

**Monday
31 March 2014**

**Volume 578
No. 145**



**HOUSE OF COMMONS
OFFICIAL REPORT**

**PARLIAMENTARY
DEBATES**

(HANSARD)

Monday 31 March 2014

House of Commons

Monday 31 March 2014

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

WORK AND PENSIONS

The Secretary of State was asked—

Defined Contribution Pension Schemes

2. **David Mowat** (Warrington South) (Con): What assessment he has made of the Office of Fair Trading's recent recommendations on the creation of independent governance committees in defined contribution pension schemes. [903370]

The Minister of State, Department for Work and Pensions (Steve Webb): The Government announced last week that pension providers will have to implement new independent governance committees to oversee workplace pension schemes. This is part of the Government's package of measures to ensure that workplace pension schemes are well run and deliver value for money.

David Mowat: I thank the Minister for that answer, and I congratulate him again on his brilliant announcement last week of a 0.7% cap, which is 50% of the cap that the Opposition imposed on stakeholder pensions. But the OFT report identified other governance issues with smaller pensions where trustees and fund managers come from the same organisations, and it suggested that these independent governance committees be set up quickly. Will he confirm that that will happen before auto-enrolment goes much further?

Steve Webb: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his support for our robust action on pension scheme charges. On governance, we recognise that there is potential for conflict of interest in some master trusts. Therefore, in last week's Command Paper, which I am sure he will have studied, we proposed that master trusts should be subject to the same independence requirements as independent governance committees. We are now consulting on that proposal.

Kevin Brennan (Cardiff West) (Lab): What does the Minister make of the Government's new Financial Conduct Authority's first foray into the area of defined contribution pension schemes?

Steve Webb: The FCA will shortly announce details of plans to look at a raft of old pension and life assurance products, some of which have exit fees and high charges, and I think consumers will warmly welcome such an investigation.

Mr Julian Brazier (Canterbury) (Con): I commend progress on this as well as the amazing wider package of pension reforms for which my hon. Friend is responsible. On the balance that trustees will look at, may I urge him to bear in mind existing people in the system, not just pensioners themselves, because with Sheerness Steel people who were still working were almost wiped out in order to protect those who had retired?

Steve Webb: My hon. Friend is quite right. As he knows, we have both the Pension Protection Fund and the financial assistance scheme to help those whose sponsoring employer has become insolvent. It is important that we make sure that sponsoring employers are in a robust position and that regulation is proportionate, which is why we are changing the remit of the Pensions Regulator so that it has regard, in its actions, to the sustainable growth of the sponsoring employer.

Gregg McClymont (Cumbernauld, Kilsyth and Kirkintilloch East) (Lab): Last week, the Minister announced that the Government were adopting lock, stock and barrel Labour's policy on the pension cap. That is welcome news for savers, but the Minister and the hon. Member for Warrington South (David Mowat) both know that governance is key to ensuring that savers get value for money all the way through the pensions system. Does the Minister therefore agree that allowing big insurance companies to appoint independent governance committees themselves is a little like allowing the home team to pick the referee in a football match?

Steve Webb: The hon. Gentleman raises an important point about governance and independence. He should know that the proposed terms of reference for IGCs include requirements that providers go through open and transparent recruitment processes, and that members be appointed for fixed terms, with limited numbers of reappointments. The requirements are designed to avoid any possibility that IGC members have incentives not to challenge providers in order to remain in post.

Employment Figures

3. **Mary Macleod** (Brentford and Isleworth) (Con): What assessment he has made of recent trends in employment figures. [903371]

8. **Nick de Bois** (Enfield North) (Con): What assessment he has made of recent trends in employment figures. [903376]

16. **Alun Cairns** (Vale of Glamorgan) (Con): What assessment he has made of recent trends in employment figures. [903385]

The Minister of State, Department for Work and Pensions (Esther McVey): We have record numbers of people in work, and the numbers are rising. Youth unemployment has fallen for six consecutive months.

There are record rates of women in work and increasing numbers of people setting up in business. We are most definitely seeing a new enterprise generation.

Mary Macleod: Since 2010, unemployment in Brentford and Isleworth has reduced by 21% and youth unemployment by 29%. Will the Minister join me in welcoming this, and in inviting everyone in west London to my third jobs and apprenticeships fair on Friday at West Thames college?

Esther McVey: I would indeed invite as many people as possible to go along to my hon. Friend's job fair—her third one. She does so much to help her young people to get into work, and she works to support women into work, which must be acknowledged, particularly as we are now seeing record rates of women in work.

Nick de Bois: In my constituency, there have been 60 new enterprise allowance take-ups, and there have been 200 across the borough of Enfield. Will the Minister update me on her plans for continuing that scheme? Will she also update the House on the scheme's progress across the country?

Esther McVey: My hon. Friend makes a good point. The new enterprise allowance has been a huge success. The latest figures, which came out last week, show that 40,000 people have set up businesses in that way. It is now running at 2,000 new businesses a month. That is because we support those businesses financially, but it is also because we support them with strong mentoring. Equally, at the very beginning, they must have a good business plan. New enterprise allowances are here, and they are staying.

Alun Cairns: Unemployment in the Vale of Glamorgan has dropped by more than 27% since the general election. Does that not demonstrate that UK employment growth is happening in all nations and regions? We should be celebrating the fact that the economy is growing outside London and the south-east as well as growing in that region.

Esther McVey: I totally agree with my hon. Friend. He is right. As I have said, new enterprise generation stretches across the UK. Long-term youth unemployment in his constituency is down by 28%. I hope it will go down a little bit more and reach the national average—youth unemployment is down by 32% nationally—but a lot of good things are going on across the country.

22. [903391]**Sheila Gilmore** (Edinburgh East) (Lab): Despite all the talk of new jobs, 2.3 million people are still unemployed, only 58% of whom are on the jobseeker's allowance claimant count, which suggests that it is not the generosity of benefits that is keeping people out of work. What steps are the Government taking to get that number down?

Esther McVey: I do not know whether the hon. Lady was smiling when she was describing all the good news that is happening. There is a record number of people into employment—over 30 million—youth unemployment has gone down for six consecutive months, and there is

a record number of women in work. Perhaps she did not hear that, which is why I have repeated the good news that our long-term economic plan is working.

Mr Stephen Hepburn (Jarrow) (Lab): But in reality, is it not true that long-term unemployment is rising, and that youth unemployment has doubled in the past six months, all because the Government are carrying out a policy whereby, at the next general election, good, secure, well-paid and skilled jobs in the public sector will have been slashed by 1 million, all with the goal of getting a low-wage economy in which insecurity is rampant?

Esther McVey: The hon. Gentleman spoke with gusto, but that was all he spoke with, because those are not the facts. Long-term unemployment has gone down and more people are in work than ever before. Perhaps he should have read the figures before he stood up to speak.

Lucy Powell (Manchester Central) (Lab/Co-op): The Minister spoke of more women than ever in work, which is actually a reflection of the fact that there are more women of working age. She should look at other figures. For the first time in more than 15 years, the gender pay gap is rising, not falling. That is a reflection of women working below their pay grade, training and education, in part-time, low-paid work. What will she do about that?

Esther McVey: I have two figures for the hon. Lady. She is correct that there are record numbers, but I also said that there are record rates for women, which is different. That shows that our long-term economic plan is working. There are more women in work than ever before.

Youth Unemployment

4. **Nigel Adams** (Selby and Ainsty) (Con): What assessment he has made of recent trends in youth unemployment. [R] [903372]

The Minister of State, Department for Work and Pensions (Esther McVey): Thanks to the Government's long-term economic plan, youth unemployment is falling. I am particularly pleased that long-term youth unemployment has fallen by 38,000 over the last year. In my hon. Friend's constituency, long-term youth unemployment has gone down by 38% in the past year.

Nigel Adams: Will the Minister congratulate, with gusto, local businesses, Jobcentre Plus, Selby college and York college for their efforts in ensuring that tremendous fall in youth unemployment since the last election in Selby and Ainsty?

Esther McVey: My hon. Friend said that with such gusto that I do not think I could top it. Employment and enterprise is important to him—at age 26, he set up his own telecommunications company with the aid of a Government enterprise grant, so he knows what he is talking about—and he is helping lots of people in his constituency.

Alison McGovern (Wirral South) (Lab): Of the young people the Minister just mentioned who have a job, how many have gone on to work on zero-hours contracts?

Esther McVey: As the hon. Lady will know, the number of zero-hours contracts has remained fairly stable since 2000. They are called zero hours or casual

hours, and they are used by Liverpool city council and Wirral council, which are Labour run. The worst council for using them is Doncaster.

We are having a full review of zero-hours contracts, and if they are exploitative we will bring about changes. Our report is due in July—something that Labour did not do for 13 years.

Greg Mulholland (Leeds North West) (LD): Thanks to the new enterprise allowance scheme, more than 1,000 people in Leeds have met a business mentor and 490 have set up a new business, including 40 in my constituency. Does my hon. Friend agree that that shows small businesses driving our economy and getting people back to work?

Esther McVey: I agree with my hon. Friend. New enterprises are starting up because of the new sense of confidence and optimism in the economy. The extra support that we are putting in place—checking business plans and providing support through mentors—is really paying dividends.

Mr William Bain (Glasgow North East) (Lab): Some 180 young people in my constituency have been out of work for one year or longer. Can the Minister explain to the young man I met two weekends ago—he has been out of work for 18 months and is desperate to find a job—how the Government were so quick to give the banks a tax concession in the Budget, but are so slow to introduce a proper jobs guarantee plan for young people across the country?

Esther McVey: I would like to have a word with the young chap you are talking about, because I would like to give him hope and optimism, which is something that you are distinctly not giving—*[Interruption.]* I apologise, Mr Speaker. I do not mean your good self: I mean the hon. Gentleman. That young chap needs hope and optimism, and he needs to know what is happening in the rest of the country, because other people are getting jobs. Youth unemployment—including long-term unemployment—has gone down, and if the young chap sticks with it and gives it a go, he will get there in the end. That is the best news that I can give him. It is far better under this Government than it was under the Labour Government, when youth unemployment went up by 45%.

Financial Inclusion/Family Budgets

5. **Damian Hinds** (East Hampshire) (Con): What steps his Department is taking to promote financial inclusion and to help families to budget. [903373]

The Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (Mr Iain Duncan Smith): Through universal credit, the Department for Work and Pensions is investing £38 million in expanding credit union services to help more people to access affordable credit. A budgeting support package will be available to all those who need it through universal credit. At the same time, the Government are clamping down on loan sharks and doorstep lenders who have taken advantage of vulnerable people for too long.

Damian Hinds: In this 50th year of credit unions in Britain, may I commend the Secretary of State for what he continues to do to support the sector? Will he update the House on what is being done to tackle the excesses of the payday lenders he mentioned?

Mr Duncan Smith: The Financial Conduct Authority will limit continuous payment authorities, which allow payday lenders to take money out of people's bank accounts, to two payments. The FCA will keep that under review. It is also preventing CPAs if a person would be left without money to buy essentials or for priority debts. We have already seen some payday lenders leave the market because it is being restricted in the right way. It is worth saying that before the last Government came to power, payday lending did not exist, but it spiralled to £1 billion-worth under them.

Dr Eilidh Whiteford (Banff and Buchan) (SNP): Has not the source of the pressure on family budgets been policies such as the freeze in child benefit and the cuts to tax credits, which have left families hundreds of pounds worse off?

Mr Duncan Smith: The biggest pressure on family budgets was the fact that far too many people lost their jobs as a result of the crash in the economy, in which GDP fell by 7.2%. Since then, we have reformed welfare. It is difficult when people are out of work, but we are doing huge amounts to get them back into work. As my hon. Friend the Minister of State has said, more people are in work, more women are in work and more young people are beginning to get into work, so we are getting more people into a position to look after themselves.

Paul Maynard (Blackpool North and Cleveleys) (Con): Financial resilience for families in my constituency can be a real challenge. One of the biggest impacts on the family budget can be the loss of a loved one. Does the Secretary of State think it is now time to consider whether social fund funeral payments should be index linked to inflation to ensure that they keep pace with the cost of funerals?

Mr Duncan Smith: I am certainly prepared to discuss the matter with my hon. Friend if he wants to come and see me about it. I keep that area of the social fund under review, as he knows. We localised about £200 million of the social fund to councils so that they could deal with the problems people face directly. We also kept the remaining money, so a total of about £1 billion goes out to all sorts of things, such as funeral payments, support for loans and support for people in hardship. This is a big push by the present Government to help people ahead of payday lenders.

Kate Green (Stretford and Urmston) (Lab): Last week the BBC reported that just 6% of households affected by the bedroom tax had managed to move. Also last week, a report from Real Life Reform showed that nearly eight out of 10 tenants hit by the bedroom tax were in debt, with borrowing increasing by an average of £52 each week and families increasingly relying on loan sharks. Rather than preaching about careful budgeting, why do Ministers not just scrap this hated and unworkable tax, which is sending people spiralling into debt?

Mr Duncan Smith: It is interesting that the Opposition and the hon. Lady take the view that people moving is a bad thing. Let me just tell her—*[Interruption.]* It is interesting that they say that, but 30,000-plus people—I will repeat that: 30,000 people—who were in overcrowded

accommodation have now had the opportunity for the first time to move into houses where they are not overcrowded. The hon. Lady and the Opposition left us with a quarter of a million people in that position—250,000—so in 10 months over 10% have had the opportunity to move and we are saving over £1 million a day. I call that a success.

Long-term Unemployment

6. **Karl Turner** (Kingston upon Hull East) (Lab): What steps he plans to take to tackle long-term unemployment. [903374]

13. **Ben Gummer** (Ipswich) (Con): What steps he plans to take to tackle long-term unemployment. [903381]

The Minister of State, Department for Work and Pensions (Esther McVey): Those at risk of long-term unemployment are given personalised support through the Work programme. Industry figures show that it has moved half a million people into work. Jobseekers returning from the Work programme will get extra support through our new help to work scheme.

Karl Turner: Through the hard work of the Labour-led council and the three Hull MPs, Siemens has now said, “Hull, yes,” to a joint investment, with Associated British Ports, of £310 million, which will create 1,000 jobs, but this is not a silver bullet. We have a long-term unemployment crisis in my city. Will the Minister now support Labour’s job guarantee for the long-term unemployed?

Esther McVey: I am glad to see that the hon. Gentleman is taking full credit for the Siemens move, but I would like to think that the long-term economic plan and everything this Government have done for the last year should take some credit too. Equally, long-term unemployment in his constituency is down 20% on the year, while long-term youth unemployment in his constituency is down 34%, so I would say that what we are doing is right. Our long-term economic plan is right and I am glad that Siemens is in his constituency.

Ben Gummer: It is a fact that every Labour Government since the war have left office with unemployment higher than when they came in. That is why I am particularly proud that unemployment, both youth and total, is lower than when we came into office in 2010. We have a particular issue with long-term unemployment in Ipswich. What will my hon. Friend do to ensure that when we leave office—in the long distant future, I hope—long-term unemployment will be lower than when we took office?

Esther McVey: My hon. Friend is correct, and he is meticulous in his homework and his figures and in everything he does. I would also like to explain to the House that long-term unemployment in the UK is half that of the eurozone—the figure is 2.7%—so what we are doing is right. Let us not get out of office, because when we are in office we run the country a lot better.

Stephen Timms (East Ham) (Lab): The hon. Member for Ipswich (Ben Gummer) is absolutely right. Last year, the number of people who had been unemployed for more than two years reached a higher level than at

any time since 1997. It then started to fall, but last week—contrary to what the Minister said a minute ago—it went up again. Does she accept that long-term unemployment is a terrible waste of human and economic potential, and will she now introduce a compulsory job guarantee for those who have been receiving jobseeker’s allowance for more than two years?

Esther McVey: It seems that the Opposition never really learnt anything. They want to introduce the future jobs fund and traineeships, for instance, because they enable them to manipulate the figures. They can take people off long-term unemployment and start the clock ticking again, but the figures that they give are unreal and untrue. We are ensuring that we measure the levels correctly, and that there is an honest assessment of what is happening to unemployment, including long-term unemployment. I can tell the Opposition, without fiddling any figures, that it is coming down.

Miss Anne McIntosh (Thirsk and Malton) (Con): The corollary of long-term unemployment is the problem of hard-to-fill job vacancies. Can my right hon. Friend give me the most recent figures for the Thirsk, Malton and Filey travel-to-work area, and can she tell me what the Government are doing to place people in the care jobs which are so important to the community but so difficult to fill?

Esther McVey: My hon. Friend will be pleased to know that we are introducing sector-based work academies. When people are nearly job ready, and when businesses in the care sector have jobs to provide, we bring young people together and give them work experience and training, and a guarantee of a job interview at the end of that. Forty per cent. of those young people are being given jobs in the care industry.

Benefit Cap

7. **Ian Swales** (Redcar) (LD): What assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the benefit cap. [903375]

12. **Stephen Metcalfe** (South Basildon and East Thurrock) (Con): What assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the benefit cap. [903380]

The Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (Mr Iain Duncan Smith): The benefit cap is working. The latest statistics show that 39% of those who are no longer subject to the cap have since moved into work. We will evaluate the policy thoroughly, and expect to publish the findings in the autumn.

Ian Swales: The average yearly pay in my constituency is about £21,000 before tax and national insurance. Does the Secretary of State think that a benefit cap of £26,000 gives people outside London an incentive to work?

Mr Duncan Smith: The introduction of the benefit cap meant that, for the first time ever, people who were out of work could not end up with more than the average earnings of people who work hard and try to make their way in the world. That was the first stage of

the process. Obviously, as with all our policies, we continue to look at it, but I currently have no plans to change the existing levels.

Stephen Metcalfe: Given that Members in all parts of the House have now supported a cap on benefit spending, will my right hon. Friend tell us whether he has received any representations on how it is possible to promise to repeal some welfare reforms such as the benefit cap while at the same time avoiding a breach of the overall cap?

Mr Duncan Smith: Interestingly, the Opposition voted against the imposition of the benefit cap, which they subsequently claimed to support. Last week they did a U-turn and voted for the welfare cap, which is the overall setting of the level of welfare. They plan to get rid of the spare room subsidy, but they have not told us where they will find the money. So here we go again: it will mean more money in taxes, more money in spending, more money in borrowing, and a bust economy once more.

Mesothelioma Compensation Fund

9. **Alison Seabeck** (Plymouth, Moor View) (Lab): What progress he has made on the mesothelioma compensation fund scheme; and if he will make a statement. [903377]

The Minister of State, Department for Work and Pensions (Mike Penning): I am proud to say that the Diffuse Mesothelioma Payment Scheme Regulations 2014 were passed by the House on 17 March, and the scheme administrator is in place. Applications will be accepted from next month, and we will make the first payments in July, as planned.

Alison Seabeck: Can the Minister explain why this morning, following an earlier inquiry on my part, there is nothing on the Department's website, nothing on the gov.uk website and nothing on the website of Gallagher Bassett, the scheme administrator, although the scheme is intended to be up and running early in April? My constituents who suffer from this disease want to know how to apply. I think that the Minister is cutting it a bit fine.

Mike Penning: We may be cutting it a bit fine, but we want to get it right. We do not want people to try to apply before it is possible for them to do so. I find it difficult to understand why any Opposition Member should deny that this is a wonderful scheme that gives hope to people with a disgusting, horrible disease. Those people received nothing previously, which is why the scheme is so important.

Guy Opperman (Hexham) (Con): In a previous profession I represented many victims of this terrible disease and I welcome the fact that the coalition has managed to get approval for the mesothelioma fund on the statute and also secured enhanced damages. Does the Minister agree not only that this will make a very big difference in the north-east, where there is a high prevalence of this disease, but also that the focus now must be on enhanced publicity so all the victims know just what they have to do to get the compensation?

Mike Penning: I could not agree more and I was very proud to be able to announce that we will be raising the benefit to 80% of average civil claims. That will give £123,000 to the claimants and their loved ones, plus £7,000 in legal fees, which if they do not spend they can keep; it will not be clawed back in any shape or form. People have waited for this scheme for many years and we will do everything we can to make sure that people who deserve it get it.

Work Programme/Universal Jobmatch

10. **Diana Johnson** (Kingston upon Hull North) (Lab): What assessment he has made of the effectiveness of (a) the Work programme and (b) Universal Jobmatch.

[903378]

The Minister of State, Department for Work and Pensions (Esther McVey): The Work programme is a success, and industry figures show it has moved half a million people into work. Universal Jobmatch revolutionises the way jobseekers look for work and it has already helped many jobseekers find the jobs they want through the millions of vacancies posted since 2012.

Diana Johnson: We recently heard that 60% of jobs on the failing Universal Jobmatch programme are bogus, such as the one for an MI6 "target elimination specialist", and many of my constituents have been ripped off by criminal scams. With the Jobmatch programme set to be axed, will MPs now get the monthly constituency figures on the number of jobseekers chasing each job, which was removed in 2013, or will that information still be withheld?

Esther McVey: Opposition Members just love to run everything down despite the fact that all these things we have put in place have helped a record number of people into work. We introduced a brand-new scheme that was in addition to what people could already do to look for work. More than half a million companies have opened up a scheme within Universal Jobmatch, which is helping millions of people to find work. Whenever we find any businesses that are not correctly adhering to terms and conditions—it is a tiny number—they are removed, but I have to say that this is a terrific addition to help people look for work. Shame on you!

Chloe Smith (Norwich North) (Con): The Minister knows of my passion for directly tackling youth unemployment in my constituency. Could she also tell me a little bit about what she is doing to help older workers find work, particularly using the tools referred to in the question?

Esther McVey: My hon. Friend does so much in her constituency to try to find young people jobs, such as setting up a scheme to find 1,000 of them jobs. She is doing that incredibly well and that task has nearly been completed. She is right that we have to help people of all ages. Yes, we put a £1 billion Youth Contract in place to help young people, but we have got to help people of all ages to get into work, which we are doing, whether through a new enterprise allowance, sector-based work academies, job clubs or Jobs First, and I can only reiterate that record numbers of people are in work.

Mr Frank Field (Birkenhead) (Lab): As somebody who supports Jobmatch, may I ask the Minister whether she shares my concern that some of our constituents have been ripped off by those who are acting fraudulently? What steps has she taken to safeguard this scheme, which most of us support?

Esther McVey: The right hon. Gentleman, my constituency neighbour, is right in saying that 14 job-seekers—out of the millions a month who are looking for jobs through the scheme—were asked to pay for a Criminal Records Bureau check. The DWP is now working with them. Ten have put in for a compensation claim, and we are helping them to sort that out. If there is a bogus job or one that does not adhere to the terms and conditions on Universal Jobmatch, it is removed immediately. However, despite that one company, more than half a million companies are putting jobs up on the scheme to help people into work. I think we can all say that this is a resounding success.

Lorely Burt (Solihull) (LD): The Work programme provides tailored support to the people who are most at risk of becoming long-term unemployed, at a fraction of the cost of Labour's flexible new deal. Companies such as EOS in my region have been successful in helping people in that way. Does my right hon. Friend agree that we should be supporting the programme, rather than criticising it as the Labour party is doing?

Esther McVey: My hon. Friend is right. Of course we have to support schemes that work and of course we have to support businesses that want to get involved with our scheme. What is interesting is that we have got industry signed up to everything we do. All the big companies and all the small companies are signed up to what we want to do. The Opposition have come forward with a job guarantee, but not one business has signed up to that.

