2 deductions

(1) If the taxpayer is an individual, there is a limit on certain deductions which may be made for the tax year at Step 2.

(2) The limit is determined as follows.

(3) Amount A must not exceed amount B.

(4) Amount A is—

- (a) the deductions for the tax year at Step 2 for the reliefs listed in subsection (6) taken together, less
- (b) so much of those deductions as fall within subsection (7).

(5) Amount B is—

- (a) £50,000, or
- (b) if more, 25% of the taxpayer's adjusted total income for the tax year (see subsection (8)).

(6) The reliefs are—

- (a) relief under section 64 (trade loss relief against general income);

- (b) relief under section 72 (early trade losses relief);
- (c) relief under section 96 (post-cessation trade relief);
- (d) relief under section 120 (property loss relief against general income);
- (e) relief under section 125 (post-cessation property relief);
- (f) relief under section 128 (employment loss relief against general income);
- (g) relief under Chapter 6 of Part 4 (share loss relief);
- (h) relief under Chapter 1 of Part 8 (interest payments);
- (i) relief under section 555 of ITEPA 2003 (deduction for liabilities relating to former employment);
- (j) relief under section 446 of ITTOIA 2005 (strips of government securities: relief for losses);
- (k) relief under section 454(4) of ITTOIA 2005 (listed securities held since 26 March 2003: relief for losses: persons other than trustees).

(7) The deductions falling within this subsection are—

- (a) deductions for amounts of relief so far as attributable to allowances under Part 3A of CAA 2001 (business premises renovation allowances);
- (b) deductions for amounts of relief under a provision mentioned in subsection (6)(a) to (e) so far as made from profits of the trade or business to which the relief in question relates;
- (c) deductions for amounts of relief under the provision mentioned in subsection (6)(a) or (b) so far as attributable to a deduction allowed under section 205 or 220 of ITTOIA 2005 (deduction for overlap profit in final tax year or on change of accounting date);
- (d) deductions for amounts of relief under the provision mentioned in subsection (6)(g)—
 - (i) where the shares in question fall within section 131(2)(a) (qualifying shares to which EIS relief is attributable), or
 - (ii) where SEIS relief is attributable to the shares in question as determined in accordance with Part 5A (seed enterprise investment scheme).

(8) The taxpayer's "adjusted total income" for the tax year is calculated as follows.

Step 1

Take the amount of the taxpayer's total income for the tax year.

Step 2

Add back the amounts of any deductions allowed under Part 12 of ITEPA 2003 (payroll giving) in calculating the taxpayer's income which is charged to tax for the tax year.

Step 3

If the taxpayer is given relief in accordance with section 192 of FA 2004 (pension schemes: relief at source) in respect of any contribution paid in the tax year under a pension scheme, deduct the gross amount of the contribution.

The "gross" amount of a contribution is the amount of the contribution before deduction of tax under section 192(1) of FA 2004.

Step 4

If the taxpayer is entitled to a deduction for relief under section 193(4) or 194(1) of FA 2004 (pension schemes: excess relief under net payment arrangements or relief on making a claim) for the tax year, deduct the amount of the excess or contribution (as the case may be).

The result is the taxpayer's adjusted total income for the tax year.

(2) In section 23 of the Income Tax Act 2007 (calculation of income tax liability) at step 2 for "section 25" substitute "sections 24A and 25".

(3) In the following provisions of the Income Tax Act 2007 (which explain how certain reliefs work) for "section 25(4) and (5)" substitute "sections 24A and 25(4) and (5)"—

- (a) section 65(1),
- (b) section 73,
- (c) section 121(1),
- (d) section 129(1), and
- (e) section 133(1).

(4) In section 148 of the Income Tax Act 2007 (share loss relief: disposal of shares forming part of mixed holding) in subsection (3)(b) before sub-paragraph (i) insert—

- “(ai) shares to which SEIS relief is attributable (as determined in accordance with Part 5A).”.

(5) The amendments made by paragraphs (1) to (4) have effect for the tax year 2013-14 and subsequent tax years.

(6) Paragraph (7) applies to a claim which relates to the tax year 2013-14 or a subsequent tax year by virtue of paragraph 2 of Schedule 1B to the Taxes Management Act 1970 where the earlier year is a tax year before the tax year 2013-14.

(7) The amount of the claim is to be determined as if the amendments made by paragraphs (1) to (4) also have effect for tax years before the tax year 2013-14.

(8) For this purpose, section 24A(6) of the Income Tax Act 2007 (as inserted by paragraph (1)) is treated as having effect for tax years before the tax year 2013-14 as if—

- (a) in paragraphs (a), (b), (f) and (g) the references to relief were limited to relief in respect of a loss made in the tax year 2013-14 or a subsequent tax year, and
- (b) all the other paragraphs were omitted.

(9) In section 24A(6)(d) of the Income Tax Act 2007 (as inserted by paragraph (1)) the reference to relief does not include relief in respect of a loss made in the tax year 2012-13.

And it is declared that it is expedient in the public interest that this Resolution should have statutory effect under the provisions of the Provisional Collection of Taxes Act 1968.

11. CALCULATION OF PROFITS ON CASH BASIS

Resolved,

That provision may be made for and in connection with the calculation of the profits of a trade, profession or vocation for the purposes of income tax on the cash basis.

12. DEDUCTIONS IN CALCULATING PROFITS

Resolved,

That provision (including provision having retrospective effect) may be made about the deductions allowed when calculating—

- (a) the profits of a trade, profession, vocation or property business for the purposes of income tax, or
- (b) the profits of a trade or property business for the purposes of corporation tax.

13. ARRANGEMENTS MADE BY INTERMEDIARIES

Resolved,

That—

(1) In Chapter 8 of Part 2 of the Income Tax (Earnings and Pensions) Act 2003 (application of provisions to workers under arrangements made by intermediaries), in section 49 (engagements to which chapter applies), for subsection (1)(c) substitute—

“(c) the circumstances are such that—

- (i) if the services were provided under a contract directly between the client and the worker, the worker would be regarded for income tax purposes as an employee of the client or the holder of an office under the client, or
- (ii) the worker is an office-holder who holds that office under the client and the services relate to the office.”

(2) This Resolution has effect for the tax year 2013-14 and subsequent tax years.

And it is declared that it is expedient in the public interest that this Resolution should have statutory effect under the provisions of the Provisional Collection of Taxes Act 1968.

14. INSURANCE POLICIES ETC.

Resolved,

That the following provision (including provision having retrospective effect) may be made—

- (a) provision amending Schedule 15 to the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1988,
- (b) provision amending Chapter 9 of Part 4 of the Income Tax (Trading and Other Income) Act 2005, and
- (c) provision amending section 55 of the Finance Act 1995.

15. TRANSFER OF ASSETS ABROAD

Resolved,

That provision (including provision having retrospective effect) may be made amending Chapter 2 of Part 13 of the Income Tax Act 2007.

16. DEDUCTION FROM INTEREST PAYMENTS

Resolved,

That provision may be made amending Chapter 3 of Part 15 of the Income Tax Act 2007.

17. DISGUISED INTEREST

Resolved,

That provision may be made about returns which are economically equivalent to interest.

18. CONTROLLED FOREIGN COMPANIES

Resolved,

That provision (including provision having retrospective effect) may be made about or in connection with CFCs (within the meaning of Part 9A of the Taxation (International and Other Provisions) Act 2010).

19. DEDUCTIONS AFTER CHANGES IN COMPANY OWNERSHIP ETC.

Resolved,

That provision may be made about amounts that may be deducted for corporation tax purposes following changes in the ownership of, or in partnership arrangements relating to, a company.

20. EXPENDITURE ON RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

Resolved,

That provision may be made about tax relief for expenditure on research and development.

21. TELEVISION PROGRAMMES AND VIDEO GAMES

Resolved,

That provision may be made about the taxation of activities in connection with television programmes and video games.

22. REAL ESTATE INVESTMENT TRUSTS*Resolved,*

That provision may be made amending Part 12 of the Corporation Tax Act 2010.

23. TAX RELIEF FOR EMPLOYEE SHARE ACQUISITIONS ETC.*Resolved,*

That provision may be made about the tax relief that is available to companies in connection with—

- (a) shares acquired by persons because of employments (directly or indirectly), or
- (b) options to acquire shares obtained by persons because of employments (directly or indirectly) or shares acquired pursuant to such options.

24. DERIVATIVE CONTRACTS*Resolved,*

That provision (including provision having retrospective effect) may be made amending Chapter 7 of Part 7 of the Corporation Tax Act 2009.

25. TAX MISMATCH SCHEMES*Resolved,*

That provision (including provision having retrospective effect) may be made about tax mismatch schemes.

26. TIER TWO CAPITAL*Resolved,*

That provision (including provision having retrospective effect) may be made about tier two capital.

27. TAX TREATMENT OF FINANCING COSTS AND INCOME (GROUP TREASURY COMPANIES)

That provision (including provision having retrospective effect) may be made amending section 316 of the Taxation (International and Other Provisions) Act 2010.

28. COMMUNITY AMATEUR SPORTS CLUBS*Resolved,*

That provision (including provision having retrospective effect) may be made about community amateur sports clubs.

29. PENSION SCHEMES*Resolved,*

That provision (including provision having retrospective effect) may be made in relation to pension schemes.

30. DRAWDOWN PENSIONS AND DEPENDANTS' DRAWDOWN PENSIONS*Resolved,*

That—

- (1) In section 165 of the Finance Act 2004 (pension rules), in subsection (1), in pension rule 5, for “100%” substitute “120%”.
- (2) In section 167 of that Act (pension death benefit rules), in subsection (1), in pension death benefit rule 4, for “100%” substitute “120%”.
- (3) In Schedule 16 to the Finance Act 2011 (benefits under pension schemes)—

- (a) in paragraph 90(2)(a), after “year” insert “beginning before 26 March 2013 and”,
- (b) in paragraph 90(3), omit paragraph (b) and the “and” before it,
- (c) in paragraph 98(2)(a), after “year” insert “beginning before 26 March 2013 and”, and
- (d) in paragraph 98(3), omit paragraph (b) and the “and” before it.

(4) The amendments made by paragraphs (1) and (2) have effect in relation to drawdown pension years beginning on or after 26 March 2013.

(5) The amendments made by paragraph (3)(a) and (c) come into force on 26 March 2013.

(6) The amendments made by paragraph (3)(b) and (d) have effect in relation to transfers within paragraph 90(5) or 98(5) of Schedule 16 to the Finance Act 2011 occurring during a drawdown pension year ending on or after 25 March 2013.

And it is declared that it is expedient in the public interest that this Resolution should have statutory effect under the provisions of the Provisional Collection of Taxes Act 1968.

31. EMPLOYEE SHAREHOLDER SHARES*Question put,*

That provision may be made in connection with the acquisition and disposal of employee shareholder shares.

The House divided: Ayes 299, Noes 240.

Division No. 198]**[10.28 pm****AYES**

Adams, Nigel	Burley, Mr Aidan
Afriyie, Adam	Burns, Conor
Aldous, Peter	Burns, rh Mr Simon
Alexander, rh Danny	Burrowes, Mr David
Andrew, Stuart	Burstow, rh Paul
Arbuthnot, rh Mr James	Burt, Alistair
Bacon, Mr Richard	Byles, Dan
Baker, Norman	Cable, rh Vince
Baker, Steve	Cairns, Alun
Baldry, Sir Tony	Carmichael, rh Mr Alistair
Baldwin, Harriett	Carmichael, Neil
Barker, rh Gregory	Carswell, Mr Douglas
Baron, Mr John	Chishti, Rehman
Barwell, Gavin	Chope, Mr Christopher
Bebb, Guto	Clark, rh Greg
Beith, rh Sir Alan	Clarke, rh Mr Kenneth
Bellingham, Mr Henry	Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Benyon, Richard	Coffey, Dr Thérèse
Beresford, Sir Paul	Collins, Damian
Berry, Jake	Colvile, Oliver
Bingham, Andrew	Cox, Mr Geoffrey
Binley, Mr Brian	Crabb, Stephen
Birtwistle, Gordon	Crockart, Mike
Blackman, Bob	Crouch, Tracey
Blackwood, Nicola	Davey, rh Mr Edward
Blunt, Mr Crispin	Davies, David T. C. <i>(Monmouth)</i>
Boles, Nick	Davies, Philip
Bone, Mr Peter	Davis, rh Mr David
Bottomley, Sir Peter	de Bois, Nick
Bradley, Karen	Dorrell, rh Mr Stephen
Brady, Mr Graham	Dorries, Nadine
Brake, rh Tom	Doyle-Price, Jackie
Bray, Angie	Drax, Richard
Brazier, Mr Julian	Duddridge, James
Bridgen, Andrew	Duncan Smith, rh Mr Iain
Brine, Steve	Ellis, Michael
Brookshire, James	Ellison, Jane
Brooke, Annette	Ellwood, Mr Tobias
Bruce, Fiona	Elphicke, Charlie
Buckland, Mr Robert	

Eustice, George
 Evans, Graham
 Evans, Jonathan
 Evennett, Mr David
 Fabricant, Michael
 Fallon, rh Michael
 Featherstone, Lynne
 Field, Mark
 Foster, rh Mr Don
 Fox, rh Dr Liam
 Francois, rh Mr Mark
 Freeman, George
 Freer, Mike
 Fullbrook, Lorraine
 Garnier, Sir Edward
 Garnier, Mark
 Gauke, Mr David
 George, Andrew
 Gibb, Mr Nick
 Gilbert, Stephen
 Gillan, rh Mrs Cheryl
 Glen, John
 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
 Gummer, Ben
 Gyimah, Mr Sam
 Hames, Duncan
 Hammond, rh Mr Philip
 Hammond, Stephen
 Hancock, Matthew
 Hands, Greg
 Harper, Mr Mark
 Harris, Rebecca
 Hart, Simon
 Harvey, Sir Nick
 Haselhurst, rh Sir Alan
 Hayes, Mr John
 Heald, Oliver
 Heath, Mr David
 Heaton-Harris, Chris
 Hemming, John
 Henderson, Gordon
 Hendry, Charles
 Hinds, Damian
 Hoban, Mr Mark
 Hollingbery, George
 Hollobone, Mr Philip
 Holloway, Mr Adam
 Hopkins, Kris
 Horwood, Martin
 Howell, John
 Hughes, rh Simon
 Hunt, rh Mr Jeremy
 Huppert, Dr Julian
 Hurd, Mr Nick
 Jackson, Mr Stewart
 James, Margot
 Javid, Sajid
 Jenkin, Mr Bernard
 Johnson, Gareth
 Jones, Andrew
 Jones, rh Mr David
 Jones, Mr Marcus
 Kawczynski, Daniel

Kirby, Simon
 Knight, rh Mr Greg
 Kwarteng, Kwasi
 Laing, Mrs Eleanor
 Lamb, Norman
 Lansley, rh Mr Andrew
 Laws, rh Mr David
 Leadsom, Andrea
 Lee, Jessica
 Lee, Dr Phillip
 Leech, Mr John
 Lefroy, Jeremy
 Leigh, Mr Edward
 Leslie, Charlotte
 Letwin, rh Mr Oliver
 Lewis, Brandon
 Lewis, Dr Julian
 Lidington, rh Mr David
 Lilley, rh Mr Peter
 Lord, Jonathan
 Loughton, Tim
 Luff, Peter
 Lumley, Karen
 Macleod, Mary
 Main, Mrs Anne
 Maude, rh Mr Francis
 Maynard, Paul
 McCartney, Jason
 McCartney, Karl
 McIntosh, Miss Anne
 McLoughlin, rh Mr Patrick
 McPartland, Stephen
 McVey, Esther
 Mercer, Patrick
 Metcalfe, Stephen
 Mills, Nigel
 Milton, Anne
 Mitchell, rh Mr Andrew
 Moore, rh Michael
 Mordaunt, Penny
 Morgan, Nicky
 Morris, Anne Marie
 Morris, David
 Morris, James
 Mosley, Stephen
 Mowat, David
 Mulholland, Greg
 Mundell, rh David
 Munt, Tessa
 Murray, Sheryll
 Morrison, Dr Andrew
 Neill, Robert
 Newmark, Mr Brooks
 Newton, Sarah
 Nokes, Caroline
 Norman, Jesse
 Nuttall, Mr David
 O'Brien, Mr Stephen
 Offord, Dr Matthew
 Ollerenshaw, Eric
 Osborne, rh Mr George
 Paice, rh Sir James
 Parish, Neil
 Patel, Priti
 Paterson, rh Mr Owen
 Pawsey, Mark
 Penrose, John
 Percy, Andrew
 Perry, Claire
 Phillips, Stephen
 Pickles, rh Mr Eric
 Pincher, Christopher

Prisk, Mr Mark
 Pugh, John
 Raab, Mr Dominic
 Randall, rh Mr John
 Reckless, Mark
 Redwood, rh Mr John
 Rees-Mogg, Jacob
 Reevel, Simon
 Robertson, rh Hugh
 Robertson, Mr Laurence
 Rudd, Amber
 Ruffley, Mr David
 Russell, Sir Bob
 Rutley, David
 Sanders, Mr Adrian
 Sandys, Laura
 Selous, Andrew
 Sharma, Alok
 Shelbrooke, Alec
 Simmonds, Mark
 Simpson, Mr Keith
 Skidmore, Chris
 Smith, Miss Chloe
 Smith, Henry
 Smith, Julian
 Smith, Sir Robert
 Soames, rh Nicholas
 Soubry, Anna
 Spelman, rh Mrs Caroline
 Spencer, Mr Mark
 Stephenson, Andrew
 Stevenson, John
 Stewart, Bob
 Stewart, Iain
 Streeter, Mr Gary
 Stride, Mel
 Stunell, rh Andrew
 Sturdy, Julian
 Swales, Ian
 Swayne, rh Mr Desmond

Swinson, Jo
 Swire, rh Mr Hugo
 Symes, Mr Robert
 Thornton, Mike
 Thurso, John
 Tomlinson, Justin
 Truss, Elizabeth
 Turner, Mr Andrew
 Tyrie, Mr Andrew
 Uppal, Paul
 Vaizey, Mr Edward
 Vara, Mr Shailesh
 Vickers, Martin
 Villiers, rh Mrs Theresa
 Walker, Mr Charles
 Walker, Mr Robin
 Ward, Mr David
 Watkinson, Dame Angela
 Webb, Steve
 Wharton, James
 Wheeler, Heather
 White, Chris
 Whittaker, Craig
 Whittingdale, Mr John
 Wiggin, Bill
 Willetts, rh Mr David
 Williams, Mr Mark
 Williams, Roger
 Williams, Stephen
 Williamson, Gavin
 Wilson, Mr Rob
 Wollaston, Dr Sarah
 Wright, Jeremy
 Wright, Simon
 Young, rh Sir George
 Zahawi, Nadhim

Tellers for the Ayes:
 Mark Hunter and
 Joseph Johnson

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
 Abrahams, Debbie
 Ainsworth, rh Mr Bob
 Alexander, Heidi
 Ali, Rushanara
 Allen, Mr Graham
 Anderson, Mr David
 Ashworth, Jonathan
 Austin, Ian
 Bailey, Mr Adrian
 Bain, Mr William
 Balls, rh Ed
 Banks, Gordon
 Barron, rh Mr Kevin
 Bayley, Hugh
 Beckett, rh Margaret
 Begg, Dame Anne
 Benn, rh Hilary
 Benton, Mr Joe
 Betts, Mr Clive
 Blackman-Woods, Roberta
 Blenkinsop, Tom
 Blomfield, Paul
 Blunkett, rh Mr David
 Brennan, Kevin
 Brown, Lyn
 Brown, rh Mr Nicholas
 Brown, Mr Russell
 Bryant, Chris

Buck, Ms Karen
 Burden, Richard
 Burnham, rh Andy
 Byrne, rh Mr Liam
 Campbell, Mr Alan
 Campbell, Mr Gregory
 Campbell, Mr Ronnie
 Caton, Martin
 Champion, Sarah
 Chapman, Jenny
 Clark, Katy
 Clarke, rh Mr Tom
 Coaker, Vernon
 Coffey, Ann
 Connarty, Michael
 Cooper, Rosie
 Cooper, rh Yvette
 Corbyn, Jeremy
 Creagh, Mary
 Creasy, Stella
 Cruddas, Jon
 Cryer, John
 Cunningham, Alex
 Cunningham, Mr Jim
 Cunningham, Sir Tony
 Curran, Margaret
 Danczuk, Simon
 Darling, rh Mr Alistair
 David, Wayne

Davidson, Mr Ian
 Davies, Geraint
 Denham, rh Mr John
 Dobbin, Jim
 Dobson, rh Frank
 Docherty, Thomas
 Dodds, rh Mr Nigel
 Donohoe, Mr Brian H.
 Doughty, Stephen
 Dowd, Jim
 Doyle, Gemma
 Dromey, Jack
 Dugher, Michael
 Durkan, Mark
 Eagle, Ms Angela
 Eagle, Maria
 Edwards, Jonathan
 Efford, Clive
 Elliott, Julie
 Engel, Natascha
 Esterson, Bill
 Farrelly, Paul
 Field, rh Mr Frank
 Fitzpatrick, Jim
 Fiello, Robert
 Flint, rh Caroline
 Flynn, Paul
 Fovargue, Yvonne
 Francis, Dr Hywel
 Gardiner, Barry
 Gilmore, Sheila
 Glindon, Mrs Mary
 Godsiff, Mr Roger
 Goggins, rh Paul
 Goodman, Helen
 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
 Harris, Mr Tom
 Havard, Mr Dai
 Healey, rh John
 Hendrick, Mark
 Hepburn, Mr Stephen
 Hermon, Lady
 Hillier, Meg
 Hilling, Julie
 Hodgson, Mrs Sharon
 Hoey, Kate
 Hopkins, Kelvin
 Howarth, rh Mr George
 Hunt, Tristram
 Irranca-Davies, Huw
 Jackson, Glenda
 Jamieson, Cathy
 Jarvis, Dan
 Johnson, rh Alan
 Johnson, Diana
 Jones, Graham
 Jones, Helen
 Jones, Mr Kevan
 Jones, Susan Elan
 Kaufman, rh Sir Gerald
 Keeley, Barbara
 Kendall, Liz
 Khan, rh Sadiq
 Lammy, rh Mr David

Lavery, Ian
 Lazarowicz, Mark
 Leslie, Chris
 Llwyd, rh Mr Elfyn
 Long, Naomi
 Love, Mr Andrew
 Lucas, Caroline
 Lucas, Ian
 MacNeil, Mr Angus Brendan
 Mactaggart, Fiona
 Mahmood, Mr Khalid
 Mahmood, Shabana
 Malhotra, Seema
 Mann, John
 Marsden, Mr Gordon
 McCabe, Steve
 McCarthy, Kerry
 McCrea, Dr William
 McDonagh, Siobhain
 McDonald, Andy
 McDonnell, Dr Alasdair
 McDonnell, John
 McFadden, rh Mr Pat
 McGovern, Jim
 McGuire, rh Mrs Anne
 McKechin, Ann
 McKenzie, Mr Iain
 McKinnell, Catherine
 Meacher, rh Mr Michael
 Meale, Sir Alan
 Mearns, Ian
 Miliband, rh David
 Miliband, rh Edward
 Miller, Andrew
 Mitchell, Austin
 Moon, Mrs Madeleine
 Morden, Jessica
 Morrice, Graeme (*Livingston*)
 Morris, Grahame M.
 (Easington)
 Mudie, Mr George
 Munn, Meg
 Murphy, rh Mr Jim
 Murphy, rh Paul
 Nandy, Lisa
 Nash, Pamela
 O'Donnell, Fiona
 Onwurah, Chi
 Osborne, Sandra
 Owen, Albert
 Paisley, Ian
 Pearce, Teresa
 Perkins, Toby
 Phillipson, Bridget
 Pound, Stephen
 Reed, Mr Jamie
 Reed, Steve
 Reynolds, Emma
 Reynolds, Jonathan
 Riordan, Mrs Linda
 Ritchie, Ms Margaret
 Robertson, Angus
 Robertson, John
 Robinson, Mr Geoffrey
 Rotheram, Steve
 Roy, Lindsay
 Ruane, Chris
 Sarwar, Anas
 Sawford, Andy
 Seabeck, Alison
 Shannon, Jim
 Sharma, Mr Virendra

Sheerman, Mr Barry
 Sheridan, Jim
 Shuker, Gavin
 Skinner, Mr Dennis
 Slaughter, Mr Andy
 Smith, rh Mr Andrew
 Smith, Angela
 Smith, Nick
 Smith, Owen
 Spellar, rh Mr John
 Straw, rh Mr Jack
 Stringer, Graham
 Stuart, Ms Gisela
 Sutcliffe, Mr Gerry
 Thomas, Mr Gareth
 Thornberry, Emily
 Timms, rh Stephen
 Turner, Karl
 Twigg, Derek
 Twigg, Stephen
 Umunna, Mr Chuka

Vaz, rh Keith
 Vaz, Valerie
 Walley, Joan
 Watson, Mr Tom
 Watts, Mr Dave
 Weir, Mr Mike
 Whiteford, Dr Eilidh
 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 Noses:
 Nic Dakin and
 Alison McGovern

Question accordingly agreed to.

32. SEED ENTERPRISE INVESTMENT SCHEME

Resolved,

That provision may be made restricting the relief given under the seed enterprise investment scheme.

33. DISINCORPORATION RELIEF

Resolved,

That provision may be made in connection with the transfer of a business from a company to its shareholders.

34. ATTRIBUTION OF GAINS TO MEMBERS OF NON-RESIDENT COMPANIES

Resolved,

That provision (including provision having retrospective effect) may be made for and in connection with the amendment of section 13 of the Taxation of Chargeable Gains Act 1992.

35. TREATMENT FOR CAPITAL GAINS TAX PURPOSES OF SHARES ACQUIRED UNDER THE EMI CODE

Resolved,

That provision (including provision having retrospective effect) may be made for capital gains tax purposes in connection with shares acquired under options which are qualifying options under the EMI code.

36. CAPITAL GAINS TAX ON DISPOSALS OF HIGH VALUE PROPERTIES

Resolved,

That provision may be made for and in connection with a charge to capital gains tax on disposals of interests in high value properties.

37. CALCULATION OF CHARGEABLE GAINS OF COMPANIES

Resolved,

That provision may be made about the calculation of chargeable gains of companies on disposals of assets.

38. CAPITAL ALLOWANCES*Resolved,*

That provision may be made about capital allowances.

39. COMMUNITY INVESTMENT TAX RELIEF*Resolved,*

That provision may be made about community investment tax relief.

40. LEASE PREMIUM RELIEF*Resolved,*

That provision may be made in relation to the deductions that are allowed to tenants under taxed leases (as defined in section 287 of the Income Tax (Trading and Other Income) Act 2005 and section 227 of the Corporation Tax Act 2009).

41. MANUFACTURED PAYMENTS*Resolved,*

That provision (including provision having retrospective effect) may be made about manufactured payments (including deemed manufactured payments).

42. CLOSE COMPANIES*Resolved,*

That provision may be made about close companies.

43. OIL TAXATION (PETROLEUM REVENUE TAX)*Resolved,*

That provision may be made in relation to petroleum revenue tax.

44. OIL TAXATION (LOAN RELATIONSHIPS)*Resolved,*

That provision may be made about loan relationships in respect of property that is comprised in a settlement the sole or main purpose of which is to provide security for the performance of obligations under an abandonment programme approved under Part 4 of the Petroleum Act 1998.

45. OIL TAXATION (RING FENCE TRADES)*Resolved,*

That provision may be made about the taxation of ring fence trades.

46. ANNUAL TAX ON ENVELOPED DWELLINGS*Resolved,*

That provision may be made for and in connection with the imposition of a new tax on the holding of interests in high value properties.

47. INHERITANCE TAX (TREATMENT OF LIABILITIES)*Resolved,*

That provision may be made about the treatment of liabilities for the purposes of inheritance tax.

48. INHERITANCE TAX (NON-DOMICILED SPOUSES AND CIVIL PARTNERS)*Resolved,*

That provision may be made for and in connection with persons who are not domiciled in the United Kingdom, but are or were the spouse or civil partner of a person so domiciled, to elect to be treated as so domiciled for the purposes of inheritance tax.

49. FUEL DUTIES (RATES AND REBATES)*Resolved,*

That—

(1) The Hydrocarbon Oil Duties Act 1979 is amended as follows.

(2) In section 6(1A) (main rates)—

- (a) in paragraph (a) (unleaded petrol), for “£0.6097” substitute “£0.5795”,
- (b) in paragraph (aa) (aviation gasoline), for “£0.3966” substitute “£0.3770”,
- (c) in paragraph (b) (light oil other than unleaded petrol or aviation gasoline), for “£0.7069” substitute “£0.6767”, and
- (d) in paragraph (c) (heavy oil), for “£0.6097” substitute “£0.5795”.

(3) In section 8(3) (road fuel gas)—

- (a) in paragraph (a) (natural road fuel gas), for “£0.2907” substitute “£0.2470”, and
- (b) in paragraph (b) (other road fuel gas), for “£0.3734” substitute “£0.3161”.

(4) In section 11(1) (rebate on heavy oil)—

- (a) in paragraph (a) (fuel oil), for “£0.1126” substitute “£0.1070”, and
- (b) in paragraph (b) (gas oil), for “£0.1172” substitute “£0.1114”.

(5) In section 14(1) (rebate on light oil for use as furnace fuel), for “£0.1126” substitute “£0.1070”.

(6) In section 14A(2) (rebate on certain biodiesel), for “£0.1172” substitute “£0.1114”.

(7) The following instruments are revoked—

- (a) Excise Duties (Surcharges or Rebates) (Hydrocarbon Oils etc) Order 2012 (S.I. 2012/3055), and
- (b) Excise Duties (Road Fuel Gas) (Reliefs) Regulations 2012 (S.I. 2012/3056).

(8) The amendments and revocations made by this Resolution come into force on 1 April 2013.

And it is declared that it is expedient in the public interest that this Resolution should have statutory effect under the provisions of the Provisional Collection of Taxes Act 1968.

50. ALCOHOLIC LIQUOR DUTIES (RATES)*Resolved,*

That—

(1) The Alcoholic Liquor Duties Act 1979 is amended as follows.

(2) In section 5 (rate of duty on spirits), for “£26.81” substitute “£28.22”.

(3) In section 36(1AA) (rates of general beer duty)—

- (a) in paragraph (za) (rate of duty on lower strength beer), for “£9.76” substitute “£9.17”, and
- (b) in paragraph (a) (standard rate of duty on beer), for “£19.51” substitute “£19.12”.

(4) In section 37(4) (rate of high strength beer duty), for “£4.88” substitute “£5.09”.

(5) In section 62(1A) (rates of duty on cider)—

- in paragraph (a) (rate of duty per hectolitre on sparkling cider of a strength exceeding 5.5 per cent), for “£245.32” substitute “£258.23”,
- in paragraph (b) (rate of duty per hectolitre on cider of a strength exceeding 7.5 per cent which is not sparkling cider), for “£56.55” substitute “£59.52”, and
- in paragraph (c) (rate of duty per hectolitre in any other case), for “£37.68” substitute “£39.66”.

(6) For the table in Schedule 1 substitute—

<i>Table of Rates of Duty on Wine and Made-Wine</i>	
<i>Part 1</i>	
<i>Wine or Made-Wine of a Strength not Exceeding 22 per cent</i>	
<i>Description of wine or made-wine</i>	<i>Rates of duty per hectolitre £</i>
Wine or made-wine of a strength not exceeding 4 per cent.	82.18
Wine or made-wine of a strength exceeding 4 per cent. but not exceeding 5.5 per cent.	113.01
Wine or made-wine of a strength exceeding 5.5 per cent. but not exceeding 15 per cent. and not being sparkling	266.72
Sparkling wine or sparkling made-wine of a strength exceeding 5.5 per cent. but less than 8.5 per cent.	258.23
Sparkling wine or sparkling made-wine of a strength of 8.5 per cent. or of a strength exceeding 8.5 per cent. but not exceeding 15 per cent.	341.63
Wine or made-wine of a strength exceeding 15 per cent. but not exceeding 22 per cent.	355.59

<i>Part 2</i>	
<i>Wine or Made-Wine of a Strength Exceeding 22 per cent</i>	
<i>Description of wine or made-wine</i>	<i>Rates of duty per litre of alcohol in wine or made-wine £</i>
Wine or made-wine of a strength exceeding 22 per cent	28.22”

(7) The amendments made by this Resolution come into force on 25 March 2013.

And it is declared that it is expedient in the public interest that this Resolution should have statutory effect under the provisions of the Provisional Collection of Taxes Act 1968.

51. TOBACCO PRODUCTS DUTY (RATES)

Resolved,

That—

(1) For the table in Schedule 1 to the Tobacco Products Duty Act 1979 substitute—

<i>Table</i>	
1. Cigarettes	An amount equal to 16.5 per cent of the retail price plus £176.22 per thousand cigarettes
2. Cigars	£219.82 per kilogram
3. Hand-rolling tobacco	£172.74 per kilogram
4. Other smoking tobacco and chewing tobacco	£96.64 per kilogram”.

(2) The amendment made by this Resolution comes into force at 6 pm on 20 March 2013.

And it is declared that it is expedient in the public interest that this Resolution should have statutory effect under the provisions of the Provisional Collection of Taxes Act 1968.

52. TOBACCO PRODUCTS DUTY (HERBAL SMOKING PRODUCTS)

Resolved,

That provision may be made for tobacco products duty to be charged on herbal smoking products.

53. AIR PASSENGER DUTY (RATES OF DUTY FROM 1 APRIL 2013)

Question put,

That—

(1) Section 30 of the Finance Act 1994 (air passenger duty: rates of duty) is amended as follows.

(2) In subsection (3)—

- in paragraph (a) for “£65” substitute “£67”, and
- in paragraph (b) for “£130” substitute “£134”.

(3) In subsection (4)—

- in paragraph (a) for “£81” substitute “£83”, and
- in paragraph (b) for “£162” substitute “£166”.

(4) In subsection (4A)—

- in paragraph (a) for “£92” substitute “£94”, and
- in paragraph (b) for “£184” substitute “£188”.

(5) The amendments made by this Resolution have effect in relation to the carriage of passengers beginning on or after 1 April 2013.

And it is declared that it is expedient in the public interest that this Resolution should have statutory effect under the provisions of the Provisional Collection of Taxes Act 1968.

The House divided: Ayes 293, Noes 16.

Division No. 199]

[10.41 pm

AYES

Adams, Nigel	Brokenshire, James
Afriyie, Adam	Brooke, Annette
Aldous, Peter	Bruce, Fiona
Alexander, rh Danny	Buckland, Mr Robert
Andrew, Stuart	Burley, Mr Aidan
Arbuthnot, rh Mr James	Burns, Conor
Bacon, Mr Richard	Burns, rh Mr Simon
Baker, Norman	Burrowes, Mr David
Baker, Steve	Burstow, rh Paul
Baldry, Sir Tony	Burt, Alistair
Baldwin, Harriett	Byles, Dan
Barker, rh Gregory	Cable, rh Vince
Barwell, Gavin	Cairns, Alun
Bebb, Guto	Carmichael, rh Mr Alistair
Beith, rh Sir Alan	Carmichael, Neil
Bellingham, Mr Henry	Carswell, Mr Douglas
Benyon, Richard	Chishti, Rehman
Beresford, Sir Paul	Chope, Mr Christopher
Berry, Jake	Clark, rh Greg
Bingham, Andrew	Clarke, rh Mr Kenneth
Binley, Mr Brian	Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Birtwistle, Gordon	Coffey, Dr Thérèse
Blackman, Bob	Collins, Damian
Blackwood, Nicola	Colvile, Oliver
Blunt, Mr Crispin	Cox, Mr Geoffrey
Boles, Nick	Crabb, Stephen
Bone, Mr Peter	Crockart, Mike
Bottomley, Sir Peter	Crouch, Tracey
Bradley, Karen	Davey, rh Mr Edward
Brady, Mr Graham	Davies, David T. C. <i>(Monmouth)</i>
Brake, rh Tom	Davis, rh Mr David
Bray, Angie	de Bois, Nick
Brazier, Mr Julian	Dorrell, rh Mr Stephen
Bridgen, Andrew	Dorries, Nadine
Brine, Steve	

Doyle-Price, Jackie
 Drax, Richard
 Duddridge, James
 Duncan Smith, rh Mr Iain
 Ellis, Michael
 Ellison, Jane
 Ellwood, Mr Tobias
 Elphicke, Charlie
 Eustice, George
 Evans, Graham
 Evans, Jonathan
 Evennett, Mr David
 Fabricant, Michael
 Fallon, rh Michael
 Featherstone, Lynne
 Field, Mark
 Foster, rh Mr Don
 Fox, rh Dr Liam
 Francois, rh Mr Mark
 Freeman, George
 Freer, Mike
 Fullbrook, Lorraine
 Garnier, Sir Edward
 Garnier, Mark
 Gauke, Mr David
 George, Andrew
 Gibb, Mr Nick
 Gilbert, Stephen
 Gillan, rh Mrs Cheryl
 Glen, John
 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
 Gummer, Ben
 Gyimah, Mr Sam
 Hames, Duncan
 Hammond, rh Mr Philip
 Hammond, Stephen
 Hancock, Matthew
 Hands, Greg
 Harper, Mr Mark
 Harris, Rebecca
 Hart, Simon
 Haselhurst, rh Sir Alan
 Hayes, Mr John
 Heald, Oliver
 Heath, Mr David
 Heaton-Harris, Chris
 Hemming, John
 Henderson, Gordon
 Hendry, Charles
 Hinds, Damian
 Hoban, Mr Mark
 Hollingbery, George
 Hollobone, Mr Philip
 Holloway, Mr Adam
 Hopkins, Kris
 Horwood, Martin
 Howell, John
 Hughes, rh Simon
 Hunt, rh Mr Jeremy
 Huppert, Dr Julian
 Hurd, Mr Nick
 Jackson, Mr Stewart
 James, Margot

Javid, Sajid
 Jenkin, Mr Bernard
 Johnson, Gareth
 Jones, Andrew
 Jones, rh Mr David
 Jones, Mr Marcus
 Kawczynski, Daniel
 Kirby, Simon
 Knight, rh Mr Greg
 Kwarteng, Kwasi
 Laing, Mrs Eleanor
 Lamb, Norman
 Lansley, rh Mr Andrew
 Laws, rh Mr David
 Leadsom, Andrea
 Lee, Jessica
 Lee, Dr Phillip
 Leech, Mr John
 Lefroy, Jeremy
 Leigh, Mr Edward
 Leslie, Charlotte
 Letwin, rh Mr Oliver
 Lewis, Brandon
 Lewis, Dr Julian
 Lidington, rh Mr David
 Lilley, rh Mr Peter
 Lord, Jonathan
 Loughton, Tim
 Luff, Peter
 Lumley, Karen
 Macleod, Mary
 Maude, rh Mr Francis
 Maynard, Paul
 McCartney, Jason
 McCartney, Karl
 McIntosh, Miss Anne
 McLoughlin, rh Mr Patrick
 McPartland, Stephen
 McVey, Esther
 Mercer, Patrick
 Metcalfe, Stephen
 Mills, Nigel
 Milton, Anne
 Mitchell, rh Mr Andrew
 Moore, rh Michael
 Mordaunt, Penny
 Morgan, Nicky
 Morris, Anne Marie
 Morris, David
 Morris, James
 Mosley, Stephen
 Mowat, David
 Mulholland, Greg
 Mundell, rh David
 Munt, Tessa
 Murray, Sheryll
 Murrison, Dr Andrew
 Neill, Robert
 Newmark, Mr Brooks
 Newton, Sarah
 Nokes, Caroline
 Norman, Jesse
 Nuttall, Mr David
 O'Brien, Mr Stephen
 Offord, Dr Matthew
 Ollerenshaw, Eric
 Osborne, rh Mr George
 Paice, rh Sir James
 Parish, Neil
 Patel, Priti
 Paterson, rh Mr Owen
 Pawsey, Mark

Penrose, John
 Percy, Andrew
 Perry, Claire
 Phillips, Stephen
 Pickles, rh Mr Eric
 Pincher, Christopher
 Prisk, Mr Mark
 Pugh, John
 Raab, Mr Dominic
 Randall, rh Mr John
 Reckless, Mark
 Redwood, rh Mr John
 Rees-Mogg, Jacob
 Reevell, Simon
 Robertson, rh Hugh
 Robertson, Mr Laurence
 Rudd, Amber
 Ruffley, Mr David
 Russell, Sir Bob
 Rutley, David
 Sanders, Mr Adrian
 Sandys, Laura
 Selous, Andrew
 Sharma, Alok
 Shelbrooke, Alec
 Simmonds, Mark
 Simpson, Mr Keith
 Skidmore, Chris
 Smith, Miss Chloe
 Smith, Julian
 Smith, Sir Robert
 Soames, rh Nicholas
 Soubry, Anna
 Spelman, rh Mrs Caroline
 Spencer, Mr Mark
 Stephenson, Andrew
 Stevenson, John
 Stewart, Bob
 Stewart, Iain
 Streeter, Mr Gary
 Stride, Mel
 Stunell, rh Andrew

Sturdy, Julian
 Swales, Ian
 Swayne, rh Mr Desmond
 Swinson, Jo
 Swire, rh Mr Hugo
 Syms, Mr Robert
 Thornton, Mike
 Thurso, John
 Tomlinson, Justin
 Truss, Elizabeth
 Turner, Mr Andrew
 Tyrie, Mr Andrew
 Uppal, Paul
 Vaizey, Mr Edward
 Vara, Mr Shailesh
 Vickers, Martin
 Villiers, rh Mrs Theresa
 Walker, Mr Charles
 Walker, Mr Robin
 Ward, Mr David
 Watkinson, Dame Angela
 Webb, Steve
 Wharton, James
 Wheeler, Heather
 White, Chris
 Whittaker, Craig
 Whittingdale, Mr John
 Wiggin, Bill
 Willetts, rh Mr David
 Williams, Mr Mark
 Williams, Roger
 Williams, Stephen
 Williamson, Gavin
 Wilson, Mr Rob
 Wollaston, Dr Sarah
 Wright, Jeremy
 Wright, Simon
 Young, rh Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mark Hunter and
Joseph Johnson

NOES

Campbell, Mr Gregory
 Dodds, rh Mr Nigel
 Durkan, Mark
 Hermon, Lady
 Hoey, Kate
 Long, Naomi
 MacNeil, Mr Angus Brendan
 McCrea, Dr William
 McDonnell, Dr Alasdair
 Paisley, Ian

Ritchie, Ms Margaret
 Robertson, Angus
 Shannon, Jim
 Skinner, Mr Dennis
 Weir, Mr Mike
 Whiteford, Dr Eilidh

Tellers for the Noes:
Pete Wishart and
Jonathan Edwards

Question accordingly agreed to.

54. AIR PASSENGER DUTY (MISCELLANEOUS PROVISION)

Resolved,

That provision may be made for requiring persons to make payments on account of their liabilities for air passenger duty based on estimates of what their liabilities will be.

55. VEHICLE EXCISE DUTY (RATES FOR LIGHT PASSENGER VEHICLES ETC.)

Resolved,

That—

(1) Schedule 1 to the Vehicle Excise and Registration Act 1994 (annual rates of duty) is amended as follows.

(2) In paragraph 1 (general)—

- (a) in sub-paragraph (2) (vehicle not covered elsewhere in Schedule otherwise than with engine cylinder capacity not exceeding 1,549cc), for “£220” substitute “£225”, and
- (b) in sub-paragraph (2A) (vehicle not covered elsewhere in Schedule with engine cylinder capacity not exceeding 1,549cc), for “£135” substitute “£140”.

(3) In paragraph 1B (graduated rates of duty for light passenger vehicles)—

- (a) for the tables substitute—

<i>Table 1</i> <i>Rates Payable on First Vehicle Licence for Vehicle</i>			
<i>CO₂ emissions figure</i>		<i>Rate</i>	
<i>(1)</i>	<i>(2)</i>	<i>(3)</i>	<i>(4)</i>
<i>Exceeding g/km</i>	<i>Not exceeding g/km</i>	<i>Reduced rate £</i>	<i>Standard rate £</i>
130	140	115	125
140	150	130	140
150	165	165	175
165	175	275	285
175	185	325	335
185	200	465	475
200	225	610	620
225	255	830	840
255	—	1055	1065

<i>Table 2</i> <i>Rates Payable on any other Licence for Vehicle</i>			
<i>CO₂ emissions figure</i>		<i>Rate</i>	
<i>(1)</i>	<i>(2)</i>	<i>(3)</i>	<i>(4)</i>
<i>Exceeding g/km</i>	<i>Not exceeding g/km</i>	<i>Reduced rate £</i>	<i>Standard rate £</i>
100	110	10	20
110	120	20	30
120	130	95	105
130	140	115	125
140	150	130	140
150	165	165	175
165	175	190	200
175	185	210	220
185	200	250	260
200	225	270	280
225	255	465	475
255	—	480	490”;

(b) in the sentence immediately following the tables, for paragraphs (a) and (b) substitute—

- “(a) in column (3), in the last two rows, “270” were substituted for “465” and “480”, and
- (b) in column (4), in the last two rows, “280” were substituted for “475” and “490”.”
- (4) In paragraph 1J (VED rates for light goods vehicles)—
 - (a) in paragraph (a), for “£215” substitute “£220”, and
 - (b) in paragraph (b), for “£135” substitute “£140”.
- (5) In paragraph 2(1) (VED rates for motorcycles)—
 - (a) in paragraph (a), for “£16” substitute “£17”,
 - (b) in paragraph (b), for “£36” substitute “£37”,
 - (c) in paragraph (c), for “£55” substitute “£57”, and
 - (d) in paragraph (d), for “£76” substitute “£78”.
- (6) The amendments made by this Resolution have effect in relation to licences taken out on or after 1 April 2013.

And it is declared that it is expedient in the public interest that this Resolution should have statutory effect under the provisions of the Provisional Collection of Taxes Act 1968.

56. VEHICLE LICENCES FOR DISABLED PEOPLE

Resolved,

That—

(1) The Vehicle Excise and Registration Act 1994 is amended as follows.

(2) Section 19 (rebates) is amended as follows.

(3) In subsection (3), after paragraph (c) insert—

“(ca) a qualifying application for a vehicle licence for the vehicle is made.”

(4) After that subsection insert—

“(3ZA) An application for a vehicle licence is a qualifying application for the purposes of subsection (3)(ca) if—

(a) paragraph 1ZA of Schedule 1 applies to the vehicle when the application is made, but

(b) that paragraph did not apply to the vehicle when the licence which is unexpired when the application is made was taken out.”

(5) Section 22ZA (nil licences for vehicles for disabled persons: information) is amended as follows.

(6) In subsection (1)(b), at the beginning insert “falls within subsection (1A) or”.

(7) After subsection (1) insert—

“(1A) Information falls within this subsection if it is—

(a) the name, date of birth or national insurance number of a person who is in receipt of a relevant payment, or would be in receipt of such a payment but for—

(i) regulations under section 86(1) of the Welfare Reform Act 2012 (treatment as in-patient in hospital or similar institution), or

(ii) corresponding provision having effect in relation to personal independence payment in Northern Ireland;

(b) in the case of a person who is or would be in receipt of personal independence payment attributable to entitlement to the mobility component, the rate of the payment to which the person is or would be entitled;

(c) in the case of a person who has ceased or will cease to receive a relevant payment, the date on which the person ceased or will cease to receive it and the reason for the person ceasing to receive it.

(1B) In subsection (1A) “relevant payment” means—

(a) personal independence payment attributable to entitlement to the mobility component, and

(b) armed forces independence payment.”

(8) In subsections (2) and (4), and in the heading, omit “nil”.

(9) For subsection (5) substitute—

“(5) In this section “relevant licence functions” means functions relating to applications for, and the issue of—

(a) vehicle licences in respect of vehicles to which paragraph 1ZA of Schedule 1 applies, and

(b) nil licences in respect of vehicles that are exempt vehicles under paragraph 19 of Schedule 2 or paragraph 7 of Schedule 4.”

(10) In section 62(1) (definitions), at the appropriate places insert—

““armed forces independence payment” means armed forces independence payment under a scheme established under section 1 of the Armed Forces (Pensions and Compensation) Act 2004,”, and

““personal independence payment” means personal independence payment under—

- (a) the Welfare Reform Act 2012, or
- (b) the corresponding provision having effect in Northern Ireland.”.

(11) In Schedule 1 (annual rates of duty), in Part 1 after paragraph 1 insert—

“1ZA(1) The annual rate of vehicle excise duty applicable to a vehicle to which this paragraph applies is 50 per cent of the rate which (but for this paragraph) would be applicable.

(2) This paragraph applies to a vehicle when it is being used, or kept for use, by or for the purposes of a disabled person who is in receipt of personal independence payment by virtue of entitlement to the mobility component at the standard rate if—

- (a) the vehicle is registered under this Act in the name of the disabled person, and
- (b) no other vehicle registered in his or her name under this Act is—
 - (i) a vehicle for which a vehicle licence taken out at a rate of duty reduced in accordance with sub-paragraph (1) is in force, or
 - (ii) an exempt vehicle under paragraph 19 of Schedule 2 or paragraph 7 of Schedule 4.

(3) This paragraph has effect as if a person were in receipt of personal independence payment by virtue of entitlement to the mobility component at the standard rate in any case where the person would be in receipt of that payment by virtue of that entitlement but for—

- (a) regulations under section 86(1) of the Welfare Reform Act 2012 (treatment as in-patient in hospital or similar institution), or
- (b) corresponding provision having effect in Northern Ireland.

(4) For the purposes of sub-paragraph (2), a vehicle is to be treated as registered under this Act in the name of a person in receipt of personal independence payment by virtue of entitlement to the mobility component at the standard rate if it is so registered in the name of—

- (a) an appointee, or
- (b) a person nominated for the purposes of this paragraph by the person or an appointee.

(5) In sub-paragraph (4) “appointee” means a person appointed pursuant to regulations made under (or having effect as if made under) the Social Security Administration Act 1992 or the Social Security Administration (Northern Ireland) Act 1992 to exercise any of the rights and powers of a person in receipt of personal independence payment.”

(12) In Schedule 2 (exempt vehicles), paragraph 19 is amended as follows.

(13) In sub-paragraph (1), for paragraph (b) substitute—

- “(b) no other vehicle registered in his or her name under this Act is—
 - (i) a vehicle for which a vehicle licence taken out at a rate of vehicle excise duty reduced in accordance with paragraph 1ZA(1) of Schedule 1 is in force, or
 - (ii) an exempt vehicle under this paragraph or paragraph 7 of Schedule 4.”

(14) In sub-paragraph (2), after paragraph (a) insert—

- “(aa) he or she is in receipt of personal independence payment by virtue of entitlement to the mobility component at the enhanced rate,
- (ab) he or she is in receipt of armed forces independence payment.”.

(15) After sub-paragraph (2A) insert—

“(2B) This paragraph has effect as if a person were in receipt of personal independence payment by virtue of entitlement to the mobility component at the enhanced rate in any case where the person would be in receipt of that payment by virtue of that entitlement but for—

- (a) regulations under section 86(1) of the Welfare Reform Act 2012 (treatment as in-patient in hospital or similar institution), or
- (b) corresponding provision having effect in Northern Ireland.”.

(16) In sub-paragraph (3), for “person in receipt of a disability living allowance by virtue of entitlement to the mobility component at the higher rate, or of a mobility supplement,” substitute “disabled person who satisfies sub-paragraph (2) by virtue of paragraph (a), (aa), (ab) or (b) of that sub-paragraph”.

(17) In sub-paragraph (4)(a), after “disability living allowance,” insert “personal independence payment or armed forces independence payment.”.

(18) The amendments made by this Resolution come into force on 8 April 2013.

And it is declared that it is expedient in the public interest that this Resolution should have statutory effect under the provisions of the Provisional Collection of Taxes Act 1968.

57. VALUE ADDED TAX (HEALTH SERVICE BODIES)

Resolved,

That—

(1) In section 41 of the Value Added Tax Act 1994 (application to the Crown), in subsection (7), after “Board” insert “and a clinical commissioning group, the Health and Social Care Information Centre, the National Health Service Commissioning Board and the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence”.

(2) The amendment made by this Resolution comes into force on 1 April 2013.

And it is declared that it is expedient in the public interest that this Resolution should have statutory effect under the provisions of the Provisional Collection of Taxes Act 1968.

58. VALUE ADDED TAX (SUPPLIES OF FUEL)

Resolved,

That provision (including provision having retrospective effect) may be made about the value of certain supplies of fuel for the purposes of value added tax.

59. VALUE ADDED TAX (ENERGY-SAVING MATERIALS)

Resolved,

That provision may be made about energy-saving materials.

60. STAMP DUTY LAND TAX

Resolved,

That provision (including provision having retrospective effect) may be made amending Part 4 of the Finance Act 2003.

61. LANDFILL TAX (STANDARD RATE)

Resolved,

That provision may be made about the standard rate of landfill tax.

62. CLIMATE CHANGE LEVY (RATES)

Resolved,

That provision may be made about the rates of climate change levy.

**63. CLIMATE CHANGE LEVY (SUPPLIES
SUBJECT TO CARBON PRICE SUPPORT RATES
ETC)**

Resolved,

That—

(1) On and after 26 March 2013, Schedule 6 to the Finance Act 2000 (climate change levy) has effect as if neither—

- (a) Schedule 20 to the Finance Act 2011, nor
- (b) Parts 1 and 2 of Schedule 32 to the Finance Act 2012, had ever been enacted.

(2) Accordingly—

- (a) in the Finance Act 2011, section 78 and Schedule 20 are omitted, and
- (b) in the Finance Act 2012, Parts 1 and 2 of Schedule 32 are omitted.

(3) Schedule 6 to the Finance Act 2000 (climate change levy) is amended as follows.

(4) In paragraph 4 (definition of “taxable supply”) in sub-paragraph (2)(b) after “24” insert “, 24A, 24B, 24C, 42D”.

(5) In paragraph 5 (supplies of electricity) after sub-paragraph (2) insert—

“(2A) Levy is chargeable on a supply of electricity if—

- (a) the supply is made by an exempt unlicensed electricity supplier who is an auto-generator or who is of a description prescribed by regulations made by the Treasury,
- (b) the electricity was produced in a generating station owned by the supplier using commodities which were the subject of a deemed supply under paragraph 24A or which would have been the subject of such a supply had the reference in paragraph 24A(1)(a) to Great Britain been a reference to the United Kingdom instead,
- (c) the supply is not a deemed supply under paragraph 23(3), and
- (d) the person to whom the supply is made is not an electricity utility.”

(6) In paragraph 6 (supplies of gas) in sub-paragraph (2A) after “24” insert “, 24A, 24B, 24C, 42D”.

(7) Paragraph 14 (exemption for supplies to electricity producers) is amended as follows.

(8) In sub-paragraphs (2)(b) and (3)(b) after “electricity” insert “in a small generating station”.

(9) After sub-paragraph (3) insert—

“(3ZA) Sub-paragraph (1) does not exempt a supply where the person to whom the supply is made—

- (a) uses the commodity supplied in producing electricity in a stand-by generator, and
- (b) uses the electricity produced otherwise than in exemption-retaining ways.”

(10) After sub-paragraph (3A) insert—

“(3B) Paragraph 24A makes provision under which carbon price support rate commodities intended to be used in a generating station may be the subject of a deemed taxable supply (and, accordingly, this paragraph needs to be read subject to that paragraph).”

(11) Omit sub-paragraphs (4) and (5).

(12) In paragraph 15 (exemption for supplies to combined heat and power stations) after sub-paragraph (4) insert—

“(4A) Paragraph 24B makes provision under which carbon price support rate commodities intended to be used in a combined heat and power station may be the subject of a deemed taxable supply (and, accordingly, this paragraph needs to be read subject to that paragraph).”

(13) Paragraph 17 (exemption: self-supplies by electricity producers) is amended as follows.

(14) After sub-paragraph (1) insert—

“(1A) The supply is exempt from levy if it is a supply of electricity produced in—

- (a) a fully exempt combined heat and power station,
- (b) a partly exempt combined heat and power station,
- (c) a stand-by generator, or
- (d) a small generating station.

(1B) Sub-paragraph (1A)(d) applies only if the producer is—

- (a) an auto-generator, or
- (b) an exempt unlicensed electricity supplier of a description prescribed by regulations made by the Treasury.”

(15) In sub-paragraph (2) for the words from “If” to “unless—” substitute “This paragraph does not exempt the supply if—”.

(16) Omit sub-paragraphs (3) and (4).

(17) In paragraph 21 (regulations to avoid double charges to levy) after sub-paragraph (2) insert—

“(2A) In sub-paragraph (2)(b) “taxable supply” does not include a deemed supply under paragraph 24A, 24B, 24C or 42D.”

(18) In Part 2 after paragraph 24 insert—

“Deemed taxable supply: commodities to be used in producing electricity”

24A (1) Sub-paragraph (2) applies if—

- (a) a quantity of a carbon price support rate commodity is brought onto, or arrives at, a site in Great Britain at which a generating station is situated,
- (b) that quantity of the commodity is intended to be used for producing electricity in the station,
- (c) the station is neither a fully exempt combined heat and power station nor a partly exempt combined heat and power station, and
- (d) the station is neither a small generating station nor a stand-by generator.

(2) For the purposes of this Schedule the owner of the station is deemed to make a taxable supply to himself of that quantity of the commodity.

(3) In sub-paragraph (1)(a) the reference to a commodity being brought onto, or arriving at, a site covers (in particular) gas in a gaseous state arriving at the site through a pipe.

(4) For the purposes of sub-paragraph (1) it does not matter—

- (a) if the quantity of the commodity is not the subject of an actual supply made to the owner of the station, or
- (b) if the commodity’s availability for use in the station is subject to any condition.

Deemed taxable supply: commodities to be used in combined heat and power station

24B (1) Sub-paragraph (2) applies if—

- (a) a quantity of a carbon price support rate commodity is brought onto, or arrives at, the CHPQA site of a fully exempt combined heat and power station or a partly exempt combined heat and power station in Great Britain,
- (b) that quantity of the commodity is intended to be used in the station for producing outputs of the station, and
- (c) the station is not a small generating station.

(2) For the purposes of this Schedule the operator of the station is deemed to make a taxable supply to himself of that quantity of the commodity so far as that quantity is referable to the production of electricity.

(3) For the purposes of sub-paragraph (2) the extent to which a quantity of a commodity is referable to the production of electricity is to be determined in accordance with regulations under paragraph 24D(1).

(4) In sub-paragraph (1)(a) the reference to a commodity being brought onto, or arriving at, the CHPQA site of a station covers (in particular) gas in a gaseous state arriving at the CHPQA site through a pipe.

(5) In sub-paragraph (1)(b) “outputs” has the meaning given by paragraph 148(9).

(6) For the purposes of sub-paragraph (1) it does not matter—

- (a) if the quantity of the commodity is not the subject of an actual supply made to the operator of the station, or
- (b) if the commodity’s availability for use in the station is subject to any condition.

(7) In this paragraph “CHPQA site”, in relation to a fully exempt combined heat and power station or a partly exempt combined heat and power station, means the site of the scheme in relation to which the station’s CHPQA certificate was issued.

24C (1) This paragraph applies if—

- (a) a determination (“the initial determination”) is made under regulations falling within paragraph 24B(3) that—
 - (i) none of a quantity of a carbon price support rate commodity is, or
 - (ii) a proportion of such a quantity is not, referable to the production of electricity,
- (b) as a result of the initial determination, the quantity or proportion of a quantity is determined not to be the subject of a deemed supply under paragraph 24B, and
- (c) it is later determined that, contrary to the initial determination, the quantity or proportion of a quantity—
 - (i) was referable to the production of electricity, and
 - (ii) accordingly, should have been determined to be the subject of a deemed supply under paragraph 24B.

(2) For the purposes of this Schedule—

- (a) the operator of the station in question is deemed to make a taxable supply to himself of the quantity or proportion of a quantity, and
- (b) the amount payable by way of levy on the deemed supply is the amount which would have been payable in relation to the quantity or proportion of a quantity had it been determined to be the subject of a deemed supply as mentioned in sub-paragraph (1)(c)(ii).

Power to make regulations giving effect to paragraphs 24A to 24C etc

24D (1) The Commissioners may by regulations make provision for giving effect to paragraphs 24A to 24C and 42A to 42D.

(2) Regulations under sub-paragraph (1) may, in particular, include provision—

- (a) for determining whether a deemed supply under paragraph 24A or 24B is made;
- (b) for determining the quantity of any commodity which is the subject of such a deemed supply;
- (c) for determining whether paragraph 42C(2) applies in relation to a deemed supply under paragraph 24A or 24B and, if it does, the reduction in the relevant carbon price support rate.

(3) Regulations under sub-paragraph (1) may include—

- (a) provision in respect of calculations, measurements, data and procedures to be made or used;
- (b) provision that, so far as framed by reference to any document, is framed by reference to that document as from time to time in force.”

(19) After paragraph 38 insert—

“Deemed supplies under paragraph 24A, 24B, 24C or 42D

38A (1) A deemed supply under paragraph 24A or 24B is treated as taking place when the quantity of the commodity is brought onto, or arrives at, the site at which the station is situated or the CHPQA site of the station (as the case may be).

(2) A deemed supply under paragraph 24C or 42D is treated as taking place upon the later determination.”

(20) Paragraph 39 (regulations as to time of supply) is amended as follows.

(21) In sub-paragraph (1)(c) after “24” insert “, 24A, 24B, 24C, 42D.”

(22) In sub-paragraph (3) after “supply” insert “and 38A”.

(23) In paragraph 42 (amount payable by way of levy) before sub-paragraph (2) insert—

“(1B) Sub-paragraph (1) does not apply to a deemed supply under paragraph 24A or 24B.”

(24) After paragraph 42 insert—

“42A (1) This paragraph applies to a deemed supply under paragraph 24A or 24B.

(2) The amount payable by way of levy on the deemed supply is the amount ascertained by applying the relevant carbon price support rate; and the levy payable on a fraction of a kilowatt hour, kilogram or gigajoule is that fraction of the levy payable on a kilowatt hour, kilogram or gigajoule.

(3) The carbon price support rates are as follows.

<i>Carbon price support rate commodity</i>	<i>Carbon price support rate</i>
Any gas in a gaseous state that is of a kind supplied by a gas utility	£0.00091 per kilowatt hour
Any petroleum gas, or other gaseous hydrocarbon, in a liquid state	£0.01460 per kilogram
Any commodity falling within paragraph 3(1)(d) to (f)	£0.44264 per gigajoule

(4) Sub-paragraph (2) needs to be read with paragraphs 42B and 42C.

42B (1) This paragraph applies for the purposes of paragraph 42A(2) if the commodity deemed to be supplied is a quantity of a commodity falling within paragraph 3(1)(d) to (f).

(2) The number of gigajoules in the quantity supplied is to be determined by reference to the total gross calorific value of that quantity.

(3) Sub-paragraph (4) applies if there is included in that quantity any coal slurry taken from a slurry pit situated at the site of a coal mine (including a disused coal mine).

(4) The gross calorific value of the coal slurry is to be left out of account in determining the total gross calorific value of that quantity.

42C (1) Sub-paragraph (2) applies for the purposes of paragraph 42A(2) if, in the calendar year in which the deemed supply is treated as taking place, carbon capture and storage technology is operated in relation to carbon dioxide generated by the station in question in producing electricity.

(2) In relation to the deemed supply, only C% of the relevant carbon price support rate is to be applied (instead of the full rate).

(3) “C%” is 100% minus the station’s carbon capture percentage for the calendar year.

(4) The station’s “carbon capture percentage” for the calendar year is the percentage of the station’s generated carbon dioxide for that year which, through the operation of the carbon capture and storage technology, is—

- (a) captured, and
- (b) then disposed of by way of permanent storage.

(5) The station’s “generated carbon dioxide” for the calendar year is the amount of carbon dioxide generated in the year by the station from the use of carbon price support rate commodities in producing electricity.

(6) In this paragraph “carbon capture and storage technology” and “carbon dioxide” have the meaning given by section 7(3) and (4) of the Energy Act 2010.

(7) Sub-paragraph (8) applies for the purposes of sub-paragraph (4) in relation to any carbon dioxide if—

- (a) the carbon dioxide is captured but then leaks out and therefore is not disposed of by way of permanent storage, but

- (b) the leak does not occur—

- (i) on the land on which the station is situated,
- (ii) on any other land under the control of the station's owner or a person connected with the station's owner, or
- (iii) from any pipeline or other facility or installation which is operated by the station's owner or a person connected with the station's owner.

Section 1122 of the Corporation Tax Act 2010 (“connected” persons) applies for the purposes of paragraph (b).

(8) The carbon dioxide is to be treated as if it had been disposed of by way of permanent storage.

(9) If the percentage mentioned in sub-paragraph (4) is not a whole number, it is to be rounded to the nearest whole number (taking 0.5% as nearest to the next whole number).

42D (1) This paragraph applies if—

- (a) an amount is determined to be payable by way of levy on a deemed supply of a quantity of a commodity under paragraph 24A or 24B, but

(b) it is later determined that that amount is too low.

(2) For the purposes of this Schedule—

- (a) the person who made the deemed supply is deemed to make a further taxable supply to himself of the quantity of the commodity, and

(b) the amount payable by way of levy on that further deemed supply is—

- (i) the total amount payable on the first deemed supply on the basis of the later determination mentioned in sub-paragraph (1)(b), less

(ii) the amount previously determined to be payable on the first deemed supply.”

(25) In paragraph 55 (notification of registrability) in sub-paragraph (1) after paragraph (a) insert—

“(aa) expects to be deemed to make a taxable supply to himself under paragraph 24A or 24B, or”.

(26) In paragraph 62 (tax credits) in sub-paragraph (1) after paragraph (b) insert—

“(ba) a quantity of a carbon price support rate commodity is the subject of a deemed supply under paragraph 24A or 24B but afterwards the quantity—

- (i) is not used as mentioned in paragraph 24A(1)(b) or 24B(1)(b) (as the case may be), and

(ii) is removed from the site at which the station is situated or from the CHPQA site of the station (as the case may be);

(bb) after—

- (i) a determination is made under regulations falling within paragraph 24B(3) that a quantity, or a proportion of a quantity, of a carbon price support rate commodity is referable to the production of electricity, and

(ii) it is accordingly determined that the quantity or proportion of a quantity is the subject of a deemed supply under paragraph 24B,

it is determined that the quantity or proportion of a quantity was not referable to the production of electricity;

(bc) after an amount is determined to be payable by way of levy on a deemed supply under paragraph 24A or 24B, it is determined that that amount is too high.”.

(27) In paragraph 146 (regulations) in sub-paragraph (3)—

(a) for “14(3),” substitute “5(2A), 14(2),”, and

(b) after “16,” insert “17(1B),”.

(28) In paragraph 147 (definitions)—

(a) at the appropriate places, insert—

““carbon price support rate commodity” means any taxable commodity other than electricity;”,

““CHPQA certificate” has the same meaning as in the Climate Change Levy (Combined Heat and Power Stations) Exemption Certificate Regulations 2001 (S.I. 2001/486);”,

““exempt unlicensed electricity supplier” has the meaning given by paragraph 152A;”,

““Great Britain” includes the territorial waters of the United Kingdom so far as adjacent to Great Britain;”,

““small generating station” has the meaning given by paragraph 152B;”, and

““stand-by generator” means a generating station which—

(a) is used to provide an emergency electricity supply to a building in the event of a failure of the building's usual electricity supply, and

(b) is not used for any other purpose;”, and

(b) in the definition of “prescribed”—

(i) for “14(3),” substitute “5(2A), 14(2),”, and

(ii) after “16(3)” insert “, 17(1B)”,

(29) After paragraph 152 insert—

“*Meaning of “exempt unlicensed electricity supplier”*”

152A (1) In this Schedule “exempt unlicensed electricity supplier” means a person—

(a) to whom an exemption from section 4(1)(c) of the Electricity Act 1989 (persons supplying electricity to premises) has been granted by an order under section 5 of that Act, or

(b) to whom an exemption from Article 8(1)(c) of the Electricity Supply (Northern Ireland) Order 1992 has been granted by an order under Article 9 of that Order,

except where the person is acting otherwise than for purposes connected with the carrying on of activities authorised by the exemption.

(2) Sub-paragraph (1) applies subject to—

(a) any direction under paragraph 151(1), and

(b) any regulations under paragraph 151(2).

“*Meaning of “small generating station”*”

152B (1) In this Schedule “small generating station” means a generating station the capacity of which for producing electricity is no more than 2 megawatts.

(2) Sub-paragraph (3) applies if a relevant station (“station X”) is one of a number of relevant stations which—

(a) are situated in the United Kingdom, and

(b) are owned by P or persons connected with P.

(3) In applying sub-paragraph (1) in relation to station X, the reference to the capacity of a generating station is to be read as a reference to the capacity of station X and all the other relevant stations mentioned in sub-paragraph (2) taken together.

(4) In sub-paragraphs (2) and (3) “relevant station” means a generating station which is neither an exempt CHP station nor a stand-by generator.

(5) For the purposes of sub-paragraph (2)(b)—

(a) “P” is the person who owns station X, and

(b) section 1122 of the Corporation Tax Act 2010 (“connected” persons) applies.

(6) Sub-paragraph (7) applies if the scheme in relation to which the CHPQA certificate of an exempt CHP station (“station Y”) is issued covers other exempt CHP stations as well.

(7) In applying sub-paragraph (1) in relation to station Y, the reference to the capacity of a generating station is to be read as a reference to the capacity of station Y and all the other exempt CHP stations mentioned in sub-paragraph (6) taken together.

(8) In this paragraph “exempt CHP station” means a fully exempt combined heat and power station or a partly exempt combined heat and power station.”

(30) Regulation 5 of the Climate Change Levy (Electricity and Gas) Regulations 2001 (S.I. 2001/1136) is amended as follows.

(31) In paragraph (1) for “paragraph 14(2) of the Act (exemption: certain supplies to electricity producers)” substitute “paragraphs 5(2A), 14(2) and 17(1B) of the Act (which contain references to exempt unlicensed electricity suppliers)”.

(32) In paragraph (2)(a) for “14(4)” substitute “152A(1)”.

(33) The amendments made by paragraphs (30) to (32) are to be treated as having been made by the Treasury under the powers to make regulations conferred by paragraphs 5(2A), 14(2) and 17(1B) of Schedule 6 to the Finance Act 2000.

(34) The amendments made by paragraphs (2) to (32) come into force on 26 March 2013.

(35) The amendments made by paragraphs (8) and (9) have effect for the purpose of determining if a supply of gas or electricity is exempt from levy where the gas or electricity is actually supplied on or after 1 April 2013.

“Gas” means gas in a gaseous state that is of a kind supplied by a gas utility.

(36) Those amendments are to have effect for the purpose of determining if any other supply is exempt from levy where the supply is treated as taking place on or after 1 April 2013.

(37) The amendments made by paragraphs (13) to (16) have effect for the purpose of determining if a supply of electricity is exempt from levy where the electricity is caused to be consumed on or after 1 April 2013.

(38) The amendment made by paragraph (18) has effect in relation to carbon price support rate commodities which are brought onto, or arrive at, sites on or after 1 April 2013.

And it is declared that it is expedient in the public interest that this Resolution should have statutory effect under the provisions of the Provisional Collection of Taxes Act 1968.

64. BANK LEVY (RATES)

Resolved,

That provision (including provision having retrospective effect) may be made about bank levy rates.

65. TAX DEDUCTIONS FOR THE BANK LEVY AND FOREIGN BANK LEVIES

Resolved,

That provision (including provision having retrospective effect) may be made preventing deductions in respect of the bank levy and foreign bank levies when calculating liability to income tax or corporation tax.

66. GENERAL ANTI-ABUSE RULE

Resolved,

That provision may be made for the purposes of counteracting tax advantages arising from tax arrangements that are abusive.

67. TRUSTS WITH VULNERABLE BENEFICIARY

Resolved,

That provision may be made about trusts which have a vulnerable beneficiary.

68. UNAUTHORISED UNIT TRUSTS

Resolved,

That provision may be made about the trustees or unit holders of unit trust schemes which are not authorised unit trusts.

69. RESIDENCE AND ORDINARY RESIDENCE

Resolved,

That provision may be made—

(a) establishing a statutory residence test to determine whether individuals are UK resident for the purposes of income tax, capital gains tax and (where relevant) inheritance tax and corporation tax,

(b) imposing charges to income tax and capital gains tax on those who are temporarily non-resident, and

(c) removing or replacing rules relating to ordinary residence.

70. OVERPAYMENT RELIEF

Resolved,

That provision may be made in connection with claims in respect of overpaid tax and excessive assessments.

71. RELIEF FROM TAX (INCIDENTAL AND CONSEQUENTIAL CHARGES)

Resolved,

That it is expedient to authorise any incidental or consequential charges to any duty or tax (including charges having retrospective effect) that may arise from provisions designed in general to afford relief from taxation.

PROCEDURE (FUTURE TAXATION)

Resolved,

That, notwithstanding anything to the contrary in the practice of the House relating to the matters that may be included in Finance Bills, any Finance Bill of the present Session may contain provision for the financial year 2015 for the rate of corporation tax on profits of companies, other than ring fence profits (within the meaning of section 276 of the Corporation Tax Act 2010), to be 20%.

PROCEDURE (FUTURE TAXATION)

Resolved,

That, notwithstanding anything to the contrary in the practice of the House relating to the matters that may be included in Finance Bills, any Finance Bill of the present Session may contain the following provisions taking effect in a future year—

- (a) provision for corporation tax to be charged for the financial year 2014,
- (b) provision about taxable benefits in respect of cars,
- (c) provision about the standard lifetime allowance under Part 4 of the Finance Act 2004,
- (d) provision about the annual allowance under that Part,
- (e) provision about the standard rate of landfill tax,
- (f) provision about the rates of climate change levy, and
- (g) provision for and in connection with penalties for late filing, late payment and errors.

PROCEDURE (R&D EXPENDITURE CREDITS)

Resolved,

That, notwithstanding anything to the contrary in the practice of the House relating to the matters that may be included in Finance Bills, any Finance Bill of the present Session may contain provision for and in connection with the payment of credits to companies in respect of expenditure on research and development.

PROCEDURE (TELEVISION TAX CREDITS)

Resolved,

That, notwithstanding anything to the contrary in the practice of the House relating to the matters that may be included in Finance Bills, any Finance Bill of the present Session may contain

provision for tax credits to be paid to television production companies in respect of expenditure on television production activities.

PROCEDURE (VIDEO GAME TAX CREDITS)

Resolved,

That, notwithstanding anything to the contrary in the practice of the House relating to the matters that may be included in Finance Bills, any Finance Bill of the present Session may contain provision for tax credits to be paid to video game development companies in respect of expenditure on video game development activities.

PROCEDURE (DECOMMISSIONING RELIEF AGREEMENTS)

Resolved,

That, notwithstanding anything to the contrary in the practice of the House relating to the matters that may be included in Finance Bills, any Finance Bill of the present Session may contain provision authorising the payment out of money provided by Parliament of sums payable by the Treasury or a Minister of the Crown to a company in connection with the amount of tax relief obtained in respect of decommissioning expenditure incurred by it.

PROCEDURE (INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENTS TO IMPROVE TAX COMPLIANCE)

Resolved,

That, notwithstanding anything to the contrary in the practice of the House relating to the matters that may be included in Finance Bills, any Finance Bill of the present Session may make provision for the purposes of enabling effect to be given to international agreements relating to international tax compliance which are entered into by the Government of the United Kingdom.

PROCEDURE (PENALTY INSTEAD OF FORFEITURE OF LARGER SHIPS)

Resolved,

That, notwithstanding anything to the contrary in the practice of the House relating to the matters that may be included in Finance Bills, any Finance Bill of the present Session may contain provision about the imposition of penalties instead of forfeiture of larger ships for or in connection with offences under any enactment relating to customs or excise.

FINANCE (MONEY)

Queen's recommendation signified.

Resolved,

That, for the purposes of any Act of the present Session relating to finance, it is expedient to authorise the payment out of money provided by Parliament of—

(a) sums incurred by the Commissioners for Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs in respect of the payment of credits to companies in respect of expenditure on research and development,

(b) sums payable by the Treasury or a Minister of the Crown to a company in connection with the amount of tax relief obtained in respect of decommissioning expenditure incurred by it, and

(c) sums payable by the Secretary of State by virtue of any provisions of the Act relating to vehicle excise and registration.

Ordered,

That a Bill be brought in upon the foregoing Resolutions;

That the Chairman of Ways and Means, The Prime Minister, The Deputy Prime Minister, Mr Chancellor of the Exchequer, Secretary Vince Cable, Secretary Iain

Duncan Smith, Secretary Eric Pickles, Danny Alexander, Greg Clark, Mr David Gauke and Sajid Javid bring in the Bill.

FINANCE (No. 2) BILL

Presentation and First Reading

Mr David Gauke accordingly presented a Bill to grant certain duties, to alter other duties, and to amend the law relating to the National Debt and the Public Revenue, and to make further provision in connection with finance.

Bill read the First time; to be read a Second time tomorrow, and to be printed (Bill 154).

Business without Debate

DELEGATED LEGISLATION

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

CONSUMER PROTECTION

That the draft Enterprise Act 2002 (Part 8 Domestic Infringements) Order 2013, which was laid before this House on 19 December 2012, be approved.—(Mr Evennett.)

Question agreed to.

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

CONSTITUTIONAL LAW

That the draft Scotland Act 2012 (Consequential Provisions) Order 2013, which was laid before this House on 10 January, be approved.—(Mr Evennett.)

Question agreed to.

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

INTERNATIONAL IMMUNITIES AND PRIVILEGES

That the draft Global Growth Institute (Legal Capacities) Order 2013, which was laid before this House on 29 January, be approved.—(Mr Evennett.)

Question agreed to.

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

COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY

That the draft Community Infrastructure Levy (Amendment) Regulations 2013, which were laid before this House on 14 February, be approved.—(Mr Evennett.)

Question agreed to.

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

TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING

That the draft Neighbourhood Planning (Referendums) (Amendment) Regulations 2013, which were laid before this House on 25 February, be approved.—(Mr Evennett.)

Question agreed to.

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

CHURCH OF ENGLAND (GENERAL SYNOD)
(MEASURES)

That the Clergy Discipline (Amendment) Measure (HC 1021), passed by the General Synod of the Church of England, which was laid before this House on 28 February, be presented to Her Majesty for Her Royal Assent in the form in which the said Measure was laid before Parliament.—(*Sir Tony Baldry.*)

Question agreed to.

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

That the Diocese in Europe Measure (HC 1020), passed by the General Synod of the Church of England, which was laid before this House on 28 February, be presented to Her Majesty for Her Royal Assent in the form in which the said Measure was laid before Parliament.—(*Sir Tony Baldry.*)

Question agreed to.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, in respect of the Finance (No. 2) Bill, notices of Amendments, new Clauses and new Schedules to be moved in Committee may be accepted by the Clerks at the Table before the Bill has been read a second time.—(*Mr Evernett.*)

PARLIAMENTARY PRIVILEGE (JOINT COMMITTEE)

Resolved,

That, notwithstanding the Resolution of this House of 3 December 2012, it be an instruction to the Joint Committee on Parliamentary Privilege that it should report by 28 June 2013.—(*Mr Lansley.*)

ADMINISTRATION

Ordered,

That Graham Evans be discharged from the Administration Committee and Nicholas Soames be added.—(*Geoffrey Clifton-Brown, on behalf of the Committee of Selection.*)

PETITIONS

Closure of Burnage Library (Manchester)

10.57 pm

Mr John Leech (Manchester, Withington) (LD): I rise to support and submit a petition on behalf of more than 2,500 Manchester residents opposed to the Labour council's plans to close Burnage library in my constituency.

The petition states:

The Petition of a resident of the UK,

Declares that Manchester City Council has proposed to close Burnage Library; further that local residents are opposed to this decision and that the council should reverse its plans.

The Petitioner therefore requests that the House of Commons urges Manchester City Council to reverse its plans to close Burnage Library.

And the Petitioner remains, etc.

[P001168]

VAT on Toasted Sandwiches

10.58 pm

Mr Leech: I rise a second time to support and submit the “Toast the Tax” petition, on behalf of the tens of thousands of employees and customers of Subway—I suppose I ought to declare an interest, as someone who occasionally purchases stuff from Subway. The petitioners

are not asking the Government to revive plans for a pasty tax; they are simply asking for sandwich shop owners to be treated fairly.

The petition states:

The Petition of employees and customers of Subway,

Declares that VAT is being charged on toasted subs and sandwiches, further that as a result, the sandwich shop industry, which employs tens of thousands of hard-working people and supports thousands of small businesses, is now being placed under threat and that sandwich shop owners should be treated fairly.

The Petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons urges the Government to maintain its recent U-turn on pasties and additionally to remove or reduce the tax across the board, in line with our European neighbours.

And the Petitioners remain, etc.

[P001167]

Human Rights in India

10.59 pm

Chris Williamson (Derby North) (Lab): I was recently presented with a petition signed by some 2,000 residents of Derby—part of a wider petition numbering some 120,000 around the country—who are concerned about the lifting of the moratorium on the death penalty in India:

The Petition of residents of the United Kingdom,

Declares that the Petitioners believe that the UK Government, together with the UN and EU, should encourage the Indian Union to take immediate action to stop human rights abuses facing minorities in India and that India should sign and ratify the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court and the UN Charter against torture and other cruel, inhumane or degrading treatment or punishment which encompasses the death penalty and thus India should abolish the death penalty as it is a cruel, inhumane or degrading form of punishment; further declares that the UK Government should campaign to stop Balwant Singh Rajoana's death sentence and have him released from jail as he has served 17 years in custody and that the Indian Union should release all prisoners facing the same situation and those who have been imprisoned without trial.

The Petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons urges the Government to appeal to India for the above actions to be taken, and request that the Government bring these issues to light in the European Union and United Nations.

And the Petitioners remain, etc.

[P001169]

Changes to Welfare in Hartlepool

11.1 pm

Mr Iain Wright (Hartlepool) (Lab): I rise to present a petition from my constituency, initiated by the Manor Residents Association and signed by more than 1,000 people from Hartlepool who are concerned about the Government's welfare reform policy in general and the introduction of the bedroom tax in particular.

The petition reads:

The Petition of residents of Hartlepool,

Declares that the Petitioners support the Manor Residents Association in their protest against Government legislation in the Welfare Reform Act 2012 which will result in a further stealth tax on residents and families who are already reeling from the effect of Government austerity measures; further that the Petitioners believe that the “bedroom tax”, introduced as part of the Welfare Reform Act 2012, will have a major impact on the health and well being of those who are most vulnerable and least well off in our

[*Mr Iain Wright*]

communities; further that this legislation ignores the needs of social housing tenants by introducing a tax designed to reduce Central Government expenditure; further that the Petitioners believe that the assertion that the legislation will encourage greater mobility within the rented sector and make better use of available housing stock flies in the face of common sense as there are already significant waiting lists for social housing in our towns and cities and that the notion that this legislation will enable families to come off benefits by downsizing is nonsensical when the reality is that families will be no better off than they are currently; further that, for many individuals on benefits, this will result in significant hardship, that stark choices such as feeding a family or keeping a roof over their heads will need to be made and that there will be an increase of homelessness amongst the most vulnerable in society.

The Petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons urges the Government to remove the “bedroom tax” on families.

And the Petitioners remain, etc.

[P001170]

Energy Intensive Industries

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

11.4 pm

Andy Sawford (Corby) (Lab/Co-op): I had not anticipated this number of Members attending the debate at this late hour. I am delighted to see them, as it shows the level of interest in this subject. Many other Members have raised the same issues, and there were some welcome announcements in the Budget last week, but I hope to press for more detail and more information on how this issue will impact on my particular constituency. If I am not able to take all the interventions that Members wish to make, I am sure they will understand.

Corby is a town built on steel: the steelworks and the tubeworks. In 1980 thousands of men were put on the dole, including my own dad, when Corby stopped making steel, but the tubeworks continued, and my granddad worked in the stores there. Today it is still incredibly important to our local economy. Six hundred and fifty people work there. These are good jobs that pay well, and in which people learn great skills. This year, Tata took on 13 apprentices at Corby. It dispatched 250 kilotonnes of tubes, and exported 40% of the product around the world. It contributes more widely to our local economy. I am told that there is a multiplier effect.

Sarah Champion (Rotherham) (Lab): As my hon. Friend knows, Tata Steel in Rotherham employs more than 2,000 people, and the effect that they have on the economy is considerable. That is why I think that the Government should introduce practical measures to support the industry.

Andy Sawford: My hon. Friend is right, and I know that she will continue to champion the steel industry in Rotherham. Steel is, of course, incredibly important to many communities around the country. I am particularly proud of Corby’s steel tubes, which can be found in Wembley stadium, in the Olympic park and in the millennium wheel. The red tubes can be found in buildings across the country.

I am pleased that, since becoming a Member of Parliament, I have been able to be active in the all-party parliamentary group for the steel and metal-related industry, which is chaired by my hon. Friend the Member for Middlesbrough South and East Cleveland (Tom Blenkinsop) and supported by many other Members. I have also been involved with the trade unions, particularly Community but also Unite. Together, we are concerned about the impact of rising energy prices, both because of rising wholesale prices generally and because of European Union and United Kingdom Government policies, especially those that rightly seek to reduce carbon output but, in my view, have wrongly had an impact on a set of vital industries which we need as a nation, and which are part of our sustainable future.

I am not talking just about steel. We have world-class energy-intensive companies that make a huge contribution to our employment, tax revenues and exports. The Environmental Audit Committee estimates that energy-intensive industries account for 4% of gross value added, and employ 125,000 people in the United Kingdom. Concern is shared by a number of industries. The hon.

Member for Rugby (Mark Pawsey) has expressed concern to me about the cement industry, and companies such as INEOS Chlor which are part of the Energy Intensive Users Group have given me helpful briefings.

Last week the ceramics industry was very much in the public eye when the Chancellor made announcements about it in his Budget statement. In my constituency, Morgan Technical Ceramics employs 200 people. It makes an incredible variety of products which are exported to more than 100 countries, but in the process it uses large amounts of gas, as do all ceramics manufacturers.

Three areas of climate policy are having a particular impact on industrial energy prices: tax, carbon prices and renewable subsidies. Of course, those apply in other European countries, but the United Kingdom Government have not listened to the calls from energy-intensive industries in the UK for help of the kind that the German and French Governments give their industries. That has two effects. First, it makes it very difficult for our companies to compete now, and secondly, when it comes to investment decisions and securing the long-term future of these industries, the global companies of which they are part are increasingly opting to move elsewhere. Morgan Ceramics, for example, tells me that it recently moved 300 jobs from the UK to France.

We have an urgent problem. Climate policies have added about 21% to current electricity prices, and the Energy Intensive Users Group estimates that the figure will rise to 58% by 2020. New extra climate-related taxes are likely to exceed current profits for many of our energy-intensive companies within the next few years, which means that their viability is in question in the medium term. Let me give two figures that illustrate the problem. The wholesale price of electricity in Germany in 2014 is forecast to be €40 per MWh, while the price in the UK is forecast to be €60 per MWh—and that is before taxes have been taken into account. That should be contrasted with the help that is being offered by Governments. The UK Government have provided a £250 million mitigation package to protect industry from the cost of the carbon prices floor and the EU emissions trading scheme. Of course, that mitigation is welcome, but the German Government are offering €5 billion in energy tax rebates to their energy-intensive industries, so we can immediately see that the concerns about a level playing field are very real.

Nic Dakin (Scunthorpe) (Lab): I congratulate my hon. Friend on securing this debate. In addition to that disadvantage, is there not also a lack of clarity about how much money will be available to support energy-intensive industries, and when? That certainty is needed to secure jobs into the future, as has been mentioned.

Andy Sawford: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. Like him, I am concerned about the lack of clarity, and particularly the time it has taken the Government to sort out the compensation package.

Stephen Doughty (Cardiff South and Penarth) (Lab/Co-op): My hon. Friend is being extremely generous in giving way, and it is fantastic that he has been able to secure this debate. Was he, like me, concerned to hear the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills admit to the Welsh Affairs Committee in January that the package was very slow in coming? He was

almost admitting to a failure of his Department. Does my hon. Friend agree that the Business Secretary needs to do a lot more to push that along?

Andy Sawford: I was conflicted in preparing for this debate because, as so often with these things, the Ministers who are called to respond to the pressure we put on the Government are the very people who are listening and seeking to help. The Business Secretary has indeed acknowledged that progress has been slow. I was told in a ministerial reply on 25 February that the Government are analysing the responses to their consultation on the mitigation package, and are exploring the issue further. I hope the Minister will understand when I say that, given the vital importance of these industries, which employ 125,000 people, this uncertainty is not good enough and we need to hear the detail soon. I hope he can say when the Government will tell us how the mitigation package will work and explain the details.

The overall level of compensation is not adequate—neither the scale of financial compensation nor the duration of the scheme, which covers only the current spending review period. The Chancellor announced in last week's Budget that there will be further support in the next spending round, which is welcome. However, on the long-term investment decisions, the scale and duration of support during the next spending round has not been made clear. Can the Minister give us further details today?

The Budget proposes a one-year extension to the current mitigation package, taking us through to 2015-16. Does that mean stretching the existing £250 million further, involving a thinner spread of money across the period, or will there be additional money? That was not made clear in the Red Book.

The announcement in the Budget of a 100% exemption from the climate change levy is good, and I am sure the Minister will remind us of that, but we must remember that it was already at 90%. The Chancellor made much of the specific exemption for the ceramics industry, which did not previously qualify for mitigation. That has been hugely welcomed and we should welcome it tonight. I pay particular tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent Central (Tristram Hunt) for his campaign, in which I know other Members are involved. I hope the Minister will not mind me describing the situation in these terms, but all those measures put together look like a sticking plaster. He must acknowledge that our energy-intensive industries have a long-term problem, certainly a long-term challenge.

To secure the future of France's energy-intensive industries, the French Government brokered the Exeltium deal, through which energy-intensives have signed long-term power supply deals for low-carbon energy. That is the kind of measure we need in the UK.

Ofgem has already raised concerns about a 2015 electricity supply crunch. We know there is a lack of gas reserves stored in this country, and gas prices are highly volatile. Last Friday, the Bacton interconnector failed for several hours. Prices opened at £1.25 per therm and rose to £1.50 during the day, which shows the huge volatility within in the industry. The ceramics industry is concerned that it could be the first in line if there are gas shortages. If production has to be turned off with two hours' notice, which is a risk, given the uncertainty of supply, that could seriously damage the kilns. In the

[Andy Sawford]

long-term we need more storage and the requirement to use it through a public service obligation, as is common in other European countries, to ensure energy security and reduce price volatility.

I have spoken about the importance of our energy-intensive industries, and how vital they are to my constituency and many others around the country, so I urge the Minister to maintain an ongoing dialogue between the Government, industry and the trade unions, which have played a helpful role. Will he commit to visit my constituency to meet Tata, with me and work force representatives, and to visit Morgan Technical Ceramics so that we can discuss the issues for that industry in more detail?

Nia Griffith (Llanelli) (Lab): Does my hon. Friend recognise that many energy-intensive industries are keen to make significant investment, which will result in energy efficiency, but are hampered because the enhanced capital allowance system is not broad enough to encompass much of that investment and a lot of it is not eligible? Will he therefore join me in calling on the Government to re-examine this area to see whether they could expand the scope of enhanced capital allowances?

Andy Sawford: My hon. Friend makes an incredibly important point. I have received a great deal of helpful briefing from industries on how they hope to secure their industry for the long term, and I hope we will hear from the Minister about the enhanced capital allowances. If he would commit to visit my constituency, that would be incredibly welcome. I ask him to provide much more detail on the various measures that have been announced and how we might go further, so that when companies look at their operations in this country, as Tata regularly does, they can be confident that they will be able to operate in a viable way in the future because of the policies that we have advocated and that the Minister has acknowledged.

11.16 pm

The Minister of State, Department of Energy and Climate Change (Gregory Barker): I congratulate the hon. Member for Corby (Andy Sawford) on securing this important debate. Without, in any way, wishing to sound patronising, may I say that that was a very good speech, and for someone who has been in the House for only a few months, It certainly augurs well for his career.

Let me say at the outset that I would be delighted to visit Corby. I think there had been an invitation from his distinguished predecessor but it fell with the by-election. I would be happy to visit Corby, not least as the Minister with responsibility in the Department of Energy and Climate Change, but also, wearing my other hat in government, as the Minister for business engagement with India. I am a huge admirer of the extraordinary achievements of the Tata group. I regularly meet its people, from both the steel part and the other parts of the company, but I have not yet had the opportunity to visit the Corby steel plant, so I would be happy to explore how I can find a date to do so.

I welcome this debate, not least because our energy-intensive industries make an important contribution to the UK economy and it is vital to keep them competitive.

These industries are also vital to regional economies, particularly because, as the hon. Gentleman pointed out, not only do they support jobs—good, well-paying, satisfying jobs that people can build careers on—but their products are important in the transition to a low-carbon economy. Some people might think it strange that, as the Minister with responsibility for tackling climate change, I have made a point of making the case for recognising the contribution that energy-intensive industries make to our economy and urging that they get special treatment, but I see no contradiction in that at all. I have made it clear since coming into this job in 2010 that we take the challenge of decarbonising the economy very seriously and are determined to deliver our commitments, in line with the Climate Change Act 2008, which was passed under the previous Government. However, we are equally clear that decarbonisation must not mean de-industrialisation. On the contrary, if we are going to build the low-carbon infrastructure—the renewable energy assets—that we need in the UK, we will need to bring forth a new age of engineering. There are huge opportunities, in not only steel, but a range of sectors that are necessarily energy-intensive. There are huge opportunities to become more energy-efficient, to drive innovation and to become more competitive, but these industries cannot subvert the laws of physics. There is only so much that many of them can do.

I was told when I first came into the job that those industries were not suffering in quite the way they suggested and that the playing field with Europe was not so uneven, but I was continually lobbied by a number of industries, not least the ceramics industry, which does a very good job, and decided that I would only get to the bottom of it if I went to Germany myself. It is no coincidence that Germany, which over the past decade has seen a massive increase in its share of the global market for manufactured goods, particularly those from advanced manufacturing, saw at the same time a massive deployment—probably the largest single deployment in Europe—of renewable energy. The two have gone neatly hand in hand, and Germany has managed much more effectively than we have to ensure a better balance of policy, supporting the deployment of renewables with the necessary subsidy to drive those nascent industries to cost competitiveness with their fossil fuel equivalents while being sufficiently differentiating in its approach to protect energy-intensive industries.

There is a fundamental difference, however. In Germany, as I found out, the burden of policy falls overwhelmingly on the consumer, not on industry. The balance is completely different from that in the UK. The hon. Gentleman rightly pointed out that €5 billion supports the energy-intensive industries in Germany, but replicating that model in full here would entail a considerable rise in consumer bills and I am sure that he would not advocate that.

We are constrained, particularly in light of the deficit we inherited and the absolute imperative of bringing down the national debt, but we are determined to be as flexible as possible. That is why when I came back from Germany—I went there with a number of major energy-intensive companies, visited the plants and spoke to German policy makers—I lobbied hard within Government to make the case for greater differentiation for the energy-intensives. That, along with the efforts of other colleagues, resulted in the £250 million package.

This is a coalition Government who understand the imperative of supporting appropriately our energy-intensive industries, but I do not pretend that £250 million is the last word or is even enough in the longer term. The fact is that if we are to support our energy-intensive industries and watch those manufacturers grow, they will require more support. I have made it very clear that the £250 million is the first step in a longer term programme of support recognising the need for greater fiscal differentiation, but it must be aligned with our deficit reduction programme.

I cannot tell the hon. Gentleman the details from the Dispatch Box this evening, but I can reassure him that we will shortly announce the outcome of the BIS-led consultation on the £250 million package. That will include the technical details, including the emissions factors that he was seeking. We must also still obtain state-aid clearance from the EU for the carbon floor price consultation. In addition to that and the EU emissions trading scheme, we are seeking permission from the EU to begin to put the building blocks in place for a more German-style approach to the architecture. Following the consultation with stakeholders, which closed in December, we have been analysing responses to ensure that compensation is targeted at those industries that are most at risk of carbon leakage, subject to final state-aid approval. As I have said, we will publish those results shortly. As set out in the Energy Bill, we will introduce an exemption for energy-intensive industries from the costs of contracts for difference under electricity market reform, again subject to consultation and state-aid clearance.

In the Budget the Chancellor was able to go further and to take another step towards building a more differentiated package, with the announcement of an exemption for mineralogical and metallurgical processes from the climate change levy—the ceramics sector. That is allowed for under the energy taxation directive.

Jeremy Lefroy (Stafford) (Con): In Staffordshire, the news in last week's Budget was received with great joy. The hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent Central (Tristram Hunt), my hon. Friend the Member for Stone (Mr Cash) and many others have been fighting for the measure, but it was great news and well received.

Gregory Barker: I am glad to hear it. My hon. Friend's representations played a part in the decision, but he is absolutely right; a number of hon. Members made the case. I have been to Stoke to see factories there and the challenges they face.

The measure will mitigate any competitive disadvantage that the UK mineralogical and metallurgical sectors face. It will help them to move to a more level playing field with their EU competitors. It also supports the Government's growth agenda and our commitment to ensuring that manufacturing remains competitive during the shift to a low-carbon economy.

Industrial energy efficiency has a strong role to play. We cannot defy the laws of physics, but industrial energy efficiency represents a huge opportunity for UK plc to improve its international competitiveness. It is good for growth and competitiveness, and it drives our energy security. It is also key to managing costs and building margin growth. The Government are supporting industry to implement energy-efficiency measures that will help to reduce the impact of rising energy prices on industry.

We recently published our energy-efficiency strategy, which sets out our commitment to seizing the energy-efficiency opportunity, accelerating the deployment of 21st-century energy-saving measures. We will do that by connecting energy-efficiency knowledge and technologies to finance, seeking strong returns; supporting energy-efficiency innovation; harnessing the power of improved energy-use information, driving its availability and disclosure; and encouraging collective action on this new and better information.

We recognise the need to minimise regulatory impacts on industry. We have taken steps to simplify our key schemes on energy efficiency and carbon reduction. We have taken measures to simplify climate change agreements, the carbon reduction commitment and the EU emissions trading scheme to remove overlaps and reduce administrative burdens. Actions we have taken include consulting on and simplifying climate change agreements and introducing an opt-out for the EU emissions trading scheme for small emitters and hospitals. We have consulted on a process for the simplification of the CRC and on new regulations to implement the EU emissions trading scheme in the UK from this year.

Tom Blenkinsop (Middlesbrough South and East Cleveland) (Lab): The Minister is listing the many causes the Government are taking up on behalf of energy-intensive industries, but is there not a distinct lack of industrial activism? We are looking at significant structural contracts in Scotland and in Merseyside, but the British steel industry is losing out. In my area, we recently saw the loss of a potential carbon capture and storage project for Wilton, which would have added at least 30 years to existing infrastructure in the chemical industry there.

Gregory Barker: The hon. Gentleman is right to a certain extent. There are big challenges and we cannot turn around a supertanker in a short time. We have seen a consistent decline in manufacturing capacity in the past decade, and before then, but we are beginning to see a rebalancing of our economy. In the renewables sector, a great deal more of the equipment required, for example, for the massive expansion of offshore wind, has begun to be fabricated and manufactured in the UK, particularly along the east coast.

Tom Blenkinsop: I am grateful to the Minister for giving way again. On the issue of offshore wind, recently at Redcar contracts were promised with Tata Steel to provide the base structures and with TAG Energy Solutions in Billingham to provide the monopiles, but both lost out to foreign competitors. What are the Government doing proactively with industry to roll up their sleeves and get involved so that industry can win those contracts?

Gregory Barker: I can tell the hon. Gentleman that he is wrong about TAG; it has won a significant order, which was secured after a personal intervention by the Minister at the Dispatch Box. I spoke directly to the board in Germany, and intervened actively on industrial policy. I am therefore glad that he raised that issue, as TAG has a big manufacturing future ahead of it.

We accept that large energy-intensive industries in Europe benefit from tax rebates and other exemptions, which means that their prices are significantly lower than the average for their country. However, it is important

[Gregory Barker]

to remember that many of the exemptions applied to those industries have distributional impacts. If industry does not pay them, other electricity consumers need to pay more. As the Minister responsible for fuel poverty, I have to bear in mind those distributional impacts and fairness for those who pick up the bill.

May I say something briefly about gas security, which is topical, particularly given what has appeared in the newspapers over the weekend and the cold snap that we are suffering? We are aware of industry concerns about current high gas prices and low storage stocks, but while high prices in a spike are uncomfortable, they are a sign that our market is working and that we are attracting the gas that we need through a diverse range of infrastructure. Price volatility is not something that we can completely remove, and nor should we seek to do so, from our market. It is the key mechanism that enables our market to balance efficiently at the lowest cost to consumers, and it incentivises investment in new infrastructure such as storage.

Our market is resilient to global events, and has spare import capacity built in. However, we take gas security and the risk of harmful gas spikes seriously, and we are

determined to do more. We are working with Ofgem to review our market arrangements, to ensure that they continue to provide secure supplies to consumers at a fair price. At the same time, we are diversifying our energy mix to reduce our dependence on imported fossil fuels, and have put in place robust policies to cut energy demand.

In conclusion, I very much welcome this debate on energy-intensive industries. I commend the hon. Member for Corby on making a compelling case. He is right to hold the Government to account on this issue, but I can assure him that we take it absolutely seriously. We are determined to do more within the context of the difficult economic and fiscal situation that we inherited, but we recognise the benefits of acting now to ensure that we maintain these industries at the same time that we build a secure low-carbon future. Those policies are designed to deliver efficient, low-carbon, secure and affordable energy supplies.

Question put and agreed to.

11.33 pm

House adjourned.

Westminster Hall

Monday 25 March 2013

[MR DAVID AMESS in the Chair]

BACKBENCH BUSINESS

Sudden Adult Death Syndrome

4.30 pm

Steve Rotheram (Liverpool, Walton) (Lab): I beg to move,

That this House has considered the e-petition relating to preventable cardiac deaths arising from Sudden Adult Death Syndrome.

I shall explain the slight typographical error in the motion in a second, but Mr Amess, you will have to excuse me if, at times, my throat is a little raw; that, and my slightly delicate disposition when standing or sitting, can be explained by the fact that I and my right hon. Friend the Member for Leigh (Andy Burnham) took part in a charity bike ride from Salford to Liverpool yesterday for the Love Leah charity. We are both suffering, but it is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship this afternoon.

I thank colleagues on the Backbench Business Committee for agreeing to hear my application on behalf of the Oliver King Foundation and for providing time in the busy parliamentary schedule for what I hope will be a preliminary debate, with a full debate in the Commons Chamber before the summer recess. Today's motion enjoys the support of 65 MPs from seven different political parties and every region of England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Some Members, such as my hon. Friends the Members for Halton (Derek Twigg) and for Liverpool, Wavertree (Luciana Berger), have expressed their disappointment at not being able to be here in person, but they send their full support.

I will use my introductory contribution to set the scene and set out a number of specific areas. Today's debate is the result of the sterling work by the OK Foundation in setting up an e-petition that attracted more than 110,000 signatures. That is no mean feat—getting 100,000 people to sign any petition is impressive, and it shows the dedication of those involved. I would like to place on record my gratitude to the family and friends of Oliver King, to Councillor Jake Morrison, to Dr Zafar Iqbal of Liverpool FC and to the many committed volunteers who have worked tirelessly to support the OK Foundation's campaign. It is true to say that we would not be here today were it not for their outstanding efforts.

Unite the Union, the GMB, and the National Union of Teachers have also pledged support for the campaign, and I thank them for their very welcome backing. I also thank our local radio stations and in particular Pete Price and Tony Snell for all they have done to raise awareness of the OK Foundation's relentless campaign, and to Marc Waddington of the *Liverpool Echo* for his comprehensive coverage of the issue.

I know colleagues will talk in more detail about the OK Foundation, but I would like briefly to pay tribute to the parents of Oliver King, who have used the tragic death of their beloved son as a mechanism to achieve what they hope will be a lasting and inspiring legacy.

Oliver was just 12 years of age when he died of sudden arrhythmic death syndrome. He excelled at sport, but his family were totally unaware of his condition until they received the tragic news of his death in March 2011. Quite simply, Oliver could have been saved if an automatic external defibrillator had been to hand. However, despite their utter devastation at the loss of their child, Mark and Joanne decided to try to prevent other parents from having to go through the same heartache that they had, which has led them here to Westminster and today's debate, and to their request for the Government to act.

Sir Edward Garnier (Harborough) (Con): I am most grateful to the hon. Gentleman, not only for allowing me to intervene, but for securing the debate. A moment ago, he mentioned a number of hon. Members who could not be here. May I take the opportunity to do something for my hon. Friend the Member for Loughborough (Nicky Morgan), who cannot speak in the debate by virtue of being a Government Whip? She has a constituency case that mirrors the one the hon. Gentleman describes—that of Joe Humphries, a 14-year-old who died on a training run last October. The tragedy for the family is indescribable, but his father has set up the Joe Humphries Memorial Trust, and a community launch will take place at Rothley parish church on 13 April. I know that they will draw a great deal of comfort and support from the words of the hon. Gentleman and from this debate, and they will know that this House is deeply concerned about this sort of tragic incident.

Steve Rotheram: I thank the hon. and learned Gentleman for his contribution. Until I did some research, I did not realise what a huge problem SADS actually is. I drew out some statistics, which I will share with the Chamber: some 250 people die every single day in the UK as a consequence of sudden arrhythmic death syndrome or one of its counterparts, and some 270 schoolchildren die in British schools from SADS each year. The disease kills more people in Britain every year than lung cancer, breast cancer and AIDS combined; it is an absolutely huge issue, and it is fantastic that the OK Foundation has brought it to our attention in Parliament, because Oliver's story is like that of any of the 60,000 SADS victims across the country each and every year.

The debate is crucial to raise awareness of the condition. We as parliamentarians have to date not done enough to address people's concerns. I hope the fact that my right hon. Friend the shadow Health Secretary is in his place and will be responding for the Opposition demonstrates just how seriously we are taking the issue. I would like to place on record my thanks to the Leader of the Opposition for meeting campaigners in recent months, which is something that the Health Minister has refused to do so far.

I will briefly outline what sudden arrhythmic death syndrome is—or SADS, as it is known.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Anna Soubry): Will the hon. Gentleman explain what he just said in more detail? I am very concerned if he is saying that any Minister has refused to meet campaigners. If that is the case, I assure him that it should not be. I certainly do not have any problems with meeting anybody. I know that some people turned up at my constituency

[*Anna Soubry*]

office unannounced on a Sunday morning, which was not very helpful—obviously, I was not there—but I am quite happy to meet any campaign group on the issue.

Steve Rotheram: It is fantastic that the Minister has agreed to meet campaigners. Some are here, and if she has time at the end of today's debate, I am sure that they would be happy to spend a few minutes trying to organise something more substantial in future. I am sure that people will welcome what the she has said.

SADS is a term that is used to describe a group of medical conditions that lead to sudden, unexpected and life-threatening instability of the heart rhythm. It has also been commonly referred to, as it is in the motion, as sudden adult death syndrome, but given its propensity to strike in children, it is now often referred to simply as sudden arrhythmic death syndrome. In the majority of cases, the unstable heart rhythm—the arrhythmia—develops a rhythm called ventricular fibrillation, in which the ventricles, which are the main pumping chambers of the heart, lose all rhythm and regularity and start beating at rates in excess of 250 beats per minute. Ventricular fibrillation causes sudden collapse, seizure-like activity and cardiac arrest—in other words, the total loss of heart function—but if it is diagnosed quickly and if cardiac massage and shock from a defibrillator are applied, normal heart rhythm and signs of life can be restored.

Dame Angela Watkinson (Hornchurch and Upminster) (Con): I am most grateful to the hon. Gentleman for allowing me to intervene. He has just touched on the importance of speed in an emergency, and I wonder what level of knowledge, understanding and expertise would be required of a member of public to be effective in an emergency and to use the defibrillator to the best effect?

Steve Rotheram: All I can tell the hon. Lady is that if I can use a defibrillator, anyone can use one. We had people come into the House to demonstrate what an AED does. I was under the illusion that it was like something out of an episode of “Casualty”: someone picks up two paddles, says, “Stand back—clear,” and applies the shock to the person through that method. It is not like that. An AED is a small computerised unit that talks someone through the process, so believe me, literally anyone can use one. That will destigmatise the use of these devices for certain people who think that if they do it wrong, they will cause further complications.

Andrew Percy (Brigg and Goole) (Con): I declare an interest as a first responder who on a number of occasions has had to attempt resuscitation. Defibrillators are indeed incredibly easy to use. One of the saddest things is turning up at someone's house and finding people just standing around, worried or frightened that if they attempt cardiopulmonary resuscitation, they will cause more damage. Actually, the training that is necessary is minimal. I therefore commend not only the e-petition, but the words of the hon. Gentleman up to now. This is something that is very simple. It is so sad to turn up two or three minutes in and find that people have not started CPR, at which point the chance of survival is so much less.

Steve Rotheram: I will highlight some of the statistical evidence relating to what the hon. Gentleman says, but if nothing else, if we can debunk the myth that we will do damage if we try to intervene and that the use of defibrillators will cause complications, that will be a start. The campaigners who have come here today do not believe that this is the end of a process; rather, it is the start of the momentum that they are building to ensure that this issue is more widely recognised.

John Woodcock (Barrow and Furness) (Lab/Co-op): I congratulate my hon. Friend on securing this very important debate. He will share my sadness at the death last week of Eleanor Murphy, who was the mayoress in Barrow last year and who, along with her husband, the mayor, was able to raise £40,000 to buy 20 new defibrillators to be placed around Barrow. Does he agree with me that a great tribute to her life and their effort would be to encourage more firms and shops to agree to have defibrillators on the outside of buildings, which was their big cause towards the end, so that if someone collapses in the street, people do not need to go inside a shop, which might be closed, to be able to save their life? The Co-op is a particular example.

Steve Rotheram: Absolutely. What campaigners, or indeed anyone who is sensible enough to understand that we are in times of austerity, will say is that it is not for the Government to do everything. The example given by my hon. Friend of £40,000 being raised and the example of the OK Foundation, which has put defibrillators in all Liverpool schools, and of other organisations that are doing sterling work, prove that this is a partnership. This is something that charities can help with, but it does demand action from the Government.

Caroline Nokes (Romsey and Southampton North) (Con): I congratulate the hon. Gentleman on securing the debate. Will he join me in congratulating small communities such as Lockerley in my constituency? I learned on Friday night that there is a defibrillator in the village hall, and I was told at a meeting there of, I have to say, predominantly quite elderly people that the instructions for the defibrillator were very easy to understand. They made exactly the point that the hon. Gentleman makes: the machine talks people through the process.

Steve Rotheram: Yes. Certain people expect us, as parliamentarians, to know everything about everything, but actually we do not know an awful lot about an awful lot. I hope that if it does nothing else, today's debate and the publicity that will be generated through the campaigners will ensure that people are aware of exactly the point that the hon. Lady raises.