Crisis Loans (Homeless People)

11. **Steve Baker** (Wycombe) (Con): What recent assessment he has made of the effect of withdrawing crisis loans on homeless people wishing to raise rent in advance to secure housing. [903379]

The Minister of State, Department for Work and Pensions (Steve Webb): Crisis loans have been withdrawn, but DWP budgeting loans are still available for rent in advance. There is also a range of support available through local authorities, including discretionary housing payments and local welfare provision, and, as I am sure my hon. Friend knows, there is a rent deposit scheme in his constituency administered by Wycombe district council.

Steve Baker: I am most grateful to the Minister for his answer. Unfortunately, Wycombe Homeless Connection has stated categorically that the withdrawal of crisis loans has made it much harder for homeless people to get into flats and homes. Will he write to me to tell me exactly what he expects from Wycombe district council, so that we can ensure it is properly guided? May I also point out that I would support the Department restricting certain benefits to the wealthiest pensioners if that would enable homeless people to get off the streets and into homes?

Steve Webb: I am sure that my hon. Friend would want us to stick to the terms of the coalition agreement, which commits us to protecting pensioner benefits for the lifetime of this Parliament. However, he is right to say that we have to do right by homeless people, and I welcome the fact that the December quarter's homeless acceptance figures were down by 5% compared with a year earlier. That covers the period in which the change was made, and there are now about 50,000 homeless acceptances a year, which is about half the level that we saw in the early years of the Labour Government.

Mr Barry Sheerman (Huddersfield) (Lab/Co-op): Does the Minister find, as I do in my constituency, that when people in his own constituency get into a real crisis, the help that they used to be able to draw down is no longer there and that the community and third sector groups and charities are underfunded?

Steve Webb: On the contrary, the money that we were spending on crisis loans and community care grants, amounting to more than £170 million a year, has been devolved in full to local government. The hon. Gentleman should take the matter up with his local authority if it is not spending it properly.

Universal Credit (IT Specialists)

14. **Chi Onwurah** (Newcastle upon Tyne Central) (Lab): How many IT specialists are working on the digital solution to universal credit. [903382]

The Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (Mr Iain Duncan Smith): We continue to build up the Department's digital capability, having launched the Government's first digital academy and brought in a man called Kevin Cunningham, who was previously global head of online at Vodafone. Some 370 people are working full time on the universal credit change programme. The aim of any multidisciplinary team is that individuals should come and go, reflecting requirements at each stage. A team of 50, of which 25 are digital specialists, is currently working alongside other experts, and it is steadily building and on track.

Chi Onwurah: It is my understanding that the Secretary of State plans to continue the development of the existing, discredited universal credit IT system while building a new system in parallel, on the recommendation of the Government Digital Service. Will he confirm whether that is the case, and set out how much extra that double development is going to cost? Also, how is he going to recruit the skills he needs, given the current shambles?

Mr Duncan Smith: First, on the skills side, we have been recruiting and we have also been educating internally at the DWP, which has been a big success. The digital process, which is about improving this, will carry on. It is the development that was recommended for the longer term. In the meantime, the live service is running, and the system is not discredited. It is working, with the pathfinder rolling out through the north-west, and it will continue to roll out. The vast majority of the equipment being developed in that will be used within the digital system, so those who say that the money being spent on that is being wasted are simply wrong. It will be used in the medium and longer term for all of the universal credit roll-out.

Charlie Elphicke (Dover) (Con): In developing universal credit and its IT system, what lessons have the Government drawn from IT projects conducted by the previous Government?

Mr Duncan Smith: The reason why we are doing this in a way that tests it at each stage, so we make sure we have got it right before rolling it out and taking more numbers on board, is because we want to make sure that taxpayers' money is protected through this process and that the system works. I recall, as I am sure my hon. Friend does, that when the Labour Government launched tax credits it was a total disaster; we had loads of people in our surgeries with real problems relating to payments. This Government will never revisit that, which is why I will never accept any advice from the lot who wasted billions on failed IT programmes.

Chris Bryant (Rhondda) (Lab): I know the Secretary of State loves to argue that black is white and white is black, but how on earth can he possibly stand here and suggest that this project is "on track"? The Government promised that 1 million people would be on universal credit by tomorrow—by 1 April this year—but how many are on it? He said at the beginning of the month that there were 6,000, but the figures given by the Minister of State, the right hon. Member for Wirral West (Esther McVey), show that fewer than 4,000 are. So precisely how many people are working on the IT? Is it 50, as the Secretary of State just said, or is the figure eight, as the Minister of State said earlier this month?

Mr Duncan Smith: I know the hon. Gentleman likes to get up and speak, but sometimes he needs to be aware of the facts that have been given to him. I have just given those facts, but because he was not listening I will give them again. Of the team of 50 working on the digital system, 25 are digital specialists—there will be more as we develop it and report back. May I simply say that instead of moaning about this system, Opposition Members might like to visit it, as many other MPs have done, because they will see how successful its rolling out has been? Some 90% of the claims for JSA as a result of universal credit are now made online, and 78% are monthly payments—these are people confident to receive those payments. [*Interruption.*] The reality is that the systems the Labour Government implemented were failures, whereas this will succeed and change many people's lives.

Mr Speaker: Order. Mr McCann, I say to you in all courtesy and in all charity that the role of the Parliamentary Private Secretary—you are sitting in the PPS slot—is to nod and shake the head in the appropriate places, and to fetch and carry notes, not to shriek from a sedentary position or gesticulate in an unseemly manner.

Andrew Bridgen (North West Leicestershire) (Con): Will my right hon. Friend confirm, and remind the House, that universal credit is set to deliver £35 billion of benefit to our economy?

Mr Duncan Smith: Yes, I agree with my hon. Friend on that. The National Audit Office report said that a minimum of £38 billion would actually be the positive elements brought to the UK economy and those who are in need. The real problem is that the Opposition say

they support it, but they carp about it. The reality is that every change they ever brought in was a failure. They wasted billions of pounds of taxpayers' money. We will implement this carefully and because of that, people will benefit, rather than suffer, as we all recall they did when Labour introduced tax credits.

Universal Credit

15. **Mark Pawsey** (Rugby) (Con): What recent assessment he has made of the effect of universal credit on employers. [903383]

The Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (Mr Iain Duncan Smith): The Department has consulted widely with employers over the past 12 months to ensure that universal credit works in the best way possible for them. The Minister with responsibility for welfare reform recently met national employers, trade bodies and employer representative groups, and we know that universal credit will have a positive impact on employers through the flexibility it brings to their work force—unlike tax credits.

Mark Pawsey: I thank the Secretary of State for that answer. He will be aware the Rugby jobcentre is among the first six offices to introduce universal credit. Will he join me in complimenting the staff there on achieving a successful roll-out in a complicated procedure? Given recent concerns about child care, will he reassure the House about the availability of child care support under universal credit for families in work?

Mr Duncan Smith: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for raising that issue, because under universal credit we will increase the child care level to 85% of the cost. We will be investing a further £400 million a year in a steady state, and 500,000 families will gain. These are positive incentives to go back to work. Child care costs are now paid up to a maximum of £646 per month for one child and £1,108 for two or more children. In universal credit we are removing the 16-hour rule, which exists in tax credits and is a major disincentive for many lone parents and others to take jobs—that has been abolished, and some extra £200 million will help 100,000 families back into work.

Child Poverty Target

17. **Catherine McKinnell** (Newcastle upon Tyne North) (Lab): What recent assessment he has made of whether the UK will meet the 2020 statutory child poverty target. [903386]

The Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (Mr Iain Duncan Smith): The Government are committed to the Child Poverty Act 2010 and to ending child poverty by 2020. It is not possible accurately to project child poverty figures, but already we are seeing progress in tackling the root causes. Just last week, we learned that there are now 290,000 fewer children living in workless households compared with 2010, and that has a net impact and effect on child poverty.

Catherine McKinnell: The Secretary of State mentions reducing the number of children in workless households, but today child poverty is overwhelmingly a problem for working families. Since 2010, the number of parents

who work part time but who want to work full time is up 45%. What are the Government going to do about the prevalence of low-paid insecure work that is trapping families in poverty?

Mr Duncan Smith: The last figures that covered people who were in work and in poverty were misrepresented by those who talked about them. In truth, those figures reflect what happened under the previous Government, when we saw an increase of 500,000 families who were in work and in poverty. That has been flat since the election. We are working on that to ensure that we get as many people out of poverty as possible. The reforms that we are changing and making to get people back to work, which the Minister of State, my right hon. Friend the Member for Wirral West (Esther McVey) has talked about, will have a huge impact on those who are in poverty now. People are better off in work. Despite what Labour did, people have more chance now to change their circumstances and more likelihood of coming out of poverty. Let me remind the hon. Lady of one little fact. Labour spent £175 billion of taxpayers' money on one benefit—chasing a child poverty target that it simply did not achieve. That was wasted money.

Topical Questions

T1. [903358] **Mary Macleod** (Brentford and Isleworth) (Con): If he will make a statement on his departmental responsibilities.

The Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (Mr Iain Duncan Smith): We were pleased this week to find elements of—that new families formed were no longer breaking up. These figures came out last week to ensure that we are making our programmes work for very good reasons. Families are now staying together. Stable families in households being able to—[*Interruption.*]

Mr Speaker: Order. May I gently interrupt the Secretary of State? I thought that he was going to give a brief rundown of his departmental responsibilities in answer to the first topical question.

Mr Duncan Smith: I was talking about the figures that came out last week on new families forming and staying together.

Mr Speaker: That is what the right hon. Gentleman was seeking to do?

Mr Duncan Smith *indicated assent.*

Mr Speaker: We are grateful. We will leave it there for now.

Mary Macleod: May I thank my right hon. Friend for the work that he and his Department are doing in transforming lives and getting people back into work? In preparation for my jobs and apprenticeships fair on Friday, will he confirm the job vacancy figures for both London and Brentford and Isleworth?

Mr Duncan Smith: At the end of last week, there were 927 active vacancies and 1,493 active jobs in the Brentford and Isleworth constituency. The vacancies were largely in retail, travel, transportation and tourism. The jobcentre has also worked with Asda and Premier Inn to deliver work experience and sector-based work academy opportunities.

Rachel Reeves (Leeds West) (Lab): Just 46% of disabled people are in work, while 40% of disabled people not working report that they want to work. Helping disabled people into work provides them with security and dignity as well as helping control the costs of social security. Will the Secretary of State tell the House what proportion of disabled people referred to the Work programme get a job?

Mr Duncan Smith: The Work programme has been successful for those who are furthest from the labour market. The group of people the hon. Lady is talking about who suffer from sickness and disability have, for the first time, been worked with and helped back into work. The figures that we are seeing now are slower than we would have wished, but they are, none the less, improving all the time. Let me remind the hon. Lady that no one has ever attempted to get these people back into work. The Work programme is succeeding in helping into work those who were never in work before.

Rachel Reeves: The truth is that just 5% of disabled people on the Work programme end up in work. If that is a success, I would like to know what failure is. It is worse than doing nothing. It is a disgrace to let disabled people down in such a way. In the Budget, spending on employment and support allowance was revised up by a staggering £800 million because of delays, incompetence and the complete failure of the Work programme. Will the Secretary of State now agree to take action to help disabled people and give them the support they need and reform the failing Work programme?

Mr Duncan Smith: Let me remind the hon. Lady that, as I said earlier, for these people, and the previous Government made no effort whatsoever to get them back to work—[*Interruption.*] No, 2.5 million people were written off on sickness benefits under the previous Government. No one worked with them and about 1 million were left without anybody seeing them for nearly 10 years. That is the record of the previous Government. I simply remind the hon. Lady that since we came to power, some 22,000 have started a job for the first time and many thousands more have worked with the Work programme to get ready for work without a requirement to go to work. The programme is succeeding and improving all the time and this is the first time that the thousands who are going back to work have ever had help—they got none from the previous Government.

T2. [903359] **Henry Smith** (Crawley) (Con): What is my right hon. Friend's assessment of how the Government's triple lock guarantee for increases in the state pension has benefited thousands of pensioners in my constituency and across the country?

The Minister of State, Department for Work and Pensions (Steve Webb): I am grateful to my hon. Friend for flagging the fact that we have increased the basic state pension by whichever of earnings, prices or 2.5% gives the best outcome for pensioners. Compared with the earnings link, which we think the Opposition would have restored from 2012, that is an extra £440 a year in state pension for pensioners in our constituencies.

T3. [903360] **Gavin Shuker** (Luton South) (Lab/Co-op): A constituent of mine who is on jobseeker's allowance wrote to me to ask for financial support to

get feedback on her interview technique to find where she was falling down at interview. Instead, I gave her a mock interview and, I hope, some helpful feedback. She says of the jobcentre, “I have asked umpteen times for interview practice, but all I get is directed to tips on the web.” Why can that not be provided by the jobcentre?

The Minister of State, Department for Work and Pensions (Esther McVey): I would like to know which jobcentre that was. I know, as I go to jobcentres all the time, how caring and supportive the advisers are. They take as much time as necessary, particularly with the claimant commitment we have rolled out across the country, to find out what skills, tips and support claimants need. I know that that is working, which is why we have record figures. I shall take the issue up, however.

T8. [903366] **Dr Julian Huppert** (Cambridge) (LD): A number of my constituents have contacted me to say that they are having to wait six months or even longer for an assessment for employment and support allowance or the personal independence payment. Surely that is unacceptable. What will the Minister do to make sure those people get assessments that are both accurate and prompt?

The Minister of State, Department for Work and Pensions (Mike Penning): There are two separate answers to that question. On WCA, Atos is leaving and we will bring in a new contractor before moving to multiple contractors to ensure that the suppliers can do what is said on the tin, all without paying a single piece of compensation to Atos—[HON. MEMBERS: “Hear, hear.”] Exactly the opposite, actually—Atos will be paying it to us. Secondly, PIP is being rolled out. We need to ensure that we get it right, as the hon. Gentleman said, and we will make sure that we get it through quicker. We need to make sure that the assessments are correct rather than making mistakes.

T4. [903362] **Julie Hilling** (Bolton West) (Lab): My constituent, Lyn Ward, has had a lumpectomy, a mastectomy, chemotherapy and radiotherapy. Eleven months later, she is still waiting for her PIP assessment and in desperation has gone back to work, even though she is not yet fit. When will that be sorted out?

Mike Penning: As I said to the hon. Member for Cambridge (Dr Huppert), we need to make sure that we get it right as we roll out PIP. The hon. Lady can give me the details of the case if she would like. Thousands of cases have been handled correctly, and if there are mistakes we must ensure that they are addressed.

T9. [903367] **Steve Baker** (Wycombe) (Con): What recent assessment has the Secretary of State made of the innovation fund in helping disadvantaged young people?

Mr Duncan Smith: The innovation fund, which started with £30 million put in by my Department, has helped to build up the concept for social impact bonds, which will help to invest in the sort of projects that my hon. Friend is talking about. The trials have been to help children from the ages of 14 to 16 get remedial education and to be job-ready. That has been a huge success and

we will in due course publish the figures, but it opens the marketplace to new money from private investors and trusts.

Dame Anne Begg (Aberdeen South) (Lab): Last week, the Select Committee on Work and Pensions published a report that recommended that the backlog for the PIP assessment should be cleared before the Government continued with the migration from the disability living allowance to PIP. Will the Government accept that? Will the fact that Atos has now lost the contract for the WCA have an impact on PIP? What action has the Minister taken to speed up new claims for PIP?

Mike Penning: Atos leaving the WCA contract will have no impact on the PIP part of the contract. We are making sure that we speed it up as we go. Interestingly, as the Chair of the Select Committee knows, I have turned off the tap on reassessments so that we get the initial backlog done first. The backlog is taking too long, in my own Department as well as in the two providers, but we will get it right.

David Rutley (Macclesfield) (Con): Given the German Government’s determination to clamp down on EU migrant benefit abuse, does my right hon. Friend agree that there is growing support among key EU member states for this Government’s agenda on this vital issue?

Mr Duncan Smith: Yes, there is huge support in other countries. Recently, Mrs Merkel, the Chancellor of Germany, said:

“There is a need for clarity: who is entitled to claim social security in Germany, and under what conditions.”

The deputy Prime Minister of the Netherlands, among others, has said exactly the same. I am in discussions with many of my counterparts across Europe to make sure that we, as individual independent nations within the EU, will be able to impose the conditions we require to stop migrants coming here just to get better benefits than they would in their own country.

Mrs Mary Glendon (North Tyneside) (Lab): With thousands of PIP claimants waiting six months or more for even their medicals before they get anywhere near any money, will the Minister say exactly what penalties he is imposing on Atos and Capita for failing so abysmally?

Mike Penning: As I said in my previous answer, it is not just Atos and Capita that are too slow. They are under a contractual obligation to the Department and I am enforcing that contract, so where they are asked for compensation we will get that compensation.

Tim Loughton (East Worthing and Shoreham) (Con): One of the most satisfying ways for people to get into work is often by setting up their own businesses. I am always impressed by the young entrepreneurs mugging me in my constituency to buy something from their new business. Will my right hon. Friend update us on the progress of the new enterprise allowance, in particular on how it is helping our younger entrepreneurs?

Esther McVey: My hon. Friend obviously has very enthusiastic young constituents with vibrant businesses. He is right that the new enterprise allowance is helping young people aged 18 to 24, some 7% of whom have set

up their own businesses. I have said that we are creating a new enterprise generation, as shown by the 2,000 new businesses a month, 7% of which are set up by those aged 18 to 24.

Mr Dave Watts (St Helens North) (Lab): Following last week's Budget, will the Minister assure me that if people exhaust their pension pots they will still be entitled to the full range of pensioner income-related benefits?

Steve Webb: Unlike the Labour party, we actually trust people with their own money. The people we are talking about have saved frugally for their retirement; they are not the sort of people to blow the lot. We will, of course, look at all the rules on capital in our Department and in the Department of Health in light of the announcement to ensure that they are up to date, but I think the hon. Gentleman's view that older people will blow the lot is far from the truth.

Robert Halfon (Harlow) (Con): Is my right hon. Friend aware that unemployment in Harlow is now 600 lower than it was at the general election, and that the number of apprenticeships in the past year has gone up by 86%? Will my right hon. Friend pay tribute to the Jobcentre Plus and the agencies that are working well with the Government's Work programme to improve the unemployment and skills situation in Harlow?

Esther McVey: My hon. Friend is right to mention the people who work tirelessly to help people into work. All the staff at the Jobcentre Pluses, all the benefit staff and all those who work on the Work programme dedicate so much of their time to something that they believe in: getting people into work.

Andrew Gwynne (Denton and Reddish) (Lab): Frankly, the answers that Ministers have given so far on the Work programme defy belief. How can Ministers be satisfied with a Work programme where the latest data show that only one in five people, having spent two years on the programme, go on to secure a job that is sustained?

Esther McVey: I will give the hon. Gentleman the figures: 1.5 million people are now receiving support that they have never received before, and half a million of those have got a job. More than 252,000 of those who have been long-term unemployed now have a lasting job. The hon. Gentleman might not think that that is very good progress, but I would say that it is revolutionary: it is turning people's lives around. I meet those people and they say, "You know what, I thought the world had given up on me, but not now. I've got a job and I can support my family."

Duncan Hames (Chippenham) (LD): I congratulate the Pensions Minister on the radical reforms he announced last week, which will be warmly welcomed by the retired secondary cancer patient whose case I raised with him before the Budget. How soon will people like her be able to get their hands on what is, after all, their own money?

Steve Webb: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, who did indeed raise the issue with me before the Budget. Short-term changes came into effect last week to raise the limits on

things such as draw-down and, in the jargon, trivially commuting small pension pots. Legislation will go through for much greater liberalisation to come into effect in April 2015.

Natascha Engel (North East Derbyshire) (Lab): We read in *The Guardian*—it must be true—that the Secretary of State is considering charging for appeals against DWP decisions. If someone has their benefits stopped, with what money are they supposed to pay to get justice?

Mike Penning: That is a matter for the Secretary of State for Justice, but we have no plans whatsoever to charge for appeals or tribunals.

Mr David Nuttall (Bury North) (Con): Does the Secretary of State agree that, when it comes to a jobs guarantee, in the real world there is no such thing as a guaranteed job and that new, genuine jobs can be created only by growing companies?

Mr Duncan Smith: What is interesting about the Opposition's view of a jobs guarantee is that their future jobs fund failed. We have introduced work experience, which costs a tiny proportion of what the future jobs fund cost—some £300, as opposed to £6,000 or nearly £7,000 a job—and as many people get into work and come off benefit as did under the future jobs fund. Labour's make-work schemes do not work, but our schemes, which get private sector employers to help, do. We are getting people back to work.

Bill Esterson (Sefton Central) (Lab): More than 15,000 people in my constituency, which is over 40% of those in work, earn less than the living wage. For millions of people the employment figures hide the reality of underemployment, zero-hours contracts and part-time, low-paid and insecure work. I wonder whether the Secretary of State can tell me how many of his constituents earn less than the living wage.

Mr Duncan Smith: I never heard Labour Members moan much about the living wage when they were in government, but all of a sudden it becomes an issue. The reality is that we are doing more to get people back to work, which gives them a chance to improve their living standards and incomes. The reality is that I took the decision to ensure that my Department pays the living wage, including to the cleaners. The Opposition never did that. I think that we stand ahead of them in that matter.

Philip Davies (Shipley) (Con): Has the Secretary of State noticed that when the spare room subsidy was first removed the Opposition and their mouthpiece of choice, the BBC, complained that too many people would be removed from their homes, yet last week Labour BBC was complaining that too few people have been removed from their homes? In the interests of fairness, surely taxpayers not on housing benefit who cannot afford a spare bedroom should not be expected to pay for a spare bedroom for people on housing benefit.

Mr Duncan Smith: The first and principal point is that this programme is saving over £1 million a day for hard-pressed taxpayers, many of whom, as my hon. Friend said, cannot afford a spare room themselves but were paying taxes to subsidise those who had spare

rooms. The second point is that over 30,000 people who were once in overcrowded accommodation, left behind by Labour in terrible conditions, are now moving into better houses. This programme is a success. The Opposition did nothing about those people the whole time they were in government.

Mrs Anne McGuire (Stirling) (Lab): In my constituency the waiting time for PIP assessments is now 26 weeks. *[Interruption.]* After further investigation, I discovered that that is because of a lack of suitable accommodation in which to carry out assessments. Why was a contract signed with Atos when there were no suitable premises in my constituency in which to carry out PIP assessments?

Mike Penning: I find it very hard to listen to that from a former Minister in the Government who signed the original contracts with Atos, and who seemed very happy with it at the time. We have removed Atos from that work. I will look into the particular situation the right hon. Lady refers to, but I find it very difficult when Opposition Members hark on about what to do about Atos when it was they who employed it in the first place.

Mr Speaker: I cannot identify the individual involved—I would not be in a position to do so—so I will simply tell the House collectively that blowing one's nose underneath a microphone is a distinctly risky enterprise.

Yarl's Wood Immigration Centre (Detainee Death)

3.35 pm

Yvette Cooper (Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford) (Lab) (*Urgent Question*): To ask the Home Secretary to make a statement about Yarl's Wood.

The Minister for Security and Immigration (James Brokenshire): I am sure that the whole House will join me in offering our very sincere condolences to the family of the woman who died at Yarl's Wood yesterday. This was tragic news, and I was certainly very sorry to receive the information. The House will understand that what I can say at this stage is limited.

The established procedure in this situation is to bring in the police to look at the circumstances. Bedfordshire police are currently leading that work. No cause of death has yet been established. Once police inquiries are concluded, the established process is that the prisons and probation ombudsman will begin an investigation. That will happen in this case. However, our focus in the immediate aftermath must be to support the family and to keep public comment to a minimum until the circumstances of yesterday's sad news become clearer.

Following any death in detention, we ensure that detainees are offered counselling and access to a support plan. We review the detention of any individual in the centre who is considered to be vulnerable and ensure that they are given appropriate support. That also applies to staff working in the detention centre.

What I can say, in general, is that the operation of immigration removal centres is a serious responsibility that falls to the Home Office. Nobody involved in this work is in any doubt about the seriousness of the role. In taking on my role as Minister for Security and Immigration, I made it an early responsibility to visit an immigration removal centre to help me understand fully the range of issues connected to detention in such an environment; I visited Brook House and Tinsley House in February.

Like other immigration removal centres, Yarl's Wood is subject to oversight from Her Majesty's inspectorate of prisons, whose most recent report was published last October. There were some key recommendations for the Home Office to review. However, the assessment of the regime in general was that it was improving. I commend to the House Nick Hardwick's overall introduction to the report, which succinctly highlights the difficult circumstances of women in detention and the improvements that have been made to the regime. The report, and the Home Office's response to its recommendations, have both been placed in the Library.

The responsibility for the detention of immigration offenders is taken seriously by everyone involved; I underline that it is a personal responsibility. I hope that the House will understand that it is far too early to draw conclusions at this stage and that to indulge in speculation would be distressing to the family and irresponsible, given the seriousness of the issues involved.

Detention and removal are essential elements of an effective immigration system. It is important that our centres are well run, safe and secure and that our detainees are treated with dignity and respect, and provided with

the proper facilities. Detainees' welfare is extremely important, which is why we are committed to treating all those in our care with such dignity and respect. The House will be as distressed as everyone to hear of this news and will want the family and loved ones of the lady involved to know that they are in our thoughts and prayers at this difficult time.

Yvette Cooper: The whole House will agree with the Minister that the news of a 40-year-old detainee dying in Yarl's Wood is extremely sad. All our thoughts must be with the family and friends, and it is important that they should get appropriate support.

I welcome the Minister's response that a full investigation is in place. He will be aware that there are unconfirmed reports that the detainee was initially denied medical assistance. Can he assure the House that all those reports are being fully looked into as part of the police and wider investigations? He will also be aware that there are reports that Yarl's Wood had turned down offers of help from the local NHS for other women detainees who were distressed after witnessing the death. Is that the case, and what further support was provided to others at Yarl's Wood yesterday?

The whole House will agree that immigration rules need to be enforced, and that does require deportations. Some people need to be detained in advance of deportations, and that is never easy. The House will also agree that this must always be done humanely, with high standards and safeguards in place. Last October's prisons inspectorate report on Yarl's Wood referred to some dismissive responses from health staff within Yarl's Wood, and research by Women for Refugee Women says that many women detainees felt that they were not believed by health staff and raises concerns about physical and mental health support. What action has been taken about that?

What action have Ministers taken since last year's deeply disturbing reports of abuse of vulnerable women by Serco employees at Yarl's Wood, including having sex with women detainees and sexual bullying? We have not yet seen a full investigation into what happened and what action has been taken to prevent it from ever happening again.

The inspectorate has also said that women who had been abused or trafficked are still wrongly detained in Yarl's Wood. These are clearly very vulnerable women who need support, so what is being done to stop them being detained?

The Minister will be aware of the case of Yashika Bageerathi, who is being placed in Yarl's Wood just before her A-levels despite the Home Office guidance about not separating families and not moving teenagers just before exams. In the light of the concerns raised, will he personally review Yashika Bageerathi's case?

Given the continuing concerns about Yarl's Wood, will the Home Secretary commission a joint inquiry into its operations and the Serco contract by the prisons inspectorate and the independent chief inspector of borders and immigration, and will she then report swiftly back to the House?

I welcome the Minister's response to the question. He and I both agree that while immigration rules must always be enforced, detainees must be treated humanely, and it is the Government's responsibility to ensure that both take place.

James Brokenshire: I thank the right hon. Lady for the tone of her comments and the points she has made about this tragic incident. I certainly agree that it is important that we have a system that is firm but fair and treats those who are in our immigration removal centres in a humane and appropriate way. That is certainly the standard that I expect, and I know that that view is shared by the Home Secretary and all of us who have responsibility in this regard.

The right hon. Lady asked about the level of support provided to those at the centre. I have spoken to the centre director, John Tolland, about that. He has underlined the fact that there has been increased staffing, increased counselling is being provided, and additional pastor support has been arranged for those at the centre.

I am not in a position to comment on the specific points that the right hon. Lady raised, but I can assure her that they will have been heard by those with responsibility in the police and the inspectorate. Certainly, I would expect all issues to be thoroughly analysed and investigated appropriately, given the nature of this incident.

The right hon. Lady highlighted the issue of medical support and the overall regime at Yarl's Wood. She will be aware that the chief inspector of prisons, Nick Hardwick, conducted an unannounced inspection of Yarl's Wood, and it is worth highlighting his concluding remarks. He said:

"Yarl's Wood has had a troubled past, punctuated by serious disturbances and controversy surrounding the detention of children. This inspection found that the improvements we have noted since the detention of children ended have continued. Nevertheless, despite the good progress made, improvement continues to be necessary."

I entirely endorse that. There is a need for continued focus to ensure that we see further changes and improvements at Yarl's Wood. That is something that I will continue to focus on.

On health service support, specific recommendations that were contained in the inspector's report have been pursued and there has been further analysis of the health support required there. That has been sent to the NHS commissioners.

I reassure the House of the seriousness that we attach to the incident. We expect all issues to be properly investigated and pursued.

Mr David Burrowes (Enfield, Southgate) (Con): Given what we have heard about Yarl's Wood today, how does it make sense for my constituent, Yashika Bageerathi, to have been detained there for nearly two weeks now, away from her traumatised mother and family? Her plight has been championed by the students at Oasis Academy Hadley school and by over 170,000 people in an online petition. They want her back to continue her studies and to complete her A-levels in May. Given that Home Office policy says specifically that someone who is three months away from sitting a major exam will not be removed, will the Minister order the release of Yashika today and allow common sense and compassion to prevail?

James Brokenshire: I know that my hon. Friend has raised concerns about this case and I commend him for his customary focus on supporting his constituents, which he has underlined again in respect of this individual case.

We consider every claim for asylum on its individual merits and this particular applicant was not considered to be in need of protection. The case has been considered carefully not simply by the Home Office but by the courts and tribunals, and has gone through the proper legal process. The decision has been upheld and supported by the courts. Given those circumstances and the extent and level of judicial and other scrutiny, the Home Secretary has indicated that she does not feel that it is appropriate to intervene. That remains our position.

Keith Vaz (Leicester East) (Lab): I associate myself with the comments made by the hon. Member for Enfield, Southgate (Mr Burrowes). The Minister is right to have started an investigation and to await its outcome, but the deaths of Jimmy Mubenga and Alois Dvorzac remind us of how careful we need to be in these matters. Last year the chief executive of Serco wrote to me to say that seven of his employees had been dismissed for inappropriate conduct at Yarl's Wood over the past few years. Does the Minister agree that even before the inquiry concludes, he needs to contact the private sector companies to remind them that they have a huge responsibility when dealing with people's lives, that they ought to treat those lives with great care and that they must have staff who are properly trained?

James Brokenshire: The right hon. Gentleman has highlighted some significant issues. There have been some shocking and disturbing cases in the past few years and he has referred to them. He will know that there are ongoing police investigations and criminal proceedings in those cases, which makes it difficult for me to comment on any specifics. I underline to him that the Home Office has conducted a review of the methods of restraint and the use of force in the difficult circumstances of removal. The development of new bespoke training packages for escorts during the removal process has been undertaken by the National Offender Management Service. An independent advisory panel for non-compliance management, chaired by Stephen Shaw, a former prisons and probation ombudsman, was appointed to assess the restraint techniques and the safety of the proposed systems. That panel's work is literally due to conclude in the next day or so and I look forward to its recommendations, because it is important that staff are fully cognisant and trained. Certainly, I underline the key message of holding responsibility for managing those in detention.

Sarah Teather (Brent Central) (LD): During my various visits to detention centres, I have been alarmed by the number of times I have heard from detainees that they have difficulty accessing health care, usually in direct contradiction to the reports being put out by management. The situation is particularly alarming given the number of detainees with serious health problems. The Opposition spokesperson, the right hon. Member for Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford (Yvette Cooper), has referred to a report by Women for Refugee Women that highlights the number with particular health difficulties, and we know that those in detention often find that things get worse. What is the Minister doing to get underneath the skin of the data that management put out about access to health, and what is he doing to ensure that those with serious mental health and physical problems are not in detention at all?

James Brokenshire: I know that the hon. Lady has taken a close interest in these matters for some time, and I welcome her involvement and question. On the chief inspector's recommendations for Yarl's Wood, a health-needs assessment was conducted on behalf of the NHS last August. It has been shared with the NHS more broadly and I will certainly pursue the issues involved. I reassure the hon. Lady that those in detention are held there for the least amount of time practical and possible. Indeed, the advice and guidance on rule 35 reports—with which she will be familiar—have been refreshed and underlined. I certainly take the issue of medical support for those who are in need of assistance extremely seriously, and we will continue to focus on ensuring that appropriate medical support is provided in our immigration removal centres.

Stella Creasy (Walthamstow) (Lab/Co-op): May I also associate myself with the comments of the hon. Member for Enfield, Southgate (Mr Burrowes)?

The Minister talks about the importance of treating detainees with dignity and respect. He will know that, before yesterday's tragic incident, there has been a growing chorus of concerns about the experience of women in particular at Yarl's Wood: there are stories of sexual harassment and a number of the women detained have experienced rape or sexual violence in their home countries and have mental health problems. Given those concerns and what happened yesterday, will the Minister commit to meeting Women for Refugee Women so that he can hear at first hand its concerns about its work with the women at Yarl's Wood?

James Brokenshire: Certainly, I would be pleased to have such a meeting to hear the concerns and see whether any specific issues can be applied more broadly to the immigration removal centre system in general. I underline the fact that the chief inspector's summary report notes that there are daily "individual needs" meetings at Yarl's Wood to help discuss detainees who are vulnerable or otherwise of cause for concern before removal and they facilitate information sharing about risk. So much of this is about managing risk and highlighting need. Clearly, I want to see further improvements. It is right that there have been changes and advancements at Yarl's Wood, but more needs to be done and that is why we will continue to keep that in focus.

Mark Reckless (Rochester and Strood) (Con): The House will understand the Minister's reluctance to comment on particular cases, but does he agree that the general record of the police and the Crown Prosecution Service in these matters shows that there is no culture of impunity in this country for those involved in immigration detention, whether they are in the private or public sector?

James Brokenshire: That is why I have underlined the need to focus attention on how removals are conducted. They must be done in the right and proper way, with a sense of respect for those involved. It would be inappropriate for me to comment further in respect of individual cases, but I expect the highest standards to be undertaken. That is why we are also strengthening the training and guidance for those involved, to make sure that the highest standards are met.

Steve McCabe (Birmingham, Selly Oak) (Lab): How many of the women detained at Yarl's Wood have been held for a period of three years or longer?

James Brokenshire: I am afraid that I do not have the details to hand, but I am very happy to write to the hon. Gentleman with further information on the duration of detentions at Yarl's Wood.

Richard Fuller (Bedford) (Con): May I thank the Minister for his thoughtful responses to questions? Many outside observers of Yarl's Wood would say that its management has improved in the recent past, but however good it is, we are still dealing with some very vulnerable women. Many of them have sought asylum here because they were victims of rape or abuse, and just because they could not prove that to an immigration official does not mean that it did not happen. The current process for detaining women for immigration purposes seems to me to be ineffective, costly and unjust. Will my hon. Friend take the opportunity, after this tragic incident to bring a fresh pair of eyes to the whole process of the detention of women for immigration purposes?

James Brokenshire: I respect the close interest that my hon. Friend takes not simply in Yarl's Wood, but more generally. I underline the fact that there have been improvements at Yarl's Wood, and he referred to them. We are seeking to speed up decisions while maintaining high standards in asylum cases and more generally in the immigration system. That is why we took the decision to split the old UK Border Agency, with visas and immigration as a specific command in the Home Office—responding to and accountable to Ministers—to ensure that we improve our decisions and their timeliness.

Kate Green (Stretford and Urmston) (Lab): When previous reports of abuse against women in Yarl's Wood surfaced, a number of women believed that witnesses and victims were deported early to avoid their cases being followed up properly. Will the Minister absolutely assure the House that all relevant evidence, including witness evidence, will be gathered in the inquiries that he has instituted? When deportations are envisaged of people who might have evidence to offer, will the process be looked at very carefully so that the information is obtained properly?

James Brokenshire: It is right and proper that the ongoing police inquiry is pursued, and that the police should follow the evidence where it takes them. That is the right process. Clearly, we will support them in their ongoing investigations to ensure that they reach appropriate conclusions and, once they have finished their criminal investigations, that subsequent investigations are also concluded. I am certainly very clear that that needs to be pursued robustly and clearly to get to the facts of what has happened.

Bob Stewart (Beckenham) (Con): All Members of the House are greatly saddened to hear about the death of a woman in Yarl's Wood. Many of the people in Yarl's Wood are likely to be victims of the criminal gangs who got them into this country illegally. What measures is my hon. Friend taking to try to identify and deal with those criminal gangs?

James Brokenshire: My hon. Friend highlights an important point about immigration, crime and the trafficking of people into this country, which I have described as the trade in human misery. That is why we will introduce a modern slavery Bill. It is also why the immigration enforcement command in the Home Office is working with the National Crime Agency and others to secure the best intelligence for pursuing the organised criminals exploiting and trafficking people into this country so that they can be brought to justice and feel the full force of the law.

Gavin Shuker (Luton South) (Lab/Co-op): Before the news broke on Sunday morning, someone called me to describe the scene that had been reported to them when talking directly to detainees. This person told me that the mood was panicked and that other women detainees had passed out from shock at what had happened. Will the Minister give me an assurance that additional resources were deployed to help with the situation as early as Sunday morning?

James Brokenshire: I can only say that the centre director, to whom I have spoken, has said that additional resources were deployed and that additional support has been given to those in detention. I am sure that all the facts of the case will be pursued and investigated, and that will certainly cover the manner in which the incident was handled after the news broke. The centre director has told me that, recognising the distress caused by this tragic news, reassurance was given to those in detention and that further ongoing support is being provided.

Dr Julian Huppert (Cambridge) (LD): I add my support to the condolences and the plea for common sense in the case of Yashika. There is no doubt that Yarl's Wood has improved, not least with the ending of child detention, which was simply inhumane—I am glad we have stopped it. However, this country continues to be unique in routinely detaining migrants without any time limit, at huge expense—according to one estimate, it is £75 million. Will the Minister look at alternative, community-based solutions such as in Sweden, which gets a higher returns rate, costs less and is more humane?

James Brokenshire: We always look at ways in which detention is minimised. However, in a system in which we seek to remove, detention can and should be a means of managing that process. Certainly, we continue to monitor the situation carefully. I hear the point the hon. Gentleman makes, but there are no easy solutions. Sadly, we need to detain in some circumstances to ensure that our removals process operates effectively.

Mr Jim Cunningham (Coventry South) (Lab): What assessments are made of those women before they go into detention? Is there a medical check on their physical or mental status? How are they assessed?

James Brokenshire: Medical support is provided at each immigration removal centre and, when someone arrives, risk assessments are conducted. That was the process I saw on the visit I undertook to an IRC a few weeks back. It is about managing risk and ensuring that issues that need to be identified are picked up at the outset. I hope I can assure the hon. Gentleman that

steps are taken when new arrivals appear at IRCs to ensure that issues or any support required are appropriately identified.

Henry Smith (Crawley) (Con): Will the Minister confirm that the Government are making improvements to the way in which the immigration detention centre estate operates, particularly at Brook House, Tinsley House and the family Cedars centre in the Gatwick area?

James Brokenshire: I have been to Brook House and Tinsley House to see for myself the operating environment and conditions there. I have seen the focus given to ensuring that immigration removals centres are humane places to be, and that appropriate standards are undertaken. An inspection regime underpins that, but I can assure my hon. Friend of the focus, seriousness and weight of responsibility that the Government feel on such matters to ensure that the regime is continually monitored. Improvements can be made—significant improvements have been made over the past few years, but we need to do more.

Andrew Gwynne (Denton and Reddish) (Lab): In an earlier answer, the Minister referred to a review being conducted by the National Offender Management Service, which is welcome, but on the allegations of inappropriate sexual contact at Yarl's Wood, what examination is the Minister undertaking of Serco policy, management and staff supervision?

James Brokenshire: As I have highlighted, and as the chief inspectorate of prisons report highlights, further improvements are required. Steps have been taken, but serious reports have been made in the past. Yarl's Wood has a troubled past, but steps have been taken to move it forward. I can assure the hon. Gentleman that I, as a relatively new Minister for Security and Immigration, am focused on seeing that standards are further improved, and on ensuring that our immigration removal centres, which are necessary, do their work in a humane and fair way as part of supporting our immigration policy.

Greg Mulholland (Leeds North West) (LD): The appalling treatment of my constituent, Enid Ruhango, and her room-mate, Sophie Odogo, led to the damning 2006 report by Her Majesty's inspectorate of prisons. I am delighted to say that the courageous Enid is now living, as she should, as a member of the community in Leeds. Will the Minister tell me and the House exactly what was learned from that report in terms of access to medical treatment and humane treatment during transportation?

James Brokenshire: Significant changes and improvements have been made, including to the commissioning functions that the NHS has in respect of providing appropriate medical support in immigration removal centres. We constantly learn from cases as we seek to prevent further tragic incidents. I assure my hon. Friend that we will continue to do that, and I will focus on these issues of medical support in respect of Yarl's Wood. A report has been commissioned, and I will pursue the matter.

Charlie Elphicke (Dover) (Con): In reviewing this tragic case, will the Minister consider carefully the strong and passionate case that has been made over a long period by my hon. Friend the Member for Bedford (Richard Fuller)? Does the Minister also agree that too

[Charlie Elphicke]

many people are in these institutions for too long, including the Dover removal centre, and we should hurry up the processing as much as we can?

James Brokenshire: I agree that we should always seek to minimise the time that someone spends in detention, but appeals can often delay matters. The Immigration Bill will reduce appeals from 17 to four. We want to ensure that we have a firm but fair system, and that is what we will deliver.

Duncan Hames (Chippenham) (LD): I wholeheartedly support the appeal made by my hon. Friend the Member for Enfield, Southgate (Mr Burrowes). How can a Government who are rightly proud to have ended child detention for immigration purposes keep an 18-year-old, who is a star pupil at her school, out of the classroom and in detention at Yarl's Wood? What lessons should her fellow pupils learn from this episode?

James Brokenshire: I understand the concern my hon. Friend has expressed. I should just mention that the individual is 19, not 18. This case has been considered carefully by the Home Office and the courts, and it has been ruled that humanitarian assistance is not appropriate. The Home Secretary has indicated that it is not appropriate for us to intervene in such circumstances.

BILL PRESENTED

RECALL OF MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT

Presentation and First Reading (Standing Order No. 57)

Zac Goldsmith, supported by Mr Douglas Carswell, Mr Graham Stuart, Mr Dominic Raab, Nick de Bois, Mark Reckless, Mr Frank Field, Kate Hoey, Mr Michael Meacher and Caroline Lucas, presented a Bill to permit voters to recall their Member of Parliament in specified circumstances: and for connected purposes.

Bill read the First time; to be read a Second time on Friday 6 June, and to be printed (Bill 193).

Wales Bill

[Relevant documents: Fourth Report from the Welsh Affairs Committee, on the Pre-legislative scrutiny of the draft Wales Bill, HC 962, and the Government response which has been deposited in the Library.]

Second Reading

4.7 pm

The Secretary of State for Wales (Mr David Jones): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

The legislation before the House today delivers an ambitious package of devolved powers for Wales, including powers providing incentives and opportunities for the Welsh Government to grow the Welsh economy and increase prosperity; powers making the devolved institutions in Wales more accountable for raising some of the money they spend; and powers that make devolved governance in Wales fairer.

The Government have a strong record on Welsh devolution. We have delivered a referendum on full law-making powers, established the Silk Commission on Devolution in Wales, which has since published two comprehensive reports, and have now introduced the first Wales Bill in more than eight years. The Bill implements most of the recommendations that the Silk commission made in its first report. I wish to record my thanks to Paul Silk and his commissioners for the dedication and hard work with which they reviewed the case for devolving fiscal powers to the National Assembly.

The powers devolved to Wales by this Bill will, for the first time, make the devolved institutions in Wales—both the Welsh Government and the Assembly—directly accountable to the electorate for raising some of the money they spend. The Bill will give the Welsh Government more levers to enable it to deliver sustainable economic growth in Wales. It will also deliver borrowing powers that will allow the Welsh Government to invest more in critical infrastructure, not only in transport links such as the M4 and the A55, but in schools and hospitals.

The Silk commission included commissioners from all four political parties in the Assembly, and reached unanimous agreement on its recommendations. I hope that the same spirit of co-operation and broad consensus will extend to all parts of this House today in respect of the Bill.

Let me turn to the detail of the legislation. The Bill provides that the Assembly will assume responsibility for devolved taxes. These are, initially, a tax on land transactions and a tax on disposals to landfill, replacing stamp duty land tax and landfill tax in Wales. The commission recommended the devolution of both taxes. This will put new economic levers in the hands of the Assembly and the Welsh Government.

Geraint Davies (Swansea West) (Lab/Co-op): What does the Secretary of State say to the Mayor of London, Boris Johnson, who has now asked for stamp duty to be devolved to London, which would give him £1.3 billion? Is this not a charter for the proliferation of all sorts of competitive taxes across different parts of the United Kingdom?

Mr Jones: It seems to me that that is a concern of the Mayor of London and does not really fall within the scope of today's discussion.

Our proposal will put new economic levers in the hands of the Assembly and Welsh Government, while also providing independent streams of revenue to facilitate borrowing. It will help Welsh Ministers to grow the Welsh economy and ensure that its performance has a direct impact on their budget.

Jonathan Edwards (Carmarthen East and Dinefwr) (PC): In devolving those minor taxes, the UK Government are conceding the principle of fiscal empowerment for the Welsh Government. Why does the Secretary of State therefore feel the need to require a referendum on devolving income tax?

Mr Jones: Simply because it is an important constitutional step. It was given to the Scottish people in 1997, and we feel it is necessary to pay equal respect to the people of Wales on the occasion of the proposed devolution.

Hywel Williams (Arfon) (PC): Is it the principle of devolution or the practice—the specific nature of income tax devolution—that requires a referendum?

Mr Jones: Clearly it is the devolution of income tax, and I would remind the hon. Gentleman that this was specifically recommended by the Silk commission.

Jonathan Evans (Cardiff North) (Con): Has my right hon. Friend noticed in recent days—not just from the interventions so far, but from some Labour Back Benchers—the idea that there should not be a referendum and that the matter should be left to a general election, depriving the people of Wales of a vote?

Mr Jones: Yes, I have heard that, certainly from those on the Plaid Cymru Benches. I would simply repeat that it is appropriate that the people of Wales have their voices heard on such an important matter.

The Bill also provides a mechanism for additional taxes to be devolved in future, with the approval of both Houses of Parliament and the Assembly. I am pleased that the Bill delivers new borrowing powers to the Welsh Government—again, as recommended by the commission. As for capital borrowing, we are providing the Welsh Government with the ability to borrow up to £500 million to invest in capital infrastructure in Wales. That is a generous limit, allowing the Welsh Government to get going on the much needed upgrade of the M4 around Newport. It also reflects the independent funding streams for which the Welsh Government will assume responsibility through the two devolved taxes and is a limit that can be increased in future if the Welsh Government become responsible for additional taxation, including income tax.