Stephen Twigg (Liverpool, West Derby) (Lab/Co-op): I join in the congratulations to my hon. Friend, to the OK Foundation and, indeed, to the Backbench Business Committee. He mentioned that the OK Foundation has funded every primary school in Liverpool to have a defibrillator. Does he agree with me that that sends a powerful message throughout the country that that policy should be adopted in all our schools?

Steve Rotheram: My hon. Friend and city of Liverpool colleague will know that where Liverpool leads, others often follow. The hope is that other people will recognise that what Liverpool has done is progressive. It has been done with the help of the mayor of Liverpool, the city

council and, of course, the OK Foundation and it will demonstrably save lives. We do not know when that will happen, of course, because we do not know when someone will have an attack, but at some stage, that provision will save someone's life. That will be a tremendous legacy of all the work and campaigning that the OK Foundation has done.

What is perhaps even more heartbreak than the sudden loss of life, if such a thing is possible, is the sudden loss of life when it is avoidable. There is a quick, simple and extremely effective device that can save lives. The treatment will not cost millions of pounds in research or development, nor is it a procedure that people require a medical degree to administer. Instead, it is as simple as first aid training in schools and defibrillators in public buildings.

At this point, I declare an interest: I unashamedly want there to be a defibrillator in every public building, in much the same way as there are fire extinguishers and fire alarms in every building. As the London Ambulance Service pointed out in its briefing for today's debate,

"56 people died in London from a fire in 2011 compared with 10,000 Londoners who suffered an out of hospital cardiac arrest—yet fire extinguishers are statutory in every building—and defibrillators are not".

We have them here in Parliament. If they are good enough for us in Parliament, they are good enough for every other public building.

I will shortly come on to the main argument with regard to my desire for defibrillators in public buildings, but before I do that, I am keen to touch on another element of tackling SADS: screening. Three young people die each week from SADS, and in more than half of the cases the cause is a genetic problem affecting the heart. I believe that targeted expert assessment of families in which there is a high risk of inherited cardiac disease or in which there has been a sudden unexplained death will lead to a considerable decrease in the number of SADS victims annually. No one is claiming that that is a panacea; it is simply a vital step in the diagnosis of those most at risk.

I praise organisations such as Cardiac Risk in the Young, which is subsidising screening for young people, ensuring that those who believe that they need an ECG—electrocardiogram—can afford one. The OK Foundation and others are also doing that, but screening should be more widely available.

John Pugh (Southport) (LD): The hon. Gentleman said earlier that Liverpool leads the way. He will be aware, as the right hon. Member for Leigh (Andy Burnham) will be aware, because we were both at the same event, that Liverpool John Moores university does an enormous amount of work on the screening of young sportsmen. A huge amount of work is being done and it is being done, again, in Liverpool.

Steve Rotheram: Again, I could not agree more. John Moores and other universities have done fantastic work. I looked at some of the material from the Football Association. It runs the association football medical screening programme for youth trainees, which involves the screening of 750 youth players. The International Olympic Committee has recommended that all countries screen their athletes to minimise the risk of SADS. That

indicates the benefits of screening, so let us look at an early intervention strategy for at-risk groups as an initial step.

Even in the past week, it has been pleasing to see the Football Association and the British Heart Foundation form a £1.2 million fund to ensure that 900 defibrillators are made available to clubs in non-league football and the women's super league. That is real action that will make a real difference, but although it is encouraging that sport has woken up to this condition and recognised what I would term its social and moral responsibility, there is more work for the medical profession to do and more support for the Government of this country and our partners across the developed world to give.

A simple ECG can expose whether a patient has irregular electrical or structural problems with their heart that can lead to SADS. Currently, however, standard cardiovascular risk assessment screening is not as precise as it needs to be in identifying symptoms relating to sudden cardiac arrest, which is why the British Heart Foundation is undertaking vital research into the genetics around SADS, on which it hopes to publish a report shortly. In the meantime, the Government can play a leading role in encouraging pathologists and coroners who determine that a person has died of SADS to inform immediate family members to ensure that they receive an ECG at the earliest possible opportunity. The Government should also support the medical industry's work to improve the scientific precision of screening. Such Government measures should form part of the proposed new national strategy to improve heart safety and reduce preventable deaths from sudden cardiac arrest, as set out in the motion.

I hope that today's debate and any subsequent debates will achieve a number of things, but it is pivotal that the imperative relationship between CPR and defibrillators is exposed: a defibrillator on its own cannot save a life; CPR on its own has an outside chance of saving a life, but the two together have a more than 50% chance of saving a life. How do we know? Ask people such as Fabrice Muamba. His collapse on a football pitch, in front of thousands of spectators at White Hart Lane and millions watching on television, was perhaps the most graphic illustration of SADS, and his recovery is the best example of what can be achieved with swift and targeted intervention.

Bystanders witness more than half the cardiac arrests that occur in public, but not enough people have the life-saving skills to help those heart attack victims. CPR is the first action in the chain of survival and is crucial in the first minutes after a cardiac arrest, because it helps keep oxygen moving around the body, including the brain, which is why the British Heart Foundation campaign tells us to phone 999 and press hard and fast to the beat of "Staying Alive". It is a simple message, which works, and we have all seen it on television. CPR essentially buys a patient time. A defibrillator starts the heart, but cannot be used on a still heart, so unless CPR is administered, a defibrillator is effectively useless.

That point is crucial, and is at the heart of—forgive the pun—why colleagues and I, in consultation with my right hon. Friend the Member for Leigh, chose to include first aid in today's motion. Medical experts believe that CPR combined with a defibrillator shock can triple the survival chances of somebody who has suffered a cardiac arrest outside hospital. I shall repeat

[*Steve Rotheram*]

that: it can triple survival chances. That is extraordinary. CPR and a defibrillator shock can buy paramedics time to arrive, prevent serious brain damage and ultimately increase the chance of a full recovery. I am not sure that there is any need for further debate. If someone's child or loved one had a cardiac arrest, would they not want to triple their chance of survival?

Penny Mordaunt (Portsmouth North) (Con): I thank the hon. Gentleman for securing the debate. I add my sentiments to those expressed already on the wonderful work that the OK Foundation and the King family have done. I pay tribute to South Central ambulance service, which does wonderful training in my constituency. Does the hon. Gentleman agree that, although it is tremendous that community organisations have invested in equipment and training in their localities, a benefit of a national push, such as that that we had with digital hearing aids, is that it drives down the cost of equipment and training, no matter who pays for it? It is important to get across that message about why we should put more oomph behind such work.

Steve Rotheram: It is an excellent point, which I will mention later in my contribution. The hon. Lady is absolutely right. If we persuaded the Government, Government bodies, large organisations or a combination of people to purchase AEDs, the price would plummet because they would order in bulk. I think they are £1,200 to £1,500 per unit at the moment, but empirical evidence from other countries shows that, when they are purchased in large volumes, their price comes down to almost 40% of the original cost.

Finally, I shall address directly what the Government can do to help, and it is simple: legislation. It can be done in a controlled and progressive manner and, in the current economic conditions, it need not cost the earth. Legislate first in education: enshrine mandatory emergency life skills training in the curriculum; ensure that every child who walks out of school at 16 or 18 possesses life-saving skills, and ensure that this Parliament, here and now, commits to having a new generation of life savers. We have the support to do it. Will we need to come back with another 100,000 signatures to get the Government to act? According to a British Heart Foundation survey in 2011, 86% of school teachers agree that such skills should be part of the curriculum, 78% of children said that they wanted to be taught how to save someone's life in an emergency, and 70% of parents thought that children should be taught emergency life skills in school. When we place emergency life skills education in the context of my earlier point about the relationship between CPR and defibrillators, we begin to see just how many lives we could save daily, monthly and yearly.

The Government, though the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, should introduce legislation such as the Canadian province of Manitoba's Defibrillator Public Access Act. In Canada, public consultation and medical expertise identified the most likely places for a person to suffer a cardiac arrest—apart from in hospital, of course—and legislated to ensure that all those buildings, such as gyms, football stadiums, golf courses, schools and airports, had to have an AED fitted by January 2014.

There is also a financial argument: fitting AEDs could save the NHS millions of pounds, because survivors would not need the same degree of critical care or, potentially, aftercare. To discredit further the myth that it would be too expensive, let us once again put it into context: a defibrillator costs about the same as a PC and if we put AEDs in public buildings, that cost will come down, as the hon. Member for Portsmouth North (Penny Mordaunt) identified, as it does for other equipment ordered in bulk.

Dame Angela Watkinson: I thank the hon. Gentleman for allowing me to intervene again. It occurs to me that he said earlier that there are defibrillators in this building, but I ashamed to say that I do not know where they are. I do not know if I am alone in that. It is important therefore not only to have them in buildings and for people to know how to use them, but for people to know where they can be found. There is no time in an emergency to wonder where one is—everybody needs to know.

Steve Rotheram: The hon. Lady is right, but there are people who know where the defibrillators are. On behalf of the OK Foundation, I asked a few police officers. We are very cosseted here. People such as police officers and other security staff know where the defibrillators are. She is right in that, just as there has to be a chart that says where the fire extinguishers or first aiders are—where someone can get treatment should they cut themselves—the same process should apply to identifying where the nearest AED is. It is not beyond the realms of Parliament for us to pull together legislation to cover the good point she raises.

I know about the costs associated with AEDs. The Association of Primary Schools and the OK Foundation said that every primary school in Liverpool should have one, which would be a considerable benefit. They have now got an AED, which they purchased together, fitted in each school. Pinehurst primary school in my constituency was the first to benefit, but now all 122 primary schools in the city have AEDs. As I said earlier, where Liverpool leads, the rest of the country needs to follow, because AEDs will save young people's lives. We need to make that happen across the whole country and encourage our devolved partners to follow suit.

I conclude by reiterating why today's debate matters. We cannot put a price on a life. If something practical can be done that has the ability to save a life and falls within what we politicians might call the envelope of affordability, we in Parliament have a duty to act. In times of austerity, when we look for ways of saving money and reducing the burden on the NHS, investing in screening research and equipping an entire future generation with emergency life-saving skills that will keep people alive, increase survival rates and reduce the demand on hospital care is a step we should all support. Every minute that goes by after a person has suffered a cardiac arrest reduces their survival chances by 10%. Although CPR can keep the heart going, it is not enough in itself. Britain should aspire to achieve survival rates such as those in Seattle, where more than 50% of sudden cardiac arrests lead to a full recovery. Our survival rate is currently somewhere between 2% and 12%.

Now is the time to act and for Parliament to say, "Enough is enough." Now is the time for levels of screening of young people to increase, for teaching CPR

to be mandatory in schools, and for the Government to initiate a new legal requirement for a defibrillator to be installed in all schools and prominent public places. We need a cohesive national strategy to improve heart safety in the UK. I hope that Government Front Benchers are listening. They have the political authority to address the issue. Let us hope that they have the moral fibre that is needed to act.

5.03 pm

Andrew Percy (Brigg and Goole) (Con): I congratulate the hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton (Steve Rotheram) and everybody who signed the e-petition on securing this debate; 100,000 signatures is an incredible amount to reach. I pay tribute to everybody who signed. It is good to have the Minister and the shadow Secretary of State here. I am happier seeing the shadow Secretary of State here than I was to see him attend a college in Goole recently. As welcome as he is, normally, perhaps he can stay here in future; that would be more beneficial. Alas. *[Interruption.]* That was a back-handed compliment, by the way.

I also want to pay tribute to the OK Foundation and the British Heart Foundation for the work that they do in raising awareness. It is fantastic to hear about the work that has been undertaken in Liverpool. I do not necessarily agree that where Liverpool leads, the country always follows, or indeed that Liverpool always leads, but on this occasion I pay tribute to what has been achieved on the wrong side of the Pennines.

I intervened on the hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton and talked about the work that I do with the Yorkshire ambulance service as a community first responder. I want to talk about that and how that has got me alive to the issue and really changed my views. It has made me quite passionate. Becoming a first responder has been the thing that I have been most proud of in my life. I am prouder of that than getting elected to this place. Before that, my proudest achievement was passing my driving test on the sixth or seventh occasion. Being a first responder has become the thing that I am most proud of.

I set up a scheme covering Goole, Hook and Airmyn: only three of the 75 communities that I represent, sadly. We did not have a scheme there. We had terrible ambulance response rates. I met the ambulance service and it set me a challenge to do something about it, so we set up a scheme. We have 10 volunteers. My staff in the Goole constituency office have all been trained and they provide cover during the day as first responders. In the evening, members of the community provide cover. We have all become good friends. We are all from different walks of life in the town. They cover evenings and I cover weekends, along with one of my councillors, who lives just round the corner.

I pay tribute to all the volunteers who put themselves forward for first responding in my constituency, both with Yorkshire ambulance service and in the Lincolnshire part of my constituency through Lincolnshire LIVES, the Lincolnshire Integrated Voluntary Emergency Service. The volunteers do a fantastic job. They get no publicity for it, which perhaps we as MPs get. They deserve all credit for the lives that they save and the impact that they have. I have seen the impact in my short time doing such work. We set up the scheme about six months ago.

We never expected to be as busy in our community as we have ended up being, having attended about 45 calls in our first four months, which is significant.

I want to talk about the training to prove how easy it is. We did our training as first responders over a weekend. It was two full days. The training included oxygen therapy and training for the other types of incidents that we attend. The CPR and defibrillator training took place on the first day. We practised scenarios and it was incredibly simple and easy. It is as simple as the hon. Gentleman said. The defibrillators spoke to us. The first thing they say is, “Tear open packages. Place one pad upper left.” I do not like hearing that now. It strikes fear into me, having had to use them. They talk people through the procedure and the training really is simple. I came away from that training thinking to myself, “How on earth can people not know how to do this?” It is staggering that we require people to be trained in all kinds of other things in their work environment. People have to learn the inside-out of all sorts of health and safety legislation for various jobs, but we do not teach people something as simple as starting chest compressions on somebody. As the hon. Gentleman said in his speech, people fear that they can do more harm than good, but if someone is in cardiac arrest, people can do no more harm than that.

So, we got our scheme up and running and we had our weekend of training. We do ongoing training every month. We have just had a weekend at the Hull York medical school in Hull going through various scenarios to try to enhance our skills, but that is an add-on to the basic training. I thought that we would not get many calls to begin with, but we were very busy. One of the first calls that I attended was a cardiac arrest, which, sadly, was at the furthest point of the three-mile radius that we cover. I got there first, within about six or seven minutes. Even though we had done all our training, I thought that six or seven minutes would be all right. It was a pretty terrifying drive on the way there for my first cardiac arrest.

I turned up in my first responder uniform and all of a sudden everyone was looking at me. However, the training kicks in and straight away I was doing chest compressions, getting the defibrillator up, getting the oxygen going and barking instructions at people to get what was needed from the bag. I thought, “If I can do this, anybody can.” It was the confidence gained from that weekend of training that led to my trying to resuscitate somebody. Unfortunately, it was not successful. I drove away that night, got home and thought about it. It had taken me a few minutes to get there. When I arrived, people were already there. A neighbour had tried to start CPR, but of course that was done through instructions over the telephone. The gentleman was not old and I thought to myself, “If only somebody had been there to start instantly. Why don’t we all know this?” I became passionate about it. Most of our calls tend to be for heart attacks, diabetes and strokes, which can end in a slightly more positive outcome.

The second cardiac arrest that I attended was in a nursing home. A responder from the neighbouring scheme and I were the first people on the scene. On that particular occasion, nursing home staff had not commenced CPR, for whatever reason, and I thought, “Well, why—in nursing homes?” There are so many calls—just on Saturday night, my phone went at 2.30 am about a cardiac arrest

[*Andrew Percy*]

at a nursing home in Goole—and they increasingly tend to be from nursing homes. I thought, “Why do we not have a defibrillator in every nursing home?” I notice that the state of Texas passed a law in 2009 to require a defibrillator in every nursing home.

The Minister obviously cannot respond about the curriculum, although I am sure that she will pass such comments on to the relevant Minister, but she could do something about nursing homes. One of my requests is that she simply requires every nursing home, at its own expense—for heaven’s sake, most of them are private organisations—to have on site a defibrillator, which costs less than £1,000, including for the training.

I live two doors away from a nursing home in my village. As a result of reading about what we have been doing locally, the parish council is proactively trying to get a defibrillator in the nursing home for general community use. That is something that we can achieve simply and without great cost to the taxpayer. The same goes for assisted living centres or sheltered housing complexes, where we should require there to be defibrillators.

I have to say—playing a little to the gallery—that, since I started first responding, I have become such an admirer of our ambulance crews and their work. I am playing to the gallery, but of course we are not allowed to refer to people in the Public Gallery. I have seen how busy those guys are. They are constantly called out and they are called out more and more, for which they do not necessarily get credit. They are the true last emergency service: when all else fails, the ambulance service is called on. They sometimes struggle to respond to all the calls in our areas, and there is no doubt that we must do something about that. Demand on our ambulance crews for service is increasing every year, and we must follow through on that with proper resources so that we do not end up with their taking too long to get to a cardiac arrest or other emergencies.

As a result of that work and becoming quite passionate about it, I started to think about the role in schools. The hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton said that 270 young people die of sudden cardiac arrest every year. I worked in government in the United States about 10 or 12 years ago, when we put through the legislature of New Jersey a requirement for a defibrillator to be placed in every school in the state. That happened, and a several other states followed suit, but that was back in 2000, and here we are in 2013, debating this issue in the House—probably for the first time in a long while—with no requirement in this country. Frankly, that seems bonkers to me.

I talked to the East Midlands ambulance service, which covers the other part of my constituency, a few weeks ago after having seen the ITV programme about sudden cardiac arrest and life-saving skills in Norway, and we put in a bid to the local council. Just this morning, my local North Lincolnshire council considered my grant application for defibrillators, and I am told that it has approved the bid to put one in all secondary schools in the north Lincolnshire part of my constituency and in the schools in that of my hon. Friend the Member for Cleethorpes (Martin Vickers). Indeed, it will go further: the council portfolio holder rang me this afternoon to say that it will guarantee a defibrillator in every secondary school, not just those in my constituency and that of my hon. Friend, and that will happen soon.

Karen Lumley (Redditch) (Con): May I pay tribute to my constituents Robert and Maggie Underwood, who lost their daughter to SADS? They have managed to raise £18,000 to put defibrillators in 15 of my schools in Redditch.

Andrew Percy: I, too, congratulate my hon. Friend’s constituents. I always think that it is a bit easier for us, as MPs, to bang the drum and to get people behind us, but it is fantastic for residents to do so and to raise such an amount of money, so I pay tribute to them as well. A lot of that is going on around the country, but frankly there needs to be more.

Our bid in north Lincolnshire was also to ask schools to filter training down to young people, as part of the deal of their accepting a defibrillator paid for from the grant, so it does not only relate to use on school sites. I hope that if there is a cardiac arrest—not that I hope for one, but if there is—a young person from north Lincolnshire with that training will be there, so that they can put their training into use, although I would prefer them not to have to do so. The *Scunthorpe Telegraph*, the local newspaper, rang me today to say that it is quite keen to get behind that and might want to run a campaign about it, so I shall wait to hear more. We can try to use the National Citizen Service to filter down that training.

Stephen Twigg: I congratulate the hon. Gentleman on his excellent speech. He mentioned the *Scunthorpe Telegraph*, and does he agree that the media have a crucial role? Will he join my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Walton (Steve Rotheram) and me in praising the brilliant work done by the *Liverpool Echo* with the OK Foundation?

Andrew Percy: Members of Parliament are never backward in coming forward to praise their local newspapers, not least in the hope that it guarantees them a friendly quote next week, but the hon. Gentleman makes an important point. Newspapers can be part of our going out to challenge—I do not want to say “shame”—businesses. I am a Conservative and I love businesses, but businesses make profits and do so on the back of their workers, to whom they have responsibility. [*Interruption.*] Well, I think that I am a Conservative. Of course, I am; or just the Brigg and Goole party these days, perhaps. [*Interruption.*] Well, I am certainly not a Liberal Democrat—no offence to my hon. Friend the Member for Southport (John Pugh)—because my views on Europe count me out.

Newspapers have a responsibility to go to businesses and challenge them, particularly big businesses. I understand that defibrillators would be expensive for smaller ones and those employing only one or two people, but we should ask big businesses, “What are you doing for the welfare of your workers? Where are your defibrillators?” Newspapers such as the *Liverpool Echo* and the *Scunthorpe Telegraph* have an important role to play in that.

Anna Soubry: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, and I congratulate him on his excellent speech, which follows another excellent one. Does he agree that there is a good argument that we can build an Olympic legacy based on the great volunteers who took part in the games by considering whether we can use some of the skills that

they helped to bring to the games, and take those skills into the issues of training people and campaigning for defibrillators, which he has identified?

Andrew Percy: Indeed. My way to address the problem is to have a multi-faceted approach. In many ways, it has to come from the bottom up. We need people in communities to say, “I will be trained and I am happy to filter down that training, and I am even happy to knock on some doors to raise some money to get defibrillators in our communities.” A lot of parish councils have money in the bank, so we should go to them as well. We need a bottom-up approach through volunteers and the Olympic legacy, as the Minister says, but there is also a role for the Government to say to nursing homes and schools, “We want and expect you to provide a defibrillator, which is relatively cheap,” and of course to say the same to businesses. Is it not true corporatism to bring all three of those elements together? As I have said, there is a role for businesses in looking after the welfare of their workers in that way.

Goole high school has a pilot this year in which everyone in year 11 has been funded to go through the National Citizen Service. I have suggested to the head teacher that, as part of the community payback for that, all those young people should be trained in CPR this summer. Therefore, 100 or 200 young people in that community in Goole will leave at the end of the summer having received training, which is 200 more advocates for the whole issue and potentially 200 more life-savers.

Julie Hilling (Bolton West) (Lab): Although it is a good idea to provide emergency life-saving skills within the National Citizen Service, does the hon. Gentleman not agree that if we legislated for every school leaver to learn CPR, we would make a huge difference?

Andrew Percy: I would be quite happy to see that happen. We can leave it to schools to decide how to deliver such learning, but even if we cannot put it in the national curriculum, we should say to schools that they should look to offer such training as an add-on.

I was clearly going to say something about Wisconsin next, as it is written here on a note, but it has gone out of my head. Something jolly good is happening in Wisconsin, which we should look at and perhaps copy if indeed it is a good thing.

Another way to address the matter is through teacher training programmes. Again, that is in the gift of Government and is relatively inexpensive to do. Simply put, we should require teachers, as part of their teacher training, to go through a morning of CPR training.

I end my contribution where I began, by congratulating the hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton on securing the debate. I congratulate, too, all those who have taken part in the debate through the e-petition and who support this campaign. This is a matter of life and death, and a matter where not just minutes but seconds count. We all have a responsibility to do what we can to ensure that we improve the appalling rates of survival for out-of-hospital cardiac arrest in this country.

5.21 pm

Mr George Howarth (Knowsley) (Lab): I am pleased to be serving under your wise chairmanship, Mr Amess. It is a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Brigg and

Goole (Andrew Percy) who brought to this debate some very particular knowledge, the scope of which, I suspect, none of the rest of us has. It was really interesting to listen to what he had to say.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Walton (Steve Rotheram) on introducing the debate, which he did not only with his usual thoroughness but in a very accessible way. That will be much appreciated by those involved in campaigning. Finally, I thank the Oliver King Foundation for keeping the issue alive and for raising awareness of it. My hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, West Derby (Stephen Twigg), who has left the Chamber, spoke about the print media. Although I accept that they can have a positive role to play in promoting such issues, it is a double-edged sword, because their coverage of bereavement is often both intrusive and inaccurate, so we should not indulge in an orgy of congratulation. If the Press Complaints Commission had had any teeth, the print media would often have been condemned for the way they have covered bereavement.

I shall cover some of the same ground as my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Walton, but with perhaps a slightly different perspective. He was right to say that as much knowledge as possible needs to be disseminated about how to keep blood pumping, which is basically what we are talking about, and about the use of defibrillators. If we talk to people about being trained so that they will be able to act if a defibrillator is available—this issue was brought out well by the hon. Member for Brigg and Goole and by my hon. Friend—the thing they are concerned about is not necessarily being taught how to use the modern device, but whether they will be able to recognise accurately what they are confronted with. That is often a barrier for many people, but I say rather brutally that the alternative to making a mistake is taking no action at all, which can be fatal. In many cases, that is the choice that people are confronted with.

My second point is about the availability of defibrillators and training in how to use them. Yes, we need them in schools and in public buildings, but there is also an argument, which should be debated, that they should be available in every workplace of significant size. At the end of the day, the powerful case that was set out by my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Walton to address the situation hinges on having both defibrillators available and people able to use them. Indeed, the more defibrillators that are available in more diverse places, the more lives will be saved.

My hon. Friend mentioned the availability of fire extinguishers, which is a really good comparison; another is smoke alarms. The impact that smoke alarms have had on detecting fires has been phenomenal. We are now at a point where almost every household has, or should have, a smoke alarm installed. I am not saying that every household should have a defibrillator, but the more widespread these safety and intervention measures are, the more effective they can be.

Finally, there is an overpowering case for screening. For several years now, I have been involved in the all-party group for cardiac arrest in the young, which does an excellent job in campaigning for widespread screening. Personally, I would like every young person to have the opportunity to be screened, because regardless of whether they believe that they might have a problem, the availability of screening would mean that they would, wherever possible, know what happens—in other words,

[Mr George Howarth]

we are talking about screening age groups that might be vulnerable to this sort of problem. However, screening is not easy to access at the moment. Also, where there has been a fatality or where someone has been diagnosed as being vulnerable, there is often a genetic component, so it is possible that other members of the family might be vulnerable as well, but in one case in my constituency, siblings wanted to be screened after they had tragically lost their brother, but they had to go to great extremes and be extremely persistent to access the screening service. That is clearly a problem that needs to be addressed.

Let me finish on a helpful note. Earlier, the hon. Member for Portsmouth North (Penny Mordaunt) said that the campaign needed a bit of “oomph” behind it. That is a good way of describing what we would all like to see as a result of today’s debate. If the Minister can address the problem, she might perhaps be known as the Minister for “oomph”.

5.28 pm

Rosie Cooper (West Lancashire) (Lab): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Amess. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Walton (Steve Rotheram) on securing this debate, after 110,000 people made their voices heard through the e-petition system. This is a genuinely important debate about action that we can take to help save lives. I join hon. Members in recognising the work of Mark King in setting up the Oliver King Foundation, Councillor Jake Morrison, and the King family and other supporters. They have indeed been the driving force behind bringing such prominence to the devastating impact of sudden cardiac death. My hon. Friend described the tragic circumstances surrounding Oliver’s death and the drive of Oliver’s family to prevent such a tragedy happening unnecessarily to anybody else. The family should be sincerely commended and thanked for their work.

In the Government’s response to the e-petition, they said:

“Sudden cardiac death is a very complex issue. It can be caused by a range of different conditions.”

I think that everybody affected by SADS understands that it is indeed a complex issue; there are no easy answers, quick solutions or magic cures for all cases. At the same time, however, there is recognition that more can and should be done, because lives can be saved. There are two facts that we cannot ignore: first, that 80% of sudden cardiac arrests occur outside hospital; and, secondly, that survival rates have not improved since in the 1960s.

In my opinion, there is a consistent theme that runs through the e-petition and the related petitions, through the work of the Oliver King Foundation, SADS UK, Cardiac Risk in the Young, the British Heart Foundation, and through the work of people such as the Marshall family and Sue Murrin-Bailey in my constituency of West Lancashire. The theme is that the Department of Health should do more to enable communities to be better informed about this condition, better trained to respond when an incident happens and better equipped to save lives.

I will take just a few moments to highlight some of the excellent work taking place in West Lancashire that is helping to save lives and to reduce the number of deaths caused by sudden cardiac arrest. John Marshall was an incredibly talented young footballer from Ormskirk; he had represented England on 12 occasions and had been signed by Everton football club. Devastatingly, John died the day before his Everton career was due to start. John’s family—his mother Maureen, dad John, and sister Hayley—have spent most of the last 18 years raising awareness and raising funds, so that other families do not have to suffer the terrible loss that they did.

Thanks to the fundraising efforts of the Marshall family, working with CRY, free heart screenings were made available to young people at Edge Hill university—in fact, the latest screening event took place just 10 days ago. Alison Cox of CRY has said that since John Marshall died in 1995, more than 10,000 young people under the age of 35 have died suddenly from undiagnosed heart conditions, yet around 9,000 of those young people could still be alive if they had been tested for heart conditions.

I now move on to the work of Sue Murrin-Bailey, the former West Lancashire borough council mayoress. Providing defibrillators was one of her chosen charities during her year as mayoress; she worked tirelessly to raise funds and that work has continued since her term as mayoress ended. At a school where Sue is a governor, a parent collapsed with cardiac arrest: luckily an ambulance was nearby, so that parent was saved, but the case highlighted the need for much-needed life-saving equipment to be nearby.

Sue has raised £35,000, which has enabled the purchase of 21 automated external defibrillators, but having raised the money and purchased the equipment, Sue and the North West ambulance service have encountered other barriers. Astonishingly, there appear to be planning restrictions that are delaying the installation of the equipment in some public places. The Minister looks surprised; I was absolutely astonished to learn that. The problem is about locating yellow boxes in conservation areas. Perhaps we should put a higher price on the conservation of human life. I urge the Minister to speak to her colleagues in the Department for Communities and Local Government to ask them to remove those senseless barriers. I am happy to provide the Minister with even more detail about the issue after the debate, if she wants it.

Sue Murrin-Bailey has been working with the North West ambulance service to identify the best locations for the equipment, through hot spot mapping to identify where the highest incidences of cardiac arrest are found and where the equipment is most needed. Once a defibrillator is installed, the NWAS catalogues the location on its database, which enables the location of the defibrillator to be provided to anyone when a 999 call is made. That information is vital when we consider that the use of an AED within four to eight minutes of sudden cardiac arrest increases the survival rate by 75%. All of these things are essential in the chain of survival, and as I said earlier, 80% of these cases occur away from hospital.

Many people experiencing sudden cardiac arrest are reliant on the people around them knowing what to do, and those first few minutes are key. People need to know that, first, they must call 999; secondly, they must

administer CPR while a defibrillator is located and used—it is important that it is actually used—before, thirdly, they pass the patient on to receive advanced care.

A better informed public will not come about through telepathy or osmosis. The public need help and the Department of Health is surely the best equipped agency to lead nationally. As the Minister will understand, up and down the country, organisations, bereaved families and local communities have not been waiting for the Department of Health to take the lead on SADS. People have been out there doing something—raising money and providing equipment—but they recognise that more action needs to be taken now, so that more deaths can be prevented. What people want is the Department of Health to work with them in making a difference, in saving lives and in reducing the number of deaths caused by sudden cardiac arrest. Surely that is not too much to ask?

5.36 pm

Grahame M. Morris (Easington) (Lab): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Amess.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Walton (Steve Rotheram) on securing this debate. It is a privilege to follow my hon. Friend the Member for West Lancashire (Rosie Cooper) and other Members who have made constructive contributions. Compared with some other debates that I have been involved with in recent weeks and months, the unanimity today is a refreshing change.

I pay tribute not only to my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Walton and the other Members who are in Westminster Hall today, but to the people—more than 110,000 of them—who signed the online petition that was set up by the Oliver King Foundation. Indeed, I pay tribute to the King family, Jake Morrison and all those who have been instrumental in taking forward the campaign. I also thank the Minister for agreeing to meet campaigners; that is very important. It shows the public interest in and the importance of the issues that we are debating today.

As you might be able to tell from my accent, Mr Amess, I am not actually from Merseyside, Liverpool or the north-west.

Andrew Percy: No?

Grahame M. Morris: Well, I am fifth-generation from that area actually, so I have a connection with it. However, I am from the north-east and I know that many colleagues from the north-east and from across the whole country are concerned and share the aims of the OK Foundation, so I hope the Minister will support the campaign to provide defibrillators in all public buildings.

My hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Walton referred to the protection that we enjoy here in the Palace of Westminster. I tried to find out precisely how many defibrillators there are in the Palace. There are notices about them at the end of every corridor, including my corridor, and I found that there are actually 16 defibrillators in the Palace. Somebody here obviously knows the importance of early defibrillation in the event

of a cardiac arrest, and they are to be complimented for that. The general public should enjoy a similar level of protection.

This is a matter of life and death. As my hon. Friend said, an estimated 60,000 out-of-hospital cardiac arrests occur each year and, incredibly, of the 30,000 cases attended by medical professionals, fewer than one in five of the people affected receive the life-saving intervention they need following a survivable cardiac arrest. I did not realise until I looked at the numbers involved quite how mind-boggling they are. There are nearly 100,000 deaths each year in the UK due to cardiac arrest, which is more than 250 a day, making it one of the UK's biggest killers.

Hon. Members have already mentioned the British Heart Foundation's high-profile "Staying Alive" campaign and information film on hands-only CPR. The House will be relieved to know, Mr Amess, that I shall not attempt to sing it or repeat it, but that was a successful campaign. It is reported that in November 28 lives were saved by people who learnt how to administer CPR from the advert headed up the footballer Vinnie Jones, or were inspired by it to take further lessons and coaching, and I imagine that that number is even higher today.

I was surprised by the UK's record on emergency life-support skills. A British Red Cross survey found that only 7% of people in the UK have first aid skills, compared with 80% of people in Scandinavian countries and a similar figure in Germany. I was surprised, because in the area where I grew up and have always lived, there was quite a strong tradition with the St John Ambulance, and so on, so I expected the figures to be higher, but perhaps it is a function of the society in which we live. That is a major omission and I hope that the Minister takes note of it.

A further survey of public support carried out by the British Heart Foundation found that 73%—almost three quarters—of schoolchildren wanted to learn how to resuscitate someone and give first aid, and more than three quarters of teachers and parents agreed that it would be a good thing to be taught in schools. I hope that the Minister will speak with her counterparts in the Department for Education and press for these life-saving first aid skills to be a core part of the national curriculum, to ensure that all young people leave school equipped with the ability to save a life. That would be really worthwhile.

We know that time matters when cardiac arrest occurs. For every minute that passes following a cardiac arrest and before CPR is administered, the chances of survival are reduced by around 10%. Although CPR can buy more time, defibrillation is the only effective treatment for cardiac arrest caused by ventricular fibrillation, where the heart quivers and stops pumping blood around the body. The British Heart Foundation has found that, for every minute that passes without defibrillation, chances of survival decrease by 14%. We have heard how CPR can improve the chances of survival. We have also heard about research that shows that applying a controlled shock within the first five minutes of collapse provides the best chance of survival. It is therefore essential that defibrillators are readily available, particularly in places where there is higher incidence of cardiac arrest or where it might be difficult for emergency services to arrive quickly.

[*Grahame M. Morris*]

I applaud the efforts of one of my local newspapers, *The Northern Echo*, which has been running the “A Chance to Live” campaign in my region, promoting the use of defibrillators in public places, particularly gymnasiums, where there is a greater risk of cardiac arrest occurring both before and after strenuous effort. I am pleased to note—we did a bit of a survey—that all the local authority and council-run gyms in the north-east have defibrillators and staff trained to use them. It has been reported, however, that 80% of private gyms do not have some form of life-saving equipment available; it does not seem to matter whether it is a small gym or one of the larger, more up-market leisure gyms. When challenged about the lack of defibrillators in their gyms, Bannatynes, headquartered in Darlington, issued a statement explaining that they did not have defibrillators because

“they are a specialist piece of medical equipment, which should only be operated by a qualified medical professional.”

I do not know if hon. Members have any contact with Duncan Bannatyne, or if he will get a copy of this debate, but having heard the comprehensive, complete and compelling case advanced by my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Walton, it is clear that it is not necessary to have comprehensive training to use a defibrillator. I hope that in the course of this debate we can put to bed this misconception.

As we have heard, modern defibrillators are designed to be used by untrained members of the public; they provide audio and visual instructions to the user and the machines will automatically diagnose the patient and deliver an electric shock only if it is necessary. To provide a medical opinion, as we have the Minister here, in my area in County Durham, Dr Harry Byrne, vice chairman of NHS Darlington clinical commissioning group, has described defibrillators as the

“single greatest advance in out of hospital cardiac assistance since the invention of chest compressions or CPR... You don’t have to be a trained first aider to use one. You just pull it out of the box and follow the instructions step by step. It even tells you what to do”,

as we have heard, from my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Walton and the hon. Member for Brigg and Goole (Andrew Percy).

A defibrillator is an essential life-saving piece of equipment and I hope defibrillators will become common, not just in schools, but in workplaces, too. Hon. Members have suggested that they should be in shopping centres and nursing homes. They should be in community buildings as well. Certainly, though, they should be in schools. I agree with my hon. Friend that they should be as common as fire extinguishers and smoke alarms. I hope that the Minister supports these measures and will be proactive in protecting the public and ensuring that everyone, no matter where they live and work, has the best chance of surviving cardiac arrest.

5.47 pm

John Mann (Bassetlaw) (Lab): It is a pleasure to take part in this debate and I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Walton (Steve Rotheram) on the fine way that he introduced it. I pay tribute to the campaigners who have given Parliament an appropriate kick in the pants to ensure that this issue is debated with

proper time. This is a great opportunity for us to look at what can be done and the best way to do it. I will be giving the Minister some proposals on how this can be taken forward that will not cost her any money—there are ways that Governments can spend money, but some suggestions are cost-neutral.

By a remarkable coincidence, in Bassetlaw we are about to launch a campaign. When we agreed to launch it, I did not know that this debate would take place. After we had set our campaign dates, I got some e-mails and twitters telling me about it—[*Interruption.*] Tweets, apparently. Anyway, I got them, read them and responded. There was a good bit of pressure, but we had already decided, because we have a campaign group that has been battling. People power has brought this debate here, and we had our own people power in our ambulance campaign in the east midlands, which was resolved today—the Minister will want to know this, because I doubt whether she had anyone in the meeting this morning, but I did.

In our area, we put forward the idea that, rather than have all our ambulance stations closed, going down to none, we should have them kept open and have three. We have won. All three are being kept open, as a result of people power. The number of fully crewed ambulances with qualified staff will remain as is, rather than being cut. I asked for six guarantees—I put it in writing—and got the formal answers on the record this morning. We won that campaign.

I offered the ambulance service a bit of a deal when I met it. Our group, the “Save Our Services” campaign, which just so happens to include Councillor Adele Mumby and Mr Gavin Briers, community first responders, and various others, has campaigned with me and the local council on this matter. I said, “Look, I’ve seen some figures that say Bassetlaw has a less than 2% survival rate. However, in Lincolnshire, it is apparently 11%. Hang on a minute. I don’t know who’s not been informing me about this, and I’ve not seen these figures before, but if our survival rate is under 2%, and Lincolnshire’s is 11%, something’s wrong.” When I looked into it, the community first responders were clear about what is needed: they said we need defibrillators everywhere in our community and we need training.

We have therefore agreed the Bassetlaw defibrillator campaign, which we are launching on 11 April. It will be an unusual campaign, compared with some. I have heard a lot of medical jargon, but we will not be using any of that, because I cannot follow it, and I am the MP. Many of my constituents will have more medical knowledge than me, but some will not be able to follow that jargon, so we will keep the campaign really simple. It is going to be like this. Every school will have to have a defibrillator; those that do not will get a visit from me to hold their governors to account. I do not care who funds this: the council, the county council or the school governors. The Lions are also raising money. What I do care about, though, is that the defibrillator is registered with the ambulance service, which can then do the training to make sure the defibrillator is properly used.

I have been to have a look at a defibrillator, and I was photographed trying one out. Like my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Walton, I know how simple they are; us simple guys, we can get it. It is easy to use one, and I can do it. However, I want to make sure the systems are good, and I want people to think them

through. That is important for the kids. When I was 11, a lad in my class at school died suddenly, so I am very aware of the problem. However, I also want to make sure the community can use these defibrillators, so we are not stopping just at schools, although if a school does not want to have a defibrillator, I will name and shame them. I am sure they all want one, and some have them already, but they should all want to participate fully.

To help, the Minister could have a word with that Secretary of State for Education, as others have said. I could suggest bits of the national curriculum that could be dropped. We could lose a king or queen who is long dead, and put in a bit about defibrillators. If the Minister or the Education Secretary wants to come up with other bits of the national curriculum we could lose, I do not mind, but they should get these issues on the curriculum, so that everyone in school learns about it. In areas such as mine, the children will then go back home and teach the old folk such as me—the grandparents and all the rest of them—the skills they have; they will tell them what to do. That knowledge will spread through the community like wildfire; that is what I want.

However, there is more than that. My neighbour, the hon. Member for Brigg and Goole (Andrew Percy), is well trained, and I am glad that he is, because I do not live too far from him. However, nursing homes are provided by the health service, county councils and others, and they are licensed by the CSQ—

Anna Soubry: The Care Quality Commission.

John Mann: The Minister knows them. She could have a word with these bodies and insist that homes have a defibrillator. What are they doing employing staff who have not been trained? We should insist they train them; we should make it part of the licensing process. It costs the Government nothing; it is also good business practice for the private homes and good public practice for the publicly run homes.

However, we can do more than that. The *Retford, Gainsborough and Worksop Times* has agreed to back and publicise the campaign, and it is going to do a sticker. Every building—say, a shop—that has a defibrillator will get good publicity. It will not need me to go there for a photograph to launch it, although I am available, if any shop wants me; they would regard that as good publicity. They can have the Minister if they really want. The sticker will tell people the defibrillator is in the shop. To me, that is a really obvious step.

However, I want more than that. We give a lot of money to sport. Another mate of mine got taken ill playing football. I pulled my hamstring, and he thought he had pulled his, but it was far worse. Luckily, we got him to hospital, because he had a heart attack just outside it. He lived, and he is perfectly fine now. However, that made me think, and it is part of the motive behind the campaign. Where are the defibrillators and trained people in all these community sports facilities? We give these facilities money. There is the Football Foundation, which my right hon. Friend the Member for Leigh (Andy Burnham) knows well. I think it spends £30 million a year. It should be built into the small print that people should get defibrillators when they get the money for their fancy new facilities. It does not matter whether it is public money, football money or lottery

money. The Minister could be raising this issue with these bodies. The Government are also rightly putting money into school sports. We could use the leverage provided by money going into sport to say that defibrillators should be part of the deal. If we do that, we will get them without the Government having to put in lots of money; indeed, if they follow my suggestions, they will not have to put in any money.

I have two other suggestions that are also cost-free. On the planning system, people are always asking for planning permission. We have heard how the system can work against what we are trying to do, but, used sensibly, it can work for us. If someone wants to get planning permission to set up a new shop, a new factory or a new community centre, having a defibrillator should be built into the planning conditions; that is really simply, and it does not cost the state anything. Yes, it will take some time to make that happen, but we can establish the principle in council policy, and that is what we want to achieve with our campaign in Bassetlaw. People will retrofit. They will jump the gun.

Like me, the Minister is a good friend of the unions, and it would be great if the shop steward and the health and safety rep negotiated to ensure that every workplace with such a representative—it will tend to be the bigger workplaces—has a defibrillator. Indeed, it might be more than one if we are talking about some of the big workplaces in my area, which employ 1,000 to 2,000 people. There might be plenty of trained people throughout the work force who know what to do. That is an easy win; it is good publicity. Those suggestions are all cost-free for the Government.

[MR GARY STREETER *in the Chair*]

I have a final suggestion. The Minister will like this, because it suits her area, just as it suits mine. I have about 80 parish councils in my area, and they are elected—well, allegedly, because there is never an election in most of them. However, through the democratic process, they are anointed as the village representatives. I shall contact them and go to those who are reticent. Every parish councillor should be trained up. Every parish, every village and every estate should know where the defibrillators are and publicise them so that everybody else knows.

If we get our act together, we can do something significant, without it costing the Government money. It is pure coincidence that Bassetlaw's campaign is happening now. We waited until we had won our ambulance campaign. I did not want people going round saying, “You're only doing this because you lost your ambulance stations.” No, the proposals are additional to the professional staff at the ambulance stations and all their brilliance. Now that my area has won its ambulance station campaign, we can deal with our defibrillator campaign properly and efficiently. We will name and shame.

I invite the Minister to come up to be photographed with a business or a parish council, or with councillors and county councillors who have donated a bit of money to assist the process. She can be photographed with me and them; it will be a great photo. However, I hope she will take these proposals forward, which are cost-neutral to the Government, and use leverage to get them moving.

5.58 pm

Julie Hilling (Bolton West) (Lab): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Walton (Steve Rotheram) on securing this important debate. I also congratulate the OK Foundation, as well as all the other small charities and groups of families and friends of people who have been saved or, sadly, lost their lives, on all the work they do in campaigning and fundraising for defibrillators and for life-saving skills to be taught in schools. I also congratulate charities such as the British Heart Foundation, the Arrhythmia Alliance, the Red Cross and St John Ambulance service for campaigning on the issue.

Each year 150,000 people die in incidents where their lives could be saved if only someone knew what to do, and 30,000 people have a cardiac arrest outside hospital. Many of those people could be saved if bystanders knew what to do, if someone started CPR immediately and if there was a defibrillator available. I want to talk about the chain of survival and the importance of someone starting CPR.

With every minute that passes in a cardiac arrest the chance of survival falls by 10%. CPR increases the chance of survival and prolongs the time a person remains in a shockable condition. If a defibrillator is used to administer a shock the survival rate increases to 50%. On “Casualty” it looks as if CPR makes people suddenly awaken and sit up. Of course, it does not. CPR simply keeps blood and oxygen pumping around the body, which means that the heart can still be shocked back into a rhythm. All the time someone is not breathing, and their heart is not pumping, part of their body and brain is dying. CPR keeps people alive and keeps them going until they can be shocked and can get to hospital.

Teaching emergency life skills in schools and the community is

“a no brainer, it’s just common sense”.

Those are not my words, but the words of Dr Andy Lockey of the Resuscitation Council. He and another 124,665 people have called on the Government to put emergency life support skills in the curriculum for all schools. With just two hours a year we could make every school leaver a life-saver. Those two hours a year could save some of the 150,000 people a year who die in situations where their lives could be saved.

The country looked on in horror just over a year ago, when Fabrice Muamba was playing for Bolton Wanderers against Tottenham and suffered a cardiac arrest. Fabrice was lucky, because he had his cardiac arrest in a public place where there were trained first aiders; because the paramedics were knowledgeable enough to give him immediate CPR on the pitch, so that his brain was saved; and because the medics did not give up, but worked on him for 78 minutes until his heart restarted. Just because he was with people who knew what to do, he survived. Fabrice is campaigning for emergency life support skills to be taught in schools, and for defibrillators to be available in public places. He joined those of us who took the British Heart Foundation’s petition, which was signed by the 124,665 people, to Downing street.

My sister’s friend Malcolm McCormick was also lucky. In April last year he went to school to pick up his grandchildren, and keeled over—effectively dead, not breathing, with his heart not beating. Malcolm was lucky because one of the people waiting to collect their

children was a retained firefighter, who gave him CPR; because once a month another firefighter volunteers in the school tuck shop, and it was his Friday to work, so he came out and took control of the situation; and because a defibrillator was available, and he was rushed to a specialist hospital. Malcolm left hospital three days later with very sore ribs; but he was alive, with his brain intact. Four months later he was fit enough to be a games maker at the Paralympics.

Andrew Percy: Earlier I failed to mention the role of retained firefighters. An initiative by Humberside fire and rescue service is starting this month; retained firefighters in some east Yorkshire communities will respond to the issues that the hon. Lady is outlining. Does she agree that we need a broader debate about what the emergency services do? Perhaps there is a role for members of the fire service. There are some in the fire service who will not allow vehicles with defibrillators fitted to be dispatched or used in relevant situations, although they are standing there while there are no ambulances nearby. We must address that.

Julie Hilling: I agree that we need to maximise the use of knowledge and equipment in the community. I will talk later about the consortium in Bolton, in which the agencies are working together on getting defibrillators in place, and teaching people ELS.

There are many inspiring stories of people who have saved lives, many of whom are young people. I have talked about them several times in Parliament, but I want now to mention a young woman I met a couple of weeks ago. I was honoured to meet 15-year-old Samantha Hobbs with her parents when she came for a meeting with an Education Minister, which, sadly was cancelled, but can hopefully be rescheduled. One morning last year, Samantha woke to hear her father on the telephone to the emergency services, telling them that he thought her mum was already dead. Samantha did not hesitate. Even though her mum felt cold to the touch, she started CPR. Of course, CPR is very tiring and after a few minutes she was exhausted, so she showed her father what to do and coached him to take over, although he had never had any training. Thanks to Samantha her mum survived and is alive today; she came to Parliament with her daughter. She is alive because Samantha learned life-saving skills at her swimming club. They are campaigning for all children to be taught how to save a life.

I have been working hard to get ELS included in the national curriculum. I even introduced a ten-minute rule Bill to ask the Government to do it, but they are stubbornly resisting that common-sense move; so I am trying to ensure that every young person leaving school in my constituency and throughout Bolton leaves school a life-saver. The work is being done with the North West ambulance service, Bolton Wanderers community trust, Greater Manchester fire and rescue service, Bolton council, the British Heart Foundation and the Arrhythmia Alliance. We are enabling all schools to teach ELS, providing training in the community and campaigning for defibrillators in public places. The campaign has been wonderfully supported by *The Bolton News*, which has been running a campaign alongside it. We are making progress, but it would be so much better if the Government would take action.

Why cannot defibrillators be made compulsory, like fire extinguishers? Far too many companies and organisations are worried about the consequences of having a defibrillator. No one has ever successfully been sued for attempting to save someone's life. As so many hon. Members have said, a defibrillator cannot be used on a person unless they are in a shockable condition. It tells the user what to do: where to put the pads and whether a shock can be administered. Companies, businesses and community groups should be far more worried about how they would feel about someone dying, when if they had only invested in a defibrillator and someone had known what to do, they could have saved them.

Will the Minister talk to her colleagues in the Department for Education about making the teaching of ELS compulsory? Will she ensure that health authorities provide teaching of those skills to the public? Will she work with colleagues to legislate for defibrillators in public places? The Government could save 150,000 lives a year. I cannot imagine anything worse than seeing a loved one collapse, and finding out afterwards that I could have saved them if I had known what to do. I have, I hope, made sure that that will not happen to me; I have become a Heartstart tutor. However, we need to give all people the skills, confidence and tools to save lives. As a firefighter in my area said, "When someone's heart stops, they are dead. You can't make them any deader, but you could save their life."

6.8 pm

Andy Burnham (Leigh) (Lab): We have heard some outstanding speeches this afternoon, and a good deal of consensus, which I am sure will be encouraging for the thousands, indeed millions, of people throughout the country who are campaigning on the issue that we are discussing. We must not forget that we are here for this debate because 110,000 people have signed a petition, in the belief that lives can be saved if Parliament will give the issue more attention and make changes. The debate would not be happening without the outstanding campaigning efforts of the OK Foundation and other heart organisations. I pay tribute in particular to Councillor Jake Morrison, one of the youngest councillors in the country and a shining example of the difference that councillors can make when they dedicate themselves to a campaign.

If it does nothing else, today's debate will have achieved something, because the official record will contain a permanent memorial to Oliver King, and to the other young people mentioned in the debate, whose lives have tragically been lost. I want the debate to achieve far more than that, however, which is why I am leading for the Opposition today. I want today to be the start of a parliamentary journey in which the issues we are debating here will soon move to the Floor of the House and then, finally, into legislation supported, I hope, by a cross-party campaign. The debate is changing in the country. Every Member of this House will have seen campaigns in their local paper when lives have been lost, and those campaigns are calling for something to be done. It is now time for Parliament to show more leadership on the issue, which we have brought up the parliamentary agenda, and to make changes that will save lives.

We have heard from many hon. Members today, and the attendance of so many Members, not all of whom have spoken, shows the level of interest within Parliament. My hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Walton (Steve Rotheram) introduced the debate with a customarily outstanding speech, and he set out the issues very clearly. The hon. Member for Brigg and Goole (Andrew Percy) spoke from personal experience, and given his commitment, we should all listen to what he has to say. My right hon. Friend the Member for Knowsley (Mr Howarth) and my hon. Friends the Members for West Lancashire (Rosie Cooper), for Bassetlaw (John Mann) and for Bolton West (Julie Hilling) have all made outstanding speeches.

The reason why people talk with such conviction and passion is that we have all seen the devastating effect of the unexpected loss of a life, particularly of a young person, but not necessarily so because this affects young and old. People have seen the inexplicable grief that a family feel when someone is brought down in their prime, often at the peak of their powers, playing sport.

That was certainly the case with Daniel Young in my constituency. He died in 2005 playing football for Leigh RMI football club. He was an outstanding young footballer, and at the time his mother, Dionne, told me that she bought everything for him to make his young football career a success. He had all the latest gear, but she said, "If somebody had just told me to pay for a screening test, it would have been the best £30 I could ever have spent, but I didn't know anything about it. I didn't know he was at risk." My journey began there, and I started to look into the issue.

When I held office in the Department of Health, I asked the Department to look at the issue and to consider the case for screening, as proposed by my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Walton. While that work has been taking place, we have sadly seen further tragedies. Of course, we have spoken today about the loss of Oliver in Liverpool. He was another outstanding young sportsman whose talent was taken away from us. Oliver's dad, Mark, was in a similar position to my constituent: he was not warned about the potential risks and, obviously, I am sure he now thinks about that all the time.

Close to my constituency, we have also recently lost a very young boy. Ciaran Geddes was seven years old, and he died in April 2012 playing football on his own. He was a member of the Winwick junior football club, who play in the same Warrington junior league in which my son used to play. That brings it very close to home, and it was such a young life. Ciaran's mum, Marika, is now campaigning through the Ciaran's Cause charity, which has given 27 defibrillators to schools across Warrington, with 10 more to be given soon. Marika says that, with every defibrillator the charity gives, she feels that Ciaran lives on. Three of the defibrillators donated to schools by the Oliver King Foundation have already been used, which brings home just how important it is to support those campaigns.

As my hon. Friends the Members for Bolton West and for Liverpool, Walton have said, we all saw the case of Fabrice Muamba—what an inspiring story that is—which shows just what can be achieved, but as my right hon. Friend the Member for Knowsley said, he was saved only because he fell at a premier league football ground. Obviously, he did almost die, but he

[*Andy Burnham*]

survived because he was at the ground and because back-up was on hand. The poor kids who fall at grass-roots football locations are not so lucky, but simple support could be in place that might save many more lives.

Mr Nigel Dodds (Belfast North) (DUP): I tried to be here for the start of the debate to hear the speeches that have been made on this most important subject.

There have been a number of high-profile deaths of young sportspeople on playing fields in Northern Ireland, where we have a very high rate of death by cardiac arrest anyway. I am sure that the right hon. Gentleman would agree that there have been positive outcomes from those tragedies—we have heard of examples from across England—and in Northern Ireland a new community resuscitation strategy has been launched that aims to train people in emergency life support and to provide more defibrillators. So, positives are coming out of those tragedies, and we must all redouble our efforts, as the hon. Member for Bassetlaw (John Mann) said, to press people to really deliver.

Andy Burnham: The right hon. Gentleman is absolutely spot on, because we see incredible activity across all four nations of the United Kingdom in the wake of those tragedies. Communities are pulling together, raising funds and donating defibrillators to schools and sports clubs, which brings me to my main point: leadership is now needed at national level to co-ordinate that activity and to bring clarity to the whole situation so that the public know where to find a defibrillator and how to use one. I hope I can persuade the Government to work with Opposition Front Benchers on that. There is no politics involved here; this is about saving lives where we can and doing things to make human progress in this country. Other countries are more focused than we have been, and because of that they are saving more lives.

My feeling is that provision is too random at the moment—it is happening in some places and not in others—and we need clarity on policy at a national level so that we can piggyback on all those local campaigns to make progress. I do not think there is a funding issue, because communities will find the money to put these things in the right places, but we must know where they need to go.