Alun Cairns (Vale of Glamorgan) (Con): Does my right hon. Friend not agree that the project for a new motorway around Newport is essential? There has been far too much delay—it was cancelled by the Labour Administration back in 1997, despite the previous commitment. Today's announcement is basically the green light for the project to go ahead.

Mr Jones: Indeed. I think that everyone in the south Wales business community recognises that the M4 is indeed a foot on the windpipe of the economy and we

are anxious to see it upgraded. The competence that we shall be giving the Assembly Government—in fact, we have already extended it to them—will enable them to proceed as quickly as possible with that essential upgrade.

Chris Bryant (Rhondda) (Lab): While we are on infrastructure improvements, the Government here have much boasted that they will be electrifying the valleys lines. Every time they seemed to suggest that they would pay for it, but now it seems they are refusing, so who will actually be paying for the electrification of the valleys lines?

Mr Jones: We are skiing somewhat off piste, because that is not within the competence of this Bill, but there is clear correspondence between the Assembly Government and the Department for Transport on how the upgrade would be funded, and it is absolutely clear that the Welsh Government were paying for the upgrade of the valleys lines.

Owen Smith (Pontypridd) (Lab): Does the Secretary of State wish to deny that he said on several occasions that it was his Government who were paying for the electrification of the railways in Wales, including the valleys lines?

Mr Jones: What I will say is that we made it absolutely clear that this Government were paying, directly and indirectly, for the upgrade of the main line as far as Swansea and for the valleys lines. I think that if the hon. Gentleman has a word with his friend the First Minister, he will find that there was an exchange of correspondence between the two Administrations which made the funding arrangements very clear, as did an e-mail from the Office of Rail Regulation.

Geraint Davies: Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mr Jones: No; I will make some progress.

The Bill also provides for a referendum to be held in Wales on the devolution of an element of income tax, should the Assembly decide to call one. The Silk commission recommended that income tax devolution should be subject to a referendum, as it was in Scotland in 1997, and the Government agree with that recommendation. As I have said in the House on several occasions, I should like the Assembly to call a referendum as soon as it is able to do so, and I personally would support a yes vote in such a referendum. It would make the Welsh Government, and the Assembly, significantly more accountable to the people who elect them.

Stephen Mosley (City of Chester) (Con): Has my right hon. Friend been able to give any consideration to the impact that changing tax rates in Wales will have on cross-border regions, particularly the economic sub-region that covers Chester and north-east Wales? Has any assessment been made of what would happen if the rates on the two sides of the border were different?

Mr Jones: Indeed. As my hon. Friend will know, there was a separate consultation on that very issue. It is another element that will be taken into consideration during the debate on the referendum.

Wayne David (Caerphilly) (Lab): The Secretary of State has put it on record that in his view, the Barnett formula is coming to the end of its life. What progress have the Government made in reforming it?

Mr Jones: We have made it very clear that we need to rebalance the finances of this country before we will consider that. Let me remind the hon. Gentleman, however, that in October 2012 there was a specific agreement between the Welsh Government and the Treasury that on the occasion of each spending review there would be an assessment of the issue of convergence, and that is indeed what happened on the last occasion.

Owen Smith: The Secretary of State said a moment ago that he would be voting yes and campaigning for a yes vote in a referendum on tax-varying powers. May I take him back to the time when he was a Member of the Welsh Assembly? In his maiden speech, he said:

“We have no tax-raising powers—long may that state of affairs continue.”

When did he change his mind?

Mr Jones: That was some 12 years ago, and, of course, we all change our minds. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman changed his mind in the light of his experiences in the Blaenau Gwent election, the first election that he fought.

David T. C. Davies (Monmouth) (Con): As one who has not changed his mind, may I ask whether the Secretary of State was as surprised as I was to read in the *Western Mail* that Opposition Members are offering to give the Assembly the power to raise income tax by up to 15%—and this only a few years after they all seemed to agree that the Assembly had the tools with which to do the job?

Mr Jones: Indeed: a Damascene conversion. The hon. Member for Pontypridd (Owen Smith) is a particular enthusiast—he now believes that 15p should be devolved to the Assembly, whereas as recently as 5 February he clearly stated that he did not believe in any tax devolution at all. He will clearly have some interesting explaining to do later in the debate.

Owen Smith: I think that the Secretary of State has just misquoted me. He will know that what I have said previously in the House on several occasions is that I do not believe in tax competition.

Mr Jones: The hon. Gentleman changes his mind with astonishing regularity. For example, on 5 February, in a Welsh Grand Committee debate, he said:

“I do not believe for a moment that having additional responsibility for tax-varying powers would confer any extra degree of accountability on the Welsh people.”—[*Official Report, Welsh Grand Committee, 5 February 2014; c. 18.*]

However, during last weekend’s speech to the Welsh Labour party conference, he spoke glowingly of the prospect of devolving 15p in the pound and said that that would

“increase both the accountability of the Assembly and its borrowing capacity too.”

He is clearly a bit at odds with himself, and we look forward to hearing what he has to say later on.

Mr Peter Hain (Neath) (Lab): Will the Secretary of State explain how, with income tax devolution, Wales will continue to benefit—like, for example, north-east England, a comparable area, does—from the redistribution of income and wealth that comes through the Barnett formula, albeit imperfectly, from the 40% of GDP that exists in London and the south-east of England if income tax is devolved?

Mr Jones: That is an important point and it is a matter that would have to be debated in a referendum. My own view, as the right hon. Gentleman knows, is that Wales would benefit from a modest reduction in the rate of income tax, but I have to remind him that all we are talking about is a referendum that would empower the Welsh Government to decide on the rate of tax they want to charge the Welsh people. If they decided they did not wish to do that, there would be no compulsion on them to do so. However, it would provide Wales with an additional borrowing stream referable to the level of income tax devolved. It would also provide a powerful incentive to the Assembly Government to grow the Welsh economy, because clearly the more the economy grows, the more would be the revenue.

Mr Hain: I understand the Secretary of State’s point. However, I find it very interesting that he has not got an answer to my question—namely, how would Wales continue to benefit from the vast wealth that exists in a relatively limited area and is redistributed right across the UK? The fact that he does not have a clear answer makes me extremely sceptical about this entire proposal.

Mr Jones: Clearly, Wales would not be deprived of Barnett consequentials; the right hon. Gentleman knows that. We would have an additional tool for the Welsh Government to use, should they decide to do so, in growing the Welsh economy. I would have hoped he would be bold, because he has spoken in the past of the need to grow the private sector in Wales. I would have thought a small differential in the rate of tax would be a significant incentive to that private sector growth.

Mr Hain: The Secretary of State is being generous in giving way, but this is an important point. The Barnett consequentials will continue to come through from that portion of income tax which remains reserved to the Treasury, but the bit that is devolved under the scenario the right hon. Gentleman proposes would not, unless there was some kind of compensating mechanism which is not described. That is what makes me extremely sceptical about this.

Mr Jones: Some of what is passed to the Assembly would be subject to indexation every year. This would take into account both growth and contraction in the wider UK economy, so there is a mechanism built into the Bill that addresses the right hon. Gentleman’s point.

Mark Tami (Alyn and Deeside) (Lab): As the hon. Member for City of Chester (Stephen Mosley) has made clear, this is not just about the Welsh economy; it is about the cross-border economy. Changing tax rates, whether personal or business, will obviously have an impact both sides of the border.

Mr Jones: The hon. Gentleman is entirely right, which is why the Government went out to further consultation before announcing their response to the

commission's recommendations. Again, these are points he would no doubt raise in the context of a referendum debate, and given the view he has just expressed, he would clearly be voting against the proposal.

Mrs Cheryl Gillan (Chesham and Amersham) (Con): I congratulate the Secretary of State on introducing this Bill. I approve of virtually all its contents. I was reading a document produced by the Government in March this year on financial empowerment and accountability, and I was greatly heartened to read that if the Welsh rate of income tax is implemented following a referendum, the Government have accepted the Silk commission's recommendation that the block grant adjustment should be determined using the index reduction mechanism originally proposed by the Holtham commission. If I remember correctly, those proposals were supported by the Labour party. It goes on to say:

"The detailed operation of the system will be discussed with the Welsh Government."

Surely that is the assurance that we need to hear and that will make sure Wales gets its fair share.

Mr Jones: My right hon. Friend is entirely right. The indexation proposals would amount to a damp, which would effectively smooth out any peaks and troughs in relation to overall UK income and act as a strong reassurance to the Assembly Government. While I am on my feet, I would like to thank my right hon. Friend for her part in commissioning the work of the Silk commission in the first place.

Wayne David: Has the Secretary of State resolved his differences with the leader of the Conservative group in the Welsh Assembly on income tax devolution?

Mr Jones: The leader of the Conservative group in the Welsh Assembly, and indeed the group as a whole, fully support the legislation before us.

Owen Smith: Will the Secretary of State explain how the indexation method works? Has the Treasury done any analysis on whether the Welsh people would be better or worse off if the rates were not amended at all in Wales? At the moment, that is unclear.

Mr Jones: It should be entirely clear to the hon. Gentleman, because the Under-Secretary of State for Wales, my hon. Friend the Member for Preseli Pembrokeshire (Stephen Crabb) took the trouble to write to the Chairman of the Grand Committee, the hon. Member for Gower (Martin Caton), on 10 February, setting out these matters in great detail. I know that a copy of that letter was sent to the hon. Gentleman, and he will know, having read it, that the provisions are as follows:

"In the first year of operation (and any transitional years) the block grant adjustment will equal the amount of tax revenue generated by the Welsh rate of income tax set at 10p. It is important to note the following:

This is the amount of income tax forfeited by the UK Government as a result of reducing the main rates of income tax by 10p in Wales. If the Welsh Government sets a rate of 10p then there will be no impact on their budget compared to current arrangements. By setting a rate of, for example, 11p or 9p the Welsh Government can increase or decrease its budget (respectively) compared to current arrangements, as the block grant adjustment will still be

based on the 10p forfeited by the UK Government. That means that the higher or lower revenue resulting from a rate of 11p or 9p (rather than 10p) would not be netted off the block grant."

Chris Bryant: Riveting.

Mr Jones: Well, the hon. Member for Pontypridd had not read this letter, so I am reading it out to him. It goes on:

"In subsequent years the initial deduction is indexed against movements in the UK NSND"—

that is, not savings, not dividends—

"income tax base. That means that if the UK NSND income tax base contracts by 2%, the block grant adjustment will decrease by 2%; if the tax base grows by 2%, the adjustment will increase by 2%."

That should have been absolutely clear to the hon. Gentleman, but he clearly did not read the letter, so I am glad to have had this opportunity to acquaint him with its contents. It clearly contains the reassurance that he seeks.

Owen Smith: Will the Minister give way?

Mr Jones: No, I will not give way.

Subject to the outcome of a referendum, the legislation provides for the introduction of a Welsh rate of income tax. The main UK rates of income tax would be reduced by 10p for Welsh taxpayers, and the Assembly would be able to set a new Welsh rate—a whole number or half a whole number—which would be added to the reduced UK rates. The rest of the income tax structure would remain a matter for this Parliament.

The Silk commission estimated that reducing the Welsh rate of income tax by 1p would cost the Welsh Government around £185 million, without taking account of any gains resulting from people moving to Wales to take advantage of lower tax rates. That is not an insignificant amount of money, but lower rates of income tax would boost the spending power of working people in Wales and bolster growth in the Welsh economy. Stronger economic growth in Wales could deliver a real boost in tax revenues, providing the Welsh Government with more resources to invest in devolved services and infrastructure across Wales.

Some Opposition Members, most notably the hon. Member for Pontypridd, have suggested that the devolution of an element of income tax is some sort of unspecified coalition trap, set to ensnare the Welsh Government.

Geraint Davies: May I ask for clarification on something, because my right hon. Friend the Member for Neath (Mr Hain) talked about the levels up to the current rate? At a marginal tax rate of one extra penny, the gross value added in Wales is 70% that of the UK. My understanding is therefore that the extra penny charged locally in Wales would generate less income than an extra penny charged across the UK and then transferred over to Wales—so we would lose out, would we not?

Mr Jones: For the reasons I have explained, there would be no loss. May I remind the hon. Gentleman, as I reminded the right hon. Member for Neath, that there would be no compulsion on the Assembly Government to change the rate of tax? This is simply an issue of whether or not the competence should be devolved. Once it is devolved, it is then a matter for the Assembly to decide what the Welsh rate of tax should be.

Jonathan Edwards (Carmarthen East and Dinefwr) (PC): The Secretary of State mentioned that one of the main reasons for devolving income tax was to incentivise the Welsh Government, yet he handcuffs them with his proposed lockstep, which was not included in the Silk recommendations. In the unlikely event of a no vote in Scotland, does he expect the lockstep to remain in Scotland following its referendum?

Mr Jones: I am not here to speculate on what will happen in Scotland in September, but I will talk about the lockstep in a moment—no doubt the hon. Gentleman will be paying close attention and intervening as he considers appropriate.

The reality is that this legislation—income tax devolution following a referendum—is a real opportunity to be seized with both hands by the Welsh Government. It is an opportunity to make Wales more competitive and to make the Welsh Government more accountable, as the hon. Member for Pontypridd now agrees. Our challenge to those who view the devolution of income tax negatively is not to shy away from this opportunity, but to seize the moment with enthusiasm and support the proposals in this Bill for a referendum on income tax devolution.

The Silk commission recommended that the Welsh Government should be able to set separate Welsh rates of income tax for each of the three income tax bands, but the Government believe that a single Welsh rate for all three bands—the so-called “lockstep”—is the right system for Wales. The same system is being introduced in Scotland under the Scotland Act 2012. The Government have a responsibility to take a UK-wide view: to consider the interests not only of Wales, but of the United Kingdom as a whole, including Wales. If the devolution of income tax is supported in a referendum, the lockstep mechanism would be the best way to maintain a progressive tax system that redistributes wealth across the whole of the UK but does not unnecessarily benefit one part of the UK at the expense of another.

The Bill also devolves responsibility to the Assembly for its own budgetary arrangements, so that it can establish new procedures for scrutinising and setting the annual budget. That was also recommended by the Silk commission, and by the Welsh Affairs Committee following its pre-legislative scrutiny of the draft Wales Bill. The Bill before us today and the Command Paper the Government have published alongside it have benefited greatly from the Select Committee’s thorough and rigorous scrutiny, and I am grateful to all hon. Members on that Committee for their hard work.

Although the majority of the Bill is devoted to fiscal devolution, the legislation also implements a number of other important reforms: it permanently moves the Assembly to five-year terms; it removes the prohibition on dual candidacy; and it makes provision to preclude Assembly Members from simultaneously being Members of this House. Those are all changes which we consulted on in our Green Paper in 2012. The move to permanent five-year terms will make it less likely that Assembly elections will clash with UK general elections, now that the length of Parliaments is fixed at five years. It is important that Assembly elections should be contested, wherever possible, on issues specific to Wales, and the Bill ensures that they will not be overshadowed by the wider issues that often dominate elections to this House.

Chris Bryant: The Secretary of State has used the word “accountable” 14 times so far in his speech and has talked about how this Bill will make politicians in Wales more accountable, but it is going to mean that there will be fewer elections. Does that not make them less accountable?

Mr Jones: I would not have thought so. By the way, I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for counting how many times I have used the word “accountable”. That now makes 15. I would have thought that he would be concerned to ensure that Assembly elections were not overshadowed by general elections, and that in my book makes for accountability.

Mr Mark Harper (Forest of Dean) (Con): I am surprised by the hon. Gentleman’s intervention. When the Fixed Term Parliaments Act 2011 was going through this House, it was Labour’s First Minister in Wales who agreed that the date of the Assembly election in Wales should be moved to 2016 so that it would not coincide with the general election. The hon. Gentleman does not seem to be joined up with his own party.

Mr Jones: My hon. Friend was involved in that Bill, and he is of course entirely right.

Chris Bryant: The thing is, it is the former Minister who is not very joined up with his own memory. At the time, Labour voted for a four-year fixed-term Parliament in here, which would have meant a four-year fixed term for Wales as well. In that way, we would not have had to coincide and we would have had greater accountability. Let us have a general election now, shall we?

Mr Jones: As we have five-year terms for general elections, we take the view that we should also have five-year terms for Assembly elections.

The removal of the ban on dual candidacy restores the position to how it was in the Government of Wales Act 1998. I believe that the change is supported by all parties other than the Labour party, which introduced the ban in the first place. The ban on so called “double-jobbing” between the Assembly and this House addresses legitimate concerns about whether it is possible for someone adequately to represent constituents’ interests in two elected legislatures at the same time.

The legislation also implements several changes that have been specifically requested by the Welsh Government, including formally enshrining that name—the Welsh Government—in statute, as it has been common parlance for the Welsh Assembly Government to be so referred to for several years now.

In responding to the Silk commission’s recommendations, the Government made it clear that we were unconvinced by the case for devolving air passenger duty to Wales, so the Bill makes no provision for that. Neither does it make provision for the full devolution of business rates. That is because, in terms of legislative competence, business rates fall within the devolved subject of local government finance and so we need make no further provision in this Bill. In order fully to devolve business rates, the Government are amending current funding arrangements so that the Welsh Government benefit directly from revenues raised by that tax in Wales.

Finally, as I said in my written statement to this House on 3 March, we do not see this Bill as an appropriate vehicle for implementing the recommendations made by the Silk commission in its second report. The commission's second report raises crucial questions about the future governance of Wales within the United Kingdom, and it would not be right to rush into implementing its recommendations without careful assessment. It is essential that we take the time needed to get things right. Consequently, the Bill is focused on devolving the package of tax and borrowing powers to Wales recommended by the commission in its first report. Including a whole raft of other powers would merely serve to delay the Bill and jeopardise its enactment before the 2015 general election.

The Government believe that devolution should be used to give a competitive edge to Wales, and that powers devolved should be used to grow the Welsh economy and make Wales a more prosperous place. The Bill will deliver that. It will make devolved governance in Wales fairer, more accountable and better able to support economic growth. I hope, and I believe, that we can achieve a broad consensus in this House around this Bill, and make rapid progress. I commend the Bill to the House.

4.38 pm

Owen Smith (Pontypridd) (Lab): This is an important debate and an important Bill. There are four broad issues under discussion. The Secretary of State has described some of them—some in more detail than others. I shall explain to the House why he glossed over some of them. The four areas I want to discuss are the electoral arrangements, the devolution of the minor taxes, the borrowing powers—the amount of borrowing in particular—and the devolution of income tax varying powers for Wales.

Let me start with electoral arrangements, which the Secretary of State glossed over in just a few phrases. The reason for that will become clear. The changes in the Bill include a reversal of the Government of Wales Act 2006 ban on candidates standing both under first past the post and on the proportional representation list in Wales. The reason that the previous Labour Government decided to introduce that ban ought to be well understood by the Secretary of State, as it stemmed from a Tammany hall-style example of an election that took place in his constituency of Clwyd West in 2003. On that occasion, the winning Labour candidate was elected on first past the post, while the losing Liberal Democrat, Conservative and Plaid Cymru candidates were also all elected, by the back door and on the back list—Tammany hall in Clwyd West. The system was designed by an earlier Labour Government, but we decided that it was clearly at odds with democracy in Wales. We decided that the people of Wales would not understand how losers could become winners.

Jonathan Evans: How can the hon. Gentleman say that that was by the back door? In essence, he is saying that those people who serve on regional lists are lesser Members of the Assembly than constituency members under a system that his Government introduced.

Owen Smith: No, I was not saying that for a moment. I was saying that I thought that the people of Wales looked askance at losers standing on two separate tickets—

first past the post and on the list—to get themselves elected. We have seen why the Opposition oppose that; we believe in democracy and we believe in democracy being seen to be done. We also know why the Government want to reintroduce it in Wales and to allow people to stand both under first past the post and on the list. That reason is captured clearly in the explanatory notes to the Bill, which say explicitly that the measure will benefit smaller parties with a smaller pool of candidates—that is, the Tory party in Wales.

Wayne David: Does my hon. Friend agree that the proposed change is in danger of giving the impression that there is somehow a political elite whose members are nevertheless elected even when they lose elections?

Owen Smith: That is precisely the impression that it gives. The rationale, as I say, is very clear. The policy only benefits the minority parties in Wales—the Tory party, of course, is a minority party in Wales. It specifically benefits Leanne Wood, the leader of Plaid Cymru in Wales, who intends to stand under first past the post and on the list. I put it to the Secretary of State that the people of Wales will not look well on his gerrymandering elections in Wales in this fashion.

Hywel Williams (Arfon) (PC): As we have a unified British Labour party, did the hon. Gentleman make those arguments to the Labour party in Scotland, where a Minister was elected on a dual mandate? Did he campaign to get that Minister sacked?

Owen Smith: I am not talking about Scotland today; I am talking about Wales. I am talking about the Clwyd West scandal, which the Secretary of State oversaw. I am talking about the fact that this measure is clearly in the interests of the Tory party and nationalist allies, which is why our nationalist colleagues are so keen to intervene.

Mr David Jones *rose*—

Owen Smith: Clearly, the Secretary of State is going to explain it differently.

Mr Jones: In the first place, let me say that I object quite strongly to the hon. Gentleman's suggestion that I would ever be involved in gerrymandering, particularly given that it was his party that introduced this atrocity in the first place in the 2006 Act. May I refer him to what Professor Roger Scully said in his written evidence to the Welsh Affairs Committee:

“If parties that are defeated at constituency level can still win representation through the list, then it is difficult to see why that should not also apply to individuals?”

Individuals represent parties; where they happen to be standing makes no difference at all.

Owen Smith: I am just getting over the fact that the Secretary of State referred to what we thought was a fairly simple safeguarding of democracy as an “atrocity”. I am pleased that I let him intervene, because he chose to read out a piece of evidence given to the consultation on the measure. I note, however, that the Secretary of State failed to inform the House that the overwhelming majority of respondents to the consultation were opposed to the measure. Clearly, this is a nakedly partisan reversal

[Owen Smith]

by the current Government. Let me be clear with the House: if we get the opportunity to win back power in this place, we will reverse the measure.

Glyn Davies (Montgomeryshire) (Con): The hon. Gentleman is making the point forcefully against the proposed change. Can he put to us any independent evidence—there is Labour party evidence, yes, but any authoritative independent evidence—that supports what he is saying?

Owen Smith: I put to the hon. Gentleman the impact assessment and the explanatory notes from his own Government. They make it clear that this is a partisan measure that will only benefit the minority parties in Wales, among which we count the Conservative party. That is what this is about.

Chris Bryant: Is it not particularly irritating that Leanne Wood can stand in Rhondda? She has done it before: she stood in 2001 for the parliamentary seat and lost very heavily. The people of Rhondda will, I am sure, return Leighton Andrews in the next Assembly elections, because he is the best Assembly Member in Wales. They cannot prevent Leanne Wood being elected, however, because they have no means of affecting the order on the Plaid Cymru list. She gets two goes.

Owen Smith: Absolutely. The only thing I would contest in my hon. Friend's intervention is the suggestion that Leighton Andrews is the best Assembly Member in Wales. That particular accolade goes, of course, to Mick Antoniw, the AM for Pontypridd.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Mrs Eleanor Laing): Order. It is best if in this Chamber we discuss principles, rather than the party political chances of individual candidates.

Owen Smith: I am very grateful to you, Madam Deputy Speaker. I simply point out that the explanatory notes referred to the rationale behind the measure as being to help the party political chances of the minority parties in Wales. That is clearly what this is about.

Mr Harper: This is not on personalities, Madam Deputy Speaker. I just wanted to pick up on the point helpfully made by the hon. Member for Rhondda (Chris Bryant). Will the shadow Secretary of State tell us whether the Labour party is proposing, for both Westminster and Wales, to revert to elections in four-year terms, or whether it will stick to the five years in the Fixed-term Parliaments Act 2011?

Owen Smith: My hon. Friend the Member for Rhondda made Labour's position clear. We are opposed to the gerrymandering shift from four years to five years to maximise the amount of time the coalition can hang on to power. However, we accept that the First Minister of Wales and the Welsh Government would like to see the term extended to guarantee, as the Secretary of State put it, that there will not be a clash between elections in Wales and Westminster. In explaining Labour's position, my hon. Friend the Member for Rhondda is entirely right. We still feel that four years is preferable, and that

five is far too long and diminishes accountability. That said, we will accept this shift and we will support this aspect of the Bill.

On double-jobbing, the third aspect of the electoral arrangements, Labour has always been clear. It has always had an internal party position whereby it does not support people having dual mandates, standing for election and holding office in the Assembly and in Westminster. We are therefore pleased that the Government are moving into line with Labour on this and we will support this aspect of the Bill.

Ian Lucas (Wrexham) (Lab): I am interested in my hon. Friend's observation on double-jobbing. Does he agree that it is inappropriate for Assembly Members to stand as prospective parliamentary candidates while, at the same time, serving as AMs? In particular, is it not inappropriate for them to open up constituency offices in the seats that they are fighting? Will he support an amendment to prevent AMs standing as prospective parliamentary candidates?

Owen Smith: I will have to look carefully at my hon. Friend's proposal and take it into consideration. I would not want to discourage Members from moving back and forth between the Assembly and Westminster, which I think is a positive state of affairs that should be encouraged, but I note the point he makes so eloquently.

Mark Tami: Further to that point, the offices they opened are also funded by the taxpayer. Does my hon. Friend think that is right?

Owen Smith: That is a very good point that we ought to consider. I would, of course, not support parliamentary or Assembly expenses being deployed for party political reasons.

I will move on to the minor taxes, particularly stamp duty land tax and landfill tax. We heard very little detail from the Secretary of State—[*Interruption.*] Well, there was very little sport there for anyone to have, to be perfectly honest. Hopefully we will have a bit more sport with the Secretary of State now. We will support the devolution of stamp duty land tax and landfill tax to Wales. However, there are many questions about how that will be implemented, so we will seek clarification during the passage of the Bill. Perhaps he will take note of some of these points now so that his Minister can respond to some of them later.

The first point concerns the suggestion that properties on the border between Wales and England would somehow be split, with stamp duty land tax being charged on the English portion and whatever its successor tax is being charged on the Welsh portion. It is an interesting concept. Will the Secretary of State tell us at some point during the passage of the Bill how many such properties there are on the border, given how populous it is? Will he tell us how the Government propose splitting those properties, as in many instances they are houses straddling the border? Will there be a number of bedrooms in England and a number in Wales? We know that the Government are keen on taxing bedrooms.

The second point relates to the cost of devolving that to Wales. We understand from the Bill that the Welsh Government will be asked to pay for the administration of any new tax, which is fair and just, and that that will

be offset by any reduction in the cost to Her Majesty's Government of administering the taxes as they had previously done in Wales. Given that the Secretary of State and the Treasury—this was confirmed by the Exchequer Secretary—have conducted little or no analysis of the impact of those various schemes in Wales, will he tell us how much he thinks it will cost the Welsh Government to administer and how much the offset will be?

On the even more important question of the reduction in the block grant that will come about as a result of the changes—it will be reduced by around £200 million and reviewed periodically—will the Secretary of State comment at some point during the Bill's passage on the volatility associated with stamp duty land tax, because that figure of £200 million varies radically over time? Will he also tell us how he will calculate any differential in the rise and fall of house prices in England and Wales? By way of illustration, stamp duty land tax revenues in Wales have varied wildly over the past 20 years. They were £20 million in 1997, up to £95 million in 2003 and £130 million in 2005, and then down to £55 million in 2008-09 and £65 million last year. It is an extremely volatile tax, so I would be intrigued to know how the Treasury will account for it in any indexed reduction in the block grant, because that will have a significant impact on both the borrowing powers and, potentially, the revenues of the Welsh Assembly Government.

Geraint Davies: As I am sure my hon. Friend knows, over the past year house price inflation has been 13.2% in London and 6.8% across the UK. As I mentioned earlier, Boris Johnson is asking for stamp duty in London, where historically prices have always gone up faster. Is he at all concerned about the differential impact of stamp duty revenues, which he has alluded to already, plus pressure from elsewhere in the UK to have that tax resulting in a less fair and more complicated and confusing situation?

Owen Smith: That is a legitimate question. I have said previously that although we will support the devolution of stamp duty land tax and landfill tax and the putting of the income tax question to Wales, we remain concerned about tax competition. Over time, that might result in other parts of Britain wishing for similar degrees of autonomy, thereby reducing the ability of the central Exchequer to pool resources, share risk and redistribute from wealthier to less wealthy parts of Britain. That abiding concern of mine needs to be considered.

David T. C. Davies: Will the hon. Gentleman clarify his point? If he believes that the Assembly should have the power to vary income tax by up to 15p in the pound, there will inevitably be some form of tax competition—unless he wants to give the Assembly the power to prevent anywhere else from varying its levels of income tax.

Owen Smith: That is not inevitable at all. I shall discuss the issue later in my speech, when I will answer the hon. Gentleman in full.

Jonathan Edwards: In Scotland, the hon. Gentleman's party proposes to devolve responsibility for 40% of the Scottish block grant in terms of tax revenues. How does that sit with the doomsday scenario of tax competition that he has just outlined?

Owen Smith: As I will explain later, and as I am sure the hon. Gentleman knows from my speech yesterday, we propose to replicate in Wales what is suggested by my party for Scotland. Wales will have exactly the same powers under a Labour Government. We can trust a Labour Government not to want to cut the top rate of tax and increase the unfairness of our tax system—unlike Plaid Cymru, whose economic adviser, much like the Secretary of State for Wales and the Tory leader in Wales, would like to reduce the top rate of tax.

Stephen Mosley: Tax competition will, of course, have an impact on both sides of the border. That impact will depend on whether the Welsh Assembly Government increase or decrease taxes. Does the Welsh Labour party want higher or lower tax rates in Wales?

Owen Smith: We want fair and equitable tax rates across Britain. That is why we propose to amend the Bill so that, if a Tory Government in Westminster continue to increase the injustice and unfairness of our tax system by making further cuts to taxes on the wealthiest, Welsh values and Welsh beliefs about social justice can implement a decent and equitable rate of taxation.

Alun Cairns *rose*—

Owen Smith: No, I am going to move on. If the hon. Gentleman holds his water, I shall come back to income tax later.

Landfill tax is relatively uncontroversial save for the link to borrowing, to which I shall come later. There is also the link to the landfill communities fund. We heard nothing from the Secretary of State about that, but it is paid to communities with landfill sites within their boundaries. Has the Secretary of State done any analysis about the value of that fund to Wales? How much is collected and how much has been spent in Wales? How many landfill sites are there in Wales in comparison with England?

The Secretary of State is proposing that the landfill tax community fund also be devolved to Wales and that Wales should become responsible for meeting the costs of implementing a revised Welsh landfill scheme. Given that elsewhere in the Bill, the Secretary of State proposes that HMRC duties should not be replicated in Wales, why does he think the implementation of the landfill communities fund should be devolved? Is that yet another example of his wishing to pass responsibilities to Wales without there being the requisite resources?

We absolutely support the extension of borrowing powers to Wales. They are vital to make up for the £1.7 billion cut in funding for Wales—an almost 40% cut in capital funds—that the Government have implemented since 2010.

It is crucial that the Welsh Government be given the ability to borrow in order to try to back-fill the enormous holes in their budget left by the Secretary of State and his colleagues.

There are two measures relating to borrowing in Bill, both with limits of £500 million—one to cover volatility in tax receipts and the other to cover capital. I wish to talk about the latter. The Silk commission, whose recommendations the Secretary of State keeps telling us he has largely stuck to, said that £1.3 billion should be

[Owen Smith]

devolved to Wales for capital borrowing, but the Bill limits it to £500 million. The Secretary of State says, as he repeated earlier, that the rationale for that is to draw a connection between the amount of money devolved to Wales—the volume of taxes—and the volume of money that might be borrowed. The Secretary of State says, as does the Command Paper on the Bill, that that is just like the position of Scotland. In fact, the Command Paper goes further than he did in saying that the Bill is generous given that in Scotland over £5 billion of taxes are devolved and £2.2 billion of borrowing is allowed—£220 million each year—and that if a similar ratio were applied to Wales, then Wales would get not £500 million but £100 million.

The problem with that rationale is that it is not true. The Scotland Act does not draw a connection, as the Secretary of State suggests, between the amount of taxes devolved to Scotland and the amount of borrowing. The Command Paper associated with the Scotland Bill said:

“Scottish Ministers will be allowed to borrow up to 10% of the Scottish capital budget any year to fund capital expenditure”—that is, £230 million of an overall stock of £2.2 billion. The Scotland Act drew a clear correlation between the size of the capital budget and the amount that could be borrowed. The Command Paper for the Wales Bill, which the Secretary of State said was just like that for the Scotland Bill, reads:

“Specifically, the Scottish Government’s capital borrowing limit is £2.2 billion while it is taking on responsibility for tax revenues that are currently worth around £5 billion. Hence the ratio between the two is slightly less than 1:2. Applying the same tax/borrowing ratio in Wales would have given the Welsh Government a limit of around £100 million.”

The crucial question is why the Government have moved the goalposts for Wales. Why cannot Wales have the same rationale for its volume of borrowing as the Scots? That would give us about £1 billion-worth of borrowing—between £1 billion and £1.5 billion—rather than the paltry £500 million on offer.

Moreover, given the volatility of all tax returns, how sensible is it for the Government to draw a direct line between the receipts that Wales receives and the amount it can borrow? What if those receipts declined? What if we were in another recession? We would therefore see, I presume, a reduction in the amount of borrowing that Wales could undertake, which would frankly be economic stupidity.

Geraint Davies: Does my hon. Friend agree that there is a danger of moving the focus from Wales having its fair share of capital investment—for example, on transport, where there is £5,000 per head for transport in London and about £500 in Wales—so that as soon as we get more borrowing powers the Government will say, “You pay for the valleys line electrification—you can borrow the money”? Is this not an excuse for making Wales pay out more from less?

Owen Smith: That is absolutely right. That is what we have been most concerned about throughout the passage of this Bill, and we describe it as a trap. The Tory party is seeking to wash its hands of Wales, and it is not interested in funding capital expenditure properly in

Wales. We have therefore seen that the valleys line promise was not worth the paper it was written on, and the words of the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State were equally worthless. We are deeply concerned that this will be an excuse for the Tory Government to ask the people with the shallowest pockets in Britain to put their hands deepest into them to fund things that traditionally would have come through general taxation and from the wider benefits of our economic union.

On income tax, let me be clear: we are and remain opposed to tax competition across Britain. We believe in an economic and social union and in the ability of the central state to pool resources, share risk, and share rewards. That is especially true in Wales, as we are a net beneficiary—indeed, the greatest one—of that principle of progressivity and risk-sharing across Britain. That is why we remain opposed to the principle of undercutting one part of Britain with lower taxes in another, which is what the Secretary of State is proposing. We agree with the Government that the principle of progressivity ought to be retained. That is why we agree, broadly speaking, with the notion of the lockstep to tie bands together. But we have deep and abiding concerns about the hidden agenda that the Conservative party has, along with its nationalist colleagues, for greater tax competition in Britain.

We have reason for that concern, because the plans are not terribly well hidden. We have already heard that the leader of the Welsh Conservative group wishes to cut just the top rate of tax and that the economic adviser to the leader of the nationalist party in Wales wishes to do the same, and cut taxes only for the wealthiest in Wales. If we need any further illustration, we simply have to look at this Government’s record: they introduced a millionaire’s tax cut even as they increased VAT, which is paid, regressively, by the least well-off people in Britain.

Daniel Kawczynski (Shrewsbury and Atcham) (Con) *indicated dissent.*

Owen Smith: The hon. Member for Shrewsbury and Atcham (Daniel Kawczynski) shakes his head. I presume he is pleased, is he, that the poorest of his constituents in Shrewsbury pay more as a proportion of their income as a result of the VAT increases that his party brought in? Or is he not pleased that they are paying that? [Interruption.] If he wants to intervene, I will happily sit down. I give way to his colleague.

David T. C. Davies: I am genuinely confused by what the hon. Gentleman is saying. On the one hand, at the Labour party conference, he went out and said that a Labour Government would give the Assembly the powers to vary tax by up to 15%, which is 15p in the pound. He also made that point earlier on. But now he is saying that he does not believe in any sort of competition and so one would presume that he does not think that the Assembly should be able to vary taxes at all. Unless he is suggesting that the Assembly should now have the power to tell central Government the level at which to set taxation, I do not see how he can hold those two completely contrasting positions. Will he please explain?

Owen Smith: With the greatest respect to the hon. Gentleman, it is not hard to get him confused—I say that with full respect and friendship, of course.

We have reason for our concern, because of the way in which the Tory Government have cut taxes. Labour believes that taxes should be fair and progressive, and accepts that it is not unreasonable for the Government, as they hand over borrowing powers to Wales, to draw some connection between the amount of borrowing and the amount of taxes devolved to Wales, especially given the massive cut to the capital budget. That is why we have decided that we will support the question of the devolution of taxes being put to the people of Wales, subject to what we have called a triple lock.

First, there must be an agreement that there will be fair funding for Wales, and an acknowledgment that, as Holtham has pointed out, convergence is a disbenefit for Wales. Secondly, we need an agreement that the proposal will leave Wales better off, not worse off. The Secretary of State read out the mechanics of indexation earlier on, but failed singularly to address the question I asked, which was whether the Government have conducted any sort of analysis as to whether Wales will be better or worse off, over time, given the volatility of taxes in both places. I suspect that he has not done that analysis and that is why he could not answer my substantive question of whether will Wales be better or worse off.

Mr Harper: I will tell the hon. Gentleman if he gives way.

Owen Smith: If the hon. Gentleman is going to tell us whether Wales will be better or worse off, I will be very grateful to him.

Mr Harper: I was listening carefully to the shadow Secretary of State about being better off and worse off, particularly with regard to those on lower incomes. In the Budget of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor we increased personal allowances for everyone, including those on the lowest incomes. Why did he and his party vote against those tax cuts for low and middle-income earners?

Owen Smith: We will take not a single lesson from any Government Members about how to provide for the most vulnerable people in Britain, because this Government have left people in Wales £1,600 a year worse off and they have overseen the largest reduction in living standards since the 1870s. The last time living standards fell this far was during the time of the Paris commune and the Franco-Prussian war—that is how disastrously this Government have handled the economy in Wales. We will take no lessons—absolutely none—from them.

Given the opportunity, we would put a different question with regard to income tax varying powers for Wales, and we will seek to amend the Bill in order to do so. It would be different in two regards. First, as several Members have suggested, we would increase the amount of money by which tax might be reduced in Wales from 10p to 15p. The two reasons for doing so are very simple. First, we believe it would increase borrowing, given the causal link the Government are drawing between the volume of taxes and the amount of borrowing. Secondly—I would have thought that Members from the nationalist party in Wales would be pleased with this—it would provide a far neater degree of symmetry between what we are proposing for Wales and what we are proposing for England. We remain concerned that constant chipping and changing of the constitution,

which the current Government seem keen to allow to continue, is not in the interests of the stability of Britain or Wales. We will seek to legislate to introduce symmetry between Wales and Scotland, both on the model of devolved powers and on taxation.

Jonathan Edwards: We welcome the fact that the hon. Gentleman is proposing to increase the level of income tax, but my understanding of what he said over the weekend is that he wants to keep the lockstep but remove the ability to vary the rate up or down such that it would only to be able to move up. Would he, therefore, label his new policy “lockstep-plus”?

Owen Smith: No, I would label it as a progressive change and I will explain why we feel the need to introduce such a change.

The second way in which we would change the question relates to our concerns about the fact that this Tory Government and an increasingly right-wing nationalist party in Wales are proposing to cut the top rate of tax. *[Laughter.]* Nationalist party Members laugh, but the economic adviser to their leader says he wants to cut only the top rate of tax. I do not know what we are meant to conclude from that, but it sounds pretty right wing to me. An alliance between the nats and the Tories in Wales seeks to reduce taxes just for the wealthiest, but we feel that that would be entirely out of step with the progressive values of Wales. That is why we will give the Welsh Government the ability to set a progressive rate for Wales, to guard against further Tory tax cuts for the wealthiest and to ensure that those Welsh values of social justice and fairness in taxation can be preserved by the Welsh people in the event of the Tories wishing to increase the injustice and unfairness of the tax system in Wales and across Britain.

Alun Cairns: The shadow Welsh Secretary is giving out so many conflicting messages that I am finding it difficult to follow him. He says that he wants to extend the tax-varying powers by 15%, but he also says that he is against tax competition, and then he says that he only wants to put taxes up. We can have lots of debates about those inconsistencies, but there is one very serious point: every nation and region of the UK is seeking to attract investment. What sort of message is being sent when the shadow Chancellor—*[Interruption.]* What sort of message is being sent when the shadow Welsh Secretary, who presumably hopes to be a future Welsh Secretary, says that he wants to increase taxes on higher earners?

Owen Smith: It is not too hard to confuse the hon. Gentleman sometimes, either, but I thank him for the promotion. Our position is very clear: we are not in favour of tax competition; we are in favour of increased borrowing powers. The way in which the Government have framed the Bill to draw a connection between borrowing powers and the devolved amount of money paid in tax means that we favour increasing that amount so as to increase borrowing powers for Wales. However, the progressive rate is only to be put up in the event of a Tory Government choosing to deepen the unfairness by making further cuts to the top rate. We should worry about that because the Tory party has form on it. It has already cut taxes for the wealthiest, and we know that it will continue to do so.

Alun Cairns: Will the hon. Gentleman give way on that point?

Owen Smith: No, I will not.

Our proposal to allow the Welsh Government to set a progressive rate of taxation in Wales would allow power to be transferred to Welsh people to guard Wales against the damage to social justice done in Britain by a Tory Government who propose to cut taxes further. The motivation is similar to that for devolution in its first inception: a Tory Government in Wales exercising—in the miner's strike, the poll tax and other measures—a political strategy that reveals how they turn their face against social justice in Britain and use Wales as a means to exercise such injustice. We have recently seen that in the war on Wales, and the way in which Grant Shapps, the chairman of the Tory party, and the Secretary of State—

Madam Deputy Speaker (Mrs Eleanor Laing): Order. *[Interruption.]* Order. The hon. Gentleman must not appear to be concerned or to question when he is called to order. *[Interruption.]* Order. I must say that if Conservative Members are not quiet, the shadow Secretary of State will never get to the end of his lengthy speech. In doing so, I trust that when the shadow Secretary of State refers to a Member of this House he does so, as is proper, by their constituency, not their Christian name and surname.

Owen Smith: I am very sorry, Madam Deputy Speaker. I was not, of course, rolling my eyes at your good self, but at the Secretary of State. I put on the record that my inability to recall the name of the constituency of the Minister without Portfolio, the right hon. Member for Welwyn Hatfield (Grant Shapps), might have something to do with the multiple aliases that he deploys outside this House and which make it very difficult to recall how to refer to him within it.

Mr David Jones: I would not want the hon. Gentleman to have wasted his eye rolling. Just for clarification, is it his case that the Labour party wants devolved income tax competence to be able to increase the rate of tax for the 4,000 or so who pay the additional rate of tax in Wales, but not to cut the standard rate of tax for the 1 million-plus who pay the standard rate?

Owen Smith: I have already made that very clear in this House. I take your admonition that I should be coming to the end of my speech in the spirit in which it was intended, Madam Deputy Speaker, although I believe that I have spoken for slightly less time than the Secretary of State. *[Interruption.]* If it is significantly longer that is perhaps because I have addressed more of the substance of the Bill than the Secretary of State, who glossed over most of the gerrymandering and the other reasons for it.

Let us be very clear that our proposals to allow the Welsh people, if they so choose at a referendum, to give powers to the Welsh Government to set a progressive rate of income tax would guard against a Tory Government with malign instincts reducing the justice of our taxation system in Wales and increasing the outrageous targeting of Wales that has been described and exposed in other areas in recent days. We will not allow such exposure

on the economy to be passed on to Wales. We will not allow Wales to be worse off as a result of the measures, and we will scrutinise the Bill extremely carefully.

5.19 pm

Mrs Cheryl Gillan (Chesham and Amersham) (Con): Rising to my feet to participate in the debate gives me a heavy attack of déjà vu. I hope my words will be slightly less curmudgeonly than those of the hon. Member for Pontypridd (Owen Smith). I give this small and elegant Bill a warm welcome, because I believe it takes Wales forward. It does so in a small, incremental step, rather than in one of those steps that allows Wales to fall into a large hole and disappear without trace. The Government are looking after the interests of Wales and the people of Wales in the Bill. Long may that continue.

As many hon. Members know, for me, the Bill is part of unfinished business that stretches back not to when I was Secretary of State for Wales, but to my appointment as shadow Secretary of State. I pay unreserved tribute to Paul Silk and members of the Silk commission. The Calman commission did not attract the Scottish National party to sit alongside other members, but I was really pleased when Plaid Cymru accepted the invitation to join the Silk commission. The participation of the all the parties involved in the governance of Wales in the Silk commission has made its results more credible. I believe it will contribute towards Wales remaining part of the Union, on which most Opposition Members agree with Government Members. I also believe that the commission will contribute to Wales having increasing self-determination in certain matters, which will be good for the people of Wales and for the devolved Administration.

The trend towards more local democracy must not be at the expense of effective governance. That brings me to a point that became apparent to me over the seven years in which I carried responsibility for Welsh policy in my party. In future, I believe that a confident Wales and a confident Westminster Government should not hesitate to contemplate not only the devolution of powers, but the return of areas of competence to the supra-national Parliament, if it is the wish of those areas or institutions. There is a valid and compelling case for that course of action. That was not apparent in the Silk commission report, but by way of example, it was expressed to me while in opposition and in government, particularly from the university sector—albeit often behind closed doors for fear of repercussions—that a body of opinion wanted the re-coupling of Welsh and English universities in the interests of Wales and of education in Wales.

As we have been reminded, the constitutional position in the Bill is that we are extending the Assembly's term of office to five years. That is probably sensible given the circumstances, but, for me, the jury is out on five-year terms. I was persuaded by the First Minister that that was the way to go because the UK Parliament introduced a five-year term and we need to avoid a clash of an Assembly election with a general election. However, I question the wisdom of that. All hon. Members know how expensive democracy and elections are. I would have liked to have seen the cost savings that would have resulted from running those elections together and any effect on turnout. It does not matter which part of the UK people are in, there is no doubt that they are being turned off by democracy—we are seeing diminishing

returns of voters going to the ballot box. Perhaps running those elections at the same time would have increased participation at the ballot box. It might also have been easier to explain the relationship between the Assembly and the UK Parliament.