It is crucial to understand that, with the best will in the world, the ambulance service is often unable to make a difference for the people who sadly fall in a busy shopping centre, railway station or sports ground. Why? Because they are unable to get there within the Government target time of eight minutes, which is too late. As my hon. Friend the Member for Bolton West said, it is about that chain of survival; it is about equipping people with the knowledge and the kit at local level to start making a difference so that, when the professionals arrive, there is somebody there to save. That is what we have to do.

If we look at the statistics, 12 young people, as my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Walton said, die from sudden cardiac arrest in the UK every week. We underplay that problem. Until recently, the Department of Health NHS Choices website stated that the figure was 12 young people a year. The figure was corrected after it was pointed out to the Department, but it is important that the problem is not underestimated.

The clinching fact for why we should do more is that across the world, survival rates are very variable. According to the British Heart Foundation, in this country between 2% and 12% of people who suffer a sudden cardiac arrest survive, which is way too low. Elsewhere, in Seattle, as has been said, 50% of people survive, and in Japan, a public access campaign for AEDs has resulted in an immediate increase in rates of survival with minimum neurological impairment for out-of-hospital cardiac arrests.

The evidence is absolutely clear, so what about policy? What did we do while we were in Government? We must be honest. I am not here to say that we did everything right, but we did something. On the back of the focus on heart services, we introduced the national defibrillator programme in the middle of the last decade. It made a modest amount of funds available to purchase defibrillators to give to local organisations. However, I think that a mistake was made. As the programme was wound down, responsibility was passed to ambulance services.

There are two ways of looking at that. On the one hand, ambulance services have been doing brilliant work ever since as they have taken on the responsibility to improve communities' capacity to respond. It is fantastic to see representatives of the ambulance service here today. I have certainly been impressed by what I have seen in the north-west. The team there is working with communities across the region to build their capacity to respond. The ambulance service has done good work, but national focus on the issue was lost when responsibility was passed down to the ambulance services, and we must acknowledge that.

That brings me to the crux of what I wanted to say, particularly to the Minister. I think that, between us, we can develop a set of simple policy calls that could make a difference and save lives. I will identify three in particular. As hon. Members have said, there is a compelling case for putting emergency life skills on the national curriculum and for making time available, perhaps as part of the personal, social, health and economic education component, to provide training for all young people. No young person should leave school without knowing how to provide CPR and use a defibrillator, because it is not all about defibrillators or CPR—the two together are important. If we train young people in those skills, as my hon. Friend the Member for Bassetlaw said, they will go home and talk to others about them.

I have seen what the British Heart Foundation does in schools. The courses that it delivers for young children are outstanding. It would be easy to add such courses to the national curriculum. My children tell me all the things that they are doing in school: the things that they are learning to make in home economics, and the kings and queens that they know about. It is odd that we do not ensure that every young person in this country leaves school at 16 knowing how to save a life. What more basic skill could we give them during their school years?

Andrew Percy: On the right hon. Gentleman's attack on kings and queens, as a former history teacher, I attach importance to learning about them. An easy way to do what he suggests without crowding the curriculum too much would be simply to require all PE teachers to have the training, so that they can disseminate it as part of PE, which is required all the way through school. It would be a simple way to teach it without crowding the curriculum.

Andy Burnham: Let me make it clear that I want children to learn about kings and queens. Yes, it must be possible. We are talking about a one-off course lasting a couple of hours. Surely it is possible to find the time to deliver it. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman's suggestion is one way to do so. My point is that every child should leave with a certificate to say that they have done the course, they know how to use the skills and they are confident in using them.

Julie Hilling: A number of schools across Bolton West are already teaching emergency life support skills and Heartstart skills through the British Heart Foundation. They are teaching those skills in different ways: some are using half an hour during the registration period; some are teaching it as part of PE; some are teaching it as part of biology. There are multiple places within the curriculum, but the important thing is that they are taught as essential skills. Schools can then work out where best to teach them. They can be taught in half-hour blocks, and two hours a year is nothing.

Andy Burnham: My hon. Friend is right. Let schools decide, but let us make it a clear legal requirement that they teach those skills. That is how to make a difference: by having a population that is much more educated in emergency first aid and CPR. The difference that it can make is huge. The Department for Education appears to be highly resistant; I do not know why. Surely we could link it to science or biology. Surely there are ways to deliver that teaching that are not irrelevant to the rest of the curriculum. That is our first request. Can we have a clear requirement?

Secondly, as my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Walton asked, is there not a case for a screening programme, particularly for at-risk young people, such as those who play lots of sport? I know that the UK National Screening Committee has considered the issue, partly because I asked it to, but still no firm recommendations have been made. Will the Minister consider it? It could be delivered for incredibly small amounts of resource in NHS terms; a screening test costs about £30 pounds. It should be available to any parent who wants to make use of it, particularly for young people who play sport every week. My son plays a lot of sport, and I watch him play every week. I have still not had him tested. It crosses my mind all the time that perhaps I should. It should be an easy thing to do; it should not be hard to find. The time has come to provide more screening.

My third and main point is to ask the Minister to give serious consideration to setting a minimum legal requirement for the number of defibrillators in public places. The time has come for that to be required by law. Hon. Members have referred to fire extinguishers and smoke alarms. There comes a point when technology allows something to be made much more widely available in public places and buildings, and I believe that we have reached that point with defibrillators.

Mr George Howarth: My right hon. Friend is making a powerful case. Does he agree that workplaces could be added to the list?

Andy Burnham: I am sure they could. That is my appeal to the Government. I am not being prescriptive and saying that I want this, that or the other. A compelling

case has been made for schools because of the loss of young lives. Shopping centres are also a possibility because of the footfall, as are train stations, airports and so on, and workplaces, particularly where people are under the extra pressure of carrying out intense physical activity.

The Government can advise on what the minimum requirement might be, but it is important to have one. Then we would have national clarity on where the public can expect to find a defibrillator. They would know where to locate one, because defibrillators would be required by law. Communities are crying out for it, and we do not have clarity at the moment. Earlier in the debate, someone asked where we would find a defibrillator in Parliament. I would not know. We need to start thinking about clarity and signage. If we did so, we might be able to have a national open register of defibrillators. It is not beyond the wit of man to ensure through an app on a phone that people in a situation where somebody had fallen could find out in real time, via modern technology, where the nearest defibrillator was. An effort could then be made to locate it as soon as possible.

Such things could be done. Lives could be saved. There is no excuse for complacency. We are not talking about huge amounts of money. This House could apply its mind to the issue, bring a little more focus to it and make proportionate and sensible requirements for where defibrillators must be located. Those locations could be publicised, and the public could be educated about how to use them. Why are we not doing it? We should be. I am not making a political point; I am being as critical of our time in government as I am of the current Government. We should be doing it. The case for action is unanswerable.

My hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Walton has done us all a huge service by requesting this debate, which is long overdue. Other countries are way ahead of us in putting a proper, thought-through policy in place at every level: education, screening, prevention, and response through public access to defibrillators. My three requests can be given fair consideration by the Minister; if she were to act, we would secure something momentous for the people who have campaigned so vigorously on the issue over recent years. They know and people outside know that it is right to make a change, and some communities are just getting on and doing so; they are not even waiting for Parliament to do something, and that alone should be enough to make us think and act. If we made a commitment now, I am certain that in a matter of years we would see those statistics improve and more lives being saved which, at the end of the day, is the best memorial we can give to Oliver King, Ciaron Geddes, Daniel Young and all the young people who have tragically lost their lives.

6.31 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Anna Soubry): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Streeter.

I thank everyone who has spoken in this excellent debate. A debate normally consists of one side of an argument versus the other side, but today we have had an outbreak of agreement and there has been no one side or the other. The debate is also momentous because

[Anna Soubry]

I can say with my hand on my heart that I found myself in agreement with not only my hon. Friend the Member for Brigg and Goole (Andrew Percy) but, most concerning, the hon. Member for Bassetlaw (John Mann), with whom I share history, because I was born and brought up in his constituency. I would be absolutely delighted to take up the hon. Gentleman's invitation to visit, because it means a great deal to me. To be serious, however, because I was being flippant, this has been a good debate. I pay tribute to all those who signed the online petition and particularly to the hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton (Steve Rotheram) who opened the debate so well. He spoke with great passion and feeling and with considerable knowledge. We have had a good debate because of the outbreak of agreement and some well formed speeches, based on real argument, facts and figures, as well as on constituents' experience.

Where are we? We all agree that defibrillators are good things; many hon. Members have spoken about the role that they can play and how we need considerably more of them. We all agree that we need more people trained in their use and in CPR and all manner of emergency measures for someone in a life-threatening situation. I congratulate the hon. Member for Bolton West (Julie Hilling) on her speech; she explained how training our children could bring us real benefits in the number of people trained, which would mean more lives being saved. I pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Brigg and Goole, who spoke about his experiences as a community first responder and about how volunteers from the community, not only young people at school, could be trained in such skills. He gave some good examples of how effectively such a programme could be rolled out. Other hon. Members talked about the value of screening and, for example, I pay tribute to the right hon. Member for Knowsley (Mr Howarth) for his comments on the need for screening.

Unfortunately, I am going to be somewhat of a fly in this otherwise rather pleasant ointment, because I do not agree with everything said about legislation. My view is that we do not need legislation. We already have all manner of programmes locally. I am not denying that our system is patchy and that some parts of the country are clearly doing a far better job than others, but it is understandable why the previous Government decided to put defibrillators and training down to the local ambulance trusts: they know their communities best and they are the people to ensure delivery, to the best of their abilities, to meet the needs of their communities.

I usually flinch from legislation, because it can take a long time to go through this place and because when we start to be prescriptive, we can run into all sorts of dangers. We have accepted that different communities have different needs, and I pay tribute to the hon. Member for Bassetlaw for his compelling case for defibrillator training to be rolled out through our communities, depending on the nature of the community. For example, his constituency has a large number of parish councils—mine does not have as many, but it matters not—and he discussed putting pressure on and working and campaigning with the parish councils to start installing defibrillators. The parish councils can look at their own communities and at what would suit the needs of those communities. He then made a good

point about work forces and the possibility of defibrillators in every place with more than a certain number of employees, and that is where the debate begins, because the difficulty with legislation lies in whether we look at a workplace with 50, 100 or 1,000 employees. The hon. Gentleman described how he could work with the trade unions in his patch and in effect, as a result, roll out a campaign of asking the work forces whether they think something is a good idea in a particular workplace or not in another. If we begin to prescribe, however, we will not deliver the sort of service that we want.

Andy Burnham: I realise the situation is slightly unusual: the Minister is defending the policy of the previous Government and I am asking her to reconsider and to go further. She said that ambulance services are best placed because they understand their communities. I partly agree, but the problem is that ambulance services do not have the power to insist on defibrillators going where they are most needed. The ambulance services are not the planning authority or the owners of the big buildings; they can only use persuasion and cannot ensure that defibrillators go where they really need to go, where lives can be saved. That is why legislation is necessary. If she is worried about overly burdensome legislation, it could start with a simple requirement to have a defibrillator publicly available in towns of, for example, 30,000 or more; it could be a modest requirement to get the ball rolling, as other countries have done.

Anna Soubry: I am grateful for the intervention, but it rather makes my point. Once we stipulate, for the sake of argument towns of 30,000, we can imagine that in the towns without that level of population people will think, "Well, we're all right, so we won't do much work on it." That is the problem with a more prescriptive approach.

While we are discussing ambulance services, and referring again to the speech of the hon. Member for Bassetlaw, I wish to set the record straight on the East Midlands ambulance service. EMAS has been struggling for some time, with a number of difficulties that the hon. Gentleman and I are familiar with. As mentioned by my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Harborough (Sir Edward Garnier), my hon. Friend the Member for Loughborough (Nicky Morgan) has been involved in a campaign following the death of Joe Humphries, who did not live in her constituency but went to school there. As a result of her work, for which I am grateful, Leicestershire has 109 static defibrillators in public areas, 14 of which were installed in partnership with the Leicestershire police, and there are 24 Heartstart schools in the county.

The hon. Member for Bolton West also talked about the Heartstart scheme and its success in her area, although I can see that that may not be the case universally throughout the country. What is happening because of the debate, however, is that not only are we holding it and everything is being recorded in *Hansard*, but I will certainly go away and not hesitate to have that conversation with the relevant Minister in the Department for Education. An extremely forceful message has come out of this debate about the need for such training to be included in the national curriculum. I could not possibly give my own views on that, but the argument has been advanced extremely strongly and it has much merit and power.

Steve Rotheram: I was not aware that the Minister is an anti-legislationist parliamentarian.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Leigh, off the top of his head, suggested a population of 30,000 as a starting point. It does not matter whether the threshold is 30,000, 25,000 or 50,000; basically, there has to be a starting point. Even if the threshold is 30,000, once automatic external defibrillators are in place, they are there for life, and we can then start to concentrate on places with fewer than 30,000 people. We could do that for large factories or organisations before we go to the small ones. There is no magic wand and provision will not happen overnight, but we need to start somewhere.

Anna Soubry: The hon. Gentleman's point is good and is well made.

Mr George Howarth: In some respects I share the Minister's scepticism that legislation is always the answer; it can, on occasions, be a blunt instrument. The problem, however, is that whenever we look at what the alternative is, it is not straightforward. My hon. Friend the Member for Bassetlaw (John Mann) talked about parish councils, but not everywhere is covered by parish councils.

Anna Soubry: That, again, is a good point. Clearly, one size does not fit all. Every area has different needs.

Andrew Percy: The problem with looking to the ambulance services is that they do not have the money to provide defibrillators to each of their communities. I would also question whether they necessarily know their communities all that intimately, being organisers, as they are, on large, regional scales.

We have discussed areas of responsibility outside those of the Minister's Department, but will she undertake to look at the situation of nursing homes, particularly in Texas? Will her officials contact the health department in Texas to see what impact there has been as a result of requiring defibrillators in nursing homes? Then we can come to an evidence-based decision on the matter.

Anna Soubry: My hon. Friend's point is, again, good and well made. I am glad that we worked out which part of the United States it was that something good could be said about in this respect. I am more than happy to take his point away, as one of the many ideas that hon. Members have suggested in this debate, and see whether we can consider in any way, be it making provision mandatory or whether we can issue guidance to nursing homes and other institutions—*[Interruption.]* I think my hon. Friend the Member for Brigg and Goole said that he was going to send it to me. I will be interested in anything that ever comes across my desk. I will give it due consideration and pass it on, if necessary, to those who have responsibility for nursing homes in the Department of Health. As I said, it is a good idea.

One could argue that only a limited number of hon. Members have participated in today's debate. We should stop here for a moment, because all the Members who have spoken have come from the standpoint of having experienced someone—normally a child—dying suddenly from a heart attack. That touches people in a raw way, because it involves a child. Mercifully, out of all the horrors and badness invariably come something good, which is a point raised by the right hon. Member for Belfast North (Mr Dodds). Hon. Members have raised many examples of the good that has come out of the terrible and tragic loss of a young life.

Julie Hilling: Does the Minister agree that we should take some of the luck out of the issue? Fabrice, Malcolm and Mrs Hobbs were lucky, but Oliver was not. We need to take the luck out of the issue, to ensure that people who suffer a sudden cardiac arrest have a good chance of survival. We can do that only if we have some sort of legislation that says, "You must have defibs and you must do training."

Anna Soubry: I have given my reasons for why I do not believe legislation, at the present time, is the answer. I agree with the hon. Lady that a lot of the matter depends on luck. Certain areas seem to offer a better service than others because of some unfortunate tragedy that has befallen. With the Oliver King Foundation and many other charities that we have heard about today, people have come together and raised money to install defibrillators or to ensure that school children receive the right sort of training.

We heard examples of the work of mayors. The hon. Member for Barrow and Furness (John Woodcock) talked about the work of the mayor in his constituency, and the hon. Member for West Lancashire (Rosie Cooper) spoke about the work that had been done in her constituency by the mayor. She also mentioned the death of a young man and the work that his family has done as a result to ensure that other youngsters did not suffer a similar fate, and that the things that should be in place were there.

Andrew Percy: Again on legislation, I agree with the Minister's point that we want a mixed approach to the matter, but if we expect communities to take charge of the matter themselves, we must understand that some communities do not have the capacity to do so. They might not be able to raise money quite as easily as more middle-class and better-off areas can. Some communities might be slightly better organised because they have a parish council speaking for them. We must bear in mind that not every community will have the resources or the individuals who feel confident enough to raise money for such provision.

Anna Soubry: My hon. Friend's point is another well made point.

I will return to where this debate started—the subject of sudden adult death syndrome. Starting with screening, often when there has been a case of a sudden cardiac arrest, many people say, "Screening will have a big impact in the future." As the right hon. Member for Leigh will know, the UK National Screening Committee, an independent expert body that advises Ministers about all aspects of screening, assesses the evidence for screening against a set of internationally recognised criteria. No doubt that is why the right hon. Gentleman listened to and followed its advice, which is that, while screening has a potential to save lives, it is not a foolproof process. The footballer Fabrice Muamba suffered cardiac arrest, and many of us will remember what happened to him at the game. We have heard many people describe the amazing medical assistance that he was given—I cannot remember for how long he was unconscious, but it was an incredibly long time—and that young man has made a remarkable recovery. However, I am told that he had received several screening tests throughout his career.

[Anna Soubry]

In 2008, the UK NSC reviewed the evidence for screening for the most common cause of sudden death in those under the age of 30, hypertrophic cardiomyopathy, including looking at athletes and young people who participated in sport. A number of the cases that we have heard today involved, invariably, young men or boys who died while playing sport, notably football. The UK NSC concluded that the evidence did not support the introduction of screening. Sudden cardiac death is a complex condition and is difficult to detect through screening; there is no single test that can detect all the conditions, nor is it possible to say which abnormalities will lead to sudden cardiac death. However, in line with its three-yearly review policy, the UK NSC is again reviewing the evidence. This time the review will go further than only looking at the evidence for screening for HCM and will cover screening for the major causes of sudden cardiac death in young people between the ages of 12 and 39. The review will take into account the most up-to-date international evidence, including evidence from Italy, where screening is currently offered to athletes between the ages of 12 and 35.

There will be an opportunity to participate in the review process later this year, when a copy of the latest review will be open for public consultation on the UK NSC's website. No doubt, a number of the organisations and charities that we have heard about today will take part in that consultation. I am told that although screening is not routinely available in England, work to prevent premature death from cardiovascular disease is a priority, as it should be.

On 5 March, the cardiovascular disease outcomes strategy—not exactly words that trip off the tongue—was published. It sets out a range of actions to reduce premature mortality for those with, or at risk of, cardiovascular disease. The NHS Commissioning Board will work with the Resuscitation Council, the British Heart Foundation and others to promote the site mapping and registration of defibrillators, and to look at ways of increasing the numbers trained in using them. I pay tribute to the foundation, which a number of hon. Members have mentioned, and rightly so, as we are all grateful for its work in, for example, placing defibrillators in Liverpool primary schools. That is, no doubt, because of the outstanding work of the Oliver King Foundation.

Ambulance trusts have had responsibility for the provision of defibrillators since 2005, and in my view they are best placed to know what is needed in their local area. However, it is important to recognise that defibrillators help only in a minority of cases. The majority of out-of-hospital heart attacks—up to 80%—happen in the home. Bystander CPR doubles survival rates, but it is only attempted in 20% to 30% of cases. It is clear that although defibrillators play an important part, we have to bear in mind, as I said, that 80% of heart attacks, if they do not happen in hospital, happen at home, and I absolutely concede that there is a real need for an increase in the amount of people trained in CPR, because we know that that also plays a hugely important part in ensuring that people who have a heart attack survive it.

When there is a sudden cardiac death, we need to take action to ensure that potentially affected family members are identified and offered counselling and testing to see

if they are also at risk. We know that that does not always happen. There are continuing discussions with the chief coroner for England to determine how coroners' services might help in the identification of potentially affected family members, so that more lives can be saved. The national clinical director for heart disease, Professor Gray, will work with all relevant stakeholders to develop and spread good practice around sudden cardiac death.

In conclusion, I will wait to see the latest recommendation from the UK NSC, following its latest review of evidence. The national clinical director for heart disease will continue to promote good practice and awareness around sudden cardiac death. However, as I have said before—forgive me for repeating myself—I will ensure that I speak to the relevant Minister at the Department for Education about all the arguments that have been advanced today for training in CPR and life-saving techniques to be part of the national curriculum. It is my understanding that that particular part of it is under review, and I will impress on him or her how strongly Members have spoken today.

Again, I thank everybody, especially those who signed the petition, for bringing the debate into this place and, effectively, for shining a spotlight on the matter. I hope that hon. Members will take the issue to their local press, as I am sure they will, and that the national press might also look at it. It is absolutely right that the more we ventilate it, the better the situation will be.

Mr Gary Streeter (in the Chair): In debates of this kind, the mover of the motion may have a few moments to summarise or respond at the end.

6.55 pm

Steve Rotheram: Thank you, Mr Streeter. First, I thank all right hon. and hon. Members for taking part in the debate on behalf of the campaigners, and obviously I thank the campaigners, who have made a long journey in certain cases to come to Parliament today to hear what we have been saying and what the Minister has been saying. Can I just pick the Minister up on one point? It is very important to some people here; we have a doctor and other medical staff here. She continually made reference to heart attacks; I think that what she meant was cardiac arrests, which are a very different thing.

Anna Soubry: Sorry.

Steve Rotheram: I just wanted to put that on the record.

Many excellent points have been raised in the debate. What we have seen demonstrated during the past three hours is the clear and absolute desire for Parliament to act. I understand that the Minister has a difficult job. There are obstacles and challenges to overcome in relation to cardiac arrest and SADS, including raising awareness and overcoming people's initial fear of helping someone who has sustained a cardiac arrest. The hope is that this debate will have teased out some of those things.

We have also heard about a number of issues that are not directly relevant to the Minister's remit, so she may well have to have conversations not just with the relevant Education Minister, but with the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills and certainly with the Department for Communities and Local Government in relation to

the planning issues. However, that does not mean that she or the Government can abrogate their responsibilities. As has been highlighted, some of these things are cost-neutral; they just need action. We are not asking for money or, at worst, they cost very little. They simply require political will.

A few weeks ago, after the debate was announced, I received numerous phone calls and e-mails from organisations and charities that have been campaigning for years on this issue, so it is only right that they receive recognition for their efforts. Therefore, in praising again the efforts of the OK Foundation, I would also like to pay tribute to SADS UK, the British Heart Foundation, Cardiac Risk in the Young, the London Ambulance Service, Hearts and Goals, the Arrhythmia Alliance, the North West Ambulance Service, AED Locator, the Community HeartBeat Trust, Kays Medical and Liverpool football club and the great Steven Gerrard, the England captain, who has also recently come on board and lent his support—my right hon. Friend the Member for Leigh (Andy Burnham) is shaking his head.

There is growing momentum for action, and campaigners will not give up on this issue until progress is made. Including first aid training in the school curriculum would take up 0.2% of the timetable, but have an incalculable value.

Andy Burnham: Can I add my own tribute to the organisations—most of them—that my hon. Friend has just listed? Obviously, we do not doubt the Minister's

good will, but I think that we will have been disappointed by the response, particularly on the issue of legislation. With that in mind, may I encourage my hon. Friend to return to the Backbench Business Committee and make a request to bring this issue to the Floor of House? It seems to me that Parliament might take a different view from the Government on the need for legislation. I think that we should try to test the mind of Parliament on this issue. I hope that my hon. Friend will not be put off and will pursue his campaign in that direction.

Steve Rotheram: I am happy to confirm to my right hon. Friend that I think that, following the discussion that I will have immediately after this debate, the next step will be for us to push the Backbench Business Committee for a further debate in the main Chamber so that we push this issue to a vote, because I genuinely believe that defibs will save thousands of lives every year. No one in their right mind doubts that, so it is for the Government to show their resolve and to back the campaigners. A national lead is needed on this issue. We have not been given that today, so we will push in the future for that lead.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House has considered the e-petition relating to preventable cardiac deaths arising from Sudden Adult Death Syndrome.

7 pm

Sitting adjourned.

Written Ministerial Statements

Monday 25 March 2013

DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER

The McKay Commission

The Parliamentary Secretary, Cabinet Office (Miss Chloe Smith): In January 2012, the Government announced the establishment of a Commission to consider how the House of Commons might deal with legislation which affects only part of the United Kingdom, following the devolution of certain legislative powers to the Scottish Parliament, the Northern Ireland Assembly and the National Assembly for Wales. Today, the Commission has published its report and I have placed a copy in the House Library.

The Government have made clear their commitment to maintaining the UK and to making sure that the devolution settlements work. The Government are very grateful to Sir William McKay and his colleagues for setting out how the House of Commons might deal with legislation which affects only part of the United Kingdom. The report represents a positive step forward. This is a very important issue, which is why the Government asked this expert Commission to look into it. We will consider seriously and constructively this report and provide a substantive response to it in due course.

DEFENCE

Defence Estate Rationalisation

The Minister for the Armed Forces (Mr Andrew Robathan): The strategic defence and security review (SDSR), announced in October 2010, marked the start of the process of transforming defence and identified the need for rationalisation of the defence estate. This included the sale of surplus land and buildings and the delivery of associated running cost reductions. The Army basing plan announcement by the Secretary of State on 5 March 2013, enabling the return from Germany and implementation of Army 2020, indicated that there would be a further announcement concerning other changes elsewhere in the Ministry of Defence (MOD) estate across the UK.

Today I am providing an update to the House on the results of work to implement the SDSR's commitments on rationalisation and on unit relocations on the wider defence estate. Service and civilian personnel at the affected locations will be briefed; we will also engage with the trade unions where appropriate. This work will now be taken forward into detailed planning.

Lightning II Aircraft Basing at RAF Marham

Our first two Lightning II aircraft (joint strike fighter) are currently participating in the US test programme and will remain in the US. We expect to receive front-line

aircraft from 2015 onwards with an initial operating capability from land in 2018, followed by first of class flights from HMS Queen Elizabeth later that year.

I can now inform the House of the outcome of the further basing review recently undertaken in respect of the Lightning II aircraft.

Following the SDSR, a number of changes have occurred on the defence estate that justified a further review of the basing options for Lightning II. This review has concluded that RAF Marham is the most appropriate station for the main operating base. Given that RAF Lossiemouth will now host three squadrons of Typhoon and given the altered draw-down profile and out of service date for Tornado (in line with the SDSR decision to concentrate our fast jet fleet on Typhoon and Lightning II), RAF Marham will have sufficient capacity for the basing of Lightning II, which will be operated jointly by the Royal Navy and the Royal Air Force. Further work will now be carried out to determine the precise investment requirements as the base transitions to support Lightning II.

Draw down at RAF Leuchars

No. 1 (Fighter) Squadron and No 6 Squadron currently based at RAF Leuchars which provide the Quick Reaction Alert (QRA) (Interceptor) North role will relocate to RAF Lossiemouth beginning summer 2014, with Typhoon flying operations ceasing at RAF Leuchars during autumn 2014, following a progressive transfer of the base from the RAF to the Army. The relocation of the Typhoons from RAF Leuchars will affect 347 service personnel who will transfer from RAF Leuchars to RAF Lossiemouth, it will also affect 148 civilian staff.

No. 6 RAF Force Protection (FP) Wing Headquarters and No 58 Squadron RAF Regiment, both based at RAF Leuchars, will be disestablished, with the personnel in No. 6 RAF FP Wing Headquarters and No 58 Squadron RAF Regiment being reassigned during spring 2014. The future of the squadron number plate is yet to be determined. This will affect 183 military posts. Those personnel will be reassigned to other RAF force protection tasks across the UK.

Relocation of flying units resulting in the closure of the airfield at RAF Wyton

Due to the significant running costs associated with maintenance of an operational airfield at RAF Wyton, it has been decided to relocate the flying units based there. No. 57(R) Squadron, who undertake elementary flying training (EFT), will relocate from RAF Wyton to RAF Cranwell by the summer of 2013. The relocation of Cambridge and London University Air Squadrons (UAS) and No. 5 Air Experience Flight (AEF) to RAF Wittering is planned by mid-2014, once preparatory work has been completed. We are working closely with the Homes and Communities Agency on the possibility of them acquiring part of the Wyton airfield since it has potential for new housing growth as identified in Huntingdon district council's emerging local plan.

The opportunity has been taken to rationalise other light aircraft flying tasks in the region to achieve greater coherency and more efficient use of manpower and assets, delivering better value for money for the taxpayer. This will result in East Midlands Universities Air Squadron and No. 115(R) Squadron relocating from RAF Cranwell to RAF Wittering.

There are 18 service personnel who will be redeployed as a result of this change and two MOD civilians will be affected.

The closure of RAF Church Fenton

Reductions in the flying training pipeline, directed by the SDSR, mean that RAF Church Fenton is no longer required to host training operations and will close by the end of 2013. The units based at Church Fenton, including the Yorkshire University Air Squadron (incorporating No. 9 Air Experience Flight), will relocate; work is ongoing to determine the optimum location for the University Air Squadron.

There are five service personnel who will be redeployed as a result of this change and three MOD civilians will be affected.

Relocation of Military Scottish Air Traffic Control from Prestwick

The Military Scottish Air Traffic Control Centre (ScATCC(Mil)) currently operates from the NATS Air Traffic Control Centre at Prestwick in Ayrshire. ScATCC(Mil) controls military and some civilian air traffic within its area of responsibility, which roughly extends north from Newcastle. Technological advances mean that the system can be rationalised and it will be possible to cover the military control task for the entire country from the London Air Traffic Control Centre (LATCC(Mil)) at Swanwick. There will be no detrimental impact on air traffic control.

The phased relocation of the RAF presence from Prestwick will be completed by the end of 2013, and will be managed in consultation with NATS En-route Ltd, who will provide the necessary technical and equipment changes under the Future Military Area Radar Services contract. Around 30 service personnel will be redeployed as a result of this change, which will also impact up to six civilian personnel.

Disposal of the former airfield and technical site at Kirton in Lindsey

Following the vacating of RAF Kirton in Lindsey by No. 1 Air Control Centre (1ACC), the site has been used to house personnel employed at RAF Scampton. While this use will continue, alternative defence uses have not been identified for the former airfield and technical facilities, so a decision has now been taken to dispose of these parts of the site.

Rationalisation of Shorncliffe Garrison

There is an enduring requirement for facilities at Shorncliffe Garrison. However much of the infrastructure is old, in poor condition and expensive to heat, light and maintain. MOD is therefore commencing redevelopment and rationalisation of the garrison to deliver a long-term, sustainable estate.

Shepway district council's local development framework core strategy has identified Shorncliffe Garrison for a development of up to 1,200 homes to help regenerate the western end of Folkestone; the site will also contribute to the Government's Plan for Growth housing strategy. Surplus land will be released in phases over the next decade.

Rationalisation of the Defence presence at MOD St Athan

In announcing the outcome of the Army basing review on 5 March 2013, the Secretary of State confirmed that 14 Signal Regiment would relocate to St Athan.

This is likely to result in consolidation of the defence presence on the site into a military enclave centred on Churchill Lines (St Athan West Camp).

Discussions have been ongoing with the Welsh Government, which leases large areas of the St Athan site, to establish how defence plans can also complement economic development by enabling its aim to develop an aerospace business park within the St Athan enterprise zone. MOD has no current requirement beyond 2017 for the St Athan "Superhangar", which will progressively be made available for commercial occupation. The intent remains to relocate No. 4 School of Technical Training from East Camp at St. Athan to Lyneham, Wiltshire in the medium term as part of the defence technical training change programme.

We also intend to move personnel of the RAF's No. 71 Investigation and Repair Squadron from St Athan to collocate with other components of No. 42 (Expeditionary Support) Wing at RAF Wittering. The relocation of the squadron will affect 47 service personnel who will transfer to RAF Wittering. It will also affect 27 civilian staff.

The Future of MOD Ashchurch

The MOD Ashchurch site is currently the central MOD hub for vehicle operations. However, the Ashchurch depot facilities are coming to the end of their lifespan and parts of the site are no longer used. The facilities would need extensive renewal to continue effective operation, while the vehicle numbers that the site supports are reducing as a result of the SDSR. The MOD is reviewing a number of vehicle basing options and has identified opportunities for greater efficiency from relocating facilities, rather than investing in the infrastructure at the site. Consequently, MOD will be withdrawing from the site entirely unless retention of a small number of specific buildings proves better value for money.

This site has the potential capacity for up to 2,100 new homes. A public consultation has been conducted so that wider views and opinions can be taken into account in any future development.

Rationalisation of the MOD Bicester site

On 3 October 2011, the MOD made an application to Cherwell district council for outline planning permission to allow the release of the Graven Hill site at Bicester to accommodate a mixed use development, including 1,900 dwellings, and with the potential to deliver over 2,000 jobs and a new MOD logistics facility on part of the site.

Chemical Weapons Convention

The Minister for the Armed Forces (Mr Andrew Robathan): The UK's chemical protection programme is designed to protect against the use of chemical weapons. The programme is permitted by the chemical weapons convention, with which the United Kingdom is fully compliant. Under the terms of the convention, we are required to provide information annually to the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). In accordance with the Government's commitment to openness, I am placing in the House of Commons Library a copy of the summary that has been provided to the organisation outlining the UK's chemical protection programme in 2012.

Service Children's Education Executive Agency

The Minister of State, Ministry of Defence (Mr Mark Francois): I wish to inform the House that with effect from 31 March 2013, Service Children's Education (SCE) will cease to have the status of an Executive agency within the Ministry of Defence (MOD).

SCE was formed as an Executive agency within MOD in 1996, following the merger of the Service Children's Schools (North West Europe) Defence Agency and the Service Children's Education Authority. The SCE mission statement is to provide a coherent and co-ordinated education service that delivers high standards of education from foundation stage to age 19 for dependent children residing with MOD personnel serving outside the UK. There are currently 33 SCE schools worldwide providing education for approximately 9,500 children.

The concept of SCE operating as a self-contained business unit has been diluted by recent changes to the defence operating model, in particular the centralisation of MOD corporate services. These changes, coupled with tighter manpower controls being applied to the agency, in common with all areas of the MOD, have meant that the efficient and effective delivery of agency objectives is now much more dependent on decisions taken elsewhere within the MOD. Moreover, the SCE operating context is changing significantly. The draw down of British Forces from Germany will see the number of SCE schools reduce, on current numbers, to 12. Managing this transformation without compromising educational standards, either in those schools that are closing or those that remain, will require sound policy decisions rooted in educational realities and informed directly by the needs of children and service families. The continued separation of policy making from delivery, as required by the agency construct is therefore no longer helpful.

The SCE title will remain, so that the sense of a shared identity is retained by schools. The change will have no impact on teaching staff. Some rationalisation between the MOD and the SCE headquarters element will be possible. Initial savings are estimated to be in the region of £180,000 per year.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE

Afghanistan (Monthly Progress Report)

The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr William Hague): I wish to inform the House that the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, together with the Ministry of Defence and the Department for International Development, is today publishing the 25th progress report on developments in Afghanistan since November 2010.

On 3 and 4 February my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister hosted a summit at Chequers, attended by the Presidents of Afghanistan and Pakistan. They were joined by Foreign Ministers, Chiefs of Defence Staff, Chiefs of Intelligence, the Afghan National Security Adviser and the Chair of the Afghan High Peace Council. Key achievements included agreement on co-operation between Afghan and Pakistan military and security services, strengthened co-ordination of Taliban prisoner

releases from Pakistani detention and a public statement in support of the opening of a Taliban political office in Doha.

My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary made her first visit to Afghanistan 24-27 February. The visit focused on British-Afghan co-operation in areas including police training, counter-narcotics, counter-terrorism and migration. The Afghanistan Minister of Defence, Bismullah Mohammadi, visited the UK 24-26 February. He held discussions on the development of the Afghan National Security Forces, Institutional Development, countering the insider threat, and progress of the UK-Afghanistan-Pakistan trilateral with the Foreign Secretary, the Defence Secretary, the Minister for the armed forces and the Chief of the Defence Staff.

The UN Assistance Mission Afghanistan reported that civilian casualties in 2012 decreased by 12% compared with 2011. Civilian deaths caused by ISAF and Afghan Forces fell from 14% of the total to 8%, while deaths caused by the insurgency rose by 9% to 81%.

In February, my right hon. Friend the International Development Secretary approved £12 million from existing DFID funds to help deliver emergency food support to over 900,000 people in Afghanistan. This assistance will support activity over a five month period up June 2013 and target food insecure regions of Afghanistan to help reduce malnutrition-related rates of mortality and morbidity.

In his State of the Union Address on 14 February President Obama confirmed that the US military presence will be approximately halved over the next year, reducing to 34,000 US troops in Afghanistan to the end of 2014. The reduction in international forces is made possible by the increasing capacity and capability of the Afghan National Security Forces.

I am placing the report in the Library of the House. It will also be published on the Foreign and Commonwealth Office website (www.fco.gov.uk).

BBC Monitoring Scheme

The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr William Hague): Following the announcement made by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, 20 October 2010, *Official Report*, column 962 that from 2013 BBC Monitoring will be funded from the TV Licence fee, I can confirm that I will be the Cabinet Minister representing the Government's interests with regards to BBC Monitoring. A new Monitoring Consultative Group (MCG) consisting of Government officials and BBC representatives will meet twice a year to discuss BBC Monitoring's strategic direction, to review BBC Monitoring's performance, and to resolve any issues as necessary.

This arrangement takes effect from 1 April 2013 and will be set out in the BBC Monitoring Scheme. I will place a copy of this "Scheme" in the Libraries of both Houses after that date.

FCO Services

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mark Simmonds): FCO Services operates as a trading fund of the FCO. I have set the following performance targets for 2013-14:

An in-year surplus before interest and tax producing a net margin of between 1 and 5%.

A return on capital employed of at least 3.5% (weighted average).

Cost of corporate functions as a % of revenue of no more than 10%.

A utilisation rate for revenue earning staff of between 75 and 80%. Customer satisfaction rating to be within or above the 2nd quartile in the UK Customer Satisfaction Index, as produced by the Institute of Customer Service.

Employee engagement in FCO Services using civil service survey of at least 60%.

FCO Services will report to Parliament on its success against these targets through its annual report for 2013-14.

Marshall Aid Commemoration Commission

The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr William Hague): The Foreign and Commonwealth Office will shortly commence a triennial review of the Marshall Aid Commemoration Commission (MACC), to Cabinet Office guidelines. As part of the coalition agreement, all Government Departments are required to review all their non-departmental public bodies (NDPBs) at least every three years. The review of MACC will commence during the final quarter of the programme (2012-13), and will be conducted in two stages. The first stage will examine the key functions of MACC. Providing the outcome of this stage is that the work of the commission should continue, the second stage of the project will ensure that MACC is operating in line with the recognised principles of good corporate governance. Copies of the review will be placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Proceeds of Crime Act 2002 (UK Appointed Person)

The Minister of State, Home Department (Mr Jeremy Browne): I am pleased to announce the recruitment of Mr Douglas Bain as the new appointed person for the United Kingdom, who will fulfil the requirement under the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002 to be an independent overseer of reports on cases where a search is carried out, without prior judicial approval, on persons or property for cash that is the proceeds of unlawful conduct or intended for use in such conduct.

Mr Bain was recruited after a fair and open competition and took up the role on 3 March 2013. Mr Bain brings a wealth of relevant experience to this role and I am confident he will ensure that the use of this power is scrutinised effectively and rigorously. It was agreed with my ministerial counterparts in the Scottish Parliament and the Northern Ireland Administration that we would jointly recruit one candidate to cover all three Administrations. This will help improve the consistency in the scrutiny of this power and save the public money.

As there were no reports on cash forfeiture in 2011-12 for consideration by the appointed person for England and Wales, a separate report to Parliament under section 219 of the Proceeds of Crime act 2002 will not be laid for 2011-12.

Terrorism Suspects (Police Detention)

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (James Brokenshire): I am today commencing subsections 4 to 8 of section 117 of the Coroners and Justice Act 2009, which provides for important enhanced

safeguards for terrorist suspects in police detention. This implements a recommendation of the Government's "Review of Counter-terrorism and Security Powers", published in January 2011.

Independent Custody Visiting (ICV) is the well established system whereby volunteers may make unannounced visits to police stations to check on the treatment of detainees and the conditions in which they are held to ensure that their rights and entitlements are being observed. Section 117 amends section 51 of the Police Reform Act 2002, which places a statutory obligation on Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) in England and Wales to have an effective Independent Custody Visiting scheme in their force area, by requiring PCCs to ensure equivalent arrangements are in place for any visit made to an individual held under terrorism powers. Independent Custody Visitors will also be required to prepare and submit a copy of the report of their visit to the relevant PCC and the Independent Reviewer Of Terrorism Legislation, currently David Anderson QC.

I have also today laid the revised Independent Custody Visitor code of practice, under section 51 of the Police Reform Act 2002. The revised code has been updated to reflect the new arrangements and requirements for ICVs visiting suspected terrorist detainees; to reflect recent changes to police accountability mechanisms, in particular the transfer of responsibility to provide ICV schemes to PCCs; and to take account of legislative changes since the code was last revised in early 2010. The revised code also benefited from a public consultation, which closed on 28 January. The revised code is available from the Vote Office and a copy of the summary of consultation responses will be placed in the House Library.

TRANSPORT

British Transport Police Authority

The Minister of State, Department for Transport (Mr Simon Burns): We will shortly commence a triennial review of the British Transport Police Authority (BTPA). The BTPA oversees the operation of the British transport police, set its targets, and allocates funding for its budget.

Reducing the number and cost of public bodies is a coalition priority. The triennial review process has been established to continue the Government's work ensuring accountability in public life by examining all NDPB's at least once every three years.

The review will be conducted as set out in Cabinet Office guidance. This review has two aims:

to provide a robust challenge of the continuing need for this NDPB—both its functions and form; and, if it is agreed that it should remain as an NDPB, to review the control and governance arrangements in place to ensure that the public body is complying with recognised principles of good corporate governance.

Further details of the review, including detailed terms of reference, will be published shortly.

If you would like further information, or to contribute to the review, please contact Richard Davey by email (richard.davey@dfes.gsi.gov.uk)

I remain committed to the ongoing review of public bodies and my Department continues to work with the Cabinet Office to develop forward plans of reviews.

The report of the review, which is expected to be completed in six months, will be placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

GLA Transport Grant

The Secretary of State for Transport (Mr Patrick McLoughlin): Following consultation with the Mayor of London, I have today determined the GLA transport grant for 2013-14 at £1.988 billion.

This grant is provided by the Government to Transport for London to deliver transport services and investment in the capital, including London Underground.

In line with my predecessor's 20 October 2010 letter to the Mayor "Spending Review 2010: TfL funding agreement" £894.960 million of this grant is designated an investment grant to support delivery of the tube upgrade programme and other projects, as set out in annex B of the 20 October letter, and the remaining £1.09 billion is for the purposes of TfL.

Written Answers to Questions

Monday 25 March 2013

BUSINESS, INNOVATION AND SKILLS

Bank Cards: Surcharges

Nic Dakin: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills pursuant to the answer of 11 February 2013, *Official Report*, column 524W, on bank cards: surcharges, when the legislative guidance that will accompany the ban on excessive surcharges will be published. [149740]

Jo Swinson: The guidance will be issued this week and will be placed on the Department's website:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-business-innovation-skills>

Nic Dakin: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills pursuant to the answer of 11 February 2013, *Official Report*, column 542W, on bank cards: surcharges, what steps he will take to ensure that the legislative guidance is sufficiently detailed to ensure that surcharges are fully cost-reflective. [149907]

Jo Swinson: The prohibition against a trader charging consumers more than the costs borne by the trader for the use of a given means of payment is laid down in the Consumer Rights (Payment Surcharges) Regulations 2012 (SI 2012/3110). The guidance will indicate the kinds of costs which the Department considers may be reflected in any payment surcharge but it cannot change the requirements of the regulations nor is it a substitute for them. In practice, the size and nature of those costs will vary with the type of business concerned, the particular means of payment and the contractual arrangements on which the business relies to use those means. It will be for each trader who wishes to impose payment surcharges to assess the costs it incurs which are exclusively attributable to using a particular payment means and to ensure that the payment surcharge does not exceed those costs.

Copyright

Mr Iain Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills pursuant to the answer of 12 March 2013, *Official Report*, column 173W, on copyright, which representatives of small and medium-sized enterprises he has met to discuss the regulatory effect of the modernising copyright proposals in the last year; if he will publish the (a) agenda and (b) minutes of any such meetings; and whether the issue of increased costs of litigation as a result of the modernising copyright proposals was discussed at such meetings. [149380]

Jo Swinson: Ministers in this Department have met a range of stakeholders, including representatives from the creative industries, on a number of occasions to discuss copyright issues including the Modernising

Copyright proposals. A range of issues of interest to the relevant stakeholders were discussed. The Government has no plans to publish the agenda or minutes of these meetings.

The Government has introduced measures to reduce the costs of litigation on intellectual property issues through the Patents County Court, including caps on costs and damages and a new small claims track for simple cases.

Food

Ann McKechnie: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills what recent assessment he has made of the adequacy of consumer protection legislation in relation to the food industry. [144932]

Mr Heath: I have been asked to reply on behalf of the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.

It is unacceptable for consumers to be misled in the way that has been recently uncovered and the fundamental principle established in food labelling rules is that information provided to the consumer must be accurate.

The Government will, of course, take account of the recent events concerning the discovery of significant amounts of horse DNA in beef products. However, we should keep in mind that food fraud and mis-labelling already contravenes current and forthcoming regulations and that we are looking carefully at how enforcement can be made more effective.

The Food Information to Consumers Regulation (EU) No. 1169/2011 came into force in November 2011 and most of the provisions will apply from 13 December 2014. Consumers are also protected by the Consumer Protection from Unfair Trading Regulations (CPRs, 2008). It is an offence under the CPRs to omit material information, to hide material information or to provide material information in a manner which is unclear, unintelligible, or ambiguous. Material information is information which the average consumer needs, according to the context, to take an informed transactional decision.

Foreign Investment in UK

Mr Dodds: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills what targets UK Trade and Investment has set for inward investment (a) projects in respect of and (b) visits to each nation and region of the UK. [149553]

Michael Fallon: UK Trade & Investment (UKTI) has a target for foreign direct investment projects covering all four nations. In 2013-14 the target is 750 investment projects. All devolved Administrations (including Northern Ireland) have their own investment promotion agencies who may have individual targets for foreign investments. UKTI has no visits target.

Mr Dodds: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills what assessment he has made of the potential level of project opportunities for Northern Ireland arising from the UK Trade and Investment National Pipeline of prospective investors. [149554]

Michael Fallon: UK Trade & Investment collects data from the UKTI network and local delivery partners on foreign direct investment opportunities. As of March 2013 there are 41 potential project opportunities where Northern Ireland is specifically tagged as a location of interest. There are a further 2,189 opportunities where the project could potentially occur at any location in the UK, including in Northern Ireland.

Mr Dodds: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills how many instances of foreign direct investment into Northern Ireland were identified or developed by the UK Trade and Investment network in each of the last three years. [149555]

Michael Fallon: UK Trade & Investment (UKTI) records data on all foreign direct investment projects into the UK. Instances of foreign direct investment into Northern Ireland identified and supported by the UKTI Network in each of the last three years are:

2011-12: 20 out of 27 total projects into Northern Ireland

2010-11: 7 out of 44 total projects into Northern Ireland

2009-10: 7 out of 49 total projects into Northern Ireland

Mr Dodds: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the relationship between UK Trade and Investment and Invest Northern Ireland. [149556]

Michael Fallon: UK Trade & Investment (UKTI) and Invest Northern Ireland (INI) have a good working relationship to support overseas exports and attract inward investment. By way of example, INI are now co-located with UKTI in India (Mumbai and Bangalore), Saudi Arabia (Jeddah), Iraq and Kurdistan (Erbil). Senior officials from both organisations meet regularly to discuss both strategic trade and investment issues, operational matters including service delivery arrangements, and trade and investment evaluation.

Growth Voucher Scheme

Mr Umunna: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills pursuant to the Financial Statement of 20 March 2013, *Official Report*, column 938, how funds will be distributed through small and medium-sized enterprises growth vouchers; how applications for funding will be made; by what date expected funds will be (a) allocated and (b) drawn down; and what processes, benchmarks and deadlines he and his officials have put in place in relation to those vouchers. [149937]

Michael Fallon: The growth vouchers programme announced in the Budget will be designed over the coming months with input from the private sector. The programme will test a variety of innovative approaches to helping small and medium-sized enterprises overcome barriers to achieving growth, such as limited use of external advice.

In January 2014, growth vouchers will be accessed through a new private sector led online marketplace and target up to £2,000 of match funding to firms with no more than 50 employees, helping them find the support they need, public and private.

Overseas Trade: Russia

Mrs Gillan: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills what assessment has been made of the factors which tend to inhibit UK businesses from seeking to operate in the Russian market; what assessment has been made of the extent to which the risks assessed by UK businesses are well-founded; and what he is doing to encourage UK businesses to venture into the Russian market. [149200]

Michael Fallon: Russia presents significant opportunities for UK business. It is the world's leading energy producer and its 9th largest economy. The Russian Government's economy modernisation and infrastructure development agenda is underpinned by 140 million consumers' appetite for quality services and goods.

Through the Overseas Business Risk service UK Trade and Investment (UKTI) and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) have brought together authoritative, accessible and topical information on Russia, and the key issues related to the political, economic and business security environments.

<http://www.ukti.gov.uk/export/countries/europe/easterneurope/russia/overseasbusinessrisk.html>

There are difficulties associated with doing business in Russia with corruption often cited as the major concern. However, although Russia is ranked 112th on the World Bank's "ease of doing business" index (up this year from 120th) it compares relatively favourably with other BRIC markets: Brazil is 130th and India 132nd.

UK companies should not be afraid of doing business in Russia. Neither should they, however, assume that business is done the same way in Russia as it is done within the European Union. UK Trade and Investment is a good source of information and advice which can help unlock potential opportunities in this market. UKTI has clear targets to assist increasing number of British businesses trading with Russia and to promote the UK's reputation as a trade and investment partner. At a strategic level the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills, the right hon. Member for Twickenham (Vince Cable), also co-chairs the annual UK-Russia Intergovernmental Steering Committee with First Deputy Prime Minister Igor Shuvalov.

Post Offices: Yorkshire and the Humber

Andrew Percy: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills how many operational post offices there were in (a) Brigg and Goole constituency and (b) Yorkshire and the Humber in each of the last 10 years. [149944]

Jo Swinson: Post Office Ltd is responsible for operational matters concerning the post office network, which includes the information requested. I have therefore asked Paula Vennells, the chief executive of Post Office Ltd, to respond directly to the hon. Member and a copy of her reply will be placed in the Libraries of the House.

UK Trade and Investment: Northern Ireland

Mr Dodds: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills how many members of UK Trade & Investment overseas staff have visited Northern Ireland for the purposes of information gathering and fact-finding in each of the last five years. [149841]

Michael Fallon: UK Trade & Investment does not keep records of visits of overseas staff to Northern Ireland.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Crimes of Violence: Females

Sarah Teather: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department with reference to paragraphs 46 to 48 of the Call to End Violence Against Women and Girls action plans, what steps her Department is taking to monitor the implementation of the recommended actions; and what specific role the Gender Champion at the UK Border Agency will have with respect to such actions. [149306]

Mr Harper: The Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Action Plan was refreshed and re-launched on 8 March 2013—International Women’s Day. The Home Office works closely with Departments across Government to monitor progress against the Action Plan. Home Office Ministers chair a regular Inter-Ministerial Group on Violence Against Women and Girls, in order to drive progress and hold Departments to account on their actions to tackle VAWG. The specific actions to which the hon. Member refers relate to gender sensitivity in the asylum system. These actions are also being incorporated into the UK Border Agency’s ‘Women’s Issues in the Asylum Claim’ action plan. The actions in this plan are regularly reviewed and monitored at meetings of the Quality and Equality Sub-Group of the National Asylum Stakeholder Forum. The UK Border Agency gender champion takes a close interest in all gender issues across the agency, and will take an oversight role in ensuring that these actions are completed.

Pat Glass: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent representations she has received from women’s organisations on tackling violence against women. [149423]

Damian Green: The Government works closely with women’s organisations to ensure our strategy to end violence against women and girls identifies, protects and supports victims.

Databases: Telecommunications

Mr David Davis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what capital expenditure has been undertaken since May 2010 as part of the Communications Capability Development Programme. [149406]

James Brokenshire: I refer my right hon. Friend to my answer of 13 February 2013, *Official Report*, column 757W.

Dr Huppert: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many staff (a) of her Department and (b) seconded from (i) other Departments and agencies and (ii) the private sector are employed within

the Communications Capabilities Directorate and on projects associated with the Communications Capabilities Directorate. [149638]

James Brokenshire: As at March 2013 the Communications Capabilities Development programme includes:

- (a) 73 Home Office civil servants
- (b) Staff Seconded from:
 - (i) Other Departments and agencies—6
 - (ii) The private sector—0.

Although not employed directly by the Home Office, the Communications Capabilities Development programme currently has a number of privately contracted subject matter experts and technical personnel deployed on the programme through support services contracts. Over the lifetime of the Communications Capabilities Development programme the number of these personnel has varied, responding to business need.

Driving: Eyesight

Sir Bob Russell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what advice is given to police officers attending a road traffic accident to require drivers to be tested as to their competence to comply with the minimum distance eyesight requirement to read a vehicle number plate. [149879]

Damian Green: This is an operational matter for the police. The police can test a driver’s eyesight at the roadside to determine whether he or she meets the minimum eyesight requirements for driving. If the driver fails the roadside test, the police can inform the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency who will revoke the driving licence.

Entry Clearances: Overseas Students

Mr Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what assessment she has made of trends in the number of student visitor visas that have been issued in the last year. [149312]

Mr Harper: In 2012, 68,372 student visitor visas were issued, 6,966 more (+11%) than 2011.

Further detail is given in the Home Office Immigration Statistics October—December 2012. This states that although there has been a 6,966 increase in student visitor visas issued in 2012 at the same time as a fall in Tier 4 study visas of 52,066, the pattern of these changes for individual nationalities does not indicate a clear or consistent relationship. The nationalities accounting for most of the 52,066 fall in study visas issued (Pakistan, India, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh) have seen only very slight changes in the number of student visitor visas issued (+73, +20, +8 and -12 respectively).

The Home Office Immigration Statistics October—December 2012, including a summary of trends is available at:

www.homeoffice.gov.uk/publications/science-research-statistics/research-statistics/immigration-asylum-research/immigration-q4-2012/study-q4-2012

Human Trafficking

Justin Tomlinson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if she will recommend that fighting modern-day slavery is made a strategic priority for police forces. [149427]

Mr Harper: The Secretary of State for the Home Department, my right hon. Friend the Member for Maidenhead (Mrs May), set out in the Strategic Policing Requirement that fighting organised crime must be a priority for all police forces. While it is for police and crime commissioners to determine local policing priorities, they must have regard to this requirement. The requirement sets out the threats that the police must address and the appropriate national policing capabilities required to counter those threats, respecting the operational independence of the police.

I expect all forces to treat human trafficking extremely seriously.

Police and Crime Commissioners

Mr Brady: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department pursuant to the answer of 17 December 2012, *Official Report*, column 500W, on police and crime commissioners, if she will review her Department's policy regarding free delivery of information regarding candidates for police and crime commissioner

elections in light of the recent report by the Electoral Commission. [149547]

Damian Green: There is no such thing as a free mailing. Information about every candidate was published online and delivered free of charge to those who requested it. The Electoral Commission's proposals would entail spending taxpayers' money on supporting political candidates. It is the Government's job to balance this cost with the benefit to the public. The Government decided that the £30 million cost to send individual candidate mailings, as is the case in general elections, was not the right use of taxpayers' money.

Police: Northamptonshire

Andy Sawford: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many (a) police officers and (b) police community support officers there were in Northamptonshire police force area in (i) 2010, (ii) 2011, (iii) 2012 and (iv) 2013. [149477]

Damian Green: The latest available information shows the number of police officers and police community support officers in Northamptonshire police force, as at 31 March 2010 to 2012 and 30 September 2010 to 2012 (full-time equivalent). The next set of figures as at 31 March 2013 is due to be published in July 2013.

Number of police officers and police community support officers in Northamptonshire police force, as at 31 March and 30 September 2010 to 2012^{1,2}

	Police Officers	Police Community Support Officers
31 March 2010	1,343	164
30 September 2010	1,337	168
31 March 2011	1,306	166
30 September 2011	1,262	163
31 March 2012	1,234	161
30 September 2012	1,220	149

¹ This table contains full-time equivalent figures that have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

² These figures are published within the Police Service Strength bulletins found on the Home Office website.

Sick Leave

Priti Patel: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many days (a) her Department and (b) each of its non-departmental public bodies has lost to staff sickness in each of the last five years; and what estimate she has made of the cost of such absence in each year; [147990]

(2) how many officials in (a) her Department and (b) each of its non-departmental public bodies have had (i) fewer than five days, (ii) five to 10 days, (iii) 10 to 15 days, (iv) 15 to 20 days, (v) 20 to 25 days, (vi) 25 to 50 days, (vii) 50 to 75 days, (viii) 75 to 100 days, (ix) 100 to 150 days, (x) 150 to 200 days, (xi) more than 200 days, (xii) more than three months, (xiii) more than six months and (xiv) more than one year on paid sick leave (A) consecutively and (B) in total in each of the last five years. [148009]

James Brokenshire: The information is as follows.

(a) Table 1 provides information on the number of days lost to staff sickness in the Home Department

(including its Executive Agencies) for the last five full financial years, along with an estimate of the cost of such sickness absence.

(b) Table 2 provides information on the number of days lost to staff sickness for each non-departmental public body for the last five full financial years, along with an estimate of the cost of such sickness absence.

Information for the current financial year (2012-13) will be available from mid April 2013.

(c) Table 3 provides information on the number of days lost both to short (less than 28 calendar days) and long term (29 or more calendar days) sickness in the Home Department (including its Executive Agencies) for the last five full financial years.

(d) Table 4 provides information on the number of days lost both to short and long term sickness for each non-departmental public body for the last five full financial years.

Information supplied complies with Cabinet Office guidelines for the reporting of staff sickness. A further breakdown of this information could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Information for the current financial year (2012-13) will be available from mid April 2013.

Table 1: Home Office working days lost (full-time equivalent (FTE)) and cost of sickness absence: 2007-08, 2008-09, 2009-10, 2010-11 and 2011-12¹

Financial year	Working days lost (FTE) to sickness absence	Cost of sickness absence (£ million)	Staff employed in period (FTE) ²
2007-08	264,579	n/a	25,090
2008-09	228,521	24.28	25,875
2009-10	216,928	24.21	26,547
2010-11	221,525	24.46	29,224
2011-12	200,904	25.89	26,939

¹ Information for the current financial year will not be available until mid April 2013.

² Information relating to staff employed during the period is included to show how the number of working days lost compares to the number of staff working in the Department during the same period. This is in line with Cabinet Office guidelines.

Notes:

1. Extract Dates: 1 April of each year.
2. Periods covered: Data are given by financial year and each year covers the period 1 April to 31 March.
3. Organisational coverage: Includes Home Office Headquarters (including Border Force) and the Executive Agencies. For all years this includes the UK Border Agency, Identity and Passport Service and Criminal Records Bureau. Additionally, figures for 2011-12 include the Government Equalities Office (within Home Office Headquarters) and National Fraud Authority.
4. Employee coverage: Figures are based on FTE of all paid civil servants employed during the financial year (current and leavers), apart from the staff employed in period (FTE) for 2007-08, where it was only possible to provide the FTE figure for current paid civil servants as at 31 March 2008.
5. Transparency agenda considerations: Figures are provided in line with Cabinet Office guidelines and conventions on sickness absence reporting.
6. Rounding: Working days lost (FTE) and staff employed in post (FTE) figures are subject to rounding +/- 1. Cost of sickness absence figures are provided to the nearest £10,000.

Sources:

Data from 2008-09 onwards taken from Data View—the Home Office's single source of Office for National Statistics compliant monthly snapshot corporate Human Resources data. Data View was introduced in June 2008, therefore information for 2007-08 has been taken from other sources—Working Days Lost data from the Department's Permanent Secretaries Management Group (PSMG) quarterly sickness absence return and Staff Employed in Period data from the Department's Annual Civil Service Employment Survey (ACSES). Information on the cost of sickness absence for 2007-08 is not available.

Table 2: Home Office non-departmental public bodies working days lost and cost of sickness absence: 2007-08, 2008-09, 2009-10, 2010-11 and 2011-12¹

Financial year	Number of days lost to sick absence	Estimate of cost of sickness absence (£ million)
2007-08	31,049	3.63
2008-09	25,346	3.63
2009-10	25,832	3.60
2010-11	28,269	3.91
2011-12	28,903	4.01

¹ Information for the current financial year will not be available until mid April 2013.

Note:

This response includes data for the Independent Safeguarding Authority (from 2008 onwards), Independent Police Complaints Commission, Security Industry Authority (from 2008), the Serious Organised Crime Agency and the Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner.

Although the Equality and Human Rights Commission was sponsored by the Home Office during this period, their data are included in the response for the Department of Culture, Media and Sport.

This response does not include data for the National Policing Improvement Agency as to do so would incur a disproportionate cost.

Table 3: Home Office working days lost (full-time equivalent (FTE)) by short and long term sickness absence: 2007-08, 2008-09, 2009-10, 2010-11 and 2011-12¹

Financial year	Working days lost (FTE) to sickness absences		
	Short-term	Long-term	Staff employed in period (FTE) ²
2007-08	126,767	137,812	25,090
2008-09	116,552	111,969	25,875

Table 3: Home Office working days lost (full-time equivalent (FTE)) by short and long term sickness absence: 2007-08, 2008-09, 2009-10, 2010-11 and 2011-12¹

Financial year	Working days lost (FTE) to sickness absences		Staff employed in period (FTE) ²
	Short-term	Long-term	
2009-10	116,874	100,055	26,547
2010-11	121,918	99,607	29,224
2011-12	105,365	95,538	26,939

¹ Information for the current financial year will not be available until mid April 2013.

² Information relating to staff employed during the period is included to show how the number of working days lost compares to the number of staff working in the Department during the same period. This is in line with Cabinet Office guidelines.

Notes:

1. Extract dates: 1 April of each year.
2. Periods covered: Data are given by financial year and each year covers the period 1 April to 31 March.
3. Organisational coverage: Includes Home Office Headquarters (including Border Force) and the Executive Agencies. For all years this includes the UK Border Agency, Identity and Passport Service and Criminal Records Bureau. Additionally, figures for 2011-12 include the Government Equalities Office (within Home Office Headquarters) and National Fraud Authority.
4. Employee coverage: Figures are based on FTE of all paid civil servants employed during the financial year (current and leavers), apart from the staff employed in period (FTE) for 2007-08, where it was only possible to provide the FTE figure for current paid civil servants as at 31 March 2008.
5. Transparency agenda considerations: Figures are provided in line with Cabinet Office guidelines and conventions on sickness absence reporting. This includes classifying absences as short or long term rather than in the groupings stated in the question. Short term sickness absences are classified as those of 20 working days or 28 calendar days or less. Long term sickness absences are classified as those of 21 working days or 29 calendar days or more.
6. Rounding: All figures are subject to rounding +/- 1.

Sources:

Office for National Statistics compliant monthly snapshot corporate Human Resources data. Data View was introduced in June 2008, therefore information for 2007-08 has been taken from other sources—Working Days Lost data from the Department's Permanent Secretaries Management Group (PSMG) quarterly sickness absence return and Staff Employed in Period data from the Department's Annual Civil Service Employment Survey (ACSES).

Table 4: Home Office non-departmental public bodies days lost by short and long term sickness absence: 2007-08, 2008-09, 2009-10, 2010-11 and 2011-12¹

Financial year	Working days lost to sickness	
	Short-term	Long-term
2007-08	30	262
2008-09	691	468
2009-10	1,229	239
2010-11	1,328	1,160
2011-12	1,239	1,027

¹ Information for the current financial year will not be available until mid April 2013.

Note:

This response includes data for the Independent Safeguarding Authority (from December 2012) and the Independent Police Complaints Commission.

This response does not include data for the Security Industry Authority, the Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner, the National Policing Improvement Agency and the Serious Organised Crime Agency, as to do so would incur a disproportionate cost.

Written Questions: Government Responses

Ms Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when she plans to answer question 146165 on charges for sexual offences tabled on 27 February 2013 for answer on 4 March 2013. [149405]

Damian Green: I answered parliamentary question 146165 on 21 March 2013, *Official Report*, column 798W. I am sorry for the delay in answering this parliamentary question.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL**Crime: Victims**

Mr Hollobone: To ask the Attorney-General whether the Crown Prosecution Service in (a) Northamptonshire and (b) England always seeks where it can with the cases it prosecutes to ensure that victim impact statements are made and victim compensation orders sought. [149805]

The Solicitor-General: The Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) has an important role to play in ensuring that a Victim Personal Statement (VPS) is available and that applications for Compensation Orders are made to the court in appropriate cases.

The CPS does not keep information on the number of VPS statements obtained or on the number of applications for compensation. However, in all cases, the prosecution advocate must be ready to assist the court to reach the appropriate decision as to sentence, and this includes drawing the court's attention to any VPS and its powers to award compensation, inviting the judge or magistrate to make such an order where appropriate.

Crown Prosecution Service

Emily Thornberry: To ask the Attorney-General what recent assessment he has made of the quality and performance of internal anti-fraud controls at the Crown Prosecution Service. [149487]

The Solicitor-General: The Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) formally assessed its vulnerability to fraud in

November 2011 when it conducted a fraud risk assessment under the auspices of the Treasury's 'Managing the Risk of Financial Loss' initiative. The assessment provided an assurance that the CPS had appropriate and proportionate anti-fraud controls in place.

Following the discovery of fraudulent payments to a supplier in its West Midlands area, the CPS commissioned investigations to ascertain the extent of the fraudulent activity, how the prescribed controls were circumvented and whether the controls were being applied correctly in other parts of the organisation.

One strand of this activity will address specifically the question of the quality and performance of internal, anti-fraud controls at the CPS.

Driving: Eyesight

Sir Bob Russell: To ask the Attorney-General how many drivers were prosecuted for failing to meet the minimum distance eyesight requirement to read a vehicle number plate in each of the last five years. [149880]

The Solicitor-General: The offence of driving a motor vehicle on a road after failing to meet the minimum distance eyesight requirement is prosecuted under section 96(1) and schedule 2 to the Road Traffic Offenders Act 1988. The Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) maintains no central record of the number of individual drivers that were prosecuted for this offence; however, a record is maintained of the number of offences charged that reached a magistrates court hearing.

Act/section	Offence	Financial year				
		2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13 ¹
Road Traffic Act 1988 (96(1)) and Schedule 2 to the Road Traffic Offenders Act 1988	Drive a motor vehicle on a road with eyesight which did not comply with requirements	36	37	26	29	31

¹ April 2012 to February 2013.

This data relates solely to CPS prosecutions, as proceedings under this section are initially commenced by the police and are only prosecuted by the CPS once they become contested.

accounting officers. The plan sets out various actions to address this. The Cabinet Office is reviewing the guidance for Departments on providing evidence to Select Committees. The Government will liaise with interested parties within Parliament as part of the review, including the Liaison Committee.

PRIME MINISTER**Civil Servants: Codes of Practice**

Mr Jenkin: To ask the Prime Minister pursuant to his answers to the Liaison Committee of 12 March 2013, if he will take steps to revise (a) the terms of the Armstrong Memorandum or repudiate its terms and (b) the terms of the Civil Service Code in order to reflect the views he expressed; and if he will make a statement on the obligation of civil servants to appear before select committees to explain and defend the acts for which they are responsible. [149045]

The Prime Minister: In the Civil Service Reform Plan the Government committed to strengthen the accountability of the civil service and to clarify the responsibilities of

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS**Beef: Horse Meat**

Mary Creagh: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs whether there is an open criminal investigation into the illegal adulteration of horsemeat. [147226]

Mr Heath: Investigations are under way into a number of cases and are being led by the Food Standards Agency. Police forces are involved, the lead police force being the City of London police. It is not appropriate to comment in any further detail on ongoing investigations.

Bovine Tuberculosis

Andrew George: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs whether he has made an estimate of the proportion of badgers in the two pilot cull areas which will be (a) trapped, (b) snared and (c) baited before being killed; and what proportion he expects will be killed through other controlled shooting methods. [148776]

Mr Heath: Controlled shooting and cage-trapping followed by shooting are the only culling methods permitted under licence from Natural England. Both are likely to involve pre-baiting. In removing the minimum number of badgers, set out by Natural England to the licensees in authorisation letters issued on 27 February 2013, these methods can be used in combination or as single control methods.

It is for the licensees to decide how many badgers should be culled using the different methods.

Andrew George: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs how many (a) farms were placed under bovine TB controls, (b) farms had bovine TB reactors and (c) cattle tested positive for bovine TB in each of the two pilot cull areas in each of the last five years for which figures are available; and how much compensation was paid to meet the cost of bovine TB reactors in each such pilot cull area in each such year. [148880]

Mr Heath: The number of cattle slaughtered as reactors in each of the last five years in England and the counties of Somerset and Gloucestershire (where the pilot areas are located) are:

	England	Somerset	Gloucestershire
2008	26,392	1,498	2,433
2009	25,539	1,235	2,268
2010	23,895	1,399	1,604
2011	25,879	1,918	1,781
2012	27,740	1,952	1,922

Data on how much compensation was paid to meet the cost of bovine TB reactors in each pilot cull area is not available. However, data on the average TB reactor values in England in the last five years can be used as an indicator of the likely local average TB reactor values. The figures are:

	£
2008	1,027
2009	1,147
2010	1,162
2011	1,139
2012	1,205

These figures are derived from dividing the total compensation paid in England by the total number of TB reactors in England. The figures in 2012 are subject to change as more statistical data is received.

Figures are not currently available for the number of farms that were placed under bovine TB controls and the number of farms that had bovine TB reactors in this

period. These statistics will be published on DEFRA's website once additional quality assurance checks have been completed.

Andrew George: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what estimate he has made of the likely cost to (a) his Department, (b) the Food and Environment Research Agency, (c) Natural England, (d) the Home Department, (e) local police constabularies and (f) other Government departments or organisations of supporting the bovine TB badger cull trials in each financial year from 2012-13 to 2018-19. [148881]

Mr Heath: The badger control policy is based on a cost-sharing approach with the farming industry. The industry will be responsible for the operational costs of delivering culling and DEFRA will bear the costs of licensing, monitoring and policing the policy. The costs to Government for a typical 350km² area as set out in the impact assessment are:

£0.4 million for licensing;

£0.7 million for monitoring;

£2 million for policing;

£0.1 million in relation to an increase in TB incidents in the neighbouring area.

We would expect these costs to be offset by savings as a result of reduced TB incidence within the control areas and in neighbouring areas, extending for five years beyond the culling period. The Government currently bears the majority of the cost of TB incidents by paying for TB testing and compensation for slaughtered animals.

The cost assumptions used to calculate these estimates are per pilot area over a four year period of culling. The pilots are subject to increased monitoring of the humaneness, effectiveness and safety of controlled shooting. We anticipate that Government costs would be lower for any culling areas licensed subsequently (including the pilot areas), as the monitoring costs in particular would be lower.

Total expenditure in 2014-15 and beyond will depend on Ministers' decisions on wider roll-out of the policy.

The cost to DEFRA of implementing this policy is being met from within its existing budget. Further details on the estimated costs are set out in the impact assessment, which is available on the DEFRA website at:

<http://archive.defra.gov.uk/foodfarm/farmanimal/diseases/atoz/tb/documents/bovine-tb-impact-assessment.pdf>

This will also be available in the Library of the House.

Andrew George: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs pursuant to the answer of 18 March 2013, *Official Report*, column 392W, on bovine tuberculosis, if, before the two pilot culls commence, he will review the badger population estimates in light of (a) the significant short-term variations in badger numbers, (b) the addition of new badger cubs in the early spring pulse and (c) any other factors. [149499]

Mr Heath: The badger population estimates published on 22 February 2013 are based on fieldwork carried out in summer/autumn 2012. There will inevitably be some changes in the population between the time of this

fieldwork and the time of culling, due to births, natural deaths and migration. However, any difference between the population as measured at the same time point in different years is likely to be small. Therefore there is no intention to review the population estimates before the pilot culls commence.

British Overseas Territories

Thomas Docherty: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs how much funding was allocated to the UK Overseas Territories for projects relating to environmental protection in 2010 to 2015. [147114]

Richard Benyon: Between 2010 and 2013, DEFRA has allocated approximately £3.2 million to environmental projects in the UK overseas territories through the Darwin Initiative, the Flagship Species Fund, our international biodiversity budget and our research budget.

We will shortly be announcing the outcome of Round 19 of the Darwin Initiative which is expected to include over £2 million worth of new environmental projects in our overseas territories. This will include the first projects under the Government's new 'Darwin Plus' fund which is jointly funded by DEFRA, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) and the Department for International Development (DFID).

In addition to this, the FCO and DFID also fund projects in our overseas territories through their Environment Programme and Official Development Assistance budget respectively.

Most Darwin Plus projects span at least two years but funding decisions for future years have yet to be taken.

Climate Change

Barry Gardiner: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what assessment he has made of the Environment Agency's capability to

deliver its new climate change adaptation role as the delivery arm of the Government's National Adaptation Programme. [147726]

Richard Benyon: DEFRA has not made a formal assessment of the Environment Agency's new climate change adaptation role. However, the Environment Agency has considerable expertise on climate adaptation, for example, through its lead role in flood risk management and the sustainable use of water resources. It is able to draw on its local delivery network and partners to reach key audiences, including business and local authorities. DEFRA will continue to evaluate the effectiveness of the Climate Ready Support Service.

Dogs: Imports

Jim Fitzpatrick: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs how many dogs were added to the Index of Exempted Dogs in 2012. [146518]

Mr Heath: I can confirm that 497 dogs were added to the Index of Exempted Dogs in 2012.

Environment Agency

Andrew Gwynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs how many legal cases brought against the Environment Agency between May 2010 and February 2013 were (a) successful and (b) unsuccessful; what the value of settlements was in each successful case; who the recipients were in each such case; and what the cost of defending these cases was. [147888]

Richard Benyon: Of the legal cases brought against the Environment Agency between May 2010 and February 2013, (a) 41 were successful and (b) 78 were unsuccessful. The following table contains the value of settlements in each successful case, and where possible the recipients and the costs of defending those cases. It is correct as of 14 March 2013.

<i>Recipient¹</i>	<i>Value of settlement (£)</i>	<i>Cost to defend</i>
1. Health and Safety Executive	³ 228,563	38,000
2.	206,000	21,070
3.	187,734	7,610
4.	160,000	53,600
5.	110,000	22,000
6. Manchester Ship Canal Company Ltd and Peel Holdings (Land and Property) Ltd	⁴ 80,000	51,780
7.	75,790	13,060
8.	50,750	12,000
9.	47,000	1,932
10.	45,600	560
11.	45,021	² —
12.	44,500	5,970
13.	31,500	2,700
14.	30,966	3,580
15.	29,512	626
16.	25,716	1,490
17. East Riding of Yorkshire Council	25,550	8,530
18.	25,485	3,230

<i>Recipient¹</i>	<i>Value of settlement (£)</i>	<i>Cost to defend²</i>
19.	16,200	3,350
20.	15,112	3,060
21.	14,500	2—
22.	11,250	1,400
23.	10,566	1,270
24.	10,216	1,660
25.	10,000	6,750
26.	10,450	1,310
27.	10,000	17,900
28.	8,800	1,240
29.	4,000	2—
30.	2,000	2—
31.	500	6,260
32. EMR Group	5—	17,951
33. EMR Group	5—	1,642
34. n/a	No payment	35,000
35. n/a	No payment	610,300
36. n/a	No payment	9,730
37. n/a	No payment	5,940
38. n/a	No payment	4,250
39. n/a	No payment	2—
40. n/a	No payment	0
41. n/a	No payment	0

¹ Some payee data is anonymised for data protection reasons.

² Where a figure is absent this information could be provided only at disproportionate cost. Costs do not include those related to the in-house team—this could be provided for each case only at disproportionate cost.

³ In fines, costs to HSE and statutory charge.

⁴ Awarded to claimants. This has not been paid as case is under appeal.

⁵ Claimant counsel's costs yet to be settled.

⁶ Estimated.

Findus

Mr Watson: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs whether he intends to meet Mr Dale Morrison of Findus to discuss that company's response to the contamination of meat products.

[146530]

Mr Heath: The discovery of horse DNA in products labelled as beef is completely unacceptable. Findus were represented at the meeting held by the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs on 18 February with food industry leaders. At that meeting it was agreed that food businesses and Government had to work together to restore consumer confidence in the UK food industry.

It is the responsibility of food businesses across the supply chain to ensure that food is correctly described and ingredients are as stated on the label. Investigations into cases where horsemeat has been discovered will continue.

Flood Control

Barry Gardiner: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (1) what discussions he has had with the Environment Agency on the provision of adequate funding to prepare and adapt homes, businesses, agricultural practices and infrastructure against the threat of flooding;

[147894]

(2) what additional funding his Department has made available to the Environment Agency for new

projects to prepare and adapt homes, businesses, agricultural practices and infrastructure against the threat of flooding.

[147895]

Richard Benyon: DEFRA is on course to spend £2.3 billion on reducing the risk from flooding and coastal erosion over the four years to 2015. The Partnership Funding approach makes funding available towards any worthwhile flood and coastal erosion risk management scheme. The amount of funding the scheme will attract is based on factors such as damages avoided to homes, businesses, agricultural land and infrastructure.

Many flood management projects, funded wholly or partly by DEFRA, and maintenance work, undertaken by the Environment Agency, reduce the risk to farmland. For example, schemes which completed in 2011-12 provided an improved standard of flood protection to more than 180,000 acres [74,000 hectares] of farm land.

The partnership funding formula sets the economic benefits of protecting critical infrastructure at a lower rate than for protecting households. This sends a clear signal to the owners of critical infrastructure that they must adapt and make it more resilient to climate change, not expect the taxpayer to defend it in every case.

The 2012 autumn statement announced £120 million for flood defences in England during this spending period, which will speed up the construction of around 50 schemes, protecting up to 60,000 households and delivering up to £1 billion in economic benefits. Half of the funding has been targeted to schemes that will, in

addition to delivering improved protection to households, deliver economic growth, create jobs and grow the economy.

For example new defences can now go ahead in Exeter (which will create over 1,000 jobs, protect over 2,000 homes and businesses which employ 4,700 people) and in Ipswich a tidal barrier will improve flood protection to ten hectares (24.7 acres) of development land attracting more business to the area and creating 4,000 jobs.

On 6 December 2012, DEFRA launched a new scheme to support innovative demonstration projects designed to improve a community's overall resilience to flooding. £5 million will be available to fund a total of up to 20 projects in the period up to March 2015.

The scheme aims to:

Enhance flood risk management and preparedness in ways which improve a community's overall resilience;

Demonstrably improve the community's financial resilience in relation to flooding; and

Deliver sustained improvements which have the potential to be applied in other areas.

Projects funded under this scheme are likely to combine a number of different elements which, taken together, could achieve a significant, quantifiable improvement in resilience. The kinds of project that could be funded include:

Installation of property level protection measures coupled with a wider package of innovative community measures;

Improving local flood risk mapping and modelling where existing data sets may not accurately capture the local level of risk;

Inspiring local communities to become more active participants in their flood management by supporting practical measures such as "gully watch" schemes or installation of local monitoring equipment;

Disseminating information or carrying out local exercises to improve flood awareness and preparedness;

Building financial resilience such as developing new insurance with rent schemes.

The application window closed on 16 January 2013 with the submission of over 40 proposals from across the country. They are now being examined by officials. The successful projects will start work shortly.

Food Standards Agency

Mr Watson: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs how much funding his Department has allocated to the Food Standards Agency in each of the last three financial years. [146525]

Mr Heath: DEFRA does not allocate funding to the Food Standards Agency.

Horses: Death

Mr Gray: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs how many horses died in the last year for which figures are available; and how many issued horse passports were cancelled in that year. [145366]

Mr Heath: As of 2 July 2012, a total of 114,961 horses whose passports had been issued by UK Passport Issuing Organisations had been reported as having died. It is not possible to break this total down by year.

Passports for horses that are slaughtered in an abattoir are invalidated on site and returned to the issuing organisation. Passports for horses that die in other circumstances are returned to the issuing organisation for invalidation.

Livestock: Transport

Mr Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what records his Department holds on the number of sheep which have died at the port of Ramsgate since September 2012; and what assessment he has made of the fitness for purpose of that port for the export of live animals. [149559]

Mr Heath: Since the 12 September 2012 incident, one sheep was euthanized in October on veterinary advice at the port of Ramsgate.

Article 22 and 23 of Council Regulation 1/2005 require the Competent Authority to ensure that there are arrangements in place to deal with emergencies, if they occur, at the port of Ramsgate. There is no requirement under the regulation for the port to have animal handling facilities. Animal Health Veterinary Laboratories Agency staff are present at the port for all sailings and will invoke emergency procedures if required.

Huw Irranca-Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs pursuant to his statement of 4 March 2013 on AHVLA report on events of 12 September 2012, when the summary of actions referred to in Annex C will be implemented. [149197]

Mr Heath: All measures highlighted in my statement of 4 March 2013 have been implemented by the Animal Health and Veterinary Laboratories Agency.

Meat

Mr Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what proportion of (a) beef, (b) lamb, (c) pork and (d) bacon used by each Government department comes from British sources. [145281]

Mr Heath: DEFRA does not have figures relating to the sourcing of food by each Government Department. However, figures relating to DEFRA's own contract show that between July and December last year 100% of (a) beef, (b) lamb, and (c) uncured pork was UK sourced or produced. Bacon was sourced from the UK and the European Union.

Meat: Contamination

Miss McIntosh: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what the estimated cost of sampling 100 grams of processed and frozen meat by the Food Standards Agency is; and if he will make a statement. [143222]

Mr Heath: The Food Standards Agency advise me that the cost for the sampling of processed and frozen meat by local authorities is approximately £300 for each sample.

Analytical costs are £250 plus a sample handling fee of £50, which is paid to the local authority taking the sample. The Food Standards Agency has also paid an additional £250 for a quick turnaround of samples which are part of phases one to three.

Phenylbutazone

Mary Creagh: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (1) whether any horse carcasses that tested positive for phenylbutazone were subsequently found to have had a false horse passport in (a) each of the last three years and (b) 2013 to date; [144794]

(2) what the (a) country of origin and (b) issuing organisation of the passports of those horse carcasses which tested positive for phenylbutazone was in (i) each of the last three years and (ii) 2013 to date. [144795]

Mr Heath: The information set out in the following table shows details of horses that have been tested and contained residues of phenylbutazone from 2010 to date. It is based on results from the statutory residues surveillance programme under Council Directive 96/23/EC implemented by the Veterinary Medicines Directorate, the Food Standards Agency's (FSA) supplementary testing in the second half of 2012 and the initial results from the FSA's 100% testing which commenced on 30 January 2013.

	<i>Case no.</i>	<i>False passport?</i>	<i>Country of origin of horse</i>	<i>Issuing organisation</i>
2010	1005349	No	Great Britain	Weatherbys Thoroughbred Ltd
	1005352	No	Great Britain	Welsh Pony and Cob Society
	1016168	Passport destroyed by passport issuing organisation ¹	Ireland	Weatherbys (Ireland) Ltd
	1016171	No	Great Britain	Pleasure Horse Society
	1016172	Passport untraceable, details supplied by passport issuing organisation ¹	America	Weatherbys Group Ltd
2011	1114326	No	Great Britain	Weatherbys Thoroughbred Ltd
2012	1207301	No	Ireland	Weatherbys Thoroughbred Ltd
	1207312	Unable to trace horse passport	Ireland	Unknown ²
	1207058	Passport destroyed by passport issuing organisation ¹	Unknown ³	Pet-ID Equine
	1217081	No	Great Britain	Weatherbys Group Ltd
	1232843	Passport destroyed by passport issuing organisation ^{1,2}	Ireland	Horse Sport Ireland
	Unknown ⁴	No	Unknown	Welsh Pony and Cob Society
	Unknown ⁴	No	Unknown	Gypsy Pony Society
	Unknown ⁴	No	Unknown	Verband Der Zuchter des Oldenburger Perdes E.V.
	Unknown ⁴	No	Unknown	Weatherbys Group Ltd
2013	S13-001303	Under investigation	Great Britain	Horse Passport Agency Ltd
	S13-001304	Under investigation	Great Britain	The National Pony Society
	S13-001328	No	Great Britain	The Veteran Horse Society
	S13-001362	Under investigation	Great Britain	Horse Passport Agency Ltd
	S13-001364	Under investigation	Great Britain	The British Horses Society
	S13-001396	Under investigation	Great Britain	Weatherbys Group Ltd
	S13-001414	Under investigation	Great Britain	The Arab Horse Society
	S13-001416	Under investigation	United Kingdom	The Arab Horse Society
	S13-001399	Under investigation	United Kingdom	Dartmoor Pony Society
	S13-001443	Under investigation	Great Britain	Pet-ID Equine
	S13-001452	Under investigation	Great Britain	Gypsy Cob Society Ltd
	S13-001464	Under investigation	Great Britain	Weatherbys Group Ltd
	S13-001512	Under investigation	Great Britain	Weatherbys Group Ltd

¹ Passport issuing organisations are legally permitted to destroy the invalidated passports of horses that have been slaughtered or died.

² The passport number was known which indicated the origin of the horse.

³ The passport was destroyed and the passport number could not be obtained, which would have indicated the country of origin.

⁴ No information available.

Water Charges: East of England

Mr Ruffley: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what the average percentage change in domestic water bills has been in each local authority area in the East of England in each of the last three years. [148083]

Richard Benyon: The water industry regulator, Ofwat, does not hold data by local authority area but by water company. Prior to privatisation in 1989 customers were billed by regional state-owned water boards and since privatisation the regulator has set price limits for water companies. Every five years Ofwat sets price limits for the water and sewerage companies. This is the amount they are able to charge customers and this process is

known as a Price Review. At Price Review, Ofwat sets a five-year price cap to which the rate of inflation is added annually. All companies have a charges scheme, which must be approved by Ofwat on an annual basis.

Prices reflect the amount of revenue each company must collect from its customers in order to maintain high quality water services and the need to finance day-to-day activities and to invest in the necessary infrastructure. These costs differ from region to region. At a household level, the size of the bill and the extent of change also depend on whether a customer is metered or unmetered.

The changes in average water bills for the five companies supplying the east of England region for the last three years are set out in the table. These take into account a rate of inflation based on the retail price index (RPI) annual inflation as at the previous November. The figures in brackets represent the changes as agreed under the Price Review, excluding RPI.

	2013-14	2012-13	Percentage 2011-12
Anglian Water	2.8 (-0.1)	6.9 (1.7)	4.7 (-0.1)
Essex and Suffolk	3 (0)	5.1 (-0.1)	9.4 (4.6)
Cambridge Water	2.8 (-0.2)	6.2 (1)	2.6 (-2.1)
Affinity (East)	1.4 (-1.6)	1.6 (-3.6)	1.6 (-3.1)
Affinity(Central)	0.1 (-2.9)	1.4 (-3.8)	5.3 (0.6)

Wind Power: Seas and Oceans

Jim Fitzpatrick: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what measures are required in UK waters to reduce the impact from noise attributable to windfarm construction on wildlife protected by the EU Habitats Directive. [149531]

Richard Benyon: An assessment of predicted noise impacts from the construction of offshore wind farms on receptors, including marine wildlife, is undertaken as part of the environmental impact assessment process. This outcome is documented in an environmental statement that applicants are required to submit to support their application.

The application is widely consulted upon with advisors, including the Statutory Nature Conservation Bodies and the Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science that have a specialist understanding of the implications of noise on marine receptors.

Depending on the outcome of the assessment and responses received, noise mitigation measures may be added as licence conditions to ensure that noise is reduced to acceptable limits.

COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Centre for Global Eco-Innovation

Helen Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government what work Inventya Ltd carried out on behalf of the Centre for

Global Innovation; and what steps his Department took to assess the value of such work to the project. [149257]

Brandon Lewis: Inventya provide specialist consultancy to small medium-sized enterprises to support commercialisation of products to market as part of the Centre for Global Eco-Innovation. Lancaster university as project applicant assess the value of the work being undertaken by Inventya as they are a delivery partner to the project.

Families: Disadvantaged

Jessica Morden: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government (1) for how many families local authorities have been able to claim the payment by results element of the Troubled Families Programme since April 2012; [149881]

(2) for how many families local authorities have been able to claim the payment by results element of the Troubled Families Programme since April 2012, by local authority. [149889]

Brandon Lewis: As of the end of December 2012, local authorities claimed results for successfully turning around the lives of 1,675 troubled families. In line with the terms of the payment-by-results scheme, which is set out in the Financial Framework for the troubled families programme, local authorities will receive payment for five out of every six families they successfully turn around.

In March 2013, the Department published progress information on the Troubled Families programme, broken down by local authority. This information is available on the Department's website:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/136318/130228_-PI_for_publication.xls

The final column 'Number of families turned round' represents the number of results claimed for families by each local authority.

We will publish this data regularly throughout the Troubled Families Programme.

Fires

Peter Aldous: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government what steps his Department is taking to make the UK economy more resilient to incidents of fire. [149538]

Brandon Lewis: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave to him on 14 March 2013, *Official Report*, column 287W.

Housing: Greater London

Mr Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government pursuant to the financial statement of 20 March 2013, *Official Report*, column 942, how many people in London will benefit from the announced Help to Buy scheme. [149948]

Mr Prisk: In London, the Mayor will work with the Homes and Communities Agency to support new build home purchases through Help to Buy: equity loan and

new private rented homes through Build to Rent. This will involve a minimum of £750 million of funding up to 2015-16.

Help to Buy: equity loan is a demand led scheme and the numbers of people who will benefit is dependent on a number of factors including take up and price of properties being purchased.

Indigo Public Affairs

Mr Kevan Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government what meetings (a) he, (b) Ministers, (c) officials and (d) special political advisers of his Department have had with Indigo Public Affairs Ltd; and if he will publish full details of any such meetings. [148829]

Brandon Lewis [holding answer 19 March 2013]: Details of Ministers' meetings with external organisations are routinely published on my Department's website.

www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-communities-and-local-government/series/dclg-ministerial-data

Details of officials' departmental meetings are not held centrally, although I can inform the hon. Member that special advisers are not aware of any such meetings. All representatives of the Department act in accordance with "Guidance on Planning Propriety Issues", which is published at:

www.gov.uk/government/publications/planning-propriety-issues-guidance

Mobile Phones

Mr Streeter: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government which company holds the largest contract to provide mobile telephony services to his Department; how much is paid each year under that contract; how many individual devices are covered by the contract; when the contract was awarded; and when and how the contract will next be reviewed. [148403]

Brandon Lewis: The Department's only mobile telephony services contract is with Vodafone. It currently has 862 mobile devices on issue to staff and has spent £213,799 (including VAT) for the period of 1 January 2012 to 31 January 2013.

Although DCLG has had contracts with Vodafone for individual devices, the current contract for this service started on 7 October 2011 and is under a Government Framework Agreement (reference RM526 (Mobile Solutions II—Lot 1, Part 3)) and with an end date of 7 October 2015.

My Department reviews usage of the contracts and compliance to terms on an ongoing basis. In addition, DCLG will liaise with the Government Procurement Service approximately one year before the current agreement expires to establish opportunities for the Department to benefit from collaborative central Government arrangements and otherwise will tender our ongoing requirements.

In a lean business environment the Department recognises the advantages in remote working that mobile devices bring. To drive down overall costs the Department has signed up to a centrally negotiated telephony agreement.

The Department has used the collective bargaining power of the DCLG group to qualify for savings with suppliers.

Mortgages: Government Assistance

Ann McKechnie: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government whether his Department has conducted an impact assessment of the effects of the Help to Buy equity loan scheme on house prices. [149899]

Mr Prisk: The scheme will help up to 74,000 home buyers over the three years to March 2016. By way of context, the Office for Budget Responsibility has estimated that in the same period there will be over 3.4 million property transactions. Homes purchased under the Help to Buy: equity loan scheme would therefore only account for 2% of overall property transactions, and hence it is unlikely they would have any material effect on house prices.

Recruitment

Priti Patel: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government how many officials were recruited to (a) his Department and (b) each of its non-departmental public bodies in each of the last five years. [147963]

Brandon Lewis: My Department has recruited the following numbers of staff in each of the last five years:

	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13
Permanent	169	202	48	26	99
Fixed-term	37	67	10	4	26

The civil service entered a recruitment freeze in May 2010 and overall civil service numbers are 15% down from the last general election. Many of the above staff recruited since May 2010 were to fill business critical vacancies, vacancies requiring technical skills, cross-Whitehall talent management programmes, or recruitment commitments made prior to new controls announced in May 2010.

Excluding Fast Stream staff, the majority of the staff joining the Department since May 2010 were existing civil servants on transfer from another Department to fill a vacancy left through natural turnover, rather than new civil service appointments.

Information for numbers of staff recruited by the Department's agencies and non-executive public bodies is not held centrally.

The Department's major programme of restructuring has reduced headcount by 37% on a like-for-like basis with the October 2010 baseline position.

Based on current estimates (which reflect accounting consequences from machinery of government changes), the DCLG Group is reducing its annual running costs by 41% in real terms between 2010-11 and 2014-15. This equates to net savings of at least £532 million over this spending review period and includes savings of around £420 million from the closure of the Government offices for the regions.

Social Rented Housing

Caroline Lucas: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government if he will conduct a survey (a) nationally, (b) by region and (c) by local authority area of the number of registered social landlords who intend to let affordable rented homes in new schemes only to working households; and if he will make a statement. [149268]

Mr Prisk: There are no plans to conduct any surveys of the number of registered providers intending to let homes at an affordable rent only to working households.

Allocations and nominations processes for affordable rent homes are expected to mirror the existing frameworks for social rented housing. Providers will be under the same statutory and regulatory obligations when allocating affordable rent homes as they are when allocating properties for social rent.

There is scope for local flexibility. Provided that a local authority's overall scheme is framed around the statutory reasonable preference categories, local authorities can opt to reserve certain properties for allocation to other client groups. They may decide to exercise this discretion in relation to affordable rent, e.g. to target it at households in work but on low incomes. Similarly, providers will have discretion to allocate properties to households who are in work where those properties do not form part of nominations agreements with local authorities.

Telephone Services

Richard Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government how many (a) 0800, (b) 0808, (c) 0844, (d) 0845 and (e) 0870 telephone numbers for the public are in use by (i) his Department and (ii) the agencies for which he is responsible. [147813]

Brandon Lewis: Neither the Department nor the Planning Inspectorate use any of these numbers for members of the public.

The Homes and Communities Agency uses a low-cost 030 number. It inherited a 0845 number that was previously the general contact number for the (now defunct) Tenants Services Authority; this was retained for legacy reasons to re-divert to the Homes and Communities Agency rather than disconnect. However, the number that the Homes and Communities Agency advertises to the public is the 030 number.

CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

Broadband

Mr Reid: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport pursuant to the answer of 18 December 2012, *Official Report*, column 683W, on mobile telephones, when in the spring she expects to appoint a supplier for the Mobile Infrastructure Project. [149933]

Mr Vaizey: The Department are in the final stage of the Mobile Infrastructure Project and expect to award the MIP provider contract in early May.

Digital Broadcasting

Priti Patel: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what discussions she has had with her counterpart at the Department of Energy and Climate Change about the lessons of Digital Switchover in engaging consumers for the forthcoming roll-out of smart meters. [148990]

Mr Vaizey: Ministers within the Department for Culture, Media and Sport regularly meet colleagues at the Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC) to discuss a range of matters.

Internet

John Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport pursuant to the answer of 11 March 2013, *Official Report*, column 60W, on internet, if she will consider conducting an assessment of the provision of free community internet access points for use by those who do not have internet access at home in (a) Glasgow North West constituency, (b) Glasgow, (c) Scotland and (d) the UK. [149269]

Mr Vaizey: The Department for Culture, Media and Sport has no plans to make an assessment of the provision of free community internet access points across the UK. The Government's broadband policies and programmes are focused on ensuring that as many people as possible have access to broadband where they live. Our broadband programme is aiming to ensure that 90% of the population has access to superfast broadband, with the remainder of the population having access to at least 2 Mbps service. In addition, the recent auction of spectrum will lead to the competitive provision of 4G mobile broadband services from the summer, with one of the operators having an obligation in its licence to reach at least 98% of the population. Other broadband technologies are also available now, including fixed wireless and satellite which is capable of serving almost 100% of UK premises. Furthermore, the Universal Offers initiative launched in January this year by the Society of Chief Librarians (SCL) commented that most public libraries provide digital access for the community and have done so for some time.

Public Expenditure

Helen Goodman: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport pursuant to the Financial Statement of 20 March 2013, *Official Report*, column 935, how her Department intends to cut one per cent from its budget. [149943]

Hugh Robertson: Almost all Department for Culture, Media and Sport funding is passed directly to our arm's length bodies. We will be discussing with our bodies what this means in practice. The Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, my right hon. Friend the Member for Basingstoke (Maria Miller), has always been clear, however, that she expects the frontline services, which the public value, to be protected as far as possible, and for savings to be made through efficiencies and from ending lower value activity.

Public Libraries

Mark Hendrick: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport how much income was obtained from libraries in England from (a) library fines, (b) loans of books, audio and other materials and (c) room hire in (i) 2009-10, (ii) 2010-11 and (iii) 2011-12. [149712]

Mr Vaizey: The detail requested is not held centrally by this Department, as it is a matter for individual authorities. However the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) collect financial information data annually from the library authorities and details of overdue charges, lettings, and hire of audio and visual materials is available from CIPFA for the years requested. Copies of CIPFA statistics are available in the House Library.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE

Arms Trade: Human Rights

Jonathan Edwards: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he plans to take to prohibit states with questionable human rights records from attending the September 2013 London DSEi arms fair. [149270]

Alistair Burt: The British Government undertakes a thorough case-by-case assessment before issuing any formal invitations to foreign governments wishing to attend events such as DSEi. Respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms are mandatory considerations in this process. We will review the invitations we have given if the situation in any one country changes significantly prior to an exhibition. Any subsequent defence sales are assessed on a case-by-case basis against the Consolidated EU and National Arms Export Licensing Criteria.

British Indian Ocean Territory

Andrew George: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs pursuant to the answer of 5 March 2013, *Official Report*, column 904W, on Chagos Islands, whether his taking stock process will include material evidence from the 2002 Feasibility Study into the practicalities of voluntary repatriation of Chagossians. [149446]

Mark Simmonds: Evidence from the 2002 Feasibility Study will be considered as part of the review of our policy towards the British Indian Ocean Territory.

Andrew George: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs pursuant to the answer to the hon. Member for Islington North, of 6 March 2013, *Official Report*, column 1018W, on Chagos Islands, if he will complete the taking stock of his policy towards resettlement before the end of 2013. [149465]

Mark Simmonds: Ministers want to consider British Indian Ocean Territory policy options carefully, given the complexity of the issues. Our review of policy will

be thorough. We do not have a timetable for the conclusion of the review and will inform Parliament as soon as we are in a position to do so.

Andrew George: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs pursuant to the answer of 12 March 2013, *Official Report*, column 168W, on British Indian Ocean Territory, if, as part of his agreement with interested stakeholders, he will consult those exiled Chagossians who are interested in the opportunity of voluntary repatriation in respect of the (a) costs to them, (b) benefits to the UK in having a presence on the islands and (c) any other consequences of pursuing such a policy. [149500]

Mark Simmonds: Ministers and officials continue to engage with Chagossians as part of our review of policy. This will include the costs, benefits and other consequences of any kind of resettlement.

Andrew George: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make an assessment of Professor Paul Kench's 5 October 2012 review of his Department's 2002 feasibility study into the practical consequences of a policy of voluntary repatriation of Chagossians to the Chagos Islands. [149501]

Mark Simmonds: As part of our review of our policy on the British Indian Ocean Territory, we will consider all relevant contributions, submissions and views, as appropriate.

Central America

Mr Stewart Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he is taking to co-ordinate the work of his Department with that of the Department for International Development in Central America; and if he will make a statement. [149454]

Mr Swire: The Department for International Development (DFID) no longer has a bilateral aid programme in Central America. This is in line with the Government's decision to focus its aid activity on a small number of the poorest and most fragile states where the UK is well-placed to make a significant impact. Foreign and Commonwealth Office officials are nonetheless in contact with DFID about work in Central America on a case by case basis.

China

Mr Douglas Alexander: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether any Government (a) Minister and (b) official has been denied a visa by the Chinese authorities in the last 12 months. [149908]

Mr Hague: I can confirm that no Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) Minister or official has been denied a visa by the Chinese authorities in the last 12 months. The FCO has not been informed of a Minister or official from any other Government Department having been denied a visa by the Chinese authorities in the last 12 months.

Colombia

Kerry McCarthy: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what reports he has received on progress being made in the Colombian peace talks. [149733]

Mr Swire: We strongly welcome President Santos's decision to enter into peace negotiations with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC). It brings the hope of sustainable peace for all Colombians after decades of conflict.

The latest round of talks started on Friday 15 March in Cuba. The two negotiating teams are working to a five point agenda, the first of which is rural development. The agenda recognises that the historic injustices suffered by vulnerable groups need to be addressed to bring about sustainable peace.

On 1 March, government negotiators in Havana gave an update on the status of the talks and announced that important progress had been made on the first agenda point. The FARC's chief negotiator has recognised that the process has advanced further than any previous peace process in Colombia.

Kerry McCarthy: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of the human rights situation in Colombia; and what reports he has received on progress made over recent years in tackling impunity from the law in that country. [149736]

Mr Swire: We welcome the Colombian Government's genuine effort to improve respect for human rights in Colombia, including through its land restitution and victims reparations processes. Progress has been made on prosecutions for extra-judicial killings, and in 2012 there were no reported cases of "false positives" in Colombia. Illegal armed groups commit most of the human rights violations in Colombia and we encourage the Colombian Government to do more to provide justice for the victims of violations.

The Colombian justice system is currently suffering from a backlog and a lack of resources. President Santos has committed to addressing these problems by implementing a package of reforms to de-politicise the

judiciary, improve its administration, give it greater resources, and de-congest its caseload. Additionally, Colombia's Attorney-General has committed to providing extra prosecutors for the National Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law Unit. Last year our embassy in Colombia helped the Attorney-General's office to improve the efficiency of its case management.

Cyprus

Andrew Rosindell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of whether the UK's sovereign base areas in Cyprus have a territorial water and a claim to a continental shelf; and if he will make a submission to the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf, in accordance with article 76, paragraph 8, of the United Nations convention on the law of the sea on this matter. [149606]

Mr Lidington: The adjacent territorial sea boundaries between the two sovereign base areas and the Republic of Cyprus are defined in Annex A of the treaty concerning the establishment of the Republic of Cyprus, 19 August 1960. Presently, both sovereign base areas claim a territorial sea out to three nautical miles but we have reserved our rights to claim up to 12 nautical miles on their behalf, as provided for under the UN convention on the law of the sea (UNCLOS).

Diplomatic Service

Ian Lucas: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs in which countries and embassies the UK has (a) decreased the number of diplomats and (b) closed diplomatic posts since May 2010. [149372]

Mr Lidington: I refer to the statement on Britain's future diplomatic network made by the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, my right hon. Friend the Member for Richmond (Yorks) (Mr Hague), to the House on 11 May 2011, *Official Report*, columns 1165-68. In line with that statement, we have reduced our diplomatic footprint in Iraq and Afghanistan, and in some European subordinate posts outside capital cities.

We have not closed any sovereign Posts. The following diplomatic posts have closed since May 2010:

Date	Country	Post
September 2011	France	Lille Consulate General
June 2012	France	Lyon Consulate General closed (re-opened as a trade office)
December 2011	Italy	Florence Consulate
September 2011	Italy	Venice Consulate General
October 2010	Switzerland	Geneva Consulate General
December 2012	Iraq	Basra Consulate General (British Embassy Office remains)

Operations in Iran and Syria have been suspended for security reasons.

Kashmir

Kerry McCarthy: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he is taking to help resolve the conflict in Kashmir; and

whether Kashmir was discussed during the recent visit to India led by the Prime Minister. [149732]

Mr Swire: The long-standing position of the UK is that it is for India and Pakistan to find a lasting resolution to the situation in Kashmir, one which takes into account the wishes of the Kashmiri people.

Kerry McCarthy: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent discussions he has had with the Governments of India and Pakistan regarding the situation in Kashmir.

[149742]

Mr Swire: Our officials in Islamabad and Delhi regularly discuss the situation in Kashmir with both governments. We welcome the renewed engagement between India and Pakistan and a solution to the Kashmir dispute is something that both sides will need to develop.

The long-standing position of the UK is that it is for India and Pakistan to find a lasting resolution to the situation in Kashmir, one which takes into account the wishes of the Kashmiri people. It is not for the UK to prescribe a solution or to mediate in finding one.

Maldives

Karen Lumley: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of the concerns raised by the UN Special Rapporteur on Independence of Judges and Lawyers about the trial of former President Mohamed Nasheed in the Maldives.

[149194]

Alistair Burt: We welcome the statement from the UN Special Rapporteur on the Independence of Judges and Lawyers, Gabriela Knaul, following her visit to Maldives. This statement urged the Maldivian Government to address a number of challenges hampering the functioning of the justice system in Maldives. These included concerns on the appointment of judges, training and education for individuals in the justice system, and transparency. We share many of the concerns expressed, and urge all parties to work together in order to implement these, and other reforms identified by the Commission of National Inquiry in order to strengthen democratic institutions in Maldives. We look forward with interest to the exploration of these issues in a detailed written report which will be presented to the Human Rights Council session in May.

The Government has consistently urged all parties to work together to implement reforms highlighted by the Commission of National Inquiry, including those designed to strengthen the judiciary. In my statement of 6 March, I urged all parties to work together to find a solution which would allow for genuinely free, fair, and inclusive elections, and outlined our view that all parties should be able to contest elections with a candidate of their choice. This includes former President Nasheed, should he be selected as a candidate by his party.

Karen Lumley: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent representations he has made to the government of the Maldives on the arrest and forthcoming trial of former President Mohamed Nasheed.

[149248]

Alistair Burt: The Government is monitoring events closely following the recent arrest and detention of former President Nasheed in Maldives. The former President was released after his hearing, and his trial has been postponed until 4 April. We look to the Maldivian authorities to ensure that due process is followed, and that proceedings are fair and transparent.

We urge all parties to remain calm and to act responsibly. Our high commissioner and officials remain in regular contact with Maldives Government.

I made a statement on 6 March following former President Nasheed's hearing, which outlined our view that all parties should be able to contest elections with the candidate of their choice. This includes former President Nasheed, should he be selected as a candidate by his party. During my visit to Maldives last month, I outlined the same points in my meetings with the President, Foreign Minister, and other political leaders. We believe that if the chosen candidates of all parties are not permitted to participate in the Presidential election in September, the credibility of the outcome will be irreparably damaged. We hope all involved will work together to find a solution which would allow for genuinely free, fair, and inclusive elections, and ensure all are able to campaign without hindrance.

Middle East

Ian Lucas: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how the Government plans to reinvigorate the Deauville partnership to ensure that economic support is available to countries in transition.

[149277]

Alistair Burt: The Deauville Partnership plays an important role in supporting the transitions under way in the Middle East and North Africa. Under the UK presidency we are working with Deauville Partners to help catalyse inclusive economic growth, and enable greater economic opportunities for youth and women in transition countries. We are doing this by providing practical support focused on delivery and impact on the ground. We are increasing the role of the private sector in all of our activities under the Deauville Partnership, as a key to delivering sustainable growth. Work on eight priority areas this year which will aim to bolster strong economic growth in the transition countries:

1. Promoting investment opportunities in transition countries, through convening a major international investment conference to showcase opportunities, encourage policy reforms to the investment climate and bring together interested businesses.
2. Trade: We will encourage further movement on opening markets as well as exploring practical steps to address other barriers to trade.
3. Supporting Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs): We are working with the International Financial Institutions to help develop SMEs in the region and are running an SME mentoring scheme to support entrepreneurship.
4. Supporting women's economic participation: We will integrate a focus on the role of women throughout all of our work and host a conference to recognise and boost the role of women in Arab economies.
5. Support expansion of European Bank of Reconstruction and Development's mandate: This will make up to €2.5 billion per year available in private sector finance available in transition countries.
6. Ensuring recovery of stolen assets: We will make sure there is an effective international response to stolen assets, by encouraging work which disseminates knowledge, facilitates and coordinates international cooperation and builds capacity in transition countries.
7. Greater access to private capital: We will continue to support greater state and private sector access to private capital to finance critical investments.

8. Providing practical assistance through a Transition Fund set up during last year's US presidency. Through this we will ensure delivery of technical assistance in implementing economic reform in transition countries.

Morocco

Katy Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) if he will raise with the Moroccan authorities the concerns raised by the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture for Morocco that public officials who order, condone or cover up torture should be prosecuted; [149220]

(2) if he will raise with the Moroccan authorities the concerns of the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture on the systematic pattern of acts of torture and ill-treatment during the detention and arrest process of Saharawi accused of threats against national security; [149226]

(3) if he will raise with the Moroccan authorities the concerns of the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture that Saharawi accused of threats against national security are often not officially registered, that they are held for weeks without being brought before a judge and without judicial oversight, and that families are not notified until such time as the suspects are transferred to police custody in order to sign confessions; [149227]

(4) if he will raise with the Moroccan authorities the concerns of the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture that testimonies of Saharawi accused of threats against national security, indicate that many cases that are submitted to the courts are based solely on confessions by the accused, allegedly obtained under torture and later recanted, in the absence of any material evidence. [149228]

Alistair Burt: We welcome the report of Mr Juan Mendez, the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture, and Morocco's openness in allowing him to visit, which indicates a genuine political will to address a continued improvement in human rights. We will encourage and support Morocco in the implementation of the recommendations and continue to raise our concerns with the Moroccan authorities on human rights issues through our existing frank and open dialogue.

Palestinians

Andrew Percy: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) what recent representations the British (a) Ambassador to Israel and (b) Consul General in Jerusalem have made to the Palestinian Authority about incitement; [149647]

(2) what representations he has made to the Palestinian Authority on fulfilling its Road Map commitment to end incitement against Israel. [149649]

Alistair Burt: Our officials raise instances of incitement with both the Palestinian Authority and Israel whenever we feel this appropriate. There is a profound need for both the Israeli and Palestinian sides to do more to promote a positive portrayal of each other, reflecting the principles of co-existence, tolerance, justice and human dignity. However, the British Government believes that the track record of President Abbas and Prime Minister Fayyad shows they are genuinely committed to a non-violent pursuit of a two state solution.

Andrew Percy: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent assessment he has made of the (a) treatment and (b) position of Christians in the Palestinian territories. [149648]

Alistair Burt: The Government places a high priority on the right to freedom of religion for all.