Chris Bryant: I am grateful to the right hon. Lady for giving way because I rather agree with her. Voters would probably prefer to have two elections on the same day. That would make far more sense—I have argued for it since 2010. Historically, general elections have tended to be every four years, even when we had seven-year terms, because either a Government had run out of steam or it felt right to move on and have an election. We are now moving everything towards five-year terms. My anxiety is that that is less democracy and less accountability.

Mrs Gillan: The hon. Gentleman makes a good point—it is unusual for us to agree on anything, as he will attest—but we need to examine the matter before we set everything finally in concrete. Those on both Front Benches and anybody involved in the business of government should keep an open mind. Rather than saying, “It will be five or seven years for ever,” we should agree to revisit the matter at some stage. Constitutional arrangements are important, but the engagement of the electorate is perhaps one of the most important aspects of democracy.

Albert Owen (Ynys Môn) (Lab): The right hon. Lady talks about holding elections on the same day, but I believe she voted for the police and crime commissioner elections to be held in the autumn, leading to a low turnout. Her stance on this issue is unclear.

Mrs Gillan: The fact that we had those elections on a separate day and the turnout was low is part of the experience that informs what I am saying now. I want to maximise engagement with the electorate, as I am sure does the hon. Gentleman. Unlike much of the debate so far, I am not making a partisan point on this issue. It is more a question of democracy and engaging with the electorate.

Jonathan Evans: In the United States, the electorate does not find it difficult to elect insurance commissioners, sheriffs and a range of public officials while also choosing members of the Senate and House of Representatives.

Mrs Gillan: My hon. Friend is right. The trouble is that in Wales we never get a breathing space from elections. We have an election almost every year. When we looked at the timetable over the past four or five years, we were relieved of an election in only one year. There is much to be said for putting the elections on one day, but particularly the Assembly elections and the general election.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will not be surprised to hear that I am sad about one particular omission from the Bill, although I will probably attract howls and squeals from both sides of the House. I am sorry that we did not take this opportunity to reduce the number of Westminster constituencies in Wales. When Scotland gained its additional primary legislative responsibilities, the Labour Government reduced the number of MPs in Scotland, and that should have happened in Wales. The job that is done at a cost of

£66,396 in an English constituency is done by an MP, an Assembly Member and half a list Assembly Member in Wales, at a cost of some £147,000 in salaries alone. Democracy is expensive, but the boundary changes should have been made and the number of MPs from Wales reduced.

Mr Hain: Is the right hon. Lady saying that somehow Welsh MPs work less hard than they used to, or do not work as hard as she and others with English constituencies do?

Mrs Gillan: The former Secretary of State and I have engaged on this topic before. A constituency such as Arfon has only 41,138 electors and Chesham and Amersham has 70,000, so—in the interests of fairness and equality, the need for which is often spouted by the Opposition—we should look at equalising the number of constituents across constituencies. Democracy costs dearly—

Mr Hain: The right hon. Lady has not answered my question. All she has to say is yes or no. Do Welsh MPs work harder or less hard than she and her colleagues in English constituencies do?

Mrs Gillan: The right hon. Gentleman knows that many Welsh seats have fewer constituents than many English seats, and he also knows that many of the responsibilities are devolved—

Mr Hain: Yes or no?

Mrs Gillan: Well, the right hon. Gentleman can answer yes or no to my question. Does he think that the salary costs alone for every Welsh constituency—amounting to £147,00 compared with just over £66,000—are fair? Yes or no?

Mr Hain: The right hon. Lady has not answered my question. She has changed the question. She has traditionally been hostile to devolution, so she is now inventing all sorts of other issues. The simple fact is that we are not second-class MPs because we are from Wales: we are on the same level as she is, until her Government change that.

Mrs Gillan: I am not going to trade insults with the right hon. Gentleman. He has 57,823 constituents on the roll, as of 1 December 2010. I have never, ever said that a Welsh MP was a second-class MP, as well he knows. However, if he chooses to go down that line, I have to say that the boundary change and the reduction in the number of MPs should have been carried out and I am sorry it was blocked by vested interests.

Let me turn to the financial provisions in the Bill. I have long thought that the Welsh Assembly Government—soon to be known as the Welsh Government—should understand better and share the responsibilities of tax raising that go with the luxury of spending taxpayers' money. I therefore welcome the steps in the Bill to bring that sense of responsibility and stronger financial accountability for Welsh Assembly Ministers, as well as the option for Welsh residents to make their views on tax powers known through a referendum.

Geraint Davies: I have already made the point that the secret plot is to reduce the overall block grant and then give the powers to Wales, but is not part of that plot, as the right hon. Lady is now revealing, to reduce the number of MPs, lower the voice of Wales in this Chamber asking for a fair share of national assets and say, “You can have fewer MPs and you can raise your money yourself,” so that we have a gagged set of Members here? That is all part of what she is saying, is it not?

Mrs Gillan: I said that there would be squealing about what I was about to say before I started that passage of my speech, and indeed there has been. The hon. Gentleman really does not do me justice with those remarks.

It has always been the case that no matter how the annual financial settlement fell, it was always possible for the Assembly to aim criticism at Westminster for tightening the purse strings. No matter where the responsibility actually lies for the poor outcomes, the finger has always been pointed towards Whitehall and Westminster. The provisions in the Bill move towards reducing the opportunity for abrogating responsibility, which, particularly in the fields of health and education, lies squarely with the Labour Administration in Cardiff Bay.

The new funding framework moves from almost exclusive block funding to two revenue streams. The block grant part will remain dependent on the Barnett formula, which, even though I believe it is nearing its sell-by date, should remain firmly in place as long as we are required to continue reducing the deficit left by the last Labour Government, particularly in the light of the convergence arrangements from the October 2012 agreement. The new funding stream of business rates and the Welsh landfill and land transaction taxes—coupled with a Welsh rate of income tax following an affirming referendum—means that the Assembly will now have a real incentive to grow the economy and more responsibility for funding its spending. However, it also means that the Assembly will have an independent revenue stream to support capital borrowing—a welcome flexibility, particularly for making decisions on infrastructure funding.

I also welcome the flexibility that the Treasury is giving to the Welsh Assembly Government on borrowing to start the much-needed improvements to the M4, as well as the cash reserve powers. The UK Government will provide the Welsh Government with the ability to pay surplus tax revenues into a cash reserve that can be drawn on when future revenues are lower than forecast. This will provide the Welsh Government with a mechanism to manage the volatility in their budget resulting from the new tax powers.

I also welcome some of the inter-governmental arrangements that spring from the Bill, including the Government’s response to the Silk commission’s part I report, in recognising the need to ensure that institutional and governance arrangements continue to be appropriate as changes are made to the financial powers of the Assembly and Welsh Government—in particular, the fact that the Office for Budget Responsibility has agreed to the Government’s formal request that it starts to forecast Welsh taxes in the autumn statement 2014 and biannually thereafter. I look forward to the Wales Office letting us know the details of the OBR’s relationship with the Assembly and the Welsh Government, which I understand will be subject to further discussions.

The Government have also agreed with the Welsh Government to set up a bilateral ministerial committee to oversee the transfer of these financial powers. I was pleased to note that an early priority for the Committee would be the consideration of further details relating to the operation of the new budgetary arrangements—including the block grant adjustments—that will accompany tax devolution, and the cash management arrangements.

I have long believed that there should be better co-operation between the Assembly and the Government, and I hope that in the future the Wales Office will consider better arrangements both inter-departmentally, within the Government, and with the Assembly. One of my great hopes is that there will eventually be a forum in which Assembly Members and Members of Parliament could sit at the same time and debate subjects that are of interest to Wales. I give the Bill a warm welcome, and I shall be following its progress in the House, because it is a major constitutional Bill for Wales.

Let me end by paying a very special tribute to a man who for many years was my “shadow” in the House of Lords, Lord Roberts of Conwy. Back in 2008, he was asked by the Prime Minister and me to conduct a review of devolution in Wales. Wyn Roberts was a terrific colleague, and he carried out that review painstakingly and after consulting a broad spectrum of opinion. The genesis of much of the Bill, and indeed the Silk commission, was in his work. Following the publication of the report, he said:

“The question of governance in Wales will eventually be settled in the broad public interest and not in anyone’s partisan interest.”

I think that the Bill is another building block of Welsh governance, and it has, I hope, been presented to the House in the spirit of Wyn’s wish that the broader interest be served. I wish it a speedy passage through the House, and I offer my congratulations again to the Ministers, the Department’s officials and the Silk commission, who have, I believe, produced it in the interests of Wales.

5.36 pm

Mrs Siân C. James (Swansea East) (Lab): Labour Members broadly support the Bill, but, along with others, I shall seek to make improvements to it in Committee. It is an important Bill which gives vital borrowing powers to the Welsh Government, and paves the way for Welsh control of business rates, stamp duty and—if it is voted for—a referendum on income tax. It is also the first piece of Wales-specific legislation that the Tory-led Government have produced in four years.

There is a great deal to welcome, but I want to concentrate on the proposed borrowing limits. I am keen to establish a clear blueprint in relation to the borrowing powers and the consequences for the Assembly Government: a business plan, as it were, providing the flexibility that is necessary to meet the requirements of a modern financial system, especially given the maturing role of the Welsh Assembly.

The capital budget of the Welsh Government has already been reduced by nearly 40%, which has resulted in even greater hardship for the citizens of Wales and further swingeing cuts in public services. Borrowing powers are essential to the Welsh Government, and will be increasingly important to future Administrations. They must have the flexibility that will allow them to react to changing markets, and to make the long-term

adjustments that will be required if they are to meet the challenges ahead. The M4 relief road is just one example of the infrastructure projects that the Welsh Government might choose to fund if they were in a position to borrow appropriate moneys; adequate borrowing powers will ensure that other equally important projects can be funded.

Labour Members recognise that some limited powers are on offer, but they are just not enough. We have serious reservations about the amount, the rules governing the settlement, and the unfavourable comparisons to other devolved bodies. Along with my colleagues, I shall be keeping a watching brief on the borrowing powers settlement as the Bill progresses. The Bill states that a limit of £500 million will be imposed for current spending, to cope with the fluctuations in, for instance, tax receipts, along with another limit of £500 million for capital projects. Again, that is simply not enough. The settlement for Northern Ireland, whose population is less than half that of Wales, gives it the capacity to borrow up to £2 billion, a sum that is a great deal larger than the one that is considered appropriate for Wales. That, too, is unacceptable.

As the Minister will no doubt recognise, I am very sceptical about the proposed borrowing levels. In evidence to the Welsh Affairs Committee the Minister said the borrowing limit would increase to £1 billion if further income tax powers were devolved. In addition, further clarification was sought at a recent Welsh Grand Committee. At the morning sitting on 5 February this year, several of my colleagues sought clarification of how the £500 million borrowing limit had been reached. Despite being given ample opportunity to share the formula for how this limit for Wales was reached, the Welsh Secretary avoided giving a definitive answer. It appears there is still some vagueness in this key area.

I feel like one of these children in a classroom: did any other Member sit with a child next to them who had his hand around his work because he did not want to show his workings out so we could copy them? The Minister is a little bit like that. We would like to see how he did his workings out—how he reached those numbers, how they are going to affect us in Wales and how we can improve them.

It has been suggested by the Silk commission that the borrowing settlement for Wales be based on the Scottish model, but we have again heard today that Scotland has a higher limit: it can raise up to £2.2 billion. It is not right to say that we are on a similar level to Scotland or Northern Ireland. We are at a disadvantage and there seems to be some confusion.

Mr Harper: I looked at the Wales Bill financial empowerment and accountability document published by the Government and I think the Secretary of State set out his workings here very clearly. According to my reading of it, the borrowing level relative to the revenues is more generous than that applicable to Scotland. I may have misread it, but that is my reading of the document. Perhaps the hon. Lady should take a look.

Mrs James: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his intervention and I will look at those figures again. I must say they were a bit of a challenge and I do not consider myself an unintelligent person. I think there are questions we have to ask, and this is the place to ask

them. Again, we come back to the Northern Ireland question: why can Wales not be trusted to raise the money it vitally needs and will be needing in the future? When the formula is applied to Wales, the sums simply do not add up. I seek further clarification from the Minister on this matter.

I appreciate that when stamp duty and landfill tax are devolved, that will provide the Welsh Government with an independent revenue stream worth around £200 million a year. However, these taxes will not be devolved until April 2018, four years from now. We have to have the borrowing powers now. We have to have them set at a level that is appropriate for us in Wales and that will allow us to grow and develop. We need those resources as soon as possible to mitigate the effects of Tory cuts to the Welsh budget. As the party of devolution, we cannot accept a settlement that places us in a restrictive position regarding borrowing.

David T. C. Davies: I thought I heard the hon. Lady say that there had been Tory cuts to the Welsh budget, but as far as I am aware there have not been any cuts whatsoever to the Welsh Assembly budget; it has remained at the same level over the last few years.

Mrs James: Well, out there on the streets life is very tough and I think the hon. Gentleman is wrong. I disagree with him: we are living every day with the effects of Tory budget cuts—long term, every day—and perhaps we should discuss this further in a different debate under different circumstances. I disagree with the hon. Gentleman on that matter.

Wales deserves the very best settlement, so we shall address this Bill positively while being ever conscious that it needs to reflect the evolving demands of an emerging Government. Welsh Labour and the Labour-controlled Welsh Government always have served, and always will serve, the needs of the people of Wales, encouraging greater self-determination for our citizens and ensuring that adequate powers are devolved whenever possible. I welcome the Bill, and I will support aspects of it, but I ask the Minister to address the issue of the borrowing powers.

5.44 pm

David T. C. Davies (Monmouth) (Con): I am not going to be able to give a warm welcome to the Bill; a slightly frosty and formal welcome is probably the best I can manage at the moment. However, I would like to thank the members of the Welsh Affairs Committee, who worked extremely hard throughout January to scrutinise the Bill in time for the Secretary of State to introduce it. I would also like to thank the Secretary of State and his colleagues for accepting some of our recommendations. None the less, we are in a slightly depressing cycle at the moment, in which Members of the Welsh Assembly demand extra powers, a range of non-governmental organisations and other bodies—many of which get some or all of their funding from the Assembly—go along with those demands, then the press jump in, followed by politicians from all the parties.

I was amazed to hear the hon. Member for Pontypridd (Owen Smith) at the Welsh Labour conference the other day making a promise that the Welsh Assembly would have even more powers to raise taxation if he had his way. Today, however, he has come to the Chamber to

[David T. C. Davies]

say that Labour does not like what is on offer, it does not think that there will be a referendum and it does not like tax competition. There is clearly ambiguity there. He is promising greater powers to the Welsh Assembly but at the same time trying to reassure others that those powers would never be implemented. Most people will be able to see through that. At least most parties are able to set out a position.

My own position is clear: I do not want the Assembly to have any kind of tax-raising powers. Members of Plaid Cymru also have a clear position: they want it to have as many powers as possible. We have a right to know what Labour actually stands for in this regard. This worries me, because I know that Labour Members are Unionists, but they do not seem to realise that we are sleepwalking into a disaster. One day, perhaps 10, 20 or 30 years hence, we are going to wake up and discover—[*Interruption.*] Yes, I will come to the Conservative party in a minute. Hon. Members must contain themselves. We will wake up and discover that we have created de facto independence in Wales simply by giving it one power after another, without making provision to take any of them back.

I am well aware that there are members of the Conservative party, and other parties, who support that course of action. A kind of auction process appears to be taking place, in which one person says, “Let’s give the Welsh Assembly this power”, and all sorts of other people who do not want to be perceived as being opposed to Wales jump on the bandwagon and agree with them. There are members of the Conservative party for whom I have the utmost affection but with whom I completely disagree on this. They seem to take the view that if we give the Assembly enough powers it will hang itself, after which we will be in power. I have a horrible feeling that we might end up dangling alongside it, however, because the Labour party will remain in power to misuse those extra powers, and we will be no better off as a result.

Susan Elan Jones (Clwyd South) (Lab): I hate to see the hon. Gentleman looking so unhappy. I suggest that the solution comes in the form of two excellent words used by the leader of the UK Labour party at the Welsh conference: “reserved powers”.

David T. C. Davies: There is a solution. It is one that we all need to think about, and I hate to say this, but it comes from the Liberal Democrats. It takes the form of a fully federal system. The only way to stop this march towards ever greater powers going to the Welsh Assembly and to Scotland is to draw a line in the sand and say, “Okay, we’re going to give certain powers to Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, and maybe to London and other regions of England, but we will not go beyond that line. There will be a federal Parliament in London with fully laid-out powers and a constitutional court to deal with any issues over who has what.” That is the only way of stopping this process. If we do not stop it, I can guarantee that we will wake up in 20 or 30 years’ time to find that the whole of the United Kingdom will have fallen apart. At least Scotland is getting a vote on this. It is having a fully fledged debate on the pros and cons of independence. We are not having that in Wales. Instead, the Welsh Assembly is

being given a little bit more power every couple of years, and there is no way of getting any of that power back.

Wayne David: The hon. Gentleman has been called early in the debate, so would he be kind enough to clarify whether he is speaking as an individual Back Bencher or as Chair of the Welsh Affairs Committee?

David T. C. Davies: Obviously, I am speaking as an individual Back Bencher; it was hard to get any agreement on certain of these issues from the Welsh Affairs Committee. Let me make it clear that I am not speaking for anyone in the Conservative party either—I am entirely on my own on this one, and probably always will be.

I would like to see one improvement that can be made to this Bill. If we consider the powers the Welsh Assembly has already been given, we can see that it has not done terribly well. We have had the sight of the Welsh Minister for Education and Skills apologising, on Boxing day, I believe it was, for the lamentable state of education. As someone who has been through the state school system there, and who has three children in that system, I feel that very strongly. Nor have we seen a good performance from our national health service. Large numbers of people in cross-border areas such as Monmouthshire are desperate to be treated by the coalition Government-run NHS in England. We have even had the spectacle of a Labour Member of Parliament being banned from going before the Health and Social Care Committee in the Welsh Assembly because she was likely to tell a few home truths that members of that Committee did not want to hear. There has thus been a failure even to carry out the proper scrutiny role.

What I would like to see from this Bill is the opportunity not to take powers away from the Welsh Assembly, but to recognise that where there are problems, individuals ought to be given the choice. Somebody in Wales who is ill and wishes to be treated in England should have the right to access the NHS in England, with the cost of treatment being deducted from the block grant. Similarly, if someone in England was happy to wait twice as long as they needed to and be treated in Wales, they could be treated in Wales, with the cost of their treatment being added to the block grant. That would be an excellent way for us to maintain the commitment to devolution while allowing everyone to enjoy the benefits of a national health service.

Chris Bryant: The hon. Gentleman thinks it would be much better to move to a federal system. My problem is that that denies the history of all the different parts of the United Kingdom: the whole of Ireland was a kingdom until the partition and so on; Scotland had a completely different legal system even when the Crowns were joined together; and Wales never had a separate legal situation. Asymmetric devolution is actually the most sensible way of progressing.

David T. C. Davies: That is a reasonable intervention from the hon. Gentleman. I respond simply by saying that a federal approach is not a perfect solution, but it is probably the least worst solution, and it is better than waking up in 20 years and finding that we have fully fledged independence. Wales has had a slightly separate legal system; I believe that Henry VIII allowed Wales a

measure of independence, except for Monmouthshire, which was brought into the Oxford assizes—we do not need to go into that now.

Hywel Williams: I do not want to detain the House, but Wales did have a separate legal system for many centuries, codified by Hywel Dda.

David T. C. Davies: You rightly told me off last time, Madam Deputy Speaker, for misusing the privilege of being called early and I do not wish to be told off again. What I would say is that I am a democrat and I recognise that much of what has been given to Wales has come about as a result of referendums. What is on offer in the Bill regarding stamp duty and land tax is not that significant. As for giving borrowing powers, I am a pragmatist and if they are going to be used for the M4, I would very much like to see an M4 relief road, so I will willingly go along with that. And of course, income tax powers will not be devolved without a further referendum. I would certainly be encouraging people to vote no in such a referendum, and perhaps for the first time I would be on a different side of the argument from the Secretary of State. Nevertheless, I recognise democracy and I recognise that he is offering a referendum. I appreciate the changes in the Bill which he has made as a result of the scrutiny by the Welsh Affairs Committee. My welcome, frosty and formal as it is, stays in place and I look forward to seeing the Bill progress through the House.

5.54 pm

Mr Peter Hain (Neath) (Lab): I rarely agree with the hon. Member for Monmouth (David T. C. Davies), but I always get great entertainment from his sincere and intelligent extremism. He made a very thoughtful speech, for which he deserves credit, but may I correct him on one point about the national health service? I think he will find that more people cross the border from England to be treated in Welsh hospitals than go the other way.

David T. C. Davies: That is true, but these people do not do that by choice; they have no choice, and many of them are actively campaigning to be treated back in England and do not want to be treated in Wales.

Mr Hain: The facts seem to speak for themselves. We can have an argument about the degree to which people can express a preference, but the hon. Gentleman and his colleagues, led by the Secretary of State and the Prime Minister, persistently rant against the Welsh national health service as part of their war on Wales and completely distort the facts on the ground.

Mr Harper *rose*—

Mr Hain: I will give way, although my speech is not about the Welsh NHS; I am merely responding to a point made by the hon. Member for Monmouth.

Mr Harper: I was not going to respond, but I cannot let what the right hon. Gentleman just said stand. Thousands of my constituents live in England and passionately want to be treated by the English NHS, according to the rules and the rights they have in law, but because their GPs based in England are registered with the NHS in Wales they are forced to be treated in Wales according to the NHS rules. They do not like that

prospect and I am doing my best to change it, so please do not pretend that they have run away from the English NHS by choice, because they absolutely have not.

Mr Hain: In that case, I think the hon. Gentleman will find that the same applies for Welsh citizens on the Welsh side of the border. All I am saying is: let us have an intelligent debate about this, rather than rantings based on a misrepresentation of the facts on the ground.

Let me get down to my speech. In focusing on clause 2 of the Bill, I wish to record my pride at taking the Government of Wales Act 2006 through Parliament as the then Secretary of State, not least because it provided for the full law-making powers the Welsh Government are now using to protect the people of Wales from this Government's disastrous policies, including on tuition fees and on the creeping privatisation of the national health service, which is not being applied by the Welsh Government. The fact that the Conservative party, the only party in this House to vote against the 2006 Act, now seems to have accepted devolution is a sign of progress—I welcome that—but on the question of dual candidature it has sadly regressed. In section 7 of the 2006 Act, I amended one clause from the Government of Wales Act 1998 in order to prevent candidates from simultaneously standing both in a constituency and for a region, whether as a list candidate or as an individual—this Bill will disgracefully reverse that reform.

Alun Cairns: On that point—

Mr Hain: I am going to develop the point and then I will take an intervention. I want to remind colleagues of the reasons for the 2006 change. I did not act for politically partisan reasons, as was alleged by opponents of the change; I acted for democratic reasons. As one of the Ministers who also took the original 1998 Bill through the Commons permitting dual candidature, I never imagined for a moment then the abuses it would produce and the antipathy it would create among voters in Wales. Voters have never understood the widespread practice that has occurred since the Assembly was established in 1999, whereby candidates rejected by a particular constituency then secured back-door election as Assembly Members through the regional list and were even able to claim to represent the very constituency that had rejected them. Three of the four defeated candidates in Clwyd West in 2003 were subsequently elected to the Assembly through the regional list. Those very three people in Clwyd West—in the Secretary of State's constituency—who were booted out by the electorate ended up as Assembly Members, competing against winning Assembly Member Alun Pugh.

Alun Cairns: The right hon. Gentleman talked about the Welsh electorate's antipathy to the arrangements. Will he remind us what the Electoral Commission's view was, following its long consultation on whether or not there was a need to change policy? What advice did it give him as the then Secretary of State for Wales?

Mr Hain: The Electoral Commission disagreed with me, and, not for the first time from my personal experience, it was wrong.

Jonathan Edwards: Does the right hon. Gentleman recognise that the Labour party has also had candidates that stand on the list and in constituencies? In 2003, on

[Jonathan Edwards]

the North Wales regional list, Sandy Mewies Lesley Griffiths, Carl Sergeant and Karen Sinclair stood both in constituencies and in the region. In South Wales Central, Rhodri Morgan, Lorraine Barnett, Sue Essex, Jane Davidson, Jane Hutt and Leighton Andrews stood in both the region and the constituencies, and in Mid and West Wales, Christine Gwyther stood in both.

Mr Hain: Yes, indeed. That is my exact point. I am not making a politically partisan point; I am making a democratic point. The practice clouded political accountability and denied voters their right to reject a particular candidate at the ballot box. A change made by the Government of Wales Act 2006 requiring candidates to choose whether to stand for a constituency or on the regional list put the voters back in charge. It cannot be right for losers to become winners through the back door, despite having been rejected by voters. That is an abuse of democracy.

Simon Hart (Carmarthen West and South Pembrokeshire) (Con): Surely the rejection is of the party in question. The system is there to get a little bit of equality across the parties. It is not about the individuals.

Mr Hain: That intervention interests me. Is the hon. Gentleman saying that whoever stands for whichever party, even if they are deeply opposed by the particular constituents whom they seek to represent, cannot be challenged because they are standing on a party label?

Chris Bryant: Is not the point also that Wales is not the only place in the world that has a top-up system to enable diversity within the legislature, but it will be the only place in the world where that practice of standing both on the list and for the first-past-post seat is used?

Mr Hain: I bow to my hon. Friend's superior experience and knowledge. I think that the system applies in Scotland.

Chris Bryant: It does in Scotland, but I mean outside the United Kingdom.

Mr Hain: It may well be the case that it exists outside the United Kingdom.

Mr David Jones: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for giving way. The hon. Member for Rhondda (Chris Bryant) is entirely wrong. Is it not the case that Wales is the only country in the world where, under this electoral system, dual candidacy is presently banned?

Mr Hain: I am not sure about that, but what I can say is that we should look at the experience in Wales. If there is no such bar in other countries, then perhaps there was no such abuse there. There was widespread abuse in Wales, practised by 15 of the 20 list Assembly Members who used taxpayers' money to open constituency offices in the very seats in which they were defeated. They then used those resources to try to win at the following election by cherry-picking local issues against the constituency AMs who had beaten them.

Alun Cairns *rose*—

Mr Hain: I will not give way, because I want to make some progress. While all that was going on, someone in Wales said to me:

"If I want to defeat constituency candidates because I don't like them and I succeed and they are defeated, why should they pop up on the list claiming to represent me?"

That is the point. There is an honourable, constitutional and necessary role to be played by list Assembly Members across the whole region that they represent. There is no justification for seeking to abuse the system by getting involved in local constituency matters to try to win back a seat at the following election using that position and that resource. That is the fundamental point.

Guto Bebb (Aberconwy) (Con): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr Hain: Not for a moment, no. The Government of Wales Act 2006 put the voters back in charge. If they did not want to elect somebody, they did not have to do so. The Act stopped the prevailing situation before then in which Assembly candidates could decide to place a "both ways" bet, by standing in both categories in order to win, even if they were kicked out by the electorate. To his shame, the Secretary of State is seeking to reintroduce that both ways bet.

There was an unholy coalition of Conservatives, nationalists and Liberal Democrats opposed to abolishing that abuse. Now they have reincarnated that unholy coalition in defiance of the popular will. Why are they so afraid of taking their choice to the people? Why are they so afraid of losing constituency elections that they need the lifebelt of standing on the lists as well?

Guto Bebb *rose*—

Mr Hain: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman can answer that question.

Guto Bebb: It is the case that the Welsh system of electing Members to the Assembly is replicated in many parts of the world, but the only country that has a similar ban is Ukraine. The Bevan Foundation, a Labour party think tank, is of the view that the ban should be withdrawn.

Mr Hain: I have no idea whether the abuse that we have seen in Wales, which I am now documenting for the House, applied in Ukraine as well. Lord Richard chaired the commission—[*Interruption.*] I will now present a lot of detailed evidence on that abuse for the sake of the hon. Members who are seeking to intervene and the whole of the House. Lord Richard chaired the commission that reported in 2004. He recommended the extra powers for the Assembly, which my 2006 Act delivered. He told the Welsh Affairs Committee:

"There is something wrong in a situation in which five people can stand in Clwyd, none of them can be elected, and then they all get into the Assembly. On the face of it, that does not make sense. I think a lot of people in Wales find that it does not."

That is not me, a former Secretary of State who banned the abuse, speaking, but Lord Richard who carried through an eminent report.

The eminent Welsh Academic, Dr Denis Balsom—again, not a politically partisan figure—said in his evidence to the Richard commission:

“Candidates use the list as an insurance against failing to win a constituency contest. This dual candidacy can also confuse the electorate, who may wish to consciously reject a particular candidate only to find them elected via the list. It should remain a basic democratic right not to elect a particular candidate or to be able to vote a Member out.”

That is a right that the Government, supported by Conservatives and members of other parties in Wales, are seeking to deny the electorate. That is not democratically defensible.

Mr Harper: I am listening to the right hon. Gentleman’s argument, but I do not follow it at all. When we get a ballot paper in a first-past-the-post election, we have to choose a candidate—we have to vote for somebody. There is no option to say I do not like this person and to cast an anti-vote. I do not follow the idea that someone can vote against someone. They are choosing to vote for who they want to represent them in the Assembly or in Parliament. I do not follow the argument.

Mr Hain: I do not know what happens in the Forest of Dean, but in every other constituency if a candidate loses, they lose. If the electorate rejects them, if the voters vote against them, they lose. They do not find themselves parachuted back in to the Assembly, from which the voters have barred them, via another route.

Mrs Gillan: It was the right hon. Gentleman and I who sparred across the Dispatch Box on that very subject. I think he has a selective memory when it comes to the Richard commission. As I recall it, Lord Richard not only objected to the list system, but recommended that there should be 80 AMs and that Wales should move to that system and employ the single transferable vote, neither of which the right hon. Gentleman chose to take up. That is almost proof that the direction in which he took it was indeed partisan.

Mr Hain: Wait a minute, Madam Deputy Speaker. Far be it from me to question whether the right hon. Lady was in order with that point, but the questions about numbers of Assembly Members and a proportional representation system are not within this Bill. They have nothing to do with this Bill. What is in this Bill is restoring the ban on the abuse of dual candidature which was in the 2006 Act, and it is that point that I am addressing.

Wayne David: Does my right hon. Friend agree that there is a telling comment tucked away in the impact assessment produced by the Government? It says that the smaller parties want to change to a dual candidacy rule because they

“may have a smaller pool of high quality candidates”.

Mr Hain: I could not possibly comment, but since the Government say that, perhaps it is true on this occasion.

I have quoted a Labour figure, Lord Richard, in support of my case, so I shall now quote a Liberal Democrat. Lord Carlile, the former Welsh Liberal Democrat leader, said in June 2005 that

“many in Wales will welcome...the removal of the absurd dual candidacy opportunity.”

In the same debate in the Lords, the former Conservative Secretary of State for Wales, Lord Crickhowell, said:

“The present arrangements are really pretty indefensible”.—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 15 June 2005; Vol. 672, c. 1216-1217.]

A Liberal Democrat, a former Labour Member and a Conservative former Secretary of State all agree with me. I think that that helps my case.

I recall, as Secretary of State for Wales, receiving on 9 January 2006 a press release from Helen Mary Jones, in which she described herself as a Llanelli-based Assembly Member, although she was on the list. In it, she complained about money being spent on a hospital in Carmarthen instead of one in Llanelli. However, as the list Assembly Member for Mid and West Wales, she represented both towns and should really have been supporting both hospitals. Had she been discharging her list Member’s duties properly, she would not have discriminated between the two towns or their hospitals.

Owen Smith: Why did she?

Mr Hain: Indeed, why did she? Why, of all the parts of the list area that she represented, did she target the one place where she had only been very narrowly defeated in 2003, invariably describing herself as the Llanelli-based Assembly Member? As it happens, I admire Helen Mary Jones for her ability and commitment, although not for her belief in an independent Wales. The 2006 Act stopped her describing herself as the Assembly Member for Llanelli, because there was one and it was not her. In the meantime, she campaigned hard and won the seat back in 2007.

The list Assembly Member for South West Wales, Bethan Jenkins, is often described as the Neath-based Assembly Member and is more active in the Neath constituency than anywhere else in the region. She has not yet had the courage to stand in the Neath constituency, but if the Bill goes through with clause 2 remaining within it, perhaps she will do so, safe in the knowledge that being defeated in Neath will not prevent her from being elected—[*Interruption.*] I will not respond to that intervention from the hon. Member for Carmarthen East and Dinefwr (Jonathan Edwards).

In a leaked memorandum written in August 2003, a Plaid Cymru list Assembly Member—now the party’s engaging young party leader—Leanne Wood, was embarrassingly blatant in encouraging abuse of the system using taxpayers’ money. Let me quote from that memorandum for the benefit of the House and my case. She urged Plaid Cymru Assembly list Members to concentrate tens of thousands of pounds of their local Assembly office budgets in their party’s target seats. She urged her party’s list Members to do casework only where it might benefit Plaid Cymru in those target seats and to attend civic or other events the constituency only if they thought they were votes in it.

I will now quote directly from that memorandum, entitled “What should be the role of a regional AM?” It perfectly illustrates the problem we faced before the 2006 Act banned dual candidature in Wales. Leanne Wood was hardly shy about her objectives:

“Each regional AM has an office budget and a staff budget of some considerable size. Consideration should be given to the location of their office—where would it be best for the region? Are there any target seats...within the region?”

She went on:

“We need to be thinking much more creatively as to how we better use staff budgets for furthering the aims of the party.”

[Mr Hain]

She finished off with a refreshing burst of honesty:

“Regional AMs are in a unique position. They are paid to work full-time in politics and have considerable budgets at their disposal. They need not be constrained by constituency casework and events, and can be more choosy about their engagements, only attending events which further the party’s cause. This can be achieved by following one simple golden rule: On receipt of every invitation, ask ‘How can my attendance at this event further the aims of Plaid Cymru?’ If the answer is ‘very little’ or ‘not at all’, then a pro forma letter of decline should be in order.”

I could not have presented my case better than she revealingly did.

Huw Irranca-Davies (Ogmore) (Lab): I am absolutely astonished at what I am hearing from my right hon. Friend. Would he, like me, welcome an intervention from the two Plaid Cymru Members present in the Chamber to distance themselves from that startling abuse of taxpayers’ money?

Mr Hain: That is not a matter for me, but I take my hon. Friend’s point with acclamation.

Wayne David: Is not my right hon. Friend’s case substantially weakened by the fact that nobody seriously believes that Leanne Wood can be party leader for much longer?

Mr Hain: I think I shall move on from that point, despite the great respect I have for my hon. Friend.

All the arguments and evidence I have cited demonstrate conclusively that the ban was not partisan but enhanced democratic standards among Welsh Assembly Members. Indeed, I reminded the House that six Labour Assembly Members, including three Ministers, could have been defeated in the 2007 Assembly elections by a swing of 3% against them—a very small swing. They would no longer enjoy the safety net of the regional list and two subsequently lost. The reform affected Labour candidates, just as it applied to candidates from other parties.

Alun Cairns *rose*—

Susan Elan Jones *rose*—

Mr Hain: I think I really ought to conclude my remarks.

Surely the principle behind the 2006 Act is right: namely, candidates must make their choices and then voters will make theirs. My right hon. Friend the Member for Torfaen (Paul Murphy), also a former Secretary of State for Wales, put it well in a debate on the then Bill in January 2006:

“The additional member system that we have as a result of the 1997 settlement is fundamentally flawed. People do not understand it. They do not understand how an individual can stand in two ways for the same body on the same day in the same election and be defeated, then get elected a matter of an hour or two later. Equally if not more confusing is the fact that, in my constituency and in those of my right hon. and hon. Friends in the south Wales valleys, thousands upon thousands of people vote Labour on their second vote, yet none of those votes is counted. I do not understand the logic of that. I can understand the technicalities, because I taught the subject many years ago when I was a teacher in a college of further education, but as an elector or as an elected representative, I think that it is terribly confusing and ought to be changed.”—[*Official Report*, 9 January 2006; Vol. 441, c. 63.]

My hon. Friend the Member for Aberavon (Dr Francis), as the then Chair of the Welsh Affairs Committee, said in the same debate:

“Electoral reform should not get caught up in internecine party politics...the present system is an unloved and confusing creature that causes more grief than it is worth.”—[*Official Report*, 9 January 2006; Vol. 441, c. 69-70.]

My hon. Friend the Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mark Tami) said:

“Following the last Assembly election, many people asked me how candidates who stood at the election and were defeated—and, in many cases, defeated by a country mile—could find themselves sitting in the Assembly, claiming not only to represent constituents but having equal status with the people who defeated them. How would we feel if a third of this Chamber”—

by which he meant this Chamber—

“were made up of candidates that had stood against us”

before appearing on the list

“they would not have come up with such a system even in North Korea”,

although I confess to having come up with it as a Wales Minister in the 1998 legislation. My hon. Friend continued:

“Once getting into the assembly via the back door, these characters spend much of their time cherry-picking issues and targeting seats that they or their party are looking at for future elections.”—[*Official Report*, 9 January 2006; Vol. 441, c. 96-97.]

Those are some of the reasons why I introduced the bar on dual candidature. It is astonishing that, for narrow partisan party reasons, the Secretary of State is assisting his own party members in Wales and those of other parties who complained about the ban. After the 2006 Act banned dual candidature, the well-known democratic abuses that had occurred before were not repeated. I find it astonishing that the Secretary of State is reinstating a regime that brought democracy in Wales into such popular disrepute. If he persists, I hope the House of Lords will delete clause 2.

I want to pick up on an earlier point relating to the interesting exchange I had with the Secretary of State. I will read the exchange in *Hansard* carefully. I was not at all convinced by his answer. Indeed, I remain very concerned, on the question of income tax devolution, that Wales will be cut adrift from richer parts of the United Kingdom and lose out. There have been a lot of warm words about indexation, but I do not find the answers we have been given, or the references in the associated financial documents, to be at all compelling or convincing. I respect the Holtham commission and I respect Gerald Holtham. I understand his points on indexation, but I do not trust a Conservative-led Treasury to honour the commitments in the Holtham commission.

I would be more reassured—this is a cross-party point, because we all want to see Wales doing the best it can—if a clear and absolute commitment was embedded in the proposed legislation for Wales to continue to benefit, regardless of income tax devolution, from the wealth of the United Kingdom. My politics come from a belief in fairness, and the redistribution from richer to poorer regions and from richer to poorer individuals. I do not see how tax accountability, which the Secretary of State exalts, can be a two-way bet. I do not see how having devolved income tax and giving, in the main, the Assembly greater accountability to local voters, will then be protected, according to the Secretary of State’s reassurance, by a kind of indexation that undermines that accountability. That makes me even more suspicious

of it. I will be extremely sceptical of, if not opposed to, income tax devolution until I am absolutely sure that Wales will not lose out, for the reasons I have described.

6.23 pm

Mr Mark Harper (Forest of Dean) (Con): I will add one or two extra points. This has been an interesting debate so far, and it has taken me back to the enjoyable debates we had during the passage of the Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Bill, which had much the same cast of characters. Indeed, we debated some of the same issues in relation to the Fixed-term Parliaments Act 2011—but I will dwell on the Bill before us.

I am pleased to support the Bill and the process that has led to its introduction. The shadow Secretary of State, who is no longer in his place, criticised the Secretary of State for Wales, my right hon. Friend the Member for Clwyd West (Mr Jones) for this being only the first, as he described it, Welsh-specific Bill, but I want to thank my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesham and Amersham (Mrs Gillan) and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for taking a very thoughtful approach. They set up the Silk commission and produced a draft Bill. The Select Committee, ably chaired by my constituency neighbour my hon. Friend the Member for Monmouth (David T. C. Davies), was asked to undertake pre-legislative scrutiny, and the Bill was then brought before the House.

It is important to think these matters through and to get them right. I speak as an English Member representing a constituency on the England-Wales border. The devolution delivered by the previous Government was not very well thought through. I have tried to address the example of cross-border health care in a reasonable way. I am sorry that the shadow Secretary of State is not here, because what he said in response to my question in Wales questions last week was simply not right. All I did was ask a question of the Secretary of State that reflected the fact that thousands of my constituents, who live in England and have the right, under the existing devolution settlement, to be treated according to the rules in England, are currently forced, because their GP in England is registered with the NHS in Wales, to be treated according to NHS Wales rules. That was the only point I raised.

My constituents are concerned when they read about mortality statistics being worse in hospitals in Wales. *[Interruption.]* I hear someone on the Opposition Front Bench saying that they are smearing Wales. In raising the issue of mortality statistics, I was merely quoting the right hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Ann Clwyd), who said in this House:

“The second warning sign, said Francis, is the level of mortality statistics. In fact, they appear to be dangerously high in many hospitals in Wales.”—*[Official Report, 5 March 2014; Vol. 576, c. 930.]*

Those are not my words; they are the words of someone who I would have thought that most Members accept is a very loyal and honourable member of the Labour party. I raise the point because, when considering further devolution to the Welsh Assembly Government, it is sensible for this House to ask itself whether existing devolution has worked well and has been properly thought through.

Alun Cairns: My hon. Friend refers to his question on mortality rates in Wales and the criticism from the Opposition. May I specifically state that this was a letter—

Hon. Members: It's not in the Bill.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. Hon. Gentlemen must not shout from a sedentary position. If the hon. Member for Vale of Glamorgan (Alun Cairns) is not in order, I will tell him that he is not in order. I am sure that he will remain in order.

Alun Cairns: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. I will do everything I can to remain in order. I want to refer briefly to a point made by my hon. Friend, who was criticised by Opposition Members. It related to a letter from the chief medical officer in England to her counterpart in Wales on the powers of devolution in Wales, seeking an investigation. How could that ever be interpreted as an attack on Wales, when it was from one clinician to another?

Mr Harper: I agree. All I did at Wales questions last week was raise a perfectly reasonable point on behalf of my constituents. I quoted something that the right hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Ann Clwyd), a valued Opposition Member, had said—it is in *Hansard*—and then the shadow Secretary of State suggests that I asked something I did not, and pretends that it is all a smear. That is simply not the case; I am a Member of Parliament raising concerns on behalf of my constituents. The previous devolution settlement was not well thought through and I want to ensure that this one is. I am grateful to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for taking a great deal of care with the Bill.

David T. C. Davies: As a proudly Welsh MP, I am very grateful for all the support we can get in drawing attention to the state of the NHS in Wales. What does my hon. Friend think of the proposal to amend the Bill to allow Welsh patients who wish to be treated by the coalition Government-run NHS to cross the border, with the funding taken off the Welsh block grant?

Mr Harper: I have not had time to study that proposal in detail, but on the face of it allowing patients anywhere in the United Kingdom to have choice is very sensible. That is not a policy that the Welsh Government prefer. I think they said in a letter they sent to me that they prefer “Patient voice, not choice.” They will not allow people to have choice, but they can have a voice, which will then be ignored as the Welsh Government proceed as they want to anyway.

Geraint Davies: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr Harper: I will make a little progress before giving way again.

Let me divert a little to address the points on which the right hon. Member for Neath (Mr Hain) focused his speech, which relate to clause 2. I did not follow his argument at all. Although he was making a point about the amendment in the Bill, the thrust of his speech seemed to be a criticism of how the list system operates in Wales. He said that it was a system that we could find only in North Korea, but then he rather shot himself in

[*Mr Harper*]

the foot when he had to admit that he was the system's author. I know that he is a supporter of proportional representation—

Mr Hain: I am not, actually.

Mr Harper: Oh, he is not a supporter now; I thought that he was. The system is the one he invented. Given that the Electoral Commission, which is independent of any party, and three of the four parties in the Assembly are perfectly happy with what is proposed in the Bill, I do not think that he can claim that this is being done for partisan reasons.

Mr Hain: I was one of the authors, under the Secretary of State at the time, Ron Davies, of the Bill that allowed candidates to stand in both the lists and the constituency, which the Secretary of State is now seeking to reinstate, but I had no idea of the abuse that would take place, for which I think I have provided more than ample evidence. That is the point.

Mr Harper: The right hon. Gentleman made two points, one of which I agree is an abuse, from the way he outlined it. Of course, parliamentary resources—I presume the same is true for the Assembly—are given to us by the taxpayer for parliamentary work, not party political campaigning. If that was the thrust of the *Plaid Cymru* document he quoted, that would have been quite wrong. He suggested that there is something wrong with candidates standing for a constituency and then being elected from a list, but that simply reflects the fact that in a list system, and certainly in the one that was put in place in Wales, it is the party label that gets a candidate elected, not their individual qualities. It seems to me that candidates getting elected by virtue of their place on a list might be a good reason for not having a list system, but it is not particularly offensive or undemocratic.

On voting for or against people, about which the right hon. Gentleman and I had an exchange, perhaps I am naive, but I happen to think that when people vote in a general election they are voting for somebody. I certainly conduct my election campaigns by trying to give people reasons to vote for me at a constituency level and reasons to vote for my right hon. Friend the Member for Witney (Mr Cameron) as Prime Minister, for example, rather than by thinking up lots of reasons why they should not vote for my opponents. I hope that is how my opponent in my constituency will conduct himself as well. That might not be what happens in Wales, but it is how I try to conduct things in my constituency.

Mrs Gillan: I recall that there was some reliance on work done by an organisation called the Bevan Foundation, with which Labour Members will be familiar. Part of the qualitative work it did at the time pointed out that, rather than objecting to candidates standing in a constituency and through the list system, people did not understand the electoral system itself. That was the fundamental problem at the heart of the whole electoral system that was set up for Wales.

Mr Harper: I suspect that my right hon. Friend, as ever, is spot on. The right hon. Member for Neath, in his lengthy speech, gave some anecdotes about one or

two people who did not like the fact that a candidate who had stood in the constituency was then elected on the list, but I heard no evidence of a wider view.

Mr Hain: With all due respect, I represent a Welsh constituency, which is not the case for either the hon. Gentleman or the right hon. Member for Chesham and Amersham (Mrs Gillan), I was Secretary of State for Wales and I travelled the length and breadth of Wales, and that matter was raised with me all the time. He mentions the Electoral Commission, which often adopts a kind of academic approach to these matters. That contrasts with the findings of Denis Balsom and other sources of credible evidence from Wales.

Mr Harper: Based on what the right hon. Gentleman has just said, it sounds as if he has a number of anecdotes, but in my experience the Electoral Commission, with which I worked closely when I was the Minister with responsibility for political and constitutional reform, takes positions based on evidence. It carries out thorough research and is always scrupulous about not taking a position that could be portrayed as partisan, and it guards that reputation jealously. It does not agree with him, as he acknowledges—I have not always agreed with it—but I would put rather more weight on its views than on his.

Mrs Gillan: During the seven years that I was shadow Secretary of State and then Secretary of State, I travelled the length and breadth of Wales, too—usually in much less comfortable conditions—and I talked with many thousands of people right across Wales, including our candidates, and this was not at the top of their list of asks.