The UK is not aware of specific legal restrictions placed upon Christians in Gaza or the west bank to practise their religion. However, we remain deeply concerned about restrictions on freedom of movement. Palestinian Christian communities are primarily concentrated in Bethlehem, Ramallah and East Jerusalem. Travel by Palestinians between these places remains very difficult due to Israeli restrictions on freedom of movement. Palestinian Christians may also, like Palestinians of other faiths, face other restrictions as a result of the policies of the respective authorities exercising control over the occupied Palestinian Territories.

The Government regularly discusses these issues with religious leaders of all faiths, and with the relevant authorities, including raising specific cases as appropriate and discussing ways of protecting holy sites across the occupied Palestinian Territories.

Andrew Percy: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the Palestinian Authority on the naming of cultural and sporting events after terrorists. [149675]

Alistair Burt: As the Prime Minister made clear in his speech to the United Jewish Israel Appeal on 15 October 2012, the UK will not tolerate incitement to terrorism and cannot support those who name sporting events after suicide bombers.

We have a regular dialogue with the Palestinian Authority in which we reiterate the need for both sides to prepare their populations for peaceful coexistence and to avoid anything which further stirs up hatred and prejudice. We most recently raised the issue of incitement with Palestinian Prime Minister Fayyad's office in January 2013.

Syria

Dr Julian Lewis: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs pursuant to the answer of 18 March 2013, *Official Report*, column 472W, on Syria, what assessment he has made of the vulnerability of Syrian chemical weapons stocks to being captured and exploited by elements of the Syrian opposition. [149885]

Alistair Burt: The Syrian regime is legally obliged under UN Security Council Resolution 1540 to keep its chemical weapons secure. We have pressed upon them the need to meet this responsibility in full.

The vulnerability to capture of Syrian chemical weapons stocks is very difficult to assess. Ultimately, if the regime falls, the security of the stocks will depend on those guarding them.

Some expertise, as well as access to appropriate delivery systems, is needed to handle and exploit chemical weapons.

The opposition's ability to use these weapons is likely to depend on the number of people with the necessary expertise who defect.

The Syrian National Coalition has however made clear in a statement on 20 March its condemnation of the use of chemical weapons, saying that "chemical warfare is internationally prohibited. Its use against any enemy is banned."

We welcome the UN Secretary-General's decision to investigate possible use of chemical weapons in Syria. Any use of chemical weapons would be morally abhorrent and universally condemned and demand a serious response from the international community.

HEALTH

Blood: Donors

Mr Watson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether the National Blood Service checks levels of lead in those who wish to donate blood. [149473]

Anna Soubry: NHS Blood and Transplant, which provides blood for transfusion to hospitals in England and North Wales, does not check levels of lead in either potential blood donors or donated blood.

Significant lead poisoning usually results in anaemia, as lead affects a person's ability to form haemoglobin (iron). All potential blood donors have their iron levels tested prior to donation and must have a minimum iron

level before they can donate. Donors who have been exposed to high levels of lead will therefore not be able to donate because their low iron levels would prevent them from meeting the donation criteria.

Cancer

Clive Efford: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what proportion of those eligible did not receive a cancer care review within six months of receiving confirmation of their diagnosis since the programme's inception. [149655]

Anna Soubry: Cancer reviews are carried out under the Quality and Outcomes Framework (QOF), which is a voluntary part of the general practitioners (GPs) contract. The National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) are responsible for keeping QOF indicators under review and making recommendations for changes.

There has been a cancer review indicator in QOF since its inception in 2004. The following table, provided by the Health and Social Care Information Centre, sets out achievement levels.

Please note that in 2004-05 and 2005-06 a slightly, differently worded indicator ('Cancer 2') with a larger diagnosis window was in force, though both 'Cancer 2' and its successor 'Cancer 3' refer to the review occurring within six months of confirmed diagnosis. Exceptions data were not reported in 2004-05, hence the missing figures in the table.

	Numerator	Exceptions	Denominator	Underlying achievement, net of exceptions (numerator/denominator) ²	% of patients for which indicator was not achieved (100% underlying achievement)	% of patients receiving the intervention (numerator/exceptions + denominator) ³	% of patients for which indicator was not achieved (including exceptions) (100% of patients receiving the intervention)
2011-12	144,360	2,364	154,708	93.3	6.7	91.9	8.1
2010-11	136,136	2,296	145,336	93.7	6.3	92.2	7.8
2009-10	128,374	2,151	137,863	93.1	6.9	91.7	8.3
2008-09	127,432	1,963	136,164	93.6	6.4	92.3	7.7
2007-08	122,603	4,883	130,845	93.7	6.3	90.3	9.7
2006-07	132,720	5,336	140,548	94.4	5.6	91.0	9.0
2005-06 ¹	319,316	33,693	353,112	90.4	9.6	82.6	17.4
2004-05 ¹	208,212	n/a	246,348	84.5	15.5	n/a	n/a

¹ Cancer 2 indicator applied in 2004-05 and 2005-06.

² Underlying Achievement is the measure by which practices are awarded QOF points score, based on this figure measured against the defined achievement thresholds.

³ This measure was introduced in 2011-12 to provide greater context to Underlying Achievement figures. It includes exceptions in the calculation, and thus covers all patients to whom the indicator applies, regardless of exception status. This measure is not part of the QOF payment process.

Cancer: Drugs

Bob Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment he has made of the benefits patients have derived from receiving drugs through the Cancer Drugs Fund; and how many additional patient years of life, taking account of the published QALY benefits, have resulted from each of the drugs provided through the fund. [149817]

Norman Lamb: The Cancer Drugs Fund was launched on 1 April 2011 to help thousands of cancer patients access the drugs their clinicians believe will help them.

We also made an additional £50 million available to strategic health authorities in 2010-11. This funding has so far helped over 28,000 patients in England to access the additional cancer drugs their clinicians recommend.

A clinical audit of the drugs provided through the Cancer Drugs Fund is being carried out by the Chemotherapy Intelligence Unit at the Oxford Registry and we expect them to report preliminary data later this year. The audit will provide an opportunity to assess the benefits of the Fund for patient outcomes and build the evidence base for the future.

Bob Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what his policy is on the continuation of the Cancer Drugs Fund beyond the end of 2014; and what assessment he has made of the value-based pricing process. [149823]

Norman Lamb: We are considering ways in which cancer patients can continue to benefit from drugs currently provided through the Cancer Drugs Fund, at a cost that represents value to the national health service.

The consultation document, “A new value-based approach to the pricing of branded medicines” set out our proposals for value-based pricing. The consultation ran from 16 December 2010 to 17 March 2011 and the Government’s response to the consultation was published on 18 July 2011, “A new value-based approach to the pricing of branded medicines: Government response to consultation”.

The impact assessment accompanying the consultation document set out an evaluation of the effects of our proposals including an assessment of the possible impact on NHS patients, including cancer patients. Copies of the consultation document, the Government’s response and the impact assessment have already been placed in the Library.

The impact assessment will be updated in due course as the new pricing arrangements for branded medicines, including value-based pricing, are finalised.

Andrew Percy: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what estimate he has made of the number of people in each hospital trust who have received treatment attributable to the Cancer Drugs Fund since its inception. [149951]

Bob Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many patients have received drugs funded through the Cancer Drugs Fund to date; and how many patients with breast cancer have received treatment with drugs funded through the fund. [149816]

Norman Lamb: A number of the drugs funded through the Cancer Drugs Fund are used in the treatment of breast cancer. However, the Department does not collect information on the specific indications for which drugs have been funded and some of these drugs may be used in the treatment of other cancers. Neither is information collected by the Department about the use of treatments funded through the Cancer Drugs Fund at hospital trust level.

Information on the number of patients who have had cancer drugs funded by strategic health authorities (SHAs) under the interim cancer drugs funding arrangements in 2010-11 (from October 2010 to the end of March 2011) and under the Cancer Drugs Fund (from April 2011 to the end of January 2013) is shown in the following table.

Strategic health authority	Number of patients funded 2010-11	Number of patients funded in 2011-12	Number of patients funded from April 2012 to end January 2013		Total number of patients funded since October 2010 ¹
			Number of patients funded from April 2012 to end January 2013	Total number of patients funded since October 2010 ¹	
North East	420	696	419	1,535	
North West	266	1,044	1,527	2,837	

Strategic health authority	Number of patients funded 2010-11	Number of patients funded in 2011-12	Number of patients funded from April 2012 to end January 2013	Number of patients funded from April 2012 to end January 2013	Total number of patients funded since October 2010 ¹
Yorkshire and the Humber	178	809	1,169	2,156	
East Midlands	178	871	797	1,846	
West Midlands	292	1,658	1,278	3,228	
East of England	246	1,486	1,413	3,145	
London	443	1,364	1,529	3,336	
South East Coast	306	1,241	1,172	2,719	
South Central	290	1,170	2,109	3,569	
South West	161	1,459	1,976	3,596	
Total	2,780	11,798	13,389	27,967	

¹ Some individual patients may be double-counted where a patient has received more than one drug treatment through the Cancer Drugs Fund.

Source:

Information provided to the Department by SHAs

Chemotherapy

Jim Dobbin: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what progress the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence has made in developing a quality standard for chemotherapy. [149221]

Norman Lamb: The topic ‘cancer chemotherapy’ is in the core library of quality standards referred to the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE). We understand from NICE that this topic has not yet been scheduled into its work programme.

Jim Dobbin: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what assessment he has made of the quality and safety of chemotherapy services in the NHS; and if he will make a statement; [149222]

(2) what plans the NHS Commissioning Board has to introduce measures to assess and improve the quality and safety of chemotherapy services in the NHS Outcomes Framework. [149223]

Anna Soubry: The National Cancer Peer Review (NCPR) programme assesses local services against the performance measures contained in the Manual for Cancer Services. These measures reflect the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence ‘Improving Outcomes in Cancer Guidance’ documents and other national and best practice guidance on the diagnosis, treatment, care and support of cancer patients. The role of the NCPR programme is to support quality assurance and continuous service improvement. All chemotherapy and acute oncology services were subject to assessment as part of the NCPR programme in 2011-12, following the introduction of new measures for these services.

The outcome of that review was published in the report ‘National Cancer Peer Review Programme Report 2011-12: An overview of the findings from the 2011-12 National Cancer Peer Review of Cancer Services in England’. It showed that while compliance against the chemotherapy service measures was over 80% in all areas, there was still work to be done to ensure compliance

with Acute Oncology Service measures. The peer review programme continues to work closely with the Care Quality Commission, sharing information about poor performing teams and Trusts and providing regular updates on any immediate risks identified. A copy of the report has been placed in the Library.

The Manual for Cancer Services informed the development of the chemotherapy service specification that will be used by the NHS Commissioning Board (NHS CB) to commission chemotherapy services from April 2013. Compliance against the measures has also been included as one of the performance indicators in the specification. The NHS CB has advised that the Clinical Reference Group for Chemotherapy services intends to continue working with providers to ensure that outcomes from the peer review process are addressed and that the new data now flowing from the National Chemotherapy Dataset Collection continues to drive improvements in quality and safety of chemotherapy services.

Furness Hospital

John Woodcock: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) on how many occasions the oncology unit at Furness General Hospital was operating at full capacity in terms of beds in each of the last five years; [149308]

(2) what the average occupancy rate of beds was in the oncology unit at Furness General Hospital in each of the last five years. [149313]

Anna Soubry: This information is not collected centrally. This information may be obtained from the University Hospitals of Morecambe Bay NHS Foundation Trust directly.

John Woodcock: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what discussions he has had with (a) University Hospitals of Morecambe Bay NHS Foundation Trust, (b) Monitor and (c) the Care Quality Commission on the future of the oncology unit at Furness General Hospital in the last 12 months. [149309]

Anna Soubry: No such discussions have taken place.

Genito-urinary Medicine

Andy Burnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health pursuant to the answer of 14 March 2013, *Official Report*, column 356W, on genito-urinary medicine, for what reasons the results of the 2010 evidence review on the effectiveness of sexual health interventions have not been published. [149891]

Anna Soubry: The evidence review was completed in September 2010 and it was the Department's original intention to publish it alongside the Sexual Health Framework. The framework was published on 15 March 2013. To be of maximum benefit we now want to update the evidence review and will work with Public Health England to undertake this.

Health Services: Sign Language

Henry Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps his Department is taking to help deaf British Sign Language users communicate with and understand health professionals. [149265]

Norman Lamb: Addressing the communication needs of people with hearing loss, including those who are British Sign Language users, to communicate with and understand health professionals is important. This is for many reasons including ensuring that they can take a genuine part in shared decision making and safeguarding against safety issues arising such as non-compliance with medicine regimes.

When making decisions about what services are delivered locally, all national health service organisations must assure themselves that they have complied with the Equality Act 2010. This includes advancing equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic, including a disability such as hearing loss, and those who do not.

HIV Infection

Mr Virendra Sharma: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what assessment his Department has made of the financial effects of using antiretroviral therapy as a preventative measure against the spread of HIV in high risk groups; and if he will make a statement; [149178]

(2) what steps his Department is taking to ensure people with HIV start their treatment early to reduce the risk of onwards transmission; [149179]

(3) if the forthcoming sexual health strategy will encourage the early uptake of antiretroviral therapy by people with HIV to reduce the risk of onwards transmission. [149180]

Anna Soubry: The Department's Expert Advisory Group on AIDS (EAGA) has produced, jointly with the British HIV Association (BHIVA), a position statement for clinicians and other health professionals interpreting the latest evidence on HIV treatment as prevention. The statement will also help patients with diagnosed HIV to make an informed decision about starting treatment based on their individual circumstances. The statement is available on the Department's website by searching EAGA news and publications.

Decisions on when to start prescribing HIV treatment are informed by clinical guidelines produced by BHIVA. These address when to prescribe treatment to prevent HIV transmission. On 15 March, the DH published A Framework for Sexual Health Improvement in England which highlights BHIVA's recommendation about offering patients with diagnosed HIV treatment at an early stage to prevent onward transmission of HIV. The framework also highlights the evidence on the reduction in treatment costs of early testing and diagnosis. A copy of the framework has been placed in the Library.

In November 2012 the Medical Research Council clinical trials unit, with the Health Protection Agency and others, started a three-year pilot study on prescribing HIV treatment for prevention purposes to HIV negative gay men.

Hospitals: Closures

John Woodcock: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what guidance he has issued to NHS Trusts on the management of situations where buildings or equipment which have been funded by community charitable donations are proposed for closure. [149310]

Norman Lamb: The Department has not issued specific guidance on the issues raised. Only general guidance is given in departmental publications 'Health Building Note 00-08: Estatecode' and 'NHS funds held on trust: guidance on acceptance, management and transfer of charitable funds for NHS bodies'. A copy of these documents have been placed in the Library.

Human Papillomavirus

Mr Blunt: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the risk of aluminium in the (a) cervarix and (b) gardasil form of the human papillomavirus vaccine crossing the blood brain barrier; and if he will publish the research and data held by his Department on such risks; [149260]

(2) if he will seek to determine the possibility of synergistic toxicity of aluminium in human papillomavirus vaccines and the mercury present in other concomitantly administered vaccines; [149261]

(3) what estimate he has made of the amount of aluminium that will enter a girl's body if she receives all the approved courses of vaccination including the human papillomavirus vaccine. [149262]

Norman Lamb: Aluminium adjuvants have been safely used to enhance the effectiveness of many vaccines for over 60 years. During product development, the adjuvants of the human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccines Cervarix and Gardasil, including the aluminium component, were extensively tested and met all the specifications required by the licensing procedure.

The European Medicines Agency has published a summary of the data considered during the licensing process for each of these and other vaccines.

The amount of aluminium varies between vaccines and is determined by several factors including the nature of the vaccine antigens and the specific manufacturing process which is different for every vaccine. The maximum total aluminium content that a child may receive through episodic vaccination as part of the current United Kingdom routine childhood immunisation programme is 3.44 milligrams. The amount of aluminium in vaccines is very small compared with aluminium exposure from the environment¹ including foods, and there is no evidence to suggest that aluminium in vaccines poses any serious health risks. This is supported by a recent review published by the United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA)². The World Health Organization's Global Advisory Committee on Vaccine Safety (GACVS)³ has also concluded that the FDA review further supports the clinical trial and epidemiological evidence of the safety of aluminium in vaccines.

None of the vaccines used in the current UK routine childhood immunisation programme contains a mercury compound.

As with all vaccines and medicines, the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency continues to closely monitor the safety of HPV vaccines using all available sources of data. The benefits of HPV vaccination in protecting against cervical cancer far outweigh any known side effects.

¹ European Food Safety Authority

<http://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/press/news/afc080715.htm>

² R. J. Mitkus et al/Vaccine 29 (2011) 9538- 9543

³ http://www.who.int/vaccine_safety/committee/topics/adjuvants/Jun_2012/en/index.html

Idiopathic Pulmonary Fibrosis

Jim Dobbin: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what representations he has received on the effectiveness of the Government's strategy for the diagnosing of idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis; [149209]

(2) what plans the Government has to develop additional advice to accompany the chronic obstructive pulmonary disease action plan to reduce misdiagnosis of idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis. [149210]

Anna Soubry: Since 1 September 2012, the Department has received one item of correspondence, no parliamentary questions and held no ministerial meetings on the diagnosing of idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis (IPF). The Government does not have a strategy for the diagnosing of IPF as this is a clinical matter.

From 1 April, Government discretion on clinical issues will be limited to referring subjects to the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) and to setting ambitions for national health service performance through the Mandate provided to the NHS Commissioning Board. The Government has already referred the diagnosis and treatment of idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis (IPF) to NICE as a priority subject for a clinical guideline and this guideline is due to be published in June 2013.

Knee Replacements

Jim Dobbin: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what criteria the NHS Commissioning Board will use to determine for which patients microprocessor knees are appropriate; [149206]

(2) what recent progress has been made on recommendations from the Innovation, Health and Wealth report, including on the National Specialised Services Innovation Fund; what the criteria for participation in this fund are; and whether microprocessor knees will be considered as part of this programme. [149207]

Norman Lamb: Microprocessor knees are not currently routinely funded by the national health service for civilian patients. A number of microprocessor knees have been funded but only following approval by Exceptional Treatment Panels.

The Clinical Reference Groups (CRG) of the NHS Commissioning Board are planning to develop a clinical commissioning policy which, will include access criteria for micro-processor knees as a priority in 2013-14 for consideration. The CRG will work closely with the Military Health policy team at the Department of Health to build on the expertise and knowledge gained as a result of their use in veterans to inform the development of a policy.

The NHS chief executive, Sir David Nicholson, published 'Creating Change—IHW One Year On' in December 2012. The document provides a full update on the progress made with the Innovation, Health and Wealth programme. A copy has been placed in the Library and is available on the Department's website at:

www.dh.gov.uk/health/2012/12/ihw-creating-change/

The Specialised Services Commissioning Innovation Fund (SSCIF) has been established to rapidly test, trial and evaluate innovations with the potential to deliver high impact change for specialised services throughout the NHS. The SSCIF will launch in the first financial quarter of 2013 and will be announced with widespread notifications issued to all stakeholders (individuals and organisations can be added to this list upon request) along with a news story on the NHS CB website.

The SSCIF will be open to applications from health staff, commissioners, manufacturers, clinicians, researchers, independent providers and the third sector. The full entry criteria for consideration of a submission to the SSCIF will be published when the fund is launched, but in essence the types of innovation that would be suitable for consideration by the SSCIF are those:

that are new to NHS specialised services or applied in a way that is new to NHS specialised services;

have shown promise of delivering an improvement in quality and outcomes for patients or the cost of service delivery; and

where it is already possible for the innovation to be used within the NHS and the innovation must not still be in the early development phase.

The scope of innovations that will be considered by the SSCIF is broad, including: service models, pathways, team approaches, diagnostics, devices, technologies and medicines.

It would not be appropriate to comment on whether individual innovations are suitable for the fund as this will be determined via the assessment of applications. However, an online self-assessment checklist will be available when the fund launches to help potential applicants determine if their innovation is suitable to be considered.

Learning Disability

Andrew Rosindell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what steps he is taking to ensure that there is local support for adults with moderate to mild learning difficulties; [149563]

(2) how much has been allocated to help individuals with moderate to mild learning difficulties in the last five years; [149564]

(3) how much has been allocated to help individuals with moderate to mild learning difficulties in the London borough of Havering in the last five years. [149565]

Norman Lamb: Many people with mild learning disabilities are able to live independent lives and contribute fully to their communities without requiring care and support from Government. However, those that do have care and support needs are supported by their local authorities through the adult social care system if they meet eligibility criteria.

Local services such as adult social care are not run from Whitehall, and it is for local authorities to choose how best to use their available funding. Central Government does not dictate to councils how much they should spend on adult social care, or how this should be divided between people with different care needs. Local authorities are best placed to make these prioritisation decisions based on local pressures and priorities, and councils have made it clear that this allows them to deliver better outcomes and more efficient services.

The Department for Communities and Local Government collects data on expenditure by service from all local authorities. This data is publicly available on at:

www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-communities-and-local-government/series/local-authority-revenue-expenditure-and-financing

The Department of Health has also published the Adult Social Care Outcomes Framework, which supports councils by providing a clear focus for local priority setting and improvement. This includes enhancing the quality of life for people with care and support needs, such as those adults with learning disability who require care and support, and includes measures on adults with a learning disability in paid employment and adults with a learning disability who live in their own home or with their family.

Mental Health: Young People

Sarah Teather: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans he has to ask the Office for National Statistics to update its report from 2004 Mental Health of Children and Young People based on the 2011 Census. [149404]

Norman Lamb: We have no such plans currently in place. However, the Children and Young People's Health Outcomes Forum recommended in its report published last year that a survey be developed to support measurement of outcomes for children and young people with mental health problems. In "Improving Children and Young People's Health Outcomes: a system wide response", published in February 2013, we said that the Department would be working with partners to develop a programme of work to explore detailed options and development costs to implement new or extend existing data sources and measures. This programme of work will consider surveys to look at mental health in children and young people, among other options.

Multiple Sclerosis

Bob Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what recent research his Department has conducted into the causes of multiple sclerosis. [149824]

Norman Lamb: The National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) Clinical Research Network is hosting a study of the genetic analysis of multiple sclerosis (MS) led by the University of Cambridge. The research is seeking to identify genetic factors that influence susceptibility to MS. Research in this field has also been supported by the NIHR Cambridge Biomedical Research Centre.

NHS: Finance

Charlotte Leslie: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what the annual NHS spend is on (a) medical staff, (b) nursing staff, (c) other staff, (d) supplies, (e) overheads, (f) building and estate costs and (g) other

running and maintenance costs of operating theatres. [149304]

Norman Lamb: The information requested is not available. Such information as is available is provided in the following table. The figures are for 2011-12, the latest period for which data is available.

	<i>Medical staff</i>	<i>Nursing, midwifery and health visiting staff¹</i>	<i>Other staff</i>	<i>Supplies and services</i>	<i>Overheads</i>	<i>Building and estate costs</i>
NHS Trusts	4,648,136	6,972,582	8,088,131	5,111,270	941,057	598,563
Primary Care Trusts	151,453	369,285	1,807,577	355,486	407,261	279,075
Strategic Health Authorities	17,541	639	239,231	6,656	20,151	8,044
Total	4,817,130	7,342,506	10,134,939	5,473,412	1,368,469	885,682

¹ It is not possible to separately identify "nursing staff" from "nursing, midwifery and health visiting staff".

Notes:

1. The Department does not collect data from NHS foundation trusts. Where an NHS trust obtains foundation trust status part way through any year, the data provided is only for the part of the year the organisation operated as an NHS trust.
2. Information on running and maintenance costs of operating theatres is not collected centrally.

NHS: Redundancy

Andy Burnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much his Department spent on NHS staff redundancies in 2012-13. [149741]

In future, special severance payments will be approved only where there is assurance that the compromise agreement under which they are being proposed includes a specific clause stating that nothing within the agreement prevents the individual from speaking out on issues such as patient care and safety, or anything else in the wider public interest.

Norman Lamb: Audited and complete data for 2012-13 redundancies is not yet available. It will be available in the summer, once the Department's annual report and accounts are audited, signed and laid before Parliament.

Andy Burnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health pursuant to the answer of 14 March 2013, *Official Report*, column 361W, on NHS: redundancies, what the average cost per staff member was of such redundancies; what the largest individual redundancy payment was; how many such redundancies involved an individual redundancy payment of over (a) £50,000, (b) £100,000 and (c) £200,000; and what the total cost to the public purse was of such redundancies. [149914]

NHS: Redundancy Pay

Margot James: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much NHS foundation trusts spent on employee severance packages in each year from 2005-06 to 2011-12. [149203]

Norman Lamb: This information is not held centrally. The average cost of compulsory redundancies across the whole national health service in 2011-12 was £39,044

In 2010-11, employee severance packages paid by foundation trusts totalled £3.2 million.

In 2011-12, employee severance packages paid by foundation trusts totalled £1.2 million.

However, the total severance packages paid may include contractual elements which Monitor is unable to separate from the non-contractual elements.

Margot James: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many NHS severance packages contained confidentiality clauses in each year from 2005-06 to 2011-12. [149204]

Jim Dobbin: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what requirement NICE has to take account of the value of innovation in a disease area where no effective treatment already exists. [149208]

Norman Lamb: The Department does not hold this information. The Department reviews proposals to make special severance payments from national health service trusts, before either rejecting them or supporting them and sending to HM Treasury for approval. Foundation trusts send such proposals to HM Treasury via Monitor.

Norman Lamb: The National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence's (NICE) legislative framework requires it to have regard to the potential for long term benefits to the national health service of innovation in its work.

Neither the Department nor Monitor routinely see the compromise agreements, which may include a confidentiality clause under which such payments are proposed.

From April 2013, NICE will be re-established as the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence. The Health and Social Care Act 2012 provides that, in exercising its functions, NICE must have regard to the desirability of promoting innovation in the provision of health services.

NICE's 'Guide to the methods of technology appraisal' explains that the innovative nature of the technology is one of the factors that its Appraisal Committees will take into account in deciding whether to recommend a

technology at the higher end of the cost per Quality-Adjusted Life Year range that NICE uses in the development of its guidance. The guide is available at:

www.nice.org.uk/media/B52/A7/TAMethodsGuideUpdatedJune2008.pdf

Mr Gregory Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) whether, under his plans for value-based pricing, treatments for diseases affecting older people will need to have higher than usual cost-effectiveness in order to be recommended by the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence; [149729]

(2) whether the age of patients will be a determinant factor in the value of medicines under his plans for value-based pricing. [149730]

Norman Lamb: The consultation document, “A new value-based approach to the pricing of branded medicines” set out our proposals for value-based pricing. The consultation ran from 16 December 2010 to 17 March 2011 and the Government’s response to the consultation was published on 18 July 2011, “A new value-based approach to the pricing of branded medicines: Government response to consultation”.

The impact assessment accompanying the consultation document set out an evaluation of the effects of our proposals including an assessment of the possible impact on NHS patients. Copies of the consultation document, the Government’s response and the impact assessment have been already placed in the Library.

The impact assessment will be updated in due course as the new pricing arrangements for branded medicines, including value-based pricing, are finalised.

School Milk

Graeme Morrice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health pursuant to the answer to the hon. Member for Stevenage of 6 March 2013, *Official Report*, column 1086W, on school milk, whether the European School Milk Scheme was open to early years settings, including Ofsted registered settings, prior to 2008; what EU rules changed in 2008 that extended the European School Milk Scheme to early years settings; and for which breaches of the EU requirements the Government was asked to return £2,641,271.08 to the European Commission in 2010. [148617]

Mr Heath: I have been asked to reply on behalf of the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.

Approved applicants were able to claim under the European School Milk Scheme for nurseries linked to primary schools prior to 2008. The EU rules were amended in 2008, from which time access to the scheme was granted to all early years settings.

The Government decided to return the £2,641,271.08 because there were concerns over nursery settings’ ability to comply in full with onerous EU record keeping requirements.

Sheep Meat

Mary Creagh: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when (a) the Food Standards Agency and (b) Ministers were informed of the discovery of 57 tonnes of British mutton at the Spanghero factory in France. [149910]

Anna Soubry: The Food Standards Agency (FSA) was first alerted to the French authorities’ initial findings at the French company Spanghero by the United Kingdom Deputy Chief Veterinary Officer on 22 February 2013. This started an immediate investigation which is ongoing. The FSA was formally notified by France through the EU Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed (RASFF) system on 27 February 2013.

The FSA informed me on 20 March 2013. As regards Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) Ministers, this issue was first included in a ministerial briefing pack for (DEFRA) oral questions on 7 March 2013, but the issue was raised substantively on 18 March when officials provided briefing for David Heath, Minister of State for Agriculture and Food.

FSA inspectors had visited Central Food Services on several occasions after the UK moratorium came into effect on 28 April 2012. The evidence disclosed at these visits, including documentary evidence and full inspections of the entire premises, indicated that unused DSM produced from ruminant bones, prohibited under the moratorium, had been disposed of as animal by-products in accordance with the terms of the moratorium.

However, evidence uncovered at the visits carried out after the information was received from the French authorities has confirmed that Central Food Services dispatched a number of consignments of desinewed lamb to Spanghero in breach of the moratorium after the moratorium had commenced.

The FSA continues to investigate the extent of the breach. To date there is nothing to suggest that Central Food Services, or any other business, manufactured DSM from ruminant bones after the moratorium commenced. There is also no evidence to suggest any link with the horse meat issue, beyond the involvement of Spanghero.

Surgery

Charlotte Leslie: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what the total annual reference costs are for all surgical procedures in the NHS. [149305]

Norman Lamb: The information is not available in the format requested.

Annual reference costs are collected from national health service trusts and NHS foundation trusts by health care resource group (HRG). HRGs are standard groupings of clinically similar treatments which use similar levels of health care resource, and may be distinguished as either diagnosis driven (where there are no major procedure codes in the patient record) or procedure driven.

The total cost of all procedure driven HRGs in admitted patient care or out-patient settings in 2011-12 reference costs is estimated at approximately £13 billion. It is not possible to distinguish between surgical and non-surgical procedures from within this amount.

A list of the procedure driven HRGs used to inform this estimate has been placed in the Library.

University Hospitals of Morecambe Bay NHS Foundation Trust

John Woodcock: To ask the Secretary of State for Health on what date he or his predecessor was made aware of the details of the arrangements for the severance of Mr Tony Halsall from the position of chief executive of University Hospitals of Morecambe Bay; and whether he or his predecessor were made aware of Mr Halsall's continued employment in the NHS. [149902]

Norman Lamb: University Hospitals of Morecambe Bay is a national health service foundation trust. The Department does not see special severance payments from foundation trusts, foundation trusts are required to send such proposals to HM Treasury for approval via Monitor.

The trust released a statement on 20 March 2013 outlining the details of the departure confirming that Mr Tony Halsall remains an employee of the trust but is currently on secondment to the NHS Confederation and that the agreed severance arrangements at the end of the secondment do not involve a special severance payment.

WALES

Domestic Visits

Jessica Morden: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many times he has visited each parliamentary

Constituency	Secretary of State for Wales (David Jones)	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales (Stephen Crabb)	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales (Baroness Randerson)
Aberconwy	2	—	—
Alyn and Deeside	4	—	—
Arfon	1	—	—
Cardiff Central	20	8	18
Cardiff South and Penarth	—	2	1
Cardiff West	—	—	1
Carmarthen West and South Pembrokeshire	—	3	—
Clwyd South	1	—	—
Clwyd West	3	—	—
Islwyn	1	—	—
Monmouthshire	—	1	—
Newport East	1	2	1
Newport West	1	—	1
Preseli Pembrokeshire	—	1	—
Rhondda	—	—	1
Swansea West	—	1	1
Vale of Glamorgan	1	1	1
Ynys Mon	3	—	—

Note:

This table shows the number of separate occasions these locations have been visited.

Females

Jessica Morden: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what assessment his Department has made of the effect of Government spending reductions on women in Wales. [149478]

Stephen Crabb: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given on 19 March 2013, *Official Report*, column 670W.

DEFENCE

Armed Forces: Electoral Register

Mr Jim Murphy: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many members of the armed forces are registered to vote. [149252]

constituency in Wales in an official capacity since taking office. [149476]

Stephen Crabb: I refer the hon. Member to my answer given on 19 March 2013, *Official Report*, columns 668-69W.

Jessica Morden: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) pursuant to the answer of 19 March 2013, *Official Report*, column 668W, on domestic visits, how many such visits have been undertaken by (a) him and (b) each of his two Parliamentary Under-Secretaries of State; [149913]

(2) pursuant to his answer of 18 March 2013, *Official Report*, column 406W, on Domestic Visits, what the venue was of each visit undertaken by (a) him and (b) each of his two Parliamentary Under-Secretaries of State. [149912]

Stephen Crabb: The Wales Office Ministerial Team and I meet with numerous stakeholders across Wales, and in London; to enhance the economic prospects of Wales; to guard the constitutional settlement and to further the interests of the people of Wales. Details of all the organisations my ministerial colleagues and I meet are regularly published on the Wales Office website.

Pursuant to my answers of 18 and 19 March 2013, *Official Report*, columns 406W and 668W respectively, the split in these visits, and the locations they were undertaken in, between the Secretary of State for Wales, my right hon. Friend the Member for Clwyd West (Mr Jones), the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales, my Noble Friend Baroness Randerson, and I are shown in the following table:

Mr Francois: The latest Armed Forces Continuous Attitude Survey published in August 2012 indicates that some 67% of regular service personnel have registered to vote.

Armed Forces: Pay

Thomas Docherty: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what estimate he has made of the cost of implementing the x-factor element of the armed forces' pay review body's forty-second report 2013 by each rank to which it applies. [149735]

Mr Francois: The estimated total cost of implementing the X factor element of the armed forces' pay review body's (AFPRB) 2013 report is some £33 million for 11 months of financial year 2013-14 and £36 million per year thereafter. Rates of pay for each rank, including the 0.5% X factor increase are set out in the AFPRB's 2013 report, a copy of which is available in the Library of the House.

Armed Forces: Redundancy

Mr Jim Murphy: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many advanced explosive ordnance disposal operators have been made redundant in tranches 1 and 2; and how many are liable for redundancy in tranche 3. [148202]

Mr Francois: Statistics for tranches 1 and 2 of the armed forces' redundancy scheme can be found on the Defence Analytical Services and Advice (DASA) website at the following address:

<http://www.dasa.mod.uk/applications/newWeb/www/index.php?page=67&pubType=0&thiscontent=5100&date=2012-08-24>

Unit	Military personnel	UK based civilian personnel	Spouses/civil partners	School-age children
Royal Scots Dragoon Guards	430	0	220	200
2 Close Support Battalion Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers	310	1	140	130
110 Provost Company Royal Military Police	100	0	40	30

¹ Less than 5.

Note:

All figures are rounded to the nearest 10.

These units are stationed in Germany at present and are due to move to Leuchars from 2015 as announced in the Army Basing Plan by the Secretary of State for Defence, my right hon. Friend the Member for Runnymede and Weybridge (Mr Hammond) on 5 March 2013, *Official Report*, column 845.

The Ministry of Defence will now begin the process of detailed planning and necessary engagement with the stakeholders concerned, including local councils, to deliver the Army Basing Plan and ensure the minimum disruption to Army personnel, their families and the local community.

British Overseas Territories

Mr Jim Murphy: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what military assets are deployed in (a) Anguilla, (b) Bermuda, (c) British Antarctic Territory, (d) British

No advanced explosive ordnance disposal operators were made redundant in tranches 1 or 2; and none are liable for redundancy in tranche 3.

Armed Forces: Scotland

Pamela Nash: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many Scottish-based service personnel serving in the infantry are liable for redundancy under tranche 3; and at what ranks such service personnel are. [149700]

Mr Francois: An individual's unit or where they are stationed is not a factor in the decision to select Service personnel for redundancy.

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 19 March 2013, *Official Report*, column 644W. As part of the January 2013 redundancy announcement for tranche 3 that earmarked 5,300 posts, 654 Infantry personnel between the ranks of Private and Corporal are liable for selection for redundancy.

Army

Sir Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many (a) military personnel and (b) UK-based civilians are currently serving in (i) Royal Scots Dragoon Guards, (ii) 2 Close Support Battalion Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers and (iii) 110 Provost Company Royal Military Police; and how many (A) spouses and (B) school-age children are attached to each unit. [149536]

Mr Francois: The numbers currently serving in the units concerned are shown in the following table.

Unit	Military personnel	UK based civilian personnel	Spouses/civil partners	School-age children
Royal Scots Dragoon Guards	430	0	220	200
2 Close Support Battalion Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers	310	1	140	130
110 Provost Company Royal Military Police	100	0	40	30

Indian Ocean Territory, (e) British Virgin Islands, (f) Cayman Islands, (g) Falkland Islands, (h) Gibraltar, (i) Montserrat, (j) Pitcairn, Henderson, Ducie and Oeno Islands, (k) St Helena and St Helena Dependencies (Ascension and Tristan da Cunha), (l) South Georgia and South Sandwich Islands, (m) Sovereign Base Areas of Akrotiri and Dhekelia and (n) the Turks and Caicos Islands. [149249]

Mr Robathan: The Ministry of Defence (MOD) has four bases located in UK overseas territories. These are termed permanent joint operating bases and consist of British Forces Gibraltar, British Forces Cyprus located within the sovereign base areas, the British Indian Ocean Territory and British Forces South Atlantic Islands based in Falklands Islands and Ascension Island. This reflects the MOD's commitment and responsibility for defence and security of the UK's overseas territories as a standing military task.

The military assets deployed in each of the permanent joint operating bases are presented in the following table:

Permanent joint operating bases	Air	Land	Sea
British Forces South Atlantic Islands	4 x Air Defence Typhoon 1 xVC10K air to air refuelling tanker 1 x Hercules C130J transport aircraft 2 x Sea King Search and Rescue Helicopters 2 x Sikorsky S61 Support Helicopters ¹ Air Surveillance Radars	Rapier Air Defence batteries 1 x Infantry Company	HMS Clyde (Falkland Islands Patrol Vessel)
British Forces Cyprus	3 x Griffin Search and Rescue Helicopters	2x Infantry Battalions	2 x Rigid Hull Inflatable Boats
Gibraltar	—	Royal Gibraltar Regiment	2 x Fast Patrol Boats 3 x Rigid Hull Inflatable Boats
British Indian Ocean Territory	—	—	5 x Rigid Hull Inflatable Boats

¹ These aircraft are civilian owned and operated and operate under contract to the MOD

The Ministry of Defence has no military assets deployed in Anguilla, Bermuda, British Antarctic Territory, British Virgin Islands, Cayman Islands, Montserrat, Pitcairn, Henderson, Ducie and Oeno Islands, St Helena and St Helena Dependencies (Tristan da Cunha) South Georgia and South Sandwich Islands or at the Turks and Caicos Islands.

Mr Jim Murphy: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how much his Department spent on programmes or projects related to (a) Anguilla, (b) Bermuda (c) British Antarctic Territory, (d) British Indian Ocean Territory, (e) British Virgin Islands, (f) Cayman Islands, (g) Falkland Islands, (h) Gibraltar, (i) Montserrat, (j) Pitcairn, Henderson, Ducie and Oeno Islands, (k) St Helena and St Helena Dependencies (Ascension and Tristan da Cunha), (l) South Georgia and South Sandwich Islands, (m) the Sovereign Base areas of Akritiri and Dhekelia and (n) the Turks and Caicos Islands in each of the last three years. [149371]

Mr Robathan: Costs shown in the following table reflect Ministry of Defence (MOD)'s commitment and responsibility for defence and security of the UK's Overseas Territories as a standing military task and are rounded to the nearest £ million.

UK's Overseas Territories	Financial year		
	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13
Anguilla	0	0	0
Bermuda	0	0	0
British Antarctic Territory	0	0	0
British Indian Ocean Territory	2	3	2
British Virgin Islands	0	0	0
Cayman Islands	0	0	0
Falkland Islands including (Ascension Island) ¹	95	68	67

UK's Overseas Territories	Financial year		
	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13
Gibraltar	58	58	53
Montserrat	0	0	0
Pitcairn, Henderson, Ducie and Oeno Islands	0	0	0
St Helena and St Helena Dependencies (Tristan da Cunha)	0	0	0
South Georgia and South Sandwich Islands	0	0	0
Akrotiri and Dhekelia ²	227	208	188
Turks and Caicos Islands	0	0	0

¹ Figures for Falkland Islands include the costs associated with Ascension Island as these figures cannot be broken down further without incurring disproportionate cost. These figures do not include the costs associated with St Helena or Tristan da Cunha (of which there are none).

² Figures for Akrotiri and Dhekelia include all MOD sites in British Forces Cyprus as these cannot be broken down further without incurring disproportionate cost.

These costs represent the Joint Forces Command Top Level Budget from 2012-13 and the Chief of Joint Operations Top Level Budget prior to this period. It also includes Defence Infrastructure Organisation costs incurred for these locations.

Consultants

Mr Jim Murphy: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) how many consultants were hired to advise the (a) Defence Infrastructure Organisation, (b) Defence Science Innovation and Technology Laboratory, (c) Defence Support Group, (d) Hydrographic Office and (e) Meteorological Office between (i) 1 April 2010 and 31 March 2011, (ii) 1 April 2011 and 31 March 2012 and (iii) 1 April 2012 and January 2013; [149266]

(2) how many consultants were hired to advise the (a) Defence Equipment and Support, (b) HQ Air Command, (c) Land Forces and (d) Navy Command between (i) 1 April 2010 and 31 March 2011, (ii) 1 April 2011 and 31 March 2012 and (iii) 1 April 2012 and January 2013; [149267]

(3) how many consultants were hired to advise (a) Central TLB, (b) head office and corporate services, (c) chief of joint operations and (d) Joint Forces Command between (i) 1 April 2010 and 31 March 2011, (ii) 1 April 2011 and 31 March 2012 and (iii) 1 April 2012 and January 2013. [149354]

Mr Francois: The Ministry of Defence negotiates contracts with consultancy companies to deliver a specific output at an agreed price. It does not specify the number of consultants to be employed as this is a matter for the contractor.

Expenditure on external consultancy with a breakdown by category of expenditure is published in UK Defence Statistics at the following website:

<http://www.dasa.mod.uk/modintranet/UKDS/UKDS2012/c1/table109.php>

Cyprus

Mr Kevan Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many cash dispensing machines are situated within UK armed forces' bases in Cyprus. [149503]

Mr Francois: The Hellenic Bank Public Company Ltd have five cash dispensing machines at Akrotiri, (two) Ayios Nikolaos (one) and Dhekelia Station (two). The Cyprus Popular Bank have two cash dispensing machines at Episkopi Station. The British Forces Post Office provide a chip and pin service at Dhekelia, Akrotiri and Episkopi Stations for those with UK cash cards that have the necessary arrangements with the Post Office in the UK.

Mr Kevan Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many UK armed forces personnel and Ministry of Defence civil servants based in Cyprus have bank accounts in that country; and when his Department ceased to make payments to these accounts. [149597]

Mr Francois: The Ministry of Defence (MOD) may not be aware of all personal bank accounts but it routinely pays salaries for 192 civil servants and 1,737 UK armed forces personnel into Cyprus bank accounts.

A decision was taken by the MOD on 19 March 2013 to hold payments into these accounts. All personnel have been asked to nominate a UK bank account into which their March salary can be paid.

Defence

Mr Jim Murphy: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what steps are taken by his Department as part of the threat assessment process. [149251]

Mr Robathan: The Cabinet Office leads the monitoring of threats at national level through the biennial National Security Risk Assessment and the regular output of the Joint Intelligence Committee. The Ministry of Defence contributes fully to this work and in addition monitors in more detail some of the threats identified at national level.

Military Bases

Angus Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether any 105mm light guns will be based in Scotland following the basing review. [149361]

Mr Francois: Following the outcome of the regular Army basing plan announced on 5 March 2013, *Official Report*, columns 845-48, 105mm light guns will continue to be based in Scotland with 29 Commando Regiment Royal Artillery 7 (Sphinx) Commando Battery Royal Artillery at Royal Marines Condor, Arbroath.

A small number of 105mm light guns are also held in Scotland for ceremonial purposes.

The future location of any 105mm light guns with Army reserve units remains subject to the reserves announcement which is due before the summer recess.

Alison Seabeck: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence pursuant to the answer of 11 March 2013, *Official Report*, column 78W, on the Army Basing Plan, what overall valuation of the announced land disposals consequent on the Army Basing Review has been made for the purposes of his Department's budgetary planning. [149548]

Mr Francois: Although the disposal of some sites formed part of the announcement, details of any pre-sale valuations obtained in advance of land disposals will not be released as to do so could unduly influence the market.

Military Bases: Edinburgh

Mike Crockart: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has for the future of housing stock at Craigiehall. [150205]

Mr Francois: The final requirement for Service Family Accommodation to support the revised structure of the armed forces in Edinburgh has not yet been confirmed.

Mike Crockart: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what proportion of service family accommodation at (a) Redford and (b) Dreghorn barracks will be used in each of the next five years; and which personnel are expected to be housed at each site during this period. [149872]

Mr Francois: The final requirement for Service Family Accommodation to support the revised structure of the armed forces in Edinburgh has not yet been confirmed.

Military Bases: Scotland

Mike Crockart: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made of the likely effects of the outcome of the Basing Review on the Defence Medical Services in Scotland. [149589]

Mr Francois: The provision of healthcare by the Defence Medical Services in Scotland should not be adversely affected by the Basing review. Healthcare provided at Defence medical and dental centres in Scotland will be adjusted if required to ensure service personnel continue to receive the highest standard of care.

Military Exercises

Angus Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assets are taking part in (a) Saharan Express and (b) Proud Mantra; how many personnel were deployed on each such operation; and what estimate he has made of the cost to the public purse of each operation. [149359]

Mr Robathan: Saharan Express is a multi-national maritime exercise designed to improve co-operation among participating nations in order to increase counter-piracy capabilities and deter maritime crimes in West Africa. The UK, US and four other European nations together with eight West African nations have just completed participation in Saharan Express 13.

The UK was represented by HMS Argyll, a Type 23 frigate, with a crew of 174 personnel. HMS Argyll was able to participate because she is in the region on UK Defence's standing commitment to maintain maritime security patrols in the North and South Atlantic. Costs associated with the exercise have not been collected separately, as HMS Argyll was concurrently on-task, fulfilling this standing commitment.

Proud Manta is NATO's largest annual anti-submarine exercise designed to improve co-operation and interoperability between NATO members; 11 nations participated this year. The UK deployed three Merlin Mk1 helicopters with 75 personnel as part of Proud Manta 2013 at a cost of £175,000.

Military Police: Edinburgh

Mike Crockart: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence pursuant to his oral statement of 5 March 2013, *Official Report*, columns 845-63W, on Army Basing Plan, whether Royal Military Police based at Edinburgh Castle will be moved in consequence of the Army Basing Plan; and where they will be based after any such move. [149938]

Mr Francois: There are no current plans to move the Royal Military Police based at Edinburgh Castle.

Ministry of Defence Police and Guarding Agency

Mr Jim Murphy: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what the instructor to student ratio is for members of the Ministry of Defence police; and what estimate he has made of the likely change in the ratio in each of the next five years. [149253]

Mr Francois: The instructor to student ratio for members of the Ministry of Defence police varies according to the type of training being delivered. Therefore the ratio in each of the next five years will be determined by the category and frequency of training delivered.

Mr Jim Murphy: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many members of the Ministry of Defence Police Criminal Investigation Department have (a) been made redundant and (b) been moved to other posts within his Department in the last 12 months. [149254]

Mr Francois: Since 1 April 2012 in the Ministry of Defence Police Criminal Investigation Department there have been no redundancies and three members have moved to other posts within the Ministry of Defence Police.

Mr Jim Murphy: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many staff were employed by the Ministry of Defence Police Criminal Investigation Department in (a) May 2010 and (b) March 2013. [149255]

Mr Francois: The Ministry of Defence Police Criminal Investigation Department employed 205 police and civilian staff as at 1 May 2010. There were 154 police and civilian staff employed as at 1 March 2013.

Gemma Doyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence pursuant to the statement of 27 March 2012, *Official Report*, column 116WS, on Defence, Police and Guarding Agency, when he will report to Parliament the results of the consultation on the future of the Ministry of Defence police. [149728]

Mr Francois: Formal consultation is in hand on detailed proposals resulting from the changes announced last year. I will make a further statement once final decisions on those proposals have been taken. I would expect to be able to do so in the summer.

Gemma Doyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what estimate he has made of the saving to the public purse as a result of actions taken by the Ministry of Defence police CID in disrupting conspiracies to commit crime in each of the last five financial years. [149814]

Mr Francois: The Ministry of Defence police (MDP) has recorded the following crime disruption figures:

	£
2012-13	117,689
2011-12	4,074,900
2010-11	49,674

The MDP only hold established disruption figures from 2010. The figures recorded are for all disruptions which would include any element of conspiracy.

Pay

Priti Patel: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what allowances and subsidies in addition to salary were available to officials in (a) his Department and (b) its non-departmental public bodies in each of the last five years; and what the monetary value was of such payments and allowances in each such year. [148041]

Mr Francois: The Ministry of Defence currently has over 500 pay-related allowances and subsidies in addition to salary available to civilian staff. This follows the removal of approximately 800 allowances in 2004-05. Nevertheless, the number and purpose of these remaining allowances is the subject of an ongoing efficiency review.

The total cost of these allowances and subsidies in each of the last five financial years was as follows:

Financial year	Total cost (£ million)
2007-08	211.238
2008-09	237.207
2009-10	245.377
2010-11	225.206
2011-12	212.234

A full breakdown of the monetary value of each type of allowance and subsidy in addition to salary, in each of the last five financial years, will be placed in the Library of the House. These allowances include those for the cost of living overseas, allowances for shift work and unsociable hours and skills specific allowances.

Other allowances and payments for the reimbursement of costs associated with transferring to a new location following a posting are payable. However, these have been excluded from total costs provided above as they are not salary-related, but claims for expenses incurred.

The Department has one non-departmental public body which has a separate pay and grading delegation, the Royal Air Force Museum. Information on the Royal Air Force Museum will be placed in the Library of the House.

RAF Leuchars

Sir Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what the titles are of the (a) sustainability studies, (b) other environmental studies and (c) associated action plans (i) completed and (ii) commissioned in relation to the transfer of the Typhoon Force from RAF Leuchars and the arrival of Army units. [148179]

Mr Robathan: The following sustainable development assessments have been completed to date for the relocation of the Typhoon Force from RAF Leuchars to RAF Lossiemouth, and the arrival of Army units:

a sustainability appraisal for the development of the estate at RAF Lossiemouth, to facilitate the arrival and future operation of up to three Typhoon Fighter 2 Squadrons, including the Northern Quick Reaction Alert facility;

a sustainability appraisal for the delivery of an Adaptable Force Brigade Scotland, including Leuchars, Cavalry Barracks Redford, Dreghorn Barracks, Fort George, Glencorse and Kinloss;

an updated sustainability appraisal for the Base Optimisation Programme (BOP) in Scotland; and

an updated sustainable development action plan for the overarching BOP.

In addition, the following site-specific environmental assessments are planned to be commissioned in 2013 for all the sites in scope:

ecological desk and field scoping surveys, assessment of development constraints and recommendations for further ecological surveys; and

cultural heritage desktop scoping assessments, assessment of development constraints and recommendations for further heritage surveys.

The above reports will support the forthcoming assessment studies on all the sites in scope.

RAF Lyneham

Mr Gray: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has for the historic Comet aircraft which is at the entrance to the former RAF Lyneham base. [149378]

Mr Robathan: The RAF are currently examining options for the future of the De Havilland Comet C2 XK699 which is the gate guardian at the former RAF Lyneham. No decision has yet been made.

RAF Police

John Woodcock: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what limitations the RAF places on recruitment to the RAF police due to previous temporary residence in another Commonwealth nation. [149307]

Mr Francois: Candidates applying for commissioned Service in the RAF police must hold developed vetting (DV) clearance, which in accordance with Cabinet Office instructions requires an individual to have resided continuously in the UK for 10 years immediately prior to their application. Candidates wishing to apply for non-commissioned service in the RAF police must hold security check (SC) clearance and should have at least five years continuous residency in the UK immediately prior to their application.

On a case-by-case basis the RAF can opt to reduce this requirement to seven years of continuous residency (for developed vetting) and three years (for security check). A residency waiver may also be considered for candidates who have undertaken full-time study overseas or those who have taken a gap year or studied abroad for a short period, but meet all other eligibility criteria.

Theft

Gemma Doyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent assessment he has made of the potential increase in theft and loss from the Ministry of Defence estate as a result of the reduction in the number of Ministry of Defence Police CID detectives. [149714]

Mr Francois: The Ministry of Defence (MOD) police criminal investigation department will continue to provide an effective investigative capability using police powers to support the MOD's new counter fraud and loss department, which aims to improve the way fraud and theft is managed across Defence.

Gemma Doyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what progress he has made on his plans to create a Defence Fraud and Loss Unit in his Department. [149715]

Mr Francois: The Ministry of Defence (MOD) is making good progress in establishing a dedicated Counter Fraud and Loss Prevention Unit. It has appointed a new head of counter fraud, loss and prevention at senior civil service level, and is currently recruiting a well-qualified team of counter fraud specialists to support efforts to reduce fraud and theft.

The Department has adopted a new Counter Fraud Strategy and a Counter Fraud and Loss Prevention Board has been established to drive improvements in managing the risk of fraud and loss across the MOD.

United Arab Emirates

Angus Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how long he expects the 906 Expeditionary Air Wing to be based at Al Minhad air base. [149362]

Mr Robathan: The RAF's 906 Expeditionary Air Wing (EAW) was stood up in the United Arab Emirates on 15 January 2013, replacing B Flight of 901 EAW. Its tasks include the provision of support to air transport links between the UK and deployed operations in Afghanistan, as well as logistic support to deployed forces. It is also responsible for supporting RAF aircraft conducting joint exercises in the region. No decision has yet been made on an end date for 906 EAW's basing at Al Minhad.

Angus Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what estimate he has made of the cost to the public purse of deploying 906 Expeditionary Air Wing at Al Minhad air base; [149363]

(2) what (a) assets and (b) munitions are deployed to Al Minhad air base; [149364]

(3) how many personnel are deployed to Al Minhad air base as part of (a) the 906 Expeditionary Air Wing and (b) other operations. [149365]

Mr Robathan: 906 Expeditionary Air Wing, based at Al Minhad in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), provides support to air transport links between the UK and operations in Afghanistan. The wing has a secondary role supporting RAF aircraft conducting joint exercises in the region such as the RAF's Tornado, Typhoon and E-3D Sentry aircraft which regularly exercise with Gulf Cooperation Council members.

The number of assets and munitions deployed, either for exercises or supporting operations, is constantly changing depending on the activity at the time. There are currently a number of Tornado aircraft deployed to the UAE supporting the biannual advanced tactical leadership course which involves aircrew from Gulf Cooperation Council partners as well as RAF and US personnel. In addition a C-17 aircraft is currently deployed to Al Minhad supporting operations in Afghanistan. There are around 100 UK personnel currently deployed to the UAE on operations, including those at Al Minhad air base as part of 906 Expeditionary Air Wing.

The precise number of personnel fluctuates on a daily basis for a variety of reasons, including mid-tour rest and recuperation, temporary absence for training, evacuation for medical reasons, the roulement of forces, visits and a range of other factors. We do not, therefore, publish actual figures for personnel deployed on operations and the figure above is rounded to the nearest 50 personnel.

The approximate cost for 906 Expeditionary Air Wing is £248,000 per month. This figure will fluctuate due to personnel levels changing and exchange rates varying.

Unmanned Aerial Vehicles

John Hemming: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what reports he has received on whether the US administration is operating unmanned aerial vehicles from any UK RAF base; [149168]

(2) what oversight the RAF has of US unmanned aerial vehicles where such operations originate from the UK. [149449]

Mr Robathan: The US does not operate remotely piloted aircraft systems from the UK.