Mr Harper: As I thought, we have competing anecdotes. I suspect that my right hon. Friend, particularly as she describes the more modest circumstances in which she travelled across Wales, was rather closer to the people, so I put more weight on what she says.

Before that constitutional interlude, I was referring to the fact that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has taken a lot of care with this Bill. I want to put on the record my appreciation for the Welsh Affairs Committee's excellent pre-legislative scrutiny report. The Government have obviously taken the trouble to respond to it and, as the Secretary of State said in his written ministerial statement, have accepted most of its recommendations. I think that was an excellent job. Doing pre-legislative scrutiny on a constitutional Bill is very sensible and likely to lead to a more accurate position.

Nia Griffith (Llanelli) (Lab): I wonder whether the hon. Gentleman, who is so keen to praise the Committee's report, agrees with its statement that

“as a point of principle, we consider it unadvisable for electoral systems to be changed frequently. Successive changes to electoral systems risk being perceived as partisan by the public.”

That is precisely on the point of dual candidacy. In other words, the Committee is saying, “Let's keep the status quo.” Does he agree with that?

Mr Harper: No. I read the Committee's report very carefully, and it did not say that we should keep the status quo at all; it said what the hon. Lady just read

out. All that the Secretary of State's proposals will do is return the system to the position that existed before the Labour party changed it in the Government of Wales Act 2006. All that we are doing is reversing it and putting it back to the original position. I read the report carefully and I am sure, knowing how Select Committees work—its Chair confirmed that it was quite hard to get agreement—that those words were chosen very carefully, and it absolutely did not say that we should stick with the status quo. My guess is that if someone had suggested that it said that, it would not have received cross-party agreement.

Guto Bebb: As a member of the Welsh Affairs Committee, I did indeed agree to the sentence the hon. Member for Llanelli (Nia Griffith) just read out, because I thought that it referred to the possibility of a further change if Labour won power any time before 2025.

Mr Harper: My hon. Friend makes a good point. Notwithstanding that point, the hon. Lady's Front-Bench colleague, the hon. Member for Pontypridd (Owen Smith), committed at the Dispatch Box to reversing the provision, if I heard him correctly. Her admonition against frequent change should be aimed at him as much as the Secretary of State.

Chris Bryant: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr Harper: I will give way one last time before moving on to tax powers.

Chris Bryant: I knew that the hon. Gentleman would never be able to turn me down. Most countries in Europe have a fixed constitution, which means that they cannot play around with their electoral arrangements. In recent years we have changed the date of the Assembly elections and the local elections, and then we had to change them again because we had already changed the Assembly elections. The voters of this country must surely feel that we play around with the electoral system far too much.

Mr Harper: That does not fit my recollection. Let me think about the change of date for the Assembly election. It was carefully thought through. We consulted the leaders of the parties in the Assembly; I recall that I found out the views of the presiding officers before we amended the Fixed-term Parliaments Bill.

The hon. Gentleman might not agree with the system, but all the parties in the Welsh Assembly agreed to it. The change was made for what was argued to be a sensible reason—to prevent the two elections from coinciding, so that the important issues facing the people of Wales would be properly debated rather than being overshadowed by other issues facing the people of the whole United Kingdom. My right hon. Friend the Member for Chesham and Amersham put the alternative view that the elections should be held on the same day, and the hon. Gentleman has put forward the same view today. However, having separate election dates seems to me perfectly sensible, and that was the view taken by the Government and this Parliament.

Chris Bryant: The thing is that we never shorten the mandate; we always lengthen it. Now local authorities in Wales will end up having five years—possibly six—and

that will be the second time they have had five years during my time as an MP in Wales. The Assembly is also going on to five years. It feels as if the political class is constantly saying, "Let's give ourselves a little more time." That undermines the democratic sense of British politics.

Mr Harper: I have listened carefully to both the hon. Gentleman's points and the one made by the shadow Secretary of State. It seems to me that they were both taking the brave point of view—presumably, it was a commitment from the shadow Secretary of State—that if the Labour party were, God forbid, to win the next election, it would amend the Fixed-term Parliaments Act and reduce the fixed term to four years. I am not sure whether the shadow Secretary of State has consulted his party leader about that, although I hope he has, for his sake. That seemed to be a clear commitment from him. If the Labour party wins the election, we will see whether it reduces its time in office. I know that the hon. Member for Rhondda (Chris Bryant) says that his party voted for a shorter term when in opposition, but I am pretty confident—I said this at the Dispatch Box, I think—that if his party returns to government, it is highly unlikely that it will vote to shorten its term of office. I might be proved wrong, but I doubt it.

I move on to the Bill's proposals on the devolution of tax powers. I welcome them in general for the clear reason of accountability. As someone with a constituency on the border, I think it wrong that the Welsh Assembly Government, like the Scottish Government, can spend money on enticing business across the border, but are not accountable for raising the money that they use to do that. Proposals to devolve some of the taxes are sensible; it makes absolute sense for there to be more accountability.

On the issue of capital borrowing, I should say that I am sorry that the hon. Member for Swansea East (Mrs James) is not in the Chamber any more. Let me elaborate a little on my short intervention on her. I looked at the "Wales Bill: Financial Empowerment and Accountability" paper that the Government laid before the House. It is a strange plot, to use the word of the hon. Member for Swansea West (Geraint Davies), that is published and laid before Parliament; I thought plots were conducted in secret, but obviously things have changed.

The paper seems clear: it sets the statutory capital borrowing limit at £500 million. That is linked to the £200 million or so of revenue that is initially being devolved. The limit is higher than if it had been set solely by reference to the same tax borrowing ratio that applies to Scotland. In Scotland, there is a £5 billion responsibility for tax revenues, but only a £2.2 billion capital borrowing limit. If my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State had used the same limit in Wales, there would have been a £100 million capital borrowing limit instead of a £500 million one.

My right hon. Friend has met the challenge to show his workings, which were in the paper presented to the House and available to all Members before this debate. He has clearly set out how the Government reached the £500 million limit. As my hon. Friend the Select Committee Chairman said, the limit was increased to £500 million to allow the Welsh Government to proceed with improvements to the M4, should they choose to, in advance of that element of income tax being devolved.

[Mr Harper]

The Government judged that such borrowing was affordable for both the Welsh Government and in relation to the UK's overall position. That seems a sensible position, which has been transparently laid out in the paper.

Hywel Williams: For the sake of completeness, I should say that a Treasury Minister gave the same evidence to the Welsh Affairs Committee. As the hon. Gentleman says, it would be a strange plot that advertised itself so comprehensively.

Mr Harper: I am grateful for that point, which shows that the Government position is joined up across not just the Wales Office but the Treasury. The right hon. Member for Neath showed an astonishing lack of trust in the Treasury led by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor, whose excellent recent Budget cut taxes for those on modest incomes. The Labour party voted against those—against the fuel duty cut and the tax cuts for modest earners. I find that surprising.

Mr Hain: I do not trust the Treasury whoever is in power.

Mr Harper: I defer to the right hon. Gentleman, who has been a spending Minister in a number of Departments. For much of that period, the right hon. Member for Kirkcaldy and Cowdenbeath (Mr Brown) was Chancellor, so perhaps it is not surprising that the right hon. Gentleman takes that jaundiced view. Having dealt with my right hon. Friend the Chancellor, I have a more positive outlook on Treasury Ministers, and I have yet to be proved wrong.

Mr Hain: The only Treasury Minister I trusted was Madam Deputy Speaker, when she was in that Department.

Mr Harper: Madam Deputy Speaker, I shall not draw you into the debate. I am sure that, for the sake of your reputation at the Treasury, you would, if allowed, cast off that foul calumny. If the right hon. Gentleman thought that highly of you when he was a spending Minister, you could not have been doing your job as a Treasury Minister properly. We all know that you absolutely were; otherwise you would not have found your way into that Chair. I will close this aspect of the debate just there, before I find myself cut off against my will.

I have some questions for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, although I do not necessarily want him or the Minister to respond today; perhaps we can touch on the issues when the Bill returns to the Floor of the House in Committee. If the income tax provisions were devolved, how would they work? I looked carefully in the Bill at the definition of an individual Welsh taxpayer; it is to do with their usual place of residence. How complex will operating the system be for businesses, particularly for small and medium-sized enterprises? In a constituency such as mine, businesses will have staff resident in both England and Wales. If income tax varying powers were to be used by the Welsh Government, I would want to make sure that the burden placed on employers of English and Welsh residents was not significant and that the system was as easy as possible to operate—preferably with as little burdensome

administration as possible. I will return to that issue in Committee, to make sure that it has been properly thought through.

I also want to check on the issue of stamp duty land tax. The shadow Secretary of State touched on it in a slightly facetious way when he discussed properties that straddled the England-Wales border. I want to make a serious point about the quality of the mapping involved. May I make a plea for us not to use postcodes in determining which nation the land is in? It is not the Post Office's fault, but a lot of organisations are sloppy and do not use postcodes properly. They assume that everybody with an NP postcode lives in Wales, including my constituents in the southern part of my constituency. A lot of my constituents, who live in England, get bilingual letters from all sorts of organisations that assume they live in Wales. I hope that my hon. Friend can assure me that we will use a proper mapping system when looking at stamp duty land tax so that we make the right decisions about whether property is in England or in Wales and do not have the sorts of cross-border issues that I have seen as a result of devolution so far.

I support the proposal to move to fixed-year terms offset against the terms for this place. On balance, it is better to have elections in Wales that focus on the issues important to the people of Wales—and ensure that those running the Welsh Assembly and those wanting to be elected to it are properly held accountable—than elections that take place on the same day as a UK general election, because then the arguments would blur. One can argue it both ways—the hon. Member for Rhondda, who is no longer in his place, did so, as did several others when we were passing the Fixed-term Parliaments Act 2011—but I am pleased with the measure.

I have already said that I am happy with the proposal to reverse the change made by the right hon. Member for Neath, and I will say no more about that. We have had a lot of debate about it already, and I do not want to provoke any more.

I notice that the borrowing powers are already available to be used for the M4 development. That is a helpful proposal. I have been having an ongoing debate with some Labour Members about the Severn bridge tolls that is driven by the desire for improvements on the M4 to improve the economic benefits from that corridor. I have proposed a third Severn crossing, although that is not welcomed by all Labour Members if it means an extension of toll revenues. Some of the borrowing powers could enable improvements to the important M4 link, which is very important for the economies not only of south Wales but of constituencies such as mine. The proposal is very welcome.

Overall, I welcome the Bill. I am glad that it has been well thought through as a result of the proposals from the Silk commission and that it had pre-legislative scrutiny in this House. I will certainly support it, and I look forward to debating it further on the Floor of the House.

6.52 pm

Wayne David (Caerphilly) (Lab): I will support this Bill, although I have to say that it is very disappointing because it is, I am afraid, a bit of a shoddy compromise. Everyone realises that the Secretary of State for Wales is no enthusiast for devolution—indeed, some people might go further than that—and we know that the Liberal

Democrats are quite enthusiastic, so we have a cobbling together of two different opinions, and the Bill suffers as a consequence. Its main proposals, which are modest and relate to the tax-raising capacity of the Welsh Assembly, are very limited. It also has strangely attached to it some new arrangements with regard to the electoral politics of the Welsh Assembly.

Although the first part of the Silk report has been quoted in support of the Bill, there is a great deal of difference between what Silk proposed and what the Government have put before us. For example, Silk states very clearly and boldly that

“for the financial accountability and empowerment of the National Assembly for Wales to be improved sufficiently, it should be responsible for raising a more substantial proportion of its spending.”

That is the core of its proposal. What the Government have given us on income tax-raising powers is a long way from the aspiration articulated by Silk. It is important to recognise, too, that a genuine and fundamental concern has been expressed by many people, including those in the Welsh Assembly, that there is no significant movement on Barnett. This proposal is a real runner only if there is a cast-iron commitment to, and a firm set of proposals on, modifying the Barnett formula as it applies to Wales. Under Barnett, as we all know, Wales is short-changed to the tune of £300 million per year, and that situation will not be addressed by this Bill.

Alun Cairns: I am interested in the sum of £300 million because it was presumably derived from the Holtham report, which is now some years old. Gerry Holtham also pointed out that as public spending contracts proportionately, the Barnett formula will protect Wales and the £300 million will decrease. Does the hon. Gentleman agree?

Wayne David: The £300 million figure, which is quoted widely and not just by me, is the most accurate figure that we have to go on at the moment. It is widely used by a number of academics as the main basis for the calculation.

Alun Cairns: My point is that the figure is several years old. There has been a change in the scale of public expenditure since then, and it is therefore nowhere near £300 million any more. Does the hon. Gentleman accept that, given that Holtham said it in the report?

Wayne David: Not necessarily, because an added scenario that Gerry Holtham did not take into account is the austerity package that has been put together by this Government, which has led to huge cuts in the Welsh Assembly Government's budget. To begin with, those cuts have not kept up with inflation, but all the indications are that they will be significantly deeper. That is an important backdrop to the whole matter that we are tackling.

Jonathan Edwards: I totally disagree with the hon. Gentleman. I do not believe that there is a link between the Barnett formula and devolving financial powers, but that is the position that the Labour party has taken, and it is a roadblock. Will he confirm that at the next Westminster election Labour's manifesto will include a commitment to review the Barnett formula, because

last week his colleagues in Scotland were saying that they would rather die in the ditch before Barnett was reformed?

Wayne David: The Labour party had in its previous general election manifesto a commitment on modifying the Barnett formula, with the introduction of fair funding and a floor. That is currently Labour's policy, and I have every confidence that it will be taken forward.

Given the possibility of a referendum on the income tax powers—although that is not very likely—it is rather disappointing that the Government have not learned lessons from previous experience of referendums across the UK, especially in Wales. The Electoral Commission has made the valid point that we need to learn one lesson, in particular, from the previous referendum on whether the Assembly should have law-making powers, when there was no coherent, registered No campaign and therefore there could not be a registered Yes campaign. As a result, we did not have the kind of debate on the Assembly's powers that we should have had, and that is partly why we had such a relatively low turnout. I am slightly concerned that the Government have not learned that lesson and have not reflected it in their legislative proposals.

Hywel Williams: I rather agree with the hon. Gentleman. I was very disappointed that the No campaign did not organise sufficiently last time. The question about the referendum that I have asked a number of times is how on earth we formulate a question about lockstep, because given that, with all due respect, many hon. Members, and even right hon. Members, might not quite understand it, I do not know how we are going to present it to the Welsh public.

Wayne David: That is a fair point that is worthy of debate.

Another significant constitutional measure is the electoral mechanism by which Assembly Members are elected. A number of Members have already referred to that.

Glyn Davies: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Wayne David: I have not made a point yet. Hang on a second—I will make a few points and then I will give way.

Glyn Davies: It is on the Barnett formula.

Wayne David: I have moved on from that. The hon. Gentleman has to learn to pay attention. But, I will be generous.

Glyn Davies: I was waiting until the hon. Gentleman finished his point before intervening. It was only when he moved on to the next point that I realised he had finished. Is he telling us today that a Labour Government would actually reform the Barnett formula and would then support putting the proposition for income tax powers for the Assembly to a referendum?

Wayne David: I do not think I said that. The hon. Gentleman has put forward an interesting hypothesis and I am sure we will consider it at the appropriate time, but it is not relevant to the discussion we are having here.

[Wayne David]

As I was saying before I was interrupted, one of the most significant constitutional changes in the Bill is the proposition that we should change the method of election for the Welsh Assembly—that there should be a revision of what was agreed in the Government of Wales Act 2006. Like other Members, I have been travelling around Wales listening to what members of the public have to say. Reference has been made to a report from the Bevan Foundation. I remember that report well, as I was one of the Members who commissioned it. It came to the objective conclusion on the basis of a representative cross-section that, as the right hon. Member for Chesham and Amersham (Mrs Gillan) said, most people in Wales did not understand the system. They also thought it was intrinsically unfair that individuals who put their names forward for election but lose the election should suddenly appear in the Welsh Assembly—most people would assume that, as those people had lost, they would not be elected.

It is fundamentally impossible to explain the rationale behind that or to argue that it is fair. Whatever special pleading we make for small parties because of how difficult it is for them to get together a sufficient number of candidates, it is an unfair proposition.

Alun Cairns: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Wayne David: Yes—do your best to explain it.

Alun Cairns: Will the hon. Gentleman inform the House why he thinks that either his anecdotal evidence or his summary of the Bevan Foundation's reasons for its recommendations are more independent or fair than the work of the Electoral Commission, which was challenged legally to come up with a full consultation, based on evidence, and ultimately to give the Secretary of State a recommendation? The commission did so, and found in favour of the measures in the Bill.

Wayne David: It is basic common sense. If someone loses an election, they do not get elected—it is as simple as that. I challenge the hon. Gentleman to explain to anybody in the street why that is not fair. I guarantee that he will fail. Go on—have a go.

Alun Cairns: I do not want to labour the point too much, but I remind the hon. Gentleman that in the 2003 election every Labour Assembly Member topped the regional list. That suggests that there is yet another inconsistency. Even the then First Minister, Rhodri Morgan, who I suspect was highly unlikely to lose, topped the list. The Opposition used the system in their interests, in spite of what has been stated now.

Wayne David: I am at a loss to understand the rationale behind that. We live in a democracy and have to accept the system that Parliament agrees. That does not mean that we think it is right, because it is not—it is fundamentally wrong. What is being suggested in the Bill amounts to gerrymandering.

I will give a couple of examples of how the regional list system as it stands at the moment is being abused in an immoral way. There is the case of Mohammed Asghar. He was elected to the Welsh Assembly as one of

Plaid Cymru's regional list Assembly Members, but having been elected as such, then decided to cross the House and join the Conservatives. Why did he join them? Was it a great matter of political principle? No. It is said that there was a disagreement about the employment of his daughter, so he decided to cross the House and use the system.

Another, more relevant and contemporary example is that of an Assembly Member called Lindsay Whittle. Lindsay Whittle was elected to the Welsh Assembly as a Plaid Cymru list Member for South Wales East. However, Mr Whittle is also a member of Caerphilly county borough council. He lives in Caerphilly and appears to spend a disproportionately large amount of time in Caerphilly.

Hon. Members: He lives there.

Wayne David: He does live there, but he works there as well, irrespective of the rest of his constituency. I put this to the House: can it be that Mr Lindsay Whittle is so interested in the council and in his own particular locality because he wants to stand in the Caerphilly constituency at the next Welsh Assembly elections in 2016? I think that is quite likely. The point I am making is that democracy in this country is based on representation. If someone does not represent people properly, but instead represents their constituents selectively and picks out who they are going to focus on, it is undemocratic and unfair. It is reprehensible for the individual to behave in that way, but it is also reprehensible that they are able to do that under the political system.

If Mr Whittle does indeed stand for re-election in 2016, his calculation will be, "Yes, I'll have a go at Caerphilly but I don't need to worry if I lose because I still have the old regional list system to fall back on." That is a practical example of this unfairness. I challenge any Member to explain to the people of south-east Wales how that can be justified and how it is an example of democracy as we understand it—it clearly is not.

Hywel Williams: I am slightly curious. The hon. Gentleman seems to be complaining about Lindsay Whittle doing his job effectively, given that, from what I understand, he is a councillor and he lives in Caerphilly. It reminds me of Lord Foulkes's remarks about how the Scottish National party is going around deliberately improving services in Scotland in order to be popular.

Wayne David: The essential point is that this individual is a councillor representing his small ward on Caerphilly county borough council, but what about the other wards and local authorities in the region that he is also supposed to be representing? What about the other parts of south-east Wales that he is supposed to be representing? The fact is that he has chosen to represent only some people and to pursue their interests for his political advantage. That is not fulfilling a democratic mandate properly.

Hywel Williams: There is a well-established principle in American politics that if someone does not do their job right, they are kicked out—it is the "kick the bums out" principle. If Lindsay Whittle is not doing his job representing people as a list Member, surely the electorate will kick him out.

Wayne David: The whole point is that people cannot pick and choose who they want on the list. The list is drawn up by the party machines—a closed list. That in itself is undemocratic in my view. People cannot pick and choose. If people are not satisfied with the way that somebody on the list is doing their job, they cannot get rid of that person because the system works to ensure that the vested interests of elites are maintained. Most of those are in the smaller political parties.

Roger Williams (Brecon and Radnorshire) (LD): I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will be voting against this part of the Bill, but does he think that there could be an amendment so that we do not have closed lists but open ones? Would that be an improvement?

Wayne David: There is a lot to be said for that, yes. I would take it further. The elections for the European Parliament have closed lists, and there has been a debate about whether those lists should be open. Speaking personally, I think there is a lot to be said for that. Democracy is about fairness, openness and transparency. Those qualities are sadly lacking in the proposals in the Bill.

In an intervention on my right hon. Friend the Member for Neath (Mr Hain) I referred to the fact that, in the impact assessment the Government have said that they want to change the 2006 Act because smaller parties say that they have difficulty in coming forward with a sufficiently large pool of

“high quality candidates to represent them in elections.”

That is what it says. *[Interruption.]* That is what the Government say. In other words, they are saying that, because Plaid Cymru and Conservative party candidates are not sufficiently attractive to the population, the electoral system must be changed to allow those inadequate people to get elected. That is absurd. It is not a definition of democracy. It is an indictment of the paucity of the Government’s arguments.

As I said earlier, I will support the Bill but, as Members will have gathered, I will not do so with any conviction or determination and certainly not with any enthusiasm. Frankly, it is better than nothing, but not much better. I assure the House that we will argue strongly in Committee about many of the issues that I and others have raised, and I hope to goodness that Members will have the common sense and decency to think again.

7.10 pm

Roger Williams (Brecon and Radnorshire) (LD): It is a great pleasure to speak in this debate. Many great political figures in the history of devolution will be very pleased that it is taking place. My predecessor Richard Livsey, Rhodri Morgan, Ron Davies, Lord Wigley and Lord Elis-Thomas will be delighted, although Richard Livsey is in a more elevated chamber than those in the Palace of Westminster.

Although the Conservatives did not embrace devolution to begin with, their contribution has been substantial. I thought that Lord Bourne, who was a regional Assembly Member, might have been based in Brecon and Radnorshire, but he actually lives in Aberystwyth and is now Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth. It is a tribute to this Government that this Bill has been introduced, and that is to be celebrated. I congratulate the Government on moving quickly with

the Bill so as to ensure that part I of the Silk proposals can be acted on in this Parliament. That shows real commitment to devolution and I commend it.

My party, both in Wales and across the UK, believes that power and authority derive and flow upwards from the people and that power must be exercised at the most appropriate local level. We have long supported a federal system as part of our vision for the UK’s constitutional future. In order to ensure that our central principles of dispersing power as widely as possible and ensuring that Wales’s distinct challenges can be addressed, we have advocated and supported devolution strongly. We have argued consistently since the establishment of the National Assembly that it should possess additional financial and legal competencies. The key to that has been the need to increase the Assembly’s accountability, and I believe that this Bill goes a very long way to doing that.

It is true that a lockstep, which other Members have mentioned, will put some constraint on the ability of whichever Government are in office in Cardiff bay to use those powers. Although I would prefer not to have the lockstep, the acceptance of the principle of giving income tax powers to the Welsh Government is such an important step that it should not be dismissed.

In their reasoning on the inclusion of the lockstep, the UK Government have argued that the devolution of power to set different rates

“could distort the redistributive structure (or progressivity) of the income tax system and could potentially be detrimental to the UK as a whole.”

I do not want this Bill to be used as a means of establishing tax competition between Wales and the rest of the UK, but we must accept that tax competition is an inevitable consequence