John Hemming: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if the cable linking RAF Croughton to Camp Lemonier is used to support US unmanned aerial vehicle operations. [149185]

Mr Robathan: RAF Croughton is part of a worldwide US Defence communications network, and the base supports a variety of communications activity. The Ministry of Defence does not hold information on what support to US operations is provided by RAF Croughton.

John Hemming: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what support the RAF is providing to the United States for unmanned aerial vehicle operations outside the UK. [149263]

Mr Robathan: RAF personnel routinely operate Reaper Remotely Piloted Aircraft Systems (RPAS) alongside US personnel in Afghanistan as part of the Launch and Recovery Element for NATO international security assistance force (ISAF) missions.

A small number of RAF personnel are also embedded with 432nd Wing of the US Air Force at Creech Air Force Base, Nevada and the USAF Formal Training Unit, at Holloman Air Force Base, New Mexico.

USA

Fabian Hamilton: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what information his Department holds on whether the US bases at USAF Croughton and the Joint Analysis Center at RAF Molesworth are being used in connection with the US drone programme. [148608]

Mr Robathan: RAF Croughton is part of a worldwide US Defence communications network, and the base supports a variety of communications activity. The Ministry of Defence does not hold information on whether RAF Croughton or RAF Molesworth are used to support US operations.

Rehman Chishti: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what information his Department holds on whether the US Air Force is operating unmanned aerial vehicles from the UK. [148966]

Mr Robathan [holding answer 19 March 2013]: The US Air Force does not operate remotely piloted aircraft systems from the UK.

World War II: Military Decorations

Mr Mike Hancock: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what steps he is taking to ensure that all surviving former military personnel entitled to the Arctic Convoy medal receive notification of how they can receive it; [149543]

(2) by what date he expects to have contacted all surviving former military personnel involved in the Arctic Convoys to indicate their entitlement to the proposed medal. [149544]

Mr Francois: The Ministry of Defence does not hold reliable records of all surviving Arctic Convoy veterans. However, we have established a clear application process that veterans need to follow in order to be assessed against the eligibility criteria for the award of the Arctic Star Medal. The Prime Minister presented the first medals to veterans at an awards ceremony on 19 March 2013. Forms have been sent to veterans who have inquired about the medal and these forms are also available from the Veterans UK website. The Ministry of Defence Medal Office, which is responsible for the application process, is fast tracking those applications from surviving veterans and widows in order to get medals to veterans as soon as we can.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Bridges

Ms Ritchie: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what discussions she has had with the First Minister, Deputy First Minister and Minister for Finance in the Northern Ireland Executive on the provision of the required funding for the construction of Narrow Water Bridge between Warrenpoint in County Down and Cooley in County Louth in the Republic of Ireland; and if she will make a statement.

[149726]

Mike Penning: The hon. Member will be aware that these are transferred matters that are wholly the responsibility of Northern Ireland Executive Ministers who have not raised them with me or the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, my right hon. Friend the Member for Chipping Barnet (Mrs Villiers).

WOMEN AND EQUALITIES

Civil Partnerships

Stephen Doughty: To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities (1) what advice she has received on the financial effect of the extension of civil partnerships to opposite sex couples;

[148656]

(2) whether any of the submissions to her equal civil marriage consultation analysed the financial effect of the extension of civil partnerships to opposite sex couples;

[148664]

(3) whether the Government has conducted an assessment of the potential effects of extending civil partnerships to opposite sex couples.

[148716]

Mrs Grant *[holding answer 18 March 2013]:* The Government do not have a policy to extend civil partnerships to opposite sex couples and therefore no assessment of the effect, financial or otherwise, of the extension of civil partnerships to opposite sex couples has been conducted.

Tourette's Syndrome

Mr Stewart Jackson: To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities what her policy is on ensuring that those issued with identity cards by the registered charity Tourette Syndrome (UK) Association following receipt of medical evidence from a recognised specialist are accepted as being disabled for the purposes of the Equality Act 2010; what guidance (a) has been given and (b) will be given to organisations subject to the public sector equality duty to ensure that those so identified are presumed to be and accepted as being disabled; and if she will make a statement.

[147930]

Mrs Grant: To qualify for protection under the Equality Act 2010 someone must meet the Act's definition of a disabled person. Disability within the Act is not defined through each specific condition, but rather in general terms. The general definition of disability for the purposes of the Act is

"a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on a person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities".

Under both the Equality Act and the public sector Equality Duty, public bodies are required to consider the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations between people with different characteristics, including people who are disabled. The Government produced a series of 'quick start' guides to help public bodies understand the legal requirements under the Equality Duty.

ENERGY AND CLIMATE CHANGE

Energy: Housing

Luciana Berger: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change what estimate he has made of the average energy performance certificate score of (a) housing in off the gas grid areas and (b) housing in gas grid areas.

[149300]

Gregory Barker *[holding answer 21 March 2013]:* The Department does not currently hold this information. Data from energy performance certificates (EPCs), which is the responsibility of the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG), is not held in a way which allows the information requested to be calculated.

Chris Ruane: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change how many and what proportion of households are off grid for gas supply in each (a) local authority area and (b) region.

[149342]

Mr Hayes: The exact number and proportion of households who are off the gas grid is not held centrally.

Estimates have been produced based on information held from two administrative sources; these are the Gemser database on the location of electricity meters, and data from xoserve and independent gas transporters on the location of gas meters. Subtracting the number of gas meters from the number of electricity meters produces a broad estimate of the number of off grid properties. However some households can have more than one electricity meter associated with their property (for instance, a supply for communal facilities such as-stairwell lighting or a lift). Additionally, the standard gas industry definition of domestic use uses a consumption threshold, with any consumer using less than 73,200 kWh of gas per year being classed as a domestic user; it is estimated that—Great Britain wide—this definition allocates around 2 million small business users as domestic. Furthermore a small number of meters (less than one third of 1%) do not have sufficient information associated with them to be able to allocate them to a specific area. The underlying data on the number of gas and electricity meters in each local authority is available on the Department's website at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/regional-and-local-authority-electricity-consumption-statistics-2005-to-2011>

and

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/gas-sales-and-numbers-of-customers-by-region-and-local-authority>

A table showing, for 2011, the number of domestic electricity meter points, the number of gas meter points where consumption was less than 73,200 kWh, the difference between the two figures (which forms an

estimate of the number of households off the gas grid), and derived from this, the estimated proportion of households off the gas grid in each local authority and region in Great Britain, has been placed in the Libraries of the House.

Energy: North Sea

Grahame M. Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change what estimate he has made of the level of production of (a) oil and gas and (b) renewable energy sources in the North sea in each year up to 2019-20. [149489]

Mr Hayes: The Department does not estimate future levels of production from the North sea area alone but out-turn data on, and projections of, oil and gas production are published at for the entire United Kingdom and UK continental shelf.

<https://www.gov.uk/oil-and-gas-uk-field-data>

Out-turn data on renewable energy generation are published in the Digest of UK Energy Statistics at:

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

We publish energy demand projections (which include UK demand for renewable and waste energy) at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-of-energy-climate-change/series/energy-and-emissions-projections>

Fracking

Chris Ruane: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change in which local authority areas shale gas has been discovered. [149358]

Mr Hayes: The Department classifies as a discovery any onshore gas well which flows gas at a rate of at least 0.2 million cubic feet per day. Although the presence of gas has been noted in a number of shales around the UK in the course of oil and gas drilling, the only discovery in the UK to meet this criterion is in Lancashire.

Fuel Poverty

Chris Ruane: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change how much funding his Department has made available for combating fuel poverty in each year for which figures are available. [149346]

Gregory Barker: Assistance to the fuel poor and those at risk of fuel poverty is provided through a number of DECC policies and programmes.

Funding for warm home discount, warm front and associated expenditure

	<i>Budget (£ million)</i>
2000-01	73
2001-02	197
2002-03	163
2003-04	152
2004-05	165
2005-06	190
2006-07	315
2007-08	350
2008-09	395

Funding for warm home discount, warm front and associated expenditure

	<i>Budget (£ million)</i>
2009-10	369
2010-11	366
2011-12	382.5
2012-13	¹ 388

¹ Of the £100 million made available in 2012-13, up to £31 million of this budget will be utilised for the local authority competition.

Assistance to the fuel poor and those at risk of fuel poverty has also been provided through the Carbon Emissions Reduction Target (CERT) and Community Energy Savings Programme (CESP) schemes and, going forward, the Energy Company Obligation will provide assistance worth an estimated £540 million to low income, vulnerable households.

In addition, assistance is provided by the Department of Work and Pensions' cold weather payments and winter fuel payments.

Renewables Obligation

Chris Heaton-Harris: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change if his Department will take steps to amend the renewables obligation subsidies to renewables in proportion to the change in the wholesale price attributable to carbon price support. [R] [149639]

Mr Hayes: The impact of the carbon price floor on wholesale prices was taken account of in the analysis to inform the renewables obligation banding review, as detailed in the final stage impact assessment published in July 2012¹. The Chancellor of the Exchequer, my right hon. Friend the Member for Tatton (Mr Osborne), announced in the March Budget 2013 that the carbon price floor trajectory will remain as planned.

¹https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/42847/5945-renewables-obligation-government-response-impact-a.pdf

Secondment

Chris Ruane: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change how many staff from his Department were seconded to each of the top six energy suppliers to work on the development of energy policy in each year for which figures are available. [149349]

Gregory Barker: No people have been on secondment from the Department of Energy and Climate Change to any the top six energy suppliers within the last financial year.

JUSTICE

Burglary

Gareth Johnson: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice what estimate he has made of the number of victims of residential burglary of each ethnic group in (a) Dartford, (b) Kent and (c) the UK in the last five years. [149181]

Mr Hurd: I have been asked to reply on behalf of the Cabinet Office.

The information requested falls within the responsibility of the UK Statistics Authority. I have asked the authority to reply.

Letter from Glen Watson, dated March 2013:

As Director General for the Office for National Statistics (ONS), I have been asked to reply to your Parliamentary Question asking the Secretary of State for Justice for the number of victims of residential burglary of each ethnic group in (a) Dartford, (b) Kent and (c) the UK in the last five years (149181)

The two main sources of crime statistics are police recorded crime and the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW), and a breakdown by ethnic group is only provided by the CSEW. CSEW data are not available at the focal authority level so we are unable to provide any estimates for Dartford and Kent.

The number of victims of burglary, broken down by ethnic group as estimated by the CSEW are provided for the last five financial years (April to March) for England and Wales.

Ethnic group	England and Wales				
	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12
White	854,261	924,970	817,580	977,860	816,376
Mixed	16,771	22,916	29,078	18,201	23,600
Asian or Asian British	72,594	62,130	82,605	87,130	100,942
Black or Black British	49,205	39,520	38,414	50,535	54,163
Chinese or Other Ethnic Group	28,415	24,914	19,769	23,922	31,493

Notes:

1. The Population Estimates by Ethnic Group are experimental statistics, and have not been shown to meet the standards required of National Statistics. Information on sources of uncertainty is provided in the Quality and Methodology Information (QMI) document available from this link: <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/method-quality/quality-information/index.html>

2. Mid-year population estimates by ethnic group are not available after mid-2009 therefore the proportion of the mid-2009 ethnic estimates has been applied to the 16 and over population estimate for mid-2010 and mid-2011.

Source:

Crime Survey for England and Wales and Mid-year population estimates by ethnic group

An additional table has also been provided which shows the proportion of the population who were victims of burglary broken down by ethnic group for England and Wales.

Ethnic group	England and Wales				
	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12
White	2.2	2.3	2.1	2.5	2.0
Mixed	3.4	4.4	5.3	3.3	4.3
Asian or Asian British	3.2	2.6	3.3	3.5	4.0
Black or Black British	4.4	3.4	3.2	4.2	4.4
Chinese or Other Ethnic Group	4.2	3.5	2.6	3.1	4.1

Source:

Crime Survey for England and Wales

The crime statistics data published by the ONS cover England and Wales only. Crime data for Scotland are published at:

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Crime-Justice>

and data for Northern Ireland are published at:

http://www.psni.police.uk/index/updates/updates_statistics/update_crime_statistics.htm

Courts: Translation Services

Steve McCabe: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice what estimate he has made of the savings to his Department as a result of the implementation of the ALS/Capita contract for court translation and interpreting services. [149942]

Mrs Grant: The estimate of savings under the language services call-off contract with Capita is based on the pre-contract spend of approximately £30 million each year. This covers courts, tribunals and the National Offender Management Service.

The savings in the first year of the contract's operation are estimated at £15 million.

Steve McCabe: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice if he will review (a) how many people have been wrongly convicted and (b) the number of potentially guilty people acquitted as a result of errors by translators employed under the ALS/Capita contract; and if he will make a statement. [149949]

Mrs Grant: We have no plan at present to undertake any review of convictions or acquittals in interpreter court cases.

The judiciary is responsible for ensuring that defendants get a fair hearing. If there are any issues with interpretation the judge will stop the proceedings and resolve those issues. The Ministry of Justice monitors performance under the contract, which has an associated complaints system. Only a very small proportion of complaints relate to the quality of the interpreter. We have received no complaints that wrong convictions have been made as a result of problems with interpreters.

Driving: Eyesight

Sir Bob Russell: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice how many drivers were prosecuted for failing to meet the requirement for visual recognition of a vehicle registration number plate in each police authority area in each of the last five years. [149877]

Jeremy Wright: The Ministry of Justice Court Proceedings Database holds information on defendants proceeded against, found guilty and sentenced for criminal offences in England and Wales. However, not all offences are individually recorded within the centrally held data. Offences of Driving a motor vehicle on a road with eyesight which did not comply with requirements under section 96(1) of the Road Traffic Act 1988 are reported as part of a miscellaneous group of offences, and it is not possible to separately identify prosecutions for this specific offence.

Employment Tribunals Service

Chris Williamson: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice how many (a) employment tribunal and (b) employment appeal tribunal cases in each year since 2000-01 concerned complaints about the application of (i) transfer of undertakings and (ii) protection of employment regulations in the bus industry. [149229]

Mrs Grant: Data on the number of claims made in relation to complaints about Transfer of Undertakings and Protection of Employment Regulations in the bus industry in particular are not collated centrally. This information could be provided only at a disproportionate cost by manually checking hard copy tribunal files or judgments. Data which relate to the transfer of an undertaking—failure to inform and consult generally is collected. These data are published annually and quarterly and are available on the Ministry of Justice website:

<http://www.justice.gov.uk/statistics/tribunals>

Gender Recognition

Hugh Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice how many people have obtained (a) a full and (b) an interim gender recognition certificate since the coming into force of the Gender Recognition Act 2004; how many people in category (b) subsequently dissolved their marriage in order to obtain a full gender recognition certificate; and of those, how many subsequently (i) formed a civil partnership with the person to whom they were formerly married and (ii) are known through tax or benefit records still to have co-habited with the person to whom they were formerly married. [149890]

Mrs Grant: Since the Gender Recognition Act 2004 was introduced on 4 April 2005 the number of interim and full gender recognition certificates issued by the Gender Recognition Panel up to 30 September 2012 is as follows:

Full certificates: 3,230

Interim certificates: 151.

Figures are published quarterly in the Gender Recognition Bulletin on the Ministry of Justice website at the following link:

<http://www.justice.gov.uk/statistics/tribunals/gender-recognition-certificate-statistics>

The next update showing figures up to end of December 2012 will be published on 4 April 2013 on the same site.

We do not formally capture data on the number of people who have ended their marriage due to the issue of a Gender Recognition Certificate and reliable estimates are not currently available.

There is no information available on the number of people who were previously married and either subsequently entered into a civil partnership or continue to cohabit with their former spouse.

Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012

Chris Skidmore: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice if he will estimate what the (a) total and (b) average annual savings of the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012 has been. [148947]

Jeremy Wright: Estimates of savings, expected from the reforms contained in the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012, can be found in the Impact Assessments carried out at Royal Assent. These Impact Assessments have been published on the Ministry of Justice website at:

www.justice.gov.uk/legislation/bills-and-acts/acts/legal-aid-and-sentencing-act/laspo-background-information

Offenders: Fines

Robert Flello: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice in what proportion of sentences involving fines a deduction from benefits order was issued in (a) 2009-10, (b) 2010-11 and (c) 2011-12. [148437]

Mrs Grant: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to Lord Touhig by my noble Friend, Lord McNally on 12 March 2013, *Official Report, House of Lords*, column WA52.

Her Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service (HMCTS) systems do not identify how many fines have been or are being paid by deduction from benefits orders.

HMCTS is only able to identify how many applications for deductions from benefits orders are made to the Department of Work and Pensions each year, but this does not indicate how many of these applications were successful or how many fines this relates to. Fines can only be deducted from certain benefits and only if there are not already too many other third-party deductions being taken from the benefits claim, so not all applications for a deduction from benefits orders are successful. Offenders who are claiming benefits often start and stop claiming benefits a number of times, which results in the deduction from benefits order ceasing and needing to be re-applied for when the offender is claiming the relevant benefit again. This means that some fine accounts will have multiple applications for deduction from benefits and that the number of applications for deductions orders does not correlate to the number of fines being paid by this method.

HMCTS takes the issue of fine enforcement very seriously and is working to ensure that clamping down on fine defaulters is a continued priority nationwide. HMCTS is always looking at ways to improve the collection of fines. The use of the deduction from benefits order is an automatic sanction for offenders who are in default and are known to be claiming benefits.

Robert Flello: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice in what proportion of sentences involving fines the offender was living in relative income poverty in (a) 2009-10, (b) 2010-11 and (c) 2011-12. [148438]

Mrs Grant: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to Lord Touhig by my noble Friend, Lord McNally on 12 March 2013, *Official Report, House of Lords*, column WA52:

Her Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service (HMCTS) does not know how many offenders are living in income poverty at the time of sentence.

The information HMCTS holds on offenders is provided by the prosecuting authorities, by the offenders themselves, and by using the tracing tools HMCTS has at its disposal, such as the Experian credit reference agency and the Department for Work and Pensions customer information system. The means form that defendants are instructed to complete asks them to provide details of their income and expenditure so that the court is aware of their financial circumstances at the time of sentence and can therefore set an appropriate sentence. Many defendants, however, do not provide financial means information to the court, so HMCTS does not know what level of financial income they have.

HMCTS takes the issue of fine enforcement very seriously and is working to ensure that clamping down on fine defaulters is a continued priority nationwide.

Robert Fello: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice what assessment his Department has made of the effect of court imposed fines on the dependent children of offenders in (a) 2009-10, (b) 2010-11 and (c) 2011-12. [148440]

Mrs Grant: Her Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service (HMCTS) does not have any way of identifying offenders who have dependant children.

The information HMCTS holds on offenders is provided by the prosecuting authorities, the offenders themselves and by using the tracing tools HMCTS has at its disposal such as the Experian credit reference agency and the Department for Work and Pensions customer information system. The means form which defendants are asked to complete asks them to provide details of how many dependant children they have and how much they have to pay out in child maintenance but as many defendants do not provide financial means information to the court HMCTS does not know what commitments they have regarding children.

HMCTS takes the issue of fine enforcement very seriously and is working to ensure that clamping down on fine defaulters is a continued priority nationwide. HMCTS are always looking at ways to improve the collection of fines. As a part of the future strategy HMCTS will be considering numerous ways in which performance can be improved, this could include offender profiling.

Parole

Sadiq Khan: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice (1) how many offenders released on licence under the supervision of the Probation Service were identified as (a) low risk, (b) medium risk or (c) high risk between 1997 and 2012; [149289]

(2) how many offenders were released on licence under the supervision of the Probation Service in each year between 1997 and 2012. [149290]

Jeremy Wright: Table 1 as follows shows the number of prisoners released on licence from determinate sentences in each year since 1999. Data for 1997 and 1998 are not readily accessible in this format and the latest full year for which we have published information is 2011.

Information held centrally on prison discharges does not currently include an assessment of risk.

These figures have been drawn from administrative IT systems which, as with any large scale recording system, are subject to possible errors with data entry and processing.

Table 1: Prisoners discharged on licence from determinate sentences¹, England and Wales

	Total
1999	44,100
2000	43,200
2001	41,400
2002	42,800
2003	42,100
2004	41,800

Table 1: Prisoners discharged on licence from determinate sentences¹, England and Wales

	Total
2005	41,800
2006	40,300
2007	42,600
2008	45,500
2009	44,700
2010	49,312
2011	47,530

¹ Includes discharges from determinate sentences of 12 months or more, and all young offenders discharged from determinate sentences of less than 12 months.

² Figures from 2001 to 2009 have been rounded to the nearest 100.

Prisoners: Criminal Records

Robert Fello: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice (1) what measures are in place to ensure prisoners do not access or retain inappropriate images of their victims from case files in the (a) secure adult male estate, (b) secure adult female estate and (c) secure youth estate; [148783]

(2) what the rules are governing access to case files for people convicted where (a) there is an ongoing appeal and (b) all avenues of appeal have been exhausted; [148784]

(3) what plans his Department has to reform prisoners' access to their case files including indecent or offensive images of their victims. [148785]

Jeremy Wright: The Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice, my right hon. Friend the Member for Epsom and Ewell (Chris Grayling), is extremely concerned about prisoners possessing materials such as photos of victims of crime scenes as part of their legal papers. He has decided that restrictions must be placed on this material urgently and has instructed the Prison Service to take this forward.

The Crown Prosecution Service must disclose all material to prisoners' defence teams. In order to help them prepare their defence or appeal, prisoners may keep in their possession legal material provided to them by the CPS or by their lawyer. This is an important aspect of ensuring that prisoners are able to properly prepare for their defence or their appeal. This material is protected under the principle of legal professional privilege (LPP) which is defined in the Freedom of Information Act as

"a rule of law that protects the confidentiality of communications made between a lawyer and his or her client".

The privilege belongs to the client and may be waived only by the client.

This material is subject to confidentially privileged handling arrangements under rule 39 of the prison rules and cannot be stopped, opened or read by prison staff unless the governor has reasonable cause to believe that its contents could endanger prison security, the safety of others or is otherwise criminal in nature. The same privilege is extended to cover material which is handed over during the course of a legal visit and which is covered under rule 38 of the prison rules.

Where legally privileged material is discovered that would be inappropriate for prisoners to keep in their possession, or there is evidence that prisoners are misusing such material, Governors may remove and secure it

while making alternative arrangements to allow the prisoner to view the material in private so as not to jeopardise their legal right to a fair trial.

The National Offender Management Service policy documents relating to this can be found in Prison Service Instruction (PSI) 49/2011 (Prisoner Communications Services) and PSI 16/2011 (Providing Visits and Services to Visitors), both of which are available in the House of Commons Library.

Prisoners: Mental Illness

Robert Fello: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice what discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Health about the transfer of prisoners to hospital under the Mental Health Act 1983, and steps to speed up admissions to and discharges from secure hospitals. [148385]

Jeremy Wright: Officials from both Departments have discussed and agreed the contents of a Department of Health Best Practice Guide for prison transfers alongside Prison Service Instructions. These have recently been revised to reflect the new NHS structures and will be published shortly.

Prisons: Gyms

Priti Patel: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice what the turn over cost was of procuring gymnasium equipment in prisons in each of the last five years.

[147924]

Jeremy Wright: The net cost of procuring gymnasium equipment within the HM Prison Service in each of the last five years is as follows:

	£
2008-09	2,454,923
2009-10	1,854,022
2010-11	1,864,129
2011-12	1,437,929
2012-13	¹ 682,388

¹ Quarters 1 and 2.

Expenditure within this spend area has significantly reduced as a direct result of budget reduction and the move towards purchasing remanufactured gymnasium equipment across the estate to reduce cost.

Physical exercise continues to play an important part in a prison regime by providing purposeful activity and engagement with prisoners. In addition, PE can make a major contribution to the physical, mental and social well being of prisoners.

Prisons: Television

Priti Patel: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice which prisons award in-cell television privileges for inmates; and what the cost to the public purse has been of such privileges in each of the last five years. [147832]

Jeremy Wright: I want to ensure that the public have confidence in the prison system. It is crucial that they are assured that any privileges earned in prison are gained through hard work and appropriate behaviour. I am therefore looking closely at the policy around the incentives scheme for prisoners as I want to be clear that these incentives and privileges, including access to in cell television, are pitched at the right level and that they have credibility with the public. The outcome of the review will be announced in due course.

Under the current system, access to in cell television is available as a key earnable privilege under the incentives and earned privileges (IEP) scheme in all establishments across England and Wales. Prison Service Instruction 11/2011 refers, a copy of which is available in the House of Commons Library. The IEP scheme must consist of at least three tiers (basic, standard and enhanced). Access to in-cell television is restricted to prisoners who have earned standard or enhanced level, is a forfeitable privilege, and prisoners are charged for use. The provision of in-cell television is self-financing from the rental payments made by prisoners.

Probation

Priti Patel: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice (1) what proportion of offenders completed approved programmes in each probation trust area in (a) 2009-10 and (b) 2010-11; [144229]

(2) what the cost was of approved programmes in each probation trust area in each year since 2007.

[144230]

Jeremy Wright: I have interpreted the questions as relating to accredited offending behaviour programmes.

Not all offenders serving a community sentence will have a requirement to attend an accredited programme as part of the sentence made by the court. The sentencer's decision to include a programme requirement will be informed in each case by the likely positive effect that a specific programme can achieve in terms of addressing an individual's offending behaviour.

In order to monitor the extent to which offenders who commence a programme requirement go on to complete it, NOMS measures completion rates for accredited programmes. These are set out in the table at probation trust level for the years requested. These are the combined completion rates for sex offender treatment programmes, domestic violence programmes and other offending behaviour programmes.

The direct cost to NOMS of accredited programmes run in 2011-12 is shown in the table. This is the first year for which sufficiently robust data are available. These costs reflect differing types and volumes of programmes for each Trust.

The figures used in the answer have been drawn from administrative IT systems, which, as with any large-scale recording system, are subject to possible errors with data entry and processing.

Table 1: Accredited programme completion rates by probation trust 2009-10 and 2010-11

Probation trust	2009-10		2010-11	
	Commenced	Completed	Commenced	Completed
Avon and Somerset	507	369	73	457
				336
				74

Table 1: Accredited programme completion rates by probation trust 2009-10 and 2010-11

Probation trust	2009-10			2010-11		
	Commenced	Completed	Percentage	Commenced	Completed	Percentage
Bedfordshire	272	192	71	255	181	71
Cambridgeshire	287	210	73	262	197	75
Cheshire	806	520	65	590	385	65
Cumbria	238	161	68	240	155	65
Derbyshire	461	335	73	465	335	72
Devon and Cornwall	718	493	69	517	344	67
Dorset	297	213	72	273	189	69
Durham Tees Valley	673	500	74	660	488	74
Essex	950	641	67	819	585	71
Gloucestershire	242	174	72	226	172	76
Greater Manchester	3,017	1,889	63	1,491	871	58
Hampshire	779	606	78	685	528	77
Hertfordshire	481	346	72	452	326	72
Humberside	349	268	77	412	291	71
Kent	577	420	73	423	314	74
Lancashire	795	564	71	767	536	70
Leicestershire	517	399	77	546	390	71
Lincolnshire	323	237	73	271	193	71
London	3,011	2,233	74	2,881	2,106	73
Merseyside	1,078	647	60	1,001	697	70
Norfolk and Suffolk	743	554	75	653	516	79
North Yorkshire	424	272	64	346	239	69
Northamptonshire	316	191	60	295	189	64
Northumbria	796	557	70	1,001	711	71
Nottinghamshire	648	465	72	593	419	71
South Yorkshire	935	616	66	803	492	61
Staffordshire and West Midlands	2,543	1,674	66	2,194	1,461	67
Surrey and Sussex	778	573	74	713	542	76
Thames Valley	742	554	75	738	531	72
Wales	1,844	1,147	62	1,555	968	62
Warwickshire	198	132	67	183	121	66
West Mercia	509	335	66	502	346	69
West Yorkshire	1,301	821	63	1,012	680	67
Wiltshire	232	159	69	185	144	78
England and Wales total	28,387	19,467	69	24,466	16,978	69

Table 2: Direct costs to NOMS of probation accredited programmes 2011-12

Probation trust	Direct cost (£ million)
Avon and Somerset	1.1
Bedfordshire	0.4
Cambridgeshire and Peterborough	0.8
Cheshire	0.8
Cumbria	0.4
Derbyshire	0.9
Devon and Cornwall	1.0
Dorset	0.5
Durham Tees Valley	0.8
Essex	1.5
Gloucestershire	0.5
Greater Manchester	2.7
Hampshire	1.4
Hertfordshire	0.8
Humberside	0.7
Kent	0.7
Lancashire	1.6
Leicestershire and Rutland	0.7
Lincolnshire	0.5
London	4.5
Merseyside	1.7
Norfolk and Suffolk	1.6
Northamptonshire	0.5
Northumbria	1.6

Table 2: Direct costs to NOMS of probation accredited programmes 2011-12

Probation trust	Direct cost (£ million)
Nottinghamshire	1.0
South Yorkshire	1.1
Staffordshire and West Midlands	3.6
Surrey and Sussex	0.9
Thames Valley	1.0
Wales	3.4
Warwickshire	0.5
West Mercia	1.8
West Yorkshire	1.9
Wiltshire	0.5
York and North Yorkshire	0.6

Sadiq Khan: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice with reference to Transforming Rehabilitation, whether probation trusts will be excluded from bidding to run services under his plans for the Probation Service.

[149341]

Jeremy Wright: We remain committed to facilitating an open competition which allows a range of bidders to take part in the new probation services market.

As set out in our consultation document 'Transforming Rehabilitation—a revolution in the way we manage offenders', it remains open for probation staff to put

together proposals for potential mutuals and other alternative delivery vehicles to bid to deliver probation services as part of future competitions.

These employee-led entities or partnerships will only be formally set up following the conclusion of the competition, if they have won a bid or are part of a winning bid. This is to guarantee continuity of service in probation during the transition to new arrangements, and also to ensure that those public sector probation professionals who do come together to enter the bidding process are not disadvantaged if they are not successful.

Under our proposals we will only contract with entities capable of bearing the financial and operational risks associated with Payment by Results and delivering offender services in the community. Therefore, public sector entities will not be able to bid, as they will not be able to carry the financial risk. Instead staff groups within trusts can work on proposals for alternative delivery vehicles and mutuals. The Cabinet Office's Mutual Support Programme is available to support probation staff to explore their options.

The Ministry of Justice's consultation on plans for reforming the way in which offenders are rehabilitated in the community closed on 22 February. We will respond to the consultation and bring forward detailed plans in due course.

Recruitment

Priti Patel: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice how many officials were recruited to (a) his Department and (b) each of its non-departmental public bodies in each of the last five years. [147973]

Damian Green: The number of officials recruited into the Ministry of Justice (Ministry of Justice Headquarters, National Offender Management Service, HM Courts and Tribunals Service and Office of the Public Guardian) is shown in the following table.

Numbers of officials recruited to the Ministry of Justice (including officials transferred from other Government Departments and non-departmental public bodies)

<i>Ministry of Justice (Department and Agencies)</i>	
2007-08	8,095
2008-09	8,254
2009-10	4,136
2010-11	3,769
2011-12	2,085

This information is not centrally held for non-departmental public bodies. This information has been requested from the Department's non-departmental public bodies and when available will be placed in the House of Commons Library.

Reoffenders

Sadiq Khan: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice (1) what further offences were committed by offenders released on licence between 1997 and 2012 and classed as low risk during their licence period; [149288]

(2) what further offences were committed by offenders released on licence between 1997 and 2012 and classed as medium risk during their licence period. [149291]

Jeremy Wright: The Ministry of Justice produces proven reoffending data for adult offenders released from prison on licence, by probation trust. However, these statistics only count offences committed over a one year follow-up period and cannot be broken down further by low and medium risk offenders.

Termination of Employment

Priti Patel: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice how many officials in (a) his Department and (b) each of its non-departmental public bodies have left that body due to (i) resignation, (ii) retirement, (iii) redundancy, (iv) transferral to another public sector post and (v) another reason in each of the last five years. [147954]

Damian Green: The number of officials who have left the Ministry of Justice (Ministry of Justice Headquarters, National Offender Management Service, HM Courts and Tribunals Service and the Office of the Public Guardian) along with their reason for leaving, is in the following table.

'Other' reasons for officials leaving include the conclusion of fixed term contracts, dismissals, voluntary exits and transfers to non-public sector organisations.

This information is not centrally held for non-departmental public bodies. This information has been requested from the Department's non-departmental public bodies and when available will be placed in the House of Commons Library.

Reason	<i>Ministry of Justice (Department and Agencies)</i>				
	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12
(i) Resignation	3,765	3,424	2,192	1,987	1,838
(ii) Retirement	1,356	1,412	1,955	2,217	1,297
(iii) Redundancy	3	32	1	1	6
(iv) Transfer to other Government Departments	313	265	280	151	265
(v) Other	2,004	2,332	1,742	1,444	3,244
Total	7,441	7,465	6,170	5,800	6,650

Victim Support Schemes

Robert Flello: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice what meetings (a) he has and (b) Ministers in his Department have had with other organisations on the new Victims Code since September 2012. [148431]

Mrs Grant: I have held two meetings with external organisations about the Victims' Code since September 2012: a roundtable meeting on 30 January 2013 with victims groups and stakeholders to canvass views on the revised code, and a roundtable meeting on 13 February 2013 with criminal justice agencies and advocacy organisations to consider how the system supports victims of sexual violence, and what role the Victims' Code can play in that support.

As Victims Minister I meet regularly with victims groups and other stakeholders. I have discussed the Victims' Code with these groups, alongside a range of other issues, since September 2012. I will be launching a public consultation on a revised Victims' Code shortly and I intend to engage with stakeholders further during the consultation period.

Young Offenders

Mr Lammy: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice if he will make it his policy that probation trusts extend youth offending support to 18 to 20-year-old offenders. [148539]

Jeremy Wright: Youth Offending Teams are tailored specifically to meet the needs of younger offenders.

We are committed to opening up rehabilitative services to a range of new providers, who will be paid by results to help offenders turn their lives around. Under these proposals, 18 to 20-year-old offenders will have a package of rehabilitation support in the community which addresses their particular needs as they transition to adulthood.

As a part of this we expect to see more use of innovative approaches, such as mentoring, and for offenders to receive targeted support to tackle the root causes of offending.

The Ministry of Justice's consultation on plans for reforming the way in which offenders are rehabilitated in the community closed on 22 February. We will respond to the consultation and bring forward detailed plans in due course.

Young Offenders: Sentencing

Kate Green: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice (1) how many children of each ethnicity were given a prison sentence for breach of a community sentence in (a) 2009, (b) 2010 and (c) 2011; [148459]

(2) how many children of each age, were given a prison sentence for breach of a community sentence in (a) 2009, (b) 2010 and (c) 2011. [148460]

Jeremy Wright: Tables 1 and 2 show the number of episodes of custody started, broken down by ethnicity and age, for young people aged under 18 years and imposed for a breach of a community sentence in (a) 2009, (b) 2010 and (c) 2011.

The Youth Justice Board does not count the number of individual young people starting custody, but does count the number of individual episodes. An episode refers to a period a young person has spent in custody and it is possible that one young person can start more than one custodial episode at different points of each year for different offences or for a change in the legal basis for detention, such as when a young person previously remanded is sentenced to custody. The data include those sentenced to custody for breaching the community part of a detention and training order and for breach of an antisocial behaviour order.

Table 1: Number of episodes of custody started for young people under 18 years and imposed for a breach of community sentence, by ethnicity and year

Ethnicity	2009	2010	2011
Asian	25	33	36
Black	58	54	64
Mixed	62	36	39
Other	0	0	0
White	654	663	567
Not Known	29	24	47
Total	828	810	753

Source:
Youth Justice Board's Secure Accommodation Clearing House System (SACHS).

Table 2: Number of episodes of custody started for young people under 18 years and imposed for a breach of community sentence by age and year

Age	2009	2010	2011
10	0	0	0
11	0	0	0
12	5	3	4
13	20	10	8
14	61	66	60
15	161	141	116
16	211	238	233
17	370	352	332
Total	828	810	753

Source:
Youth Justice Board's Secure Accommodation Clearing House System (SACHS).

TRANSPORT

Driving: Eyesight

Sir Bob Russell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what estimate he has made of the number of road traffic accidents each year which involve drivers whose eyesight is below the minimum distance eyesight requirement to read a vehicle number plate. [149878]

Stephen Hammond: The following table gives the number of accidents for which the police officer recorded "uncorrected, defective eyesight" as a contributory factor in each of the last five years.

	Number of accidents
2007	207
2008	225
2009	191
2010	234
2011	250

Freight

Dr Offord: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what research his Department has conducted on the effectiveness of current technology to jam Global System for Mobile Communications triggers in freight vehicles; [149860]

(2) what assessment his Department has made of the availability of technology for the detection of Global System for Mobile Communications triggers in freight containers. [149861]

Stephen Hammond: The Department has not conducted any assessment or research that meets these descriptions.

High Speed 2 Railway Line

Mrs Gillan: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) whether he plans to meet or take advice from High Speed 2 Action Alliance members before reissuing the compensation consultation on High Speed 2; [149652]

(2) how many (a) officials of his Department and (b) employees of High Speed 2 Limited at each grade are working on the re-run of the consultation on compensation for people adversely affected by High Speed 2. [149653]

Mr Simon Burns: We are still considering the implications of the recent judgment on our proposals for discretionary compensation.

Litter

Andrew Gwynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether the litter code of practice specifies response times for each grade of litter. [149376]

Stephen Hammond: The code of practice on litter and refuse does not give specific response times by grade of litter other than where acceptable standards have not been met. Part 1, section 9 sets down that,

“As a last resort, if acceptable standards of litter and refuse are not met, response times have been set for each of the four categories by which land must be returned to an acceptable standard.”

The times that have been set are:

High intensity of use	Medium intensity of use	Low intensity of use	Special circumstances
Half a day This means by 6 pm if reported before 1 pm or by 1 pm the next duty day if reported between 1 pm and 6 pm on the previous day	One day This means by 6 pm the following evening	14 days	28 days or as soon as reasonably practicable

Andrew Gwynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether the response times set for each category of land in the litter code are only to be applied as a last resort if acceptable standards are not met. [149377]

Stephen Hammond: The response times set for each category of land in the code of practice on litter and refuse are to be used as a last resort if acceptable standards are not met. These standards and response times are applied under the Highways Agency's maintenance contracts.

Railways: Concessions

Thomas Docherty: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many senior citizen railcards have been issued in each of the last five years for which figures are available. [149932]

Norman Baker: The Department does not hold this information, as the sale of senior railcards is a matter for the train operators. However, the Association of Train Operating Companies recently advised that over one million senior railcards were sold in 2012.

Shrewsbury-Crewe Railway Line

Paul Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what the reasons are for the time taken to implement the Crewe to Shrewsbury modular signalling scheme; and when he now expects the scheme to be completed. [149985]

Mr Simon Burns: As explained in my previous answers of 14 March 2013, *Official Report*, columns 285-86W, this scheme is an operational matter for Network Rail and any questions should be directed to the chief executive at the following address:

Network Rail
Kings Place
90 York Way
London
N1 9AG.

Sunderland Port

Grahame M. Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how much inter-modal freight was handled at the Port of Sunderland in each of the last five years; what his most recent estimate was of inter-modal freight capacity at the port; and when that estimate was made. [149502]

Stephen Hammond: The Department does not hold information on the movement of freight containers or vehicles using multiple modes of transportation.

The Port of Sunderland is a municipal port. Further information on their facilities can be found at:

<http://www.portofsunderland.org.uk/>

Transport: North West

John Pugh: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport pursuant to the answer of 27 February 2013, *Official Report*, column 492W, on regional and local transport, which projects in the north west have received funding from his Department; and how much each such project has received. [149450]

Norman Baker: Government block grant funding to local authorities for integrated transport and highways maintenance is not ring fenced, and there is no requirement on local authorities to report on the individual projects these grants are used for. Therefore a complete picture is not available.

Details of funding provided for specific local authority major schemes to local authorities in the north west can be provided, as follows:

Of the programme of local authority major schemes approved by this Government, two schemes have been fully approved and are now receiving funding:

Scheme	£ million	
	Total cost	DFT funding
Rochdale Interchange	11.5	7.0
Manchester Cross City Bus	43.2	2.5

Other schemes in the north west which were already under construction at the last election, and on which this Government has continued to provide funding, are as follows:

Scheme	£ million	
	Total cost	DFT funding
A34 Alderley Edge Bypass	61.9	48.2
Hall Lane (Liverpool)	16.8	15.3
GM Urban Traffic Control	13.5	13.5
Blackpool Tram Upgrade	100.3	66.9

Scheme	Total cost	£ million DFT funding
GM Highway Retaining Walls	45.3	40.5
Edge Lane (Liverpool)	20.0	18.8
Metrolink Extensions	744.0	396.4

The local authorities major schemes budget has also contributed some funding to the Highways Agency maintenance scheme at Bidston Moss Viaduct, Wirral.

Funding being provided to north west local authorities for Local Sustainable Transport Fund projects over the period 2011 to 2015 is as follows:

Local authority	LSTF project	Funding (£ million)
Blackburn with Darwen	BwD CONNECT Project	1.452
Cheshire East	Growing Smarter Travel Choices in Crewe	3.509
Cheshire West & Chester	Connect to Jobs	4.578
Cumbria	Lake District Sustainable Visitor Transport Beacon Area	4.890
Lancashire	Targeting Key Growth Corridors	5.000
Merseyside ITA	Supporting Sustainable Access to Opportunity in Merseyside	24.867
Sefton	Sefton & West Lancashire Visitor Economy Project	1.550

CABINET OFFICE

Charities

Jim Dobbin: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office what steps the Government is taking to strengthen the charitable sector. [149224]

Mr Hurd: Although we recognise that these are tough times for the charitable sector, the Government is taking a range of steps to strengthen the sector. These include the £600 million Big Society Capital and the £20 million Investment and Contract Readiness Fund. We are also helping, ambitious voluntary and community organisations to access the capital they need to expand their services. Our £10 million Innovation in Giving Fund provides funding to support ideas that have the potential to create a step change in giving and the £20 million Social Action Fund supports the development of proven models of social action. Following Lord Hodgson's report Unshackling Good Neighbours we are addressing the burden of regulation that hampers charities and the recently announced Charitable Incorporated Organisation will introduce a new simple legal structure designed solely for charities.

Electronic Government

Jon Trickett: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the implementation of the Government Digital Service (GDS); what discussions he has had with external organisations and individuals on the GDS in the last 12 months; and what steps he has taken to monitor the efficiency and effectiveness of the GDS. [149256]

Mr Hurd: Today 82% of adults in the UK are online and more and more of us are going online for shopping, banking, information and entertainment. But at the time of the last general election, government use of digital public services lagged far behind that of the private sector, despite the vast amounts of money poured into government technology.

This Government was determined to do better and set up the Government Digital Service in 2011, with the aim of transforming government services so they are digital by default and focused on user need,

In April 2012, we set up a Digital Advisory Board to support government deliver its commitment to provide high-quality public services online by default. Its role is to work with the Government Digital Service (GDS) and challenge Government to deliver better services for users.

GDS has also published the Government's Digital Strategy and Digital Efficiency Report. The strategy sets out how government will redesign its digital services to make them straightforward and convenient so that all those who can use them prefer to do so. During the financial year 2012-13 GDS has saved at least £36 million by closing Directgov and BusinessLink and bringing Government services and information together under a single domain GOV.UK. Further estimated annual savings of at least £50 million are expected from the migration of departmental websites to GOV.UK. And in the first six months of this fiscal year GDS has enabled cross Government savings of at least £400 million by helping Government become a commissioner of IT instead of a buyer of IT. All of these changes could have been made by the last Administration.

In line with the practice of previous Administrations, details of internal discussions are not normally disclosed. External meetings by ministers and senior officials are disclosed here:

<http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/resource-library/ministerial-gifts-hospitality-travel-and-meetings-external-organisations>

Engineering

Dan Jarvis: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office how many people in (a) Barnsley Central constituency, (b) South Yorkshire and (c) England were employed in the industrial engineering sector in the latest period for which figures are available. [149397]

Mr Hurd: The information requested falls within the responsibility of the UK Statistics Authority. I have asked the authority to reply.

Letter from Glen Watson, dated March 2013:

As Director General for the Office for National Statistics, I have been asked to reply to your recent Parliamentary Question asking how many people in (a) Barnsley Central constituency, (b) South Yorkshire and (c) England are employed in the industrial engineering sector in the latest period for which figures are available. (149397)

Annual employment statistics are available from the Business Register and Employment Survey (BRES). Table 1 contains the latest figures available, which show the number in employment in 2011 for industries considered to be in the industrial engineering sector.

National and local area estimates for many labour market statistics, including employment, unemployment and claimant count are available on the NOMIS website at:

<http://www.nomisweb.co.uk>

Table 1: Employment in Barnsley Central constituency, South Yorkshire and England in the industrial engineering sector in 2011

Industry (SIC 2007)	Barnsley Central constituency	South Yorkshire	England
Total	1,800	31,400	940,500

Notes:

1. South Yorkshire refers to the former metropolitan county of South Yorkshire.
2. The following industries have been considered to be part of the industrial engineering sector: Manufacture of other non-metallic mineral products; Manufacture of basic metals; Manufacture of fabricated metal products, except machinery and equipment; Manufacture of electrical equipment; Manufacture of machinery and equipment n.e.c.; Manufacture of motor vehicles, trailers and semi-trailers; Manufacture of other transport equipment; Repair and installation of machinery and equipment.

Estate Agents

Dan Jarvis: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office how many people in (a) Barnsley Central constituency, (b) South Yorkshire and (c) England were employed in the real estate sector in the most recent period for which figures are available. [149396]

Mr Hurd: The information requested falls within the responsibility of the UK Statistics Authority. I have asked the authority to reply.

Letter from Glen Watson, dated March 2013:

As Director General for the Office for National Statistics, I have been asked to reply to your recent Parliamentary Question asking how many people in (a) Barnsley Central constituency, (b) South Yorkshire and (c) England are employed in the real estate sector in the most recent period for which figures are available. (149396)

Annual employment statistics are available from the Business Register and Employment Survey (BRES). Table 1 following contains the latest figures available, which show the number in employment in 2011 for the real estate sector.

National and local area estimates for many labour market statistics, including employment, unemployment and claimant count are available on the NOMIS website at:

<http://www.nomisweb.co.uk>

Table 1: Employment in Barnsley Central constituency, South Yorkshire and England for real estate activities in 2011

Industry (SIC 2007)	Barnsley Central constituency	South Yorkshire	England
L: Real estate activities	700	7,300	408,100

Note:

South Yorkshire refers to the former metropolitan county of South Yorkshire.

Government Departments: Location

Diana Johnson: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office pursuant to the answer of 13 March 2013, *Official Report*, column 253W, on Government departments: locations, which vanity properties were referred to in the original answer. [149659]

Miss Chloe Smith: This Government has exited several costly leases within Central London which were entered into under the previous Government. In total this Government has saved the taxpayer a staggering £1 billion since the General Election by selling, exiting and getting out of unnecessary properties, leases and land. It would have been entirely possible for this to have happened under the previous Government.

This Government does not believe that taxpayers should foot the bill for unnecessary properties. That's why in February 2013 the Department for International Development exited its leasehold address at 1 Palace Street. Though the building was undeniably impressive,

the lease was expensive and unnecessary given the under-occupation of various properties in the area which the Government owns outright. Exiting the lease has saved the taxpayer £62.5 million.

Diana Johnson: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office pursuant to the answer of 13 March 2013, *Official Report*, column 253W, on Government departments: locations, whether he has made an assessment of the potential benefits in (a) cost savings, (b) economic growth or (c) regeneration of moving staff of Government departments out of London to the regions. [149660]

Miss Chloe Smith: There have been numerous studies on the benefits of relocation, both by the previous Conservative Government and the Government of which the hon. Lady was a Member. We recognise that the number of civil servants in Central London is higher than it needs to be. Relocation of staff out of expensive London offices to other regions continues to be high on the agenda, as an option to deliver the savings needed. However, the final location of posts in a Department is decided by its business and operational requirements.

The Government Property Unit, in the Cabinet Office, is managing a programme of estate rationalisation across Central London in order to reduce the cost of offices and to make savings for the UK taxpayer. The Government's strategy is to consolidate its operations into freehold and PFI space where that is practical and cost-effective to do so. This has already resulted in the reduction of the Central Civil Estate in London by just over 432,900 sq m, or around 20% in the period from 1 May 2010 to 1 March 2013.

Internet

John Robertson: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office pursuant to the answer of 4 March 2013, *Official Report*, column 820W, on internet, what assessment he has made of the performance on his Department's work with (a) Go-ON:UK and (b) the eAccessibility Forum. [149225]

Mr Hurd: The focus of the Government Digital Strategy is in making services digital by default. The Government Digital Service (GDS) continues to work closely with Go ON UK and with the eAccessibility Forum to ensure that appropriate assisted digital support is in place for people who are not online or who have limited digital skills. The Department is satisfied with the work undertaken to date.

Job Creation: Private Sector

Mr Russell Brown: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office how many and what proportion of jobs created in the private sector since May 2010 are (a) located in each area of the UK and (b) in each industrial sector; and how many are (i) in excess of 35 hours per week, (ii) between 20 and 35 hours per week, (iii) between 10 and 20 hours per week, (iv) up to 10 hours a week and (v) have no contracted hours. [148969]

Mr Hurd [holding answer 19 March 2013]: The information requested falls within the responsibility of the UK Statistics Authority. I have asked the authority to reply.

Letter from Glen Watson:

As Director General for the Office for National Statistics, I have been asked how many and what proportion of jobs created in the private sector since May 2010 are (a) located in each area of the UK and (b) in each industrial sector; and how many are in (i) in excess of 35 hours per week, (ii) between 20 and 35 hours per week, (iii) between 10 and 20 hours per week, (iv) up to 10 hours a week and (v) have no contracted hours (148969).

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) compiles labour market statistics for local areas from the Annual Population Survey (APS), following International Labour Organisation (ILO) definitions. Estimates of the number of zero hour contracts are not available from this source.

Individuals in the APS are classified to the public or private sector according to their responses to the survey. In the APS the distinction between public and private sector is based on respondents' views about the organisation for which they work. The private sector estimates provided do not correspond to official estimates of the split between public and private sector employment which are based on a National Accounts' definition and are not available for areas smaller than regions.

Estimates of the number of jobs created in the private sector are not available from the APS. As an alternative we have provided the net change in the number of people employed in the private sector, according to responses to the APS, between the 12 month period ending June 2010, the period closest to May 2010, and the 12 month period ending September 2012, the latest available period. Along with the number of people employed in the two periods.

Since the estimates are net changes in the number of people employed in the private sector, which are a mixture of increases and decreases, a measurement of a proportion of the total net change is not appropriate.

As with any sample survey, estimates from the APS are subject to a margin of uncertainty.

National and local area estimates for many labour market statistics, including employment, unemployment and claimant count are available on the NOMIS website at:

<http://www.nomisweb.co.uk>

A copy of the table will be placed in the Library of the House.

Mr Russell Brown: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office how many and what proportion of jobs created in the private sector since May 2010 are (a) agency jobs and (b) paid at the minimum wage. [148970]

Mr Hurd [holding answer 19 March 2013]: The information requested falls within the responsibility of the UK Statistics Authority. I have asked the authority to reply.

Letter from Glen Watson, dated March 2013:

As Director General for the Office for National Statistics, I have been asked to reply to your Parliamentary Question asking how many and what proportion of jobs created in the private sector since May 2010 are (a) agency jobs and (b) paid at the minimum wage. (148970)

Information regarding jobs created is not available. As an alternative, estimates of the number of people in employment in the private sector are available from the Labour Force Survey (LFS). This includes an estimate of the number of temporary employees who report that they work for an employment agency.

Sufficiently reliable estimates of the number of people in the private sector who are paid at the level of the minimum wage are not available from the LFS or any other source of official labour market statistics.

The table provided contains the available private sector employment statistics for the three-month period January to March 2010 onwards. In the LFS the distinction between public and private sector is based on respondents' views about the organisation for which they work. The estimates do not correspond directly to the

official statistics for private sector employment published in the monthly Labour Market Statistical Bulletin. Those statistics, which are derived partly from employers and are based on National Accounts definitions, do not provide for an estimate of agency workers.

In the table, the change over the last two years is shown along with the change between April to June 2010 and April to June 2012. The estimates are not seasonally adjusted so changes between individual quarters needs to be interpreted carefully.

As with any sample survey, estimates from the LFS are subject to a margin of uncertainty. These are indicated in the table.

<i>Private sector employment, quarterly, 2010 to 2012, United Kingdom</i>		
	<i>(thousands) not seasonally adjusted</i>	
	<i>Private Sector Employment¹</i>	
	<i>Total</i>	<i>Temporary employees² working for an employment agency</i>
<i>2010</i>		
January to March	21,341	168
April to June	21,440	200
July to September	21,828	208
October to December	21,781	214
<i>2011</i>		
January to March	21,688	205
April to June	21,870	200
July to September	22,068	204
October to December	22,132	213
<i>2012</i>		
January to March	22,077	189
April to June	22,394	206
July to September	22,608	210
October to December	22,623	233
Change April to June 2010 to April to June 2012	954	7
Change October to December 2010 to October to December 2012	842	19

¹ Individuals in the LFS are classified to the public or private sector according to their responses regarding the organisation for which they work.

² All those who report that their job was not permanent in some way.

Guide to Quality:

The Coefficient of Variation (CV) indicates the quality of an estimate, the smaller the CV value the higher the quality. The true value is likely to lie within +/- twice the CV—for example, for an estimate of 200 with a CV of 5% we would expect the population total to be within the range 180-220.

Key Coefficient of Variation (CV) (%)

* 0 ≤ CV < 5

** 5 ≤ CV < 10

*** 10 ≤ CV < 20

**** CV ≥ 20

Source:

Labour Force Survey

Manufacturing Industries

Dan Jarvis: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office how many people in (a) Barnsley Central constituency, (b) South Yorkshire and (c) England are employed in the (i) technology, hardware and equipment and (ii) industrial transportation sectors. [149940]

Mr Hurd: The information requested falls within the responsibility of the UK Statistics Authority. I have asked the authority to reply.

Letter from Glen Watson, dated March 2013:

As Director General for the Office for National Statistics, I have been asked to reply to your recent Parliamentary Question asking the Minister for the Cabinet Office how many people in (a) Barnsley Central constituency, (b) South Yorkshire and (c) England are employed in the (i) technology, hardware and equipment and (ii) industrial transportation sectors. [149940]

Annual employment statistics are available from the Business Register and Employment Survey (BRES). Table 1 as follows contains the latest figures, available, which show the number in employment in 2011 for industries considered to be in the technology, hardware and equipment sector. Table 2 as follows shows the number in employment in 2011 for industries considered to be in the industrial transportation sector.

National and local area estimates for many labour market statistics, including employment, unemployment and claimant count are available on the NOMIS website at

<http://www.nomisweb.co.uk>

Table 1: Employment in Barnsley Central constituency, South Yorkshire and England for the technology, hardware and equipment sector in 2011

Industry	Barnsley Central constituency	South Yorkshire	England
Technology, hardware and equipment	200	2,800	253,200

Notes:

1. South Yorkshire refers to the former metropolitan county of South Yorkshire.
2. The following industries have been considered to be part of the technology, hardware and equipment sector. Manufacture of computer, electronic and optical products; Wholesale of information and communication equipment; Retail sale of information and communication equipment in specialised stores; Repair of computers and communication equipment.

Table 2: Employment in Barnsley Central constituency, South Yorkshire and England for the industrial transportation sector in 2011

Industry	Barnsley Central constituency	South Yorkshire	England
Industrial transportation	400	5,800	214,200

Notes:

1. South Yorkshire refers to the former metropolitan county of South Yorkshire.
2. The following industries have been considered to be part of the industrial transportation sector: Freight rail transport; Freight transport by road and removal services; Transport via pipeline; Sea and coastal freight water transport; Inland freight water transport; Freight air transport and space transport.

Non-departmental Public Bodies

Mr Gregory Campbell: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office whether he plans to engage with Ministers from the devolved Administrations as part of his review of the cost-effectiveness of non-departmental public bodies for the purpose of developing a common approach to that matter. [149731]

Mr Hurd: There continues to be close cooperation with the devolved administrations in delivering the Public Bodies Reform Programme. For reforms taken forward by the Public Bodies Act, the Act clearly states when the explicit consent of the devolved legislatures is required, and when Ministers in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland should be consulted. Cabinet Office guidance also emphasises the importance of engaging with the devolved Administrations during policy development. Similarly, for the ongoing programme of triennial reviews of non-departmental public bodies, we are engaging with devolved Administrations for those bodies whose remit extends to the devolved Administrations.

Written Answers**Pay**

Priti Patel: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office how much was paid to officials in (a) his Department and (b) its non-departmental public bodies in bonuses and other payments in addition to salary in each of the last five years; how many officials received such payments; and what the monetary value was of the 20 largest payments made in each year. [148019]

Mr Maude: The following table sets out how much was paid to officials in my Department and its non-departmental public bodies in non-consolidated bonuses in each of the last five years:

	Monetary Value (£)	Number of Awards
2012-13	1,847,770	1,014
2011-12	1,730,410	831
2010-11	1,856,242	912
2009-10	2,264,417	1,091
2008-09	1,745,118	745

My answer of 18 January 2012, *Official Report*, column 878W, set out the values of the top 20 payments for previous years. In 2012-13 my Department made two payments of £15,000, 14 of £12,500 and four of £10,000.

Prostate Cancer

Clive Efford: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office how many men in each (a) parliamentary constituency and (b) local authority area in England were diagnosed with (i) prostatitis or benign prostatic hyperplasia and (ii) prostate cancer in each of the last five years. [149654]

Mr Hurd: The information requested falls within the responsibility of the UK Statistics Authority. I have asked the authority to reply.

Letter from Glen Watson:

As Director General for the Office for National Statistics, I have been asked to reply to your recent question asking how many men in each (a) parliamentary constituency and (b) local authority area in England were diagnosed with (i) prostatitis or benign prostatic hyperplasia and (ii) prostate cancer in each of the last five years. [149654]

The Office for National Statistics maintains the national cancer registry for England. Cancer registration is carried out by eight regional registries that collect information on cancers registered to residents of their areas. These cancer registrations are subsequently submitted to ONS as a standard dataset. For the purposes of the national cancer registration scheme the term "cancer" includes all malignant neoplasms (tumours that invade into surrounding tissues), which are conditions listed under site code numbers C00 to C97 of the Tenth Revision of the International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems. In addition, all in situ neoplasms (D00-D09), certain benign neoplasms (D32-D33, D35.2-D35.4) and neoplasms of uncertain or unknown behaviour (D37-D48) are registered.

Information on prostatitis and benign prostatic hyperplasia is not available. Prostatitis is a general term that refers to inflammation or infection of the prostate gland. Hyperplasia of the prostate is classified as disease of the genitourinary system and not as a neoplasm.

The latest available figures for newly diagnosed cases of cancer (incidence) are for the year 2010.

Table 1 provides the number of newly diagnosed cases of prostate cancer in men in each parliamentary constituency in England, for each of the years 2006 to 2010. Table 2 provides the number of newly diagnosed cases of prostate cancer in local authorities in England, again for each of the years 2006 to 2010.

Please note that these numbers may not be the same as the number of men diagnosed with prostate cancer, because a man may be diagnosed with more than one primary prostate cancer over time, although this is rare.

Copies of Tables 1 and 2 have been placed in the House of Commons Library.

The latest published figures on cancer incidence in England are available on the National Statistics website at:

<http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/vsob1/cancer-statistics-registrations--england--series-mb1-/index.html>

Public Sector: Mutual Societies

Tom Blenkinsop: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office if he will introduce legislative proposals to fully and permanently exempt parent bodies from having to open up to competitive tender the services they are commissioning from a spun-out public service mutual.

[149893]

Miss Chloe Smith: Public sector procurement is governed by EU directives, particularly Directive 2004/18/EC, as implemented in UK Regulations. Proposals for revisions to this directive are currently being negotiated in the EU and the Government is pursuing amendments to ensure more flexibility for employee-led organisations such as mutuals.

Social Class

Nadine Dorries: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office what change there has been in the number of people in each socio-economic group from A to E since 1 January 2009.

[149006]

Mr Hurd: The information requested falls within the responsibility of the UK Statistics Authority. I have asked the authority to reply.

Letter from Glen Watson, dated March 2013:

As Director General for the Office for National Statistics, I have been asked to reply to your Parliamentary Question asking the Minister for the Cabinet Office what change there has been in the number of people in each socio-economic group from A to E since 1 January 2009. (149006)

For official statistics in the UK, socio-economic groups are usually defined according to the National Statistics Socio-economic Classification (NS-SEC). This classification has replaced measures such as Social Class based on Occupation (formerly Registrar General's Social Class) and Socio-economic Groups. The NS-SEC, although similar in nature, is not directly comparable with these previous classifications.

The NS-SEC is based on people's occupation but has rules to provide coverage of everyone aged 16 and over. An individual's occupation is coded to a unit group within the Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) and then combined with details of their employment status: whether an employer, self-employed or employee; whether a supervisor; and the number of employees at the workplace. For people not in work but who have worked before and who have not been unemployed for more than a year, the details relating to their last job are used.

The table provided contains Labour Force Survey (LFS) based estimates for nine classes of the NS-SEC for the October to December three-month periods from 2008 to 2012. In 2010 the SOC underwent significant changes as part of a regular review and the new classification, known as SOC 2010, was introduced

into the LFS in January 2011. Consequently the estimates of the number of people in each category of the NS-SEC from 2011 onwards are not comparable with those before 2011. Therefore the changes in each category since January 2009 are not reliable indicators of the true changes.

As with any sample survey, estimates from the LFS are subject to a margin of uncertainty.

People aged 16 and over by National Statistics Socio-economic Classification October to December, 2008 to 2012: United Kingdom not seasonally adjusted

	National Statistics Socio-economic Classification (NS-SEC) ¹				Small employers and own account workers
	Higher managerial and professional		Lower managerial and professional	Intermediate occupations	
	All	Higher managerial and professional	Lower managerial and professional	Intermediate occupations	
2008	49,221	4,731	9,339	4,107	3,427
2009	49,573	4,861	9,470	4,067	3,430
2010	49,956	4,972	9,393	4,082	3,525
2011 ⁴	50,320	4,967	9,213	5,116	3,519
2012	50,686	5,109	9,696	5,004	3,579

	National Statistics Socio-economic Classification (NS-SEC) ¹					Not classified or full-time student ³
	Lower supervisory and technical		Semi-routine occupations	Routine occupations	Never worked or long-term unemployed ²	
	All	Lower supervisory and technical	Semi-routine occupations	Routine occupations	Never worked or long-term unemployed ²	
2008	3,501	5,581	4,046	2,042	12,446	
2009	3,466	5,441	3,949	2,104	12,785	
2010	3,396	5,676	3,903	2,388	12,622	
2011 ⁴	2,863	5,268	4,121	2,320	12,931	
2012	2,846	5,442	3,982	2,264	12,764	

¹ Based upon current occupation and employment situation. Previous occupation and employment status is used, where available, for economically inactive or persons unemployed for less than a year.

² Those who have never worked plus those who have worked in the past but have been unemployed for a year or more.

³ Includes people who did not state their occupation, those retired over the age of 74, and all full-time students (including full-time students in paid employment).

⁴ In 2011 the occupation classification used in the Labour Force Survey changed from SOC 2000 to SOC 2010. The NS-SEC classification is partly derived from SOC and consequently there are inconsistencies with estimates before 2011. Therefore like-for-like comparisons cannot be made between years before and after the change.

Source:
Labour Force Survey

Tobacco: Industry

Dan Jarvis: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office how many people in (a) Barnsley Central constituency, (b) South Yorkshire and (c) England were employed in the tobacco sector in the latest period for which figures are available.

[149398]

Mr Hurd: The information requested falls within the responsibility of the UK Statistics Authority. I have asked the authority to reply.

Letter from Glen Watson, dated March 2013:

As Director General for the Office for National Statistics, I have been asked to reply to your recent Parliamentary Question concerning how many people in (a) Barnsley Central constituency, (b) South Yorkshire and (c) England are employed in the tobacco sector in the latest period for which figures are available. (149398)

Annual employment statistics are available from the Business Register and Employment Survey (BRES). Table 1 following contains the latest figures available, which show the number in employment in 2011 for industries considered to be in the tobacco sector.

National and local area estimates for many labour market statistics, including employment, unemployment and claimant count are available on the NOMIS website at:

<http://www.nomisweb.co.uk>

Table 1: Employment in Barnsley Central constituency, South Yorkshire and England for tobacco sector in 2011

Industry (SIC 2007)	Barnsley Central constituency	South Yorkshire	England
47260: Retail sale of tobacco products in specialised stores	0	200	6,700
46350: Wholesale of tobacco products	0	0	1,100
12: Manufacture of tobacco products	0	*	1,800

Notes:

1. Cells containing an asterisk '*' represent disclosive data that cannot be published.
2. South Yorkshire refers to the former metropolitan county of South Yorkshire.

INDEPENDENT PARLIAMENTARY STANDARDS AUTHORITY COMMITTEE

Members: Moving Costs

Helen Jones: To ask the hon. Member for Broxbourne, representing the Speaker's Committee for the Independent Parliamentary Standards Authority, what the total amount spent by the Independent Parliamentary Standards Authority to cover hon. Members' removal costs has been in each financial year since 2010. [149519]

Mr Charles Walker: The information requested falls within the responsibility of the Independent Parliamentary Standards Authority. I have asked IPSA to reply.

Letter from Andrew McDonald, dated 22 March 2013:

As Chief Executive of the Independent Parliamentary Standards Authority, I have been asked to reply to your Parliamentary Question asking for figures relating to claims made by Members of Parliament for removal costs.

The figures requested are presented below.

Financial year	£
2010-11	18,215.56
2011-12	9,799.32
2012-13 (to date)	13,620.22

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Developing Countries: Malaria

Margot James: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what campaigns her Department are running to increase awareness about malaria in developing countries. [149201]

Lynne Featherstone: The UK Government is committed to help halve malaria deaths in at least 10 high burden countries between 2010 and 2015, and to sustain these gains into the future. The Department for International Development works directly on strengthening health systems and supporting national malaria programmes in 17 high burden countries, and through our support to multi-lateral organisations in all countries with malaria.

UK-supported programmes include preventing malaria transmission through bed-nets and indoor residual spraying, testing and diagnosing malaria, and treating malaria with safe, effective and affordable medicines. Many of these programmes have associated activities which help educate the general population and increase awareness about malaria and its proper prevention and treatment. Increased awareness makes the malaria programmes more effective and helps save more lives.

Margot James: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what steps she is taking to ensure that (a) anti-malarial drugs and (b) mosquito nets reach the most at-risk groups in countries that receive support from her Department. [149202]

Lynne Featherstone: The UK Government is committed to help halve malaria deaths in at least 10 high burden countries between 2010 and 2015, and to sustain these gains into the future. Amongst other interventions the Department for International Development (DFID) directly supports the Affordable Medicines Facility for malaria (AMFm). The majority of those in the most-at-risk groups, including the poor, access their anti-malarial treatment from the private sector. AMFm responds to this by ensuring that high-quality, effective anti-malarial drugs in the private sector are subsidised to make them affordable to these most-at-risk groups.

DFID's support to mosquito net programmes fully takes the most-at-risk groups into account. For example DFID's programme in the Democratic Republic of Congo takes steps to ensure mosquito nets are delivered free of charge to poor populations, and covers the costs of transport to homes in the most remote and inaccessible parts of the country.

Fair Trade Initiative

Tom Blenkinsop: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what proportion of refreshments purchased by her Department are FairTrade certified. [149169]

Mr Duncan: All tea and coffee purchased by the Department for hospitality purposes is FairTrade certified.

WORK AND PENSIONS

Asbestos: Public Buildings

Dan Jarvis: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what recent estimate he has made of the number of public buildings that contain asbestos. [149399]

Mr Hoban: The Health and Safety Executive does not hold records of the number of buildings that contain asbestos. When the impact assessment for the Control of Asbestos at Work Regulations 2002 was prepared, it was estimated that approximately 500,000 commercial and public buildings contained asbestos.

Crisis Loans: Nottinghamshire

Gloria De Piero: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what the total value was of crisis loans awarded in each local authority in Nottinghamshire in each year since 2009; and how many applications were accepted for a crisis loan in each such area in each such year. [149831]

Steve Webb: Tables 1-3 below give crisis loan applications, awards and expenditure in the local authorities in Nottinghamshire in 2009-10, 2010-11 and 2011-12 respectively.

Table 1: Crisis loan applications, awards and expenditure by Nottinghamshire local authorities in 2009-10

	Applications	Awards	Expenditure (£)
Ashfield	4,200	3,180	294,500
Bassetlaw	4,290	3,230	263,400
Broxtowe	2,600	2,000	184,600
Gedling	3,310	2,550	232,400
Mansfield	5,520	4,140	344,700
Newark and Sherwood	3,220	2,490	207,700
Rushcliffe	1,460	1,160	100,700
Nottinghamshire	24,610	18,760	1,627,900

Table 2: Crisis loan applications, awards and expenditure by Nottinghamshire local authorities in 2010-11

	Applications	Awards	Expenditure (£)
Ashfield	4,490	3,530	319,900
Bassetlaw	4,500	3,510	295,300
Broxtowe	2,760	2,220	190,200
Gedling	3,460	2,750	230,900
Mansfield	6,040	4,750	385,300
Newark and Sherwood	3,360	2,710	203,200
Rushcliffe	1,640	1,330	118,200
Nottinghamshire	26,250	20,810	1,742,900

Table 3: Crisis loan applications, awards and expenditure by Nottinghamshire local authorities in 2011-12

	Applications	Awards	Expenditure (£)
Ashfield	3,660	2,960	193,200
Bassetlaw	3,260	2,600	161,700
Broxtowe	2,170	1,760	109,100
Gedling	2,510	2,030	127,000
Mansfield	4,750	3,860	244,700
Newark and Sherwood	2,520	2,100	132,500
Rushcliffe	1,330	1,090	64,300
Nottinghamshire	20,190	16,400	1,032,600

Notes:

1. The information provided is Management Information. Our preference is to answer all parliamentary questions using Official / National Statistics but in this case we only have Management Information available. It is not quality assured to the same extent as Official / National statistics and there are some issues with the data; for example, it does not include applications which were processed clerically and have not yet been entered on to the Social Fund Computer System.
2. Local authority figures have been produced by linking Social Fund Computer System data with the National Benefits Database to obtain the local authority the person lived in at the time of application. There are up to 7% of cases where we cannot link the records in this way.
3. All applications and awards figure are rounded to the nearest 10. Expenditure is rounded to the nearest £100.

Disability Living Allowance

Mrs McGuire: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many disabled people have a fixed-term award of disability living allowance which is

due to expire after February 2014; and how many such people he expects to invite to apply for the personal independence payment for the year October 2013 to October 2014. [149571]

Esther McVey: The number of disability living allowance recipients who have a fixed term award due to expire after February 2014 is 895,000, of which there will be 550,000 who were aged 16-64 on 8 April 2013. We expect to invite 219,000 of these working age claimants to apply for personal independence payment between October 2013 and September 2014.

Source:

DWP Quarterly Statistical Enquiry data, May 2012.

Disability Living Allowance: Young People

Mrs McGuire: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many young disabled people who are in receipt of disability living allowance are expected to be invited to be assessed for personal independence payment in the next 12 months as they reach the age of 16. [149614]

Esther McVey: DLA claimants reaching age 16 from 7 October 2013 onwards will be invited to claim PIP on reaching their 16th birthday. Those who have reached age 16 between April 2013 and October 2013 will be invited to claim PIP at a later date according the published reassessment strategy

<http://www.dwp.gov.uk/docs/pip-reassessments-and-impacts.pdf>

During any 12 month period around 34,000 DLA claimants reach age 16. This is the number of people who we would expect to invite to claim PIP on their 16th birthday between October 2013 and September 2014.

Source:

DWP Longitudinal Study May 2012.

Employment and Support Allowance

Stephen Timms: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many employees (a) of his Department, (b) in each of his Department's benefit delivery centres and (c) in each jobcentre are decision makers for employment and support allowance. [149066]

Mr Hoban [holding answer 18 March 2013]: The information is as follows:

(a) As at January 2013 there were 125 full-time equivalent staff performing decision making activities on employment and support allowance.

(b) ESA decision making activities broken down by benefit delivery centre is as follows:

	Number
Benefits Directorate	125
BCCE Bury St Edmunds BC	1
BCCE Derby BC	2
BCCE Handsworth BC	2
BCCE Hanley BC	4
BCCE Leicester BC	2
BCCE Nottingham BC	2
BCCE Peterborough BC	3
BCCE Ravenhurst BC	1

	Number
BCCE Walsall BC	2
BCCE Wellingborough BC	1
BCCE Wolverhampton BC	5
BCCE Worcester BC	1
BCLH Basildon BC	5
BCLH Canterbury BC	1
BCLH Hackney BC	1
BCLH Stratford BC	2
BCNE Barnsley BC	7
BCNE Hull BC	5
BCNE Leeds BC	2
BCNE Newcastle BC	3
BCNE Stockton BC	5
BCNE Sunderland BC	4
BCNW Birkenhead BC	4
BCNW Bolton BC	9
BCNW Oldham BC	2
BCNW Preston BC	3
BCSC Aberdeen BC	3
BCSC Bathgate BC	4
BCSC Clydebank BC	2
BCSC Coatbridge BC	2
BCSC Glasgow Northgate BC	7
BCSC Greenock BC	2
BCSC Kilmarnock BC	1
BCSC Stirling DMU	3
BCSE Chippenham BC	2
BCSE Cosham BC	2
BCSE Gloucester BC	1
BCSE Plymouth BC	3
BCSE St Austell BC	3
BCSE Worthing BC	2
BCWA Caerphilly BC	2
BCWA Llanelli BC	2
BCWA Merthyr Tydfil BC	2
BCWA Merthyr Tydfil DMU	2
BCWA Wrexham BC	3

(c) There is no ESA decision making activity in jobcentres.

Source:

Operational Activity Based Management Model 2012-13

Stephen Timms: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many applications for employment and support allowance were processed within 16 days in each of the last four years; and in each case what proportion that represents of all the claims submitted.

[149099]

Mr Hoban: The information available for employment and support allowance (ESA) new claims processed within 16 days, is shown in the following table:

	April 2009 to March 2010	April 2010 to March 2011	April 2011 to March 2012	April 2012 to January 2013
ESA Claims Processed	504,400	577,000	621,800	554,300

ESA Claims Processed	April 2009 to March 2010	April 2010 to March 2011	April 2011 to March 2012	April 2012 to January 2013
ESA claims processed in 16 days (percentage)	72.9	81.0	84.5	82.7

Source:

Management Information System Programme (MISP). MISP is a departmental performance management, data capture and reporting tool. This type of internal management information does not form part of the official statistics outputs that are released by the Department in accordance with the UK Statistics Authority's Code of Practice.

Employment: Private Sector

Michael Connarty: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many jobs have been reclassified as private sector as a result of (a) the transfer of further education colleges from public to private sector and (b) outsourcing by local authorities since May 2010.

[149384]

Mr Hurd: I have been asked to reply on behalf of the Cabinet Office.

The information requested falls within the responsibility of the UK Statistics Authority. I have asked the authority to reply.

Letter from Glen Watson, dated March 2013:

As Director General for the Office for National Statistics, I have been asked to reply to your recent Parliamentary Question asking the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many jobs have been reclassified as private sector as a result of (a) the transfer of further education colleges from public to private sector and (b) outsourcing by local authorities since May 2010. (149384)

Estimates of public and private sector employment are produced on a quarterly basis for reference periods March, June, September and December. Therefore estimates of public sector employment are not available for May 2010.

On 1 April 2012, English further education colleges and sixth form college corporations were re-classified from the public sector to the private sector. As a result it is estimated that an employment of 196,000 moved from the public sector to the private sector between March 2012 and June 2012.

No estimate has been made of the employment reclassified to the private sector as a result of outsourcing by local authorities.

Housing Benefit: Social Rented Housing

Ian Austin: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (1) what measures his Department has put in place to ensure that households with children in bedrooms that are not large enough for two children to occupy will not be forced to move into homes with bedrooms that are too small for children to share as a result of the under-occupancy penalty;

[149492]

(2) what guidance his Department is giving to those housing associations whose tenants are facing under-occupancy deductions to their housing benefit because they have children living in single rooms which are not large enough for two children to occupy;

[149493]

(3) what measures his Department has put in place to ensure that households with children in single rooms that are not large enough for two children to occupy do not face under-occupancy deductions to their housing benefit.

[149495]

Steve Webb: There is no definition of a minimum bedroom size set out in the regulations. It will be up to the landlord to accurately describe the property in line with the actual rent being charged.

We are not proposing to issue separate guidance on the size of rooms or their suitability for use as a bedroom. As rent levels generally reflect the number of bedrooms in the property and may take into account their size, it is in the tenant's best interest to decide at the point of accepting the tenancy whether the rooms are of a suitable size for their needs.

The Department for Communities and Local Government has published statutory guidance which includes advice to the effect that landlords, when allocating property, should make households aware of the implications in relation to housing benefit in the event of under-occupation.

Ian Austin: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (1) what estimate he has made of the availability of social housing with bedrooms large enough for two children to share for the purposes of determining under-occupancy deductions to housing benefit; [149494]

(2) what estimate he has made of the number of households with children in single rooms that are not large enough for two children to occupy that will face under-occupancy deductions to housing benefit. [149496]

Steve Webb: The Department does not hold information on bedroom size within the social rented sector.

There is no definition of a minimum bedroom size set out in the regulations. It will be up to the landlord to accurately describe the property in line with the actual rent being charged.

Stephen Timms: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions pursuant to his answer of 18 March 2013, *Official Report*, column 486W, on housing benefit: social rented housing, how many of the (a) 380,000 people affected and needing one bedroom properties and (b) 260,000 people affected and needing two bedroom properties are living in (i) England, (ii) Wales and (iii) Scotland. [149734]

Steve Webb: The Department estimates that of the (a) around 380,000 claimants affected by the removal of the spare bedroom subsidy in 2013-14 and needing one bedroom properties:

(i) around 300,000 will be living in England and

(iii) around 60,000 will be living in Scotland.

Samples sizes are too small to allow robust estimates for (ii) Wales.

Of the (b) around 260,000 claimants affected and needing two bedroom properties in 2013-14, the Department estimates

(i) around 220,000 are living in England.

Samples sizes are too small to allow robust estimates for (ii) Wales and (iii) Scotland.

However, we expect that many claimants will choose not to move from their current home.

Incapacity Benefit: Greater Manchester

Jonathan Reynolds: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions pursuant to the answer of 14 February 2013, *Official Report*, column 773W, on incapacity benefit, how many claimants who have been reassessed for incapacity benefit in (a) Stalybridge and Hyde constituency and (b) Tameside metropolitan borough since May 2010 have not subsequently gone on to claim employment and support allowance. [149867]

Mr Hoban: The Department regularly publishes official statistics on incapacity benefits reassessment (IBR). The latest publication was released in January 2013 and is available here:

http://research.dwp.gov.uk/asd/workingage/index.php?page=esa_ibr

Table 2 in the above publication provides outcomes for IBR claims broken down by region and local authority. Constituency level data are not available.

Jonathan Reynolds: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions pursuant to the answer of 14 February 2013, *Official Report*, column 773W, on incapacity benefit, how many recipients of incapacity benefit have been referred to Work Choice in (a) Stalybridge and Hyde constituency and (b) Tameside Metropolitan Borough since May 2010. [149868]

Mr Hoban: Since 1 May 2010 and up to 31 December 2012, the number of referrals to Work Choice from customers who were in receipt of incapacity benefit, was nil or negligible in both Stalybridge and Hyde constituency and Tameside metropolitan borough.

Incapacity Benefit: Peterborough

Mr Stewart Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions by what date he expects the reassessment of the eligibility of individuals in Peterborough constituency in receipt of incapacity benefit to be complete. [149542]

Mr Hoban: The incapacity benefit reassessment process is expected to be completed by spring 2014.

Ingeus

John Mann: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how much is paid to Ingeus per person in (a) job retention fees and (b) substantiation payments. [149965]

Mr Hoban: The fee structure for the Work programme is available on the DWP website via this link (at figure 3 on page 7)

<http://www.dwp.gov.uk/docs/the-work-programme.pdf>

This document also explains minimum and incentive performance levels for the Work programme.

Jobcentre Plus

Mr Jamie Reed: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions pursuant to the answer of 18 March 2013, *Official Report*, column 489W, on Jobcentre Plus,

what suggestions from staff of his Department have been (a) received by his Department and (b) incorporated into policy. [149641]

Mr Hoban: We do not collect information in the format requested. Staff make suggestions in wide range variety of ways, for example our Bright Ideas scheme. These feed into the design of any new or existing policies and processes on an ongoing basis.

Mr Jamie Reed: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions pursuant to the answer of 18 March 2013, *Official Report*, column 489W, on Jobcentre Plus, (1) how many existing staff have been transferred to the role of universal credit ambassador; [149642]

(2) what proportion of existing staffing allocations has been assigned to universal credit ambassadors. [149643]

Mr Hoban: No DWP staff have been transferred to a universal credit ambassador role as this is not a specific job. Ambassadors support their managers in communication activities and culture change around universal credit as part of their day to day duties.

No resource from existing staff allocations has been assigned to universal credit ambassadors.

Stephen Timms: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many internet access terminals have been placed in Jobcentre Plus offices to enable online submission of universal credit claims; and how

much has been spent on providing such terminals in 2012-13 to date. [149644]

Mr Hoban: We are installing internet access devices (IADs) in our Jobcentres to help support those who don't have home access to the internet. At present, 706 sites have had IADs installed. In total this will provide 2,167 new IADs for our customers. Jobcentre staff will be available to provide claimants with any assistance required in using these devices.

The total figure spent up to end of February 2013 is £711,407.92.

Leave

Priti Patel: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many officials in (a) his Department and (b) each of its agencies and non-departmental public bodies qualify for privilege days; and what the total cost to the public purse was of the number of privilege days utilised each year by such officials. [147751]

Mr Hoban: In 2011-12, 88,626 full-time equivalent officials working for the Department for Work and Pensions qualified for 2.5 days privilege leave. One of these days was granted under the authority of the Queen.

The estimated cost was £24.26 million.

The Department's non-departmental bodies have provided the following information:

Name of organisation	Number of officials qualifying for privilege leave	Total cost (£)
Child Maintenance Group	7,898	2,034,827
Independent Living Fund	122	25,492
Health and Safety Executive	3,531	1,137,037
National Employment Savings Trust Corporation	225	83,500
Remploy Ltd	0	—
Pensions Ombudsman/Pension Protection Fund Ombudsman	¹ 34.49	² —
The Pensions Advisory Service	—	5,723
The Pensions Regulator	0	—

¹ Average staff number.

² Cost not available.

As part of Civil Service Reform, DWP is looking at some terms and conditions, including privilege leave.

Pay

Priti Patel: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what allowances and subsidies in addition to salary were available to officials in (a) his Department and (b) its non-departmental public bodies in each of the last five years; and what the monetary value was of such payments and allowances in each such year. [148055]

Mr Hoban: For information prior to 2011-12 I refer the hon. Member to two previous answers my right hon. Friend the Member for Epsom and Ewell (Chris Grayling), gave her on 17 November 2010, *Official Report*, columns 829-32W and 18 April 2012, *Official Report*, columns 391-6W.

In DWP, details of the individual rates of allowances and payments payable since the Department's first harmonised pay award in 2002, under the previous Government, were provided in a separate table and placed in the Library. Details can be found in *Hansard* — 17 November 2012, *Official Report*, columns 829-32W. This information remains relevant.

Body	Non-Departmental Public Bodies		£
	Payment/Allowance Type	2010-11	2011-12
The Pension Regulator (TPR)	Duty allowance	122,235.96	98,677.82
	Duty rota	15,601.89	15,552.00

Non-Departmental Public Bodies

Body	Payment/Allowance Type	2010-11	2011-12
	First aid	4,542.84	5,658.74
Pensions Ombudsman (PO) and Pension Protection Fund Ombudsman (PPFO)	Responsibility Allowance (RA)	4,130	4,619.74
	Management Allowance (MA)	2,962	4,827.91
	Temporary Duties Allowance (TDA)	5,873	10,703.90
Independent Living Fund (ILF)	On Call Allowance	2,775.16	2,801.12
NEST	Nil	—	—
The Pensions Advisory Service	First Aid	240.00	240.00
Remploy	Acting Up Allowance	—	8,590
	Additional Role	1,212	202
	Call Out	15,540	5,246
	Car Allowance	1,200,000	1,077,837
	Disturbance Allowance	76,166	10,265
	Extra Duty Allowance	155,134	166,633
	First Aid	119,802	103,820
	First Aid Requalification	4,650	3,850
	Leading Hand	233,503	198,018
	London Weighting	—	271,608
	Opening/Closing Allowance	124,814	117,228
	Pensionable Allowance	43,519	33,158
	Safety Officer	57,157	66,838
	Sales Commission	209,004	218,681
	Shift Pay and Unsocial Hours	214,978	113,976
	Relocation Allowance	—	7,500
Health and Safety Executive (HSE)	Abatement Compensation	1—	301,375
	Chart Inst Pure and Supp	1—	2,500
	Diploma in Accg and Fin	1—	5,450
	Association of Accounting Technicians Test	1—	800
	Inspec Mgmt Aberdeen	1—	533,667
	SCS London Weighting	—	16,586
	Responsibility Allowance	—	6,438
	Temp Prom Allowance	—	11,450
	Nuclear Allowance	—	36,629
	London Weighting	—	845,502
	Office for Civil Nuclear Security On-Call Allowance	—	2,524
	United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority On-Call Allowance	—	244
	London Pay Addition	—	160
	Duty Off Allowance	—	42,921
	Deputising Allowance	—	54,141
	On Call Allowance	—	4,627
	Specialist Pay Enhancement	—	14,203
	Extra Duty	—	43,760
	TARA (historic responsibility allowance for Chemical Regulation Directorate)	—	1,435
Child Maintenance and Enforcement Commission ^{2,3}	Emergency Officers' Allowance	0	0
	Language Allowance	310	310
	Locational Allowance	0	833

Non-Departmental Public Bodies

Body	Payment/Allowance Type	2010-11	2011-12
	On Call Allowance	7,532	10,249
	Private Secretary Allowance	4,496	5,114
	Procurement Allowance	63,324	61,934
	Responsibility Allowance	9,335	19,368
	Responsibility on Temporary Duties Allowance	0	0
	Secondment Allowance	3,354	3,533
	Shorthand Audio Allowance	11	0
	Skills Allowance	12,523	12,821
	Skills Annual Allowance	11,162	11,500
	Typing Allowance	292	0
	Extended Working Allowance	2,079,932	1,992,669
	Miscellaneous Allowance	2,071	125

¹ Information not available.² The Child Maintenance and Enforcement Commission transferred its functions into the DWP on 1 August 2012. It is now part of the DWP called The Child Maintenance Group.³ Table excludes Temporary Duties Allowance where a member of staff is acting temporarily in a higher grade.

Recruitment

Priti Patel: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many officials were recruited to (a) his Department and (b) each of its non-departmental public bodies in each of the last five years. [147979]

Mr Hoban: The following table shows the number of officials recruited to the Department and each of its non-departmental public bodies in each of the last five years. All data are in financial years from 1 April to 31 March annually.

	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12
Department for Work and Pensions	6,254	11,222	18,538	571	490
National Employment Savings Trust Corporation	0	86	100	92	143
Pensions Ombudsman/Pension Protection Fund Ombudsman	7	2	4	2	8
The Pensions Advisory Service	2	4	5	5	4
Health and Safety Executive	95	352	248	139	62
Remploy	571	531	770	1,006	256
Independent Living Fund	18	5	22	2	2

Sick Leave

Priti Patel: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many days (a) his Department and (b) each of its non-departmental public bodies has lost

to staff sickness in each of the last five years; and what estimate he has made of the cost of such absence in each year. [147998]

Mr Hoban: The information for DWP is provided in the following table:

	Average working days lost (AWDL) per staff year	Salary cost of sickness absence (£ million)
2007-08	10.1	75.1
2008-09	8.9	59.8
2009-10	8.5	67.1
2010-11	8.1	62.9
2011-12	7.3	51.9

Average working days lost (AWDL) and salary cost sickness absence figures are not available for the non-departmental public bodies because the information is not centrally held by them.

Whiston constituency, (b) Merseyside and (c) England; and how many of those affected live in (i) social housing and (ii) private-rented housing. [148994]

Social Security Benefits

Mr Woodward: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many households will be affected by the benefit cap in (a) St Helens South and

Steve Webb: A breakdown of households affected by the benefit cap by parliamentary constituency has been placed in the library and can be found at:

<http://data.parliament.uk/DepositedPapers/Files/DEP2012-1587/LibraryDocument125527.pdf>

Please note that household numbers are rounded to the nearest 100. Areas with fewer than 100 households affected are denoted by “..”, as additional disclosure control has been applied to these areas. For this reason, figures will not sum to the total number of households affected in the July 2012 impact assessment for the household benefit cap. Due to these disclosure controls we are unable to state how many of those affected live in either social housing and/or private-rented housing.

Around 900 households in Merseyside may be affected by the benefit cap, and around 40% of those affected live in social housing and 60% in private rented housing. Figures for Merseyside are based on a combined total of those affected in Liverpool, St Helens, Sefton, the Wirral and Knowsley local authorities.

Around 52,000 households in England may be affected by the benefit cap, and of those affected around 55% live in social housing and 45% live in private rented housing.

Please note as the benefit cap will be applied through a phased roll-out from 15 April 2013 and at a national level from 15 July 2013, at present no households have been affected by the cap. The figures are consistent with the impact assessment published on 16 July 2012. The figures in the table assume that the situation of these households will go unchanged, and they will not take any steps to either work enough hours to qualify for working tax credit, renegotiate their rent in situ, or find alternative accommodation. The Department is identifying and writing to all the households who are likely to be affected by the cap and we are offering advice and support through Jobcentre Plus, including, where appropriate, early access to the Work programme before the cap is introduced.

The disregarding of housing costs for those in supported exempt accommodation announced in the autumn statement can not be allocated geographically therefore this has not been removed from the estimates presented here.

Stephen Timms: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many sanctions have been imposed under the provisions of the Employment, Skills and Enterprise Regulations 2011 (a) in total and (b) on people on (i) jobseeker's allowance, (ii) employment and support allowance and (iii) other benefits in each year since their entry into force; and in respect of how many there has been (A) a reconsideration request and (B) an appeal. [149671]

Mr Hoban: Statistics on how many sanctions have been imposed on people on jobseeker's allowance in each year; and in respect of how many there has been (A) a reconsideration request and (B) an appeal for failing to participate in the following programmes; Work Programme, sector-based work academies, Skills Conditionality and New Enterprise Allowance can be found 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>

Benefit sanctions imposed by the Employment Skills and Enterprise Regulations 2011 do not impact on recipients of employment and support allowance or other benefits other than jobseeker's allowance claimants.

Stephen Timms: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what was the total amount of benefit withheld as a result of benefit sanctions in each of the last four years. [149718]

Mr Hoban: The table shows the total amount of jobseeker's allowance (JSA) withheld to the nearest £ million (in actual prices) as a result of fixed sanctions in each of the last four years up to 22 October 2012:

	<i>Benefit withheld from fixed JSA sanctions (£ million)</i>
2009-10	11
2010-11	43
2011-12	45
2012-13 (to October 2012)	60

The total amount of benefit withheld as a result of benefit sanctions is interpreted here as the maximum benefit amount that claimants would have received if they had continued to be on benefit for the length of the sanction. Since some people would have flowed off benefit in the period of the sanction and that also they might have flowed off benefit had they not received a sanction, the figures calculated represent overestimates for the actual benefit that might have been withheld.

This calculation is performed for both people aged under 25 and over 25-years-old to reflect different JSA rates.

The calculation does not net the figures for hardship payments.

The amount of benefit withheld as a result for employment support allowance sanctions is not available because the number of sanctions is not available for employment and support allowance (ESA) claimants. The sanctions regime for people on ESA in the Work Related Activity Group changed at the beginning of December 2012. As a result of the changes to the regime, the Department for Work and Pensions has reviewed its methodology for publishing ESA sanctions official statistics with a view to ensuring the publication remains relevant while also seeking to maintain a consistent time series.

The amount of benefit withheld as a result of income support lone parent sanctions is not readily available because we do not have data on sanction duration between application of sanction and end of the sanction when the claimant re-complies.

The amount of benefit withheld is not readily available for JSA varied sanctions. Data on duration of varied sanctions are of variable quality.

Over half of the difference between amounts in 2009-10 and 2010-11 can be explained by application of the new fixed sanction for failure to attend an advisory interview from April 2010, which used to be a disentitlement.

Stephen Timms: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many benefit sanctions issued in the most recent year for which data is available have been subject to a reconsideration request; how many such sanctions have been overturned on reconsideration; of those sanctions not overturned on appeal, how many have been subject to a subsequent appeal; and of those appeals, how many have been upheld. [149822]

Mr Hoban: The information is as follows:

(a) Statistics on how many benefit sanctions, issued to jobseeker's allowance (JSA) claimants in the most recent year for which data are available, have been subject to a reconsideration request and how many such sanctions have been overturned on reconsideration can be found 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>

(b) Statistics for those sanctions in (a) not overturned on appeal, how many have been subject to a subsequent appeal; and of those appeals, how many have been upheld, are not readily available and to provide them would incur disproportionate cost.

Social Security Benefits: Learning Disability

Andrew Rosindell: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what steps he is taking to ensure that moderate to mild learning difficulties in adults are recognised within (a) employment and support allowance and (b) the work capability assessment. [149656]

Mr Hoban: We are committed to supporting people with mental health conditions or learning difficulties to access the right benefits and the right support.

Recognising that particular concerns have been raised about the way the work capability assessment (WCA) works for people with mental health conditions, Professor Harrington asked leading charities Mind, Mencap and the National Autistic Society to make recommendations to refine the mental, intellectual and cognitive descriptors used in the WCA as part of his second independent review.

Professor Harrington agreed with us that further evidence was required to establish whether the charities' proposed descriptors would make the assessment fairer or more accurate, and recommended a 'gold standard' review. As such the Department has committed to conducting a systematic evidence based review (EBR) of the existing and proposed WCA activities and descriptors in order to make the WCA fairer and more accurate.

Since summer 2012, DWP has worked extensively with the charities to ensure there is a single assessment that combines recommendations from the mental functioning and fluctuating conditions groups and that the descriptors are suitable for testing. We also have a steering group in place, chaired by Professor Harrington to oversee the review. We expect the testing of the alternative assessment to be in spring 2013 with a final report to be published later in the year.

Social Security Benefits: South East

Fiona Mactaggart: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many benefits claimants resident in (a) Bromley, (b) Enfield, (c) Croydon and (d) Haringey have moved into the Thames Valley area and continued claiming in the last 12 months. [149849]

Mr Hoban: This information is not readily available and to provide it would incur disproportionate cost.

Telephone Services

Fabian Hamilton: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions whether his Department's customer service telephone lines are restricted to those beginning 0870. [149031]

Mr Hoban: The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) does not operate any 0870 customer service telephone lines. The DWP uses 0800 service lines for calls to claim benefit or request emergency payments and 0845 service lines for when people call for other reasons, and these are calls that typically take less time to resolve.

Termination of Employment

Priti Patel: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many officials in (a) his Department and (b) each of its non-departmental public bodies have left that body due to (i) resignation, (ii) retirement, (iii) redundancy, (iv) transferral to another public sector post and (v) another reason in each of the last five years. [147960]

Mr Hoban: The information for the Department for Work and Pensions is provided in the following table. All data is in financial years from 1 April to 31 March annually.

Leaving reason	Reporting year				
	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12
Resignation	4,707	3,338	3,036	4,871	2,429
Retirement	982	1,310	1,195	1,258	1,442
Redundancy ¹	3,620	148	42	1,564	1,113
Transferral to another public sector post	858	484	290	375	786
Another reason	3,421	² 13,791	3,222	3,493	5,751
Grand total	13,588	19,071	7,785	11,561	11,521

¹ The figures shown under the redundancy heading include all exits paid out of the Civil Service Compensation Scheme since 2007-08. This includes compensation paid through the use of voluntary exit schemes, voluntary redundancy and compulsory redundancy schemes.

² 10,560 Child Support Agency (CSA) officials transferred from the Ministerial Department to the Child Maintenance Enforcement Commission (CMEC) when it was established in October 2008.

The information for the non-departmental public bodies is provided in the following tables. All data is in financial years from 1 April to 31 March annually.

Leaving reason	Health and Safety Executive				
	Reporting year				
2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	
Resignation	134	119	57	80	63
Retirement	92	87	86	87	60
Redundancy	0	0	0	3	21
Transferral to another public sector post	55	102	42	13	17
Another reason	36	54	39	222	39
Grand total	317	362	224	405	200

Leaving reason	National Employment Savings Trust Corporation				
	Reporting year				
2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	
Resignation	0	45	36	36	33
Retirement	0	0	0	0	0

National Employment Savings Trust Corporation						Independent Living Fund				
Leaving reason	Reporting year					Reporting year				
	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12
Redundancy	0	0	0	0	0	13	15	13	18	46
Transferral to another public sector post	0	35	36	16	16	^All leavers for "Another reason" in 2011-12 left via Voluntary Exit Scheme, when the Independent Living Fund needed to reduce in size by 35%.				
Another reason	0	0	18	45	46					
Grand total	0	80	90	97	95					
Pensions Ombudsman/Pension Protection Fund Ombudsman										
Leaving reason	Reporting year					Reporting year				
	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12
Resignation	6	2	1	2	0					
Retirement	2	2	0	1	0					
Redundancy	0	0	0	0	0					
Transferral to another public sector post	1	0	2	0	4					
Another reason	9	6	3	3	6					
Grand total	18	10	6	6	10					
The Pensions Regulator										
Leaving reason	Reporting year					Reporting year				
	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12
Resignation	0	0	0	0	0					
Retirement	0	6	3	2	1					
Redundancy	0	13	8	1	10					
Transferral to another public sector post	0	0	0	0	0					
Another reason	0	149	131	105	95					
Grand total	0	168	142	108	106					
The Pensions Advisory Service										
Leaving reason	Reporting year					Reporting year				
	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12
Resignation	0	1	5	5	4					
Retirement	0	0	1	2	1					
Redundancy	0	0	0	2	0					
Transferral to another public sector post	0	0	0	0	0					
Another reason	0	0	0	0	0					
Grand total	0	1	6	9	5					
Remploy										
Leaving reason	Reporting year					Reporting year				
	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12
Resignation	194	178	150	245	132					
Retirement	113	74	49	52	37					
Redundancy	1,436	586	83	70	733					
Transferral to another public sector post	0	0	0	0	0					
Another reason	365	317	267	641	435					
Grand total	2,108	1,155	549	1,008	1,337					
Independent Living Fund										
Leaving reason	Reporting year					Reporting year				
	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12
Resignation	8	14	7	7	0					
Retirement	2	0	3	2	0					
Redundancy	0	0	0	1	0					
Transferral to another public sector post	0	0	0	0	0					
Another reason	3	1	3	8	146					

Unemployment: Young People

Pamela Nash: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many people have received Youth Contract wage subsidies since the launch of that scheme. [149803]

Mr Hoban: In most cases the wage incentive element of the Youth Contract is paid after a young person has been in work continuously for 26 weeks. Following the collection and quality assurance of this data, the first set of Official Statistics on the wage incentive should be available in the next few months.

The Department is working to guidelines set by the UK Statistics Authority to ensure we publish statistics that meet high quality standards at the earliest opportunity.

Universal Credit

Stephen Timms: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what his most recent assessment is of the preparedness of future applicants for universal credit to submit their applications online; and if he will make a statement. [149095]

Mr Hoban: A survey of existing claimants found 78% already use the internet and 74% have a home broadband connection. Online access to universal credit and other DWP services is being designed to be compliant with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) Version 2, to level AA, with compliance to some AAA guidelines where these are deemed appropriate. All our products are being developed using the DWP guidelines for level of literacy required of between nine and 13 years of age and to be compliant with disability legislation. This will ensure that online services are accessible to the vast majority of users. We are also taking the opportunity to simplify the language we use.

Jobcentre Plus advisers are helping people who lack the skills or confidence to use online services to develop their digital skills, often in partnership with local charities, libraries and businesses.

The Department has installed a total of 2,167 new Internet Access Devices (IADs) in Jobcentres for those who do not have their own computer, and we will ensure that digital skills are a key part of the support offered to jobseekers to help them back to work.

For those who lack the skills or confidence to use online services, Jobcentre Plus advisers are helping them to develop their digital skills, often in partnership with local charities, libraries and businesses. We are also working with partners such as Digital Unite, UK Online and GoON to develop digital skills more widely across society. We will use our existing phone and face-to-face channels to signpost people to digital options and help people to use digital services where they are having difficulties.

Stephen Timms: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what recent changes he has made to projects to deliver the elements of the universal credit system being led by (a) Accenture, (b) BT, (c) Cap Gemini, (d) Hewlett Packard and (e) IBM; and if he will make a statement. [149264]

Mr Hoban: The Departments IT contractors remain focused on delivering the Pathfinder for April 2013, and supporting the wider roll-out for October 2013.

Work Capability Assessment

Mr Kevan Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions to whom Mental Function Champions (a) report and (b) are accountable; and how such a reporting process is documented. [149601]

Mr Hoban: Mental Function Champions report to their line managers within Atos Healthcare. There is an annual appraisal process for all health care professionals.

Mr Kevan Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what formal qualifications in mental health are required to be held by Mental Function Champions before they embark on their role. [149604]

Mr Hoban: Health care professionals are not required to hold specialist qualifications in mental health conditions. As part of their induction training all health care professionals receive training in mental health issues.

Mental Function Champions are selected from within the ranks of Atos Healthcare professionals based on their previous mental health experience and proven experience as a disability analyst. All mental function champions receive additional facilitated training on mental health topics and are expected to maintain their subject expertise through continuous professional development.

Andrew Stunell: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many work capability assessment cases were decided, and what number of claims were (a) rejected, (b) approved on the basis of an ATOS assessment and (c) approved after consideration of additional information in the most recent month for which figures are available; and if he will make a statement. [149706]

Mr Hoban: Decisions on entitlement to ESA rest solely with the Department's decision makers taking into account the medical assessment reports from Atos and any other relevant information.

The Department regularly publishes official statistics on work capability assessment outcomes for employment and support allowance and incapacity benefits reassessment. Statistics on whether additional information was taken into consideration by the decision maker when making their decision on eligibility for employment and support allowance is not available.

The publications can be found here:

Employment and Support Allowance:

http://research.dwp.gov.uk/asd/workingage/index.php?page=esa_wca

Incapacity Benefits Reassessment:

http://research.dwp.gov.uk/asd/workingage/index.php?page=esa_ibr

Work Programme

Stephen Timms: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many full-time equivalent officials in his Department work on delivery of the Work programme. [149518]

Mr Hoban: As a major part of the Government's efforts to get people off benefit and into work, the Work programme touches almost every part of the Department, involving job roles as diverse as front line personal advisers and finance staff making payments to providers. Few of these job roles are devoted exclusively to the Work programme. Given the breadth and depth of the Department's work on the programme it is not possible to calculate how many full-time equivalent officials are involved.

Work Programme: Wales

Jessica Morden: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many Work programme participants in Wales have (a) received a sanction and (b) received a sanction and disputed it since the inception of the programme. [149640]

Mr Hoban: Statistics on how many Work programme participants in receipt of jobseeker's allowance (JSA) in Wales who have (a) received a sanction and (b) received a sanction and disputed it since the inception of the programme are given in the following table:

Number of JSA claimants with a sanction referral for failing to participate in the Work programme in Wales Jobcentre Plus Group by sanction decision: 1 June 2011 to 21 October 2012

Sanction decision	Total
Applied	5,900
Reconsidered	2,780
Appealed	120

Notes:

1. Figures are rounded to the nearest 10.
2. The number of sanctions applied is the number of referrals where there has been an adverse decision.
3. The decision to apply a sanction can be overturned following reconsideration or appeal by the Sector Decision Maker.
4. All figures may include individuals who have had more than one sanction decision eg if an individual has a sanction applied and another sanction appealed then they will appear twice.
5. A fixed length sanction of between one week and 26 weeks is imposed for refusal, without good cause, to attend an employment programme or carry out a Jobseeker's Direction. Payment of benefit continues in full pending the Adjudication Officer's decision on a sanction question.
6. Jobcentre Plus Group: Formerly known as Jobcentre Plus Regions. Jobcentre Plus Groups were updated to reflect changes to the hierarchical structure of Jobcentre Plus implemented on 5 April 2011 from 11 regions to seven groups.

Source:

DWP Information, Governance and Security Directorate: JSA Sanctions and Disallowance Decisions Statistics Database.

TREASURY

Credit: Databases

Mr Ummuna: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer by what date he expects the small and medium-sized enterprises credit database to be operational; and what deadlines, benchmarks and timetables he or his officials have set for that process. [149936]

Greg Clark: The Government has committed to investigate options for improving access to SME credit data to make it easier for newer lenders to assess loans to smaller businesses.

The Government is currently carrying out further analysis into this issue and will provide an update once this work has reached a conclusion.

Financial Services: Advisory Services

Mr Donohoe: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimate he has made of the number of (a) small business advisors and (b) individual financial advisors who will cease to trade following the introduction of the proposals in the Retail Distributive Review. [149557]

Sajid Javid: This is a matter for the Financial Services Authority (FSA). This question has been passed on to the FSA. The FSA will reply to the hon. Member directly by letter. A copy of the response will be placed in the Library of the House.

Mr Donohoe: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the potential effect of the introduction of the proposals in the Retail Distributive Review on the ability of low net worth investors to obtain affordable independent financial advice. [149558]

Sajid Javid: The Financial Service Authority's Retail Distribution Review aims to raise the professional standards of advisers, improve the clarity with which firms describe their services to consumers and make clear the cost of investment advice—addressing the commonly held perception that advice is free.

For a significant group of consumers, including low net worth individuals, it may not be justifiable for them to pay for advice based on the amount they have to invest. For these consumers, generic, free advice services, including the Money Advice Service, will remain a useful source of guidance, enabling consumers to make informed decisions about their finances.

Haemolytic Uraemic Syndrome

Mr Virendra Sharma: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received from the Secretary of State for Health on funding decisions for eculizumab for treatment of atypical haemolytic uremic syndrome. [149959]

Danny Alexander: The Chancellor has not received any representations from the Secretary of State for Health on funding decisions for eculizumab for treatment of atypical haemolytic uremic syndrome.

Individual Savings Accounts: Children

Mr Raab: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what assessment he has made of the potential effects of (a) levels of charges and (b) rates of interest on the savings of children with (i) child trust funds and (ii) junior ISAs; [149672]

(2) is taking to ensure that children with child trust funds are not financially disadvantaged relative to those with junior ISAs; [149673]

(3) for what reasons parents whose children have child trust funds are not allowed to transfer such funds into junior ISAs. [149674]

Sajid Javid: The Government keeps all matters relating to tax-advantaged children's saving accounts under review, and has ensured that children with Child Trust Fund (CTF) accounts are not disadvantaged by increasing the CTF subscription limit to equal the Junior ISA limit. The Government wants to support parents by ensuring that there continues to be a clear and simple way to save for all children, and will therefore consult on options for transferring savings held in CTFs into Junior ISA.

National Asset Register

Angus Robertson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when the decision was made not to publish the revised, updated National Asset Register. [148900]

Danny Alexander: The decision to stop the publication of a National Asset Register was made preceding the first publication of Whole of Government Accounts for 2009-10.

National Insurance Contributions: Charities

Mr Thomas: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) pursuant to the Financial Statement of 20 March 2013, *Official Report*, column 944, what estimate he has made of the likely amount UK charities will receive in total as a result of the employment allowance; [149900]

(2) how many charities he estimates will benefit from the employment allowance. [149901]

Sajid Javid: Up to 35,000 charities with employees are expected to benefit from the employment allowance, by around £45 million a year in total. These estimates are derived from HMRC analysis based on publicly available Charity Aid Foundation data.

National Insurance Contributions: New Businesses

Mr Umunna: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many firms have (a) applied and (b) taken up the regional employer national insurance contributions holiday to date. [149935]

Mr Gauke: The NICs Holiday Factsheet was recently published on HMRC's website, providing a breakdown of take up by region, constituency, local authority and employer size. The factsheet shows data up to 31 December 2012, at which point there had been 20,365 registrations and 576 unsuccessful applications (as set out in table 1.4).

To date around 22,000 registrations for the Regional Employer NICs Holiday have been received, supporting an estimated 70,000 jobs.

<http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/statistics/nics-hol/nic-hol-mar13.xls>

Pay

Priti Patel: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what allowances and subsidies in addition to salary were available to officials in (a) his Department and (b) its non-departmental public bodies in each of the last five years; and what the monetary value was of such payments and allowances in each such year. [148053]

Sajid Javid: Details of allowances paid in 2009-10, 2010-11 and 2011-12 are shown in the following table. Details of allowances paid in the preceding two years were provided to the hon. Member on 20 December 2010, *Official Report*, column 972W.

Allowance	2009-10	2010-11	£000 2011-12
Procurement	25	25	9
Temp. Duties	—	—	—
Cost of living (overseas)	65	44	29
Hardship (low quality overseas accommodation)	—	—	—
Fast stream	5	2	3
Other (non pensionable)	—	—	—
Additional performance	50	65	27
Bursary (professional training)	—	—	—
Language	9	8	4
Responsibility	205	238	250
Press Office	49	44	50
Private Secretary	225	190	173
Misc	18	2	3
On call	0	0	—
Typing	1	1	1
Meal (for working after 8 pm)	12	8	4
Additional housing cost	3	1	—
Excess rent (overseas)	—	—	—
London (for Senior Civil Service Band 1 staff)	167	151	128
Internal Audit	14	16	11
Accountancy	66	67	63
Clothing	—	—	—
Indirect representation	—	—	—
Vehicle	—	—	—
Total	914	862	755

Spending on allowances has reduced steadily since 2009-10, mainly due to staff reductions.

Statutory Sick Pay

Mr Woodward: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many people received statutory sick pay in (a) St Helens South and Whiston constituency, (b) Merseyside and (c) England in each of the last three years; and what the duration was of each such claim. [149033]

Mr Hoban: I have been asked to reply on behalf of the Department for Work and Pensions.

Individual employers meet the cost of statutory sick pay for their employees. The information you requested is not collected by Government Departments.

Tax Avoidance

Graeme Morrice: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what steps his Department is taking to close corporation tax loopholes to ensure that multinational companies involved in corporate tax avoidance pay higher amounts of tax. [149367]

Mr Gauke: Where loopholes in the UK tax system are identified, the Government takes swift and robust action to close them down. Budget 2013 demonstrated this by closing down seven newly identified Corporation Tax loopholes.

Alongside this, the UK has been at the forefront in taking forward work to strengthen international tax standards, through the G20 and OECD, to tackle the issue of base erosion and profit shifting by multinational companies. This is an international issue that requires coordinated international action to resolve.

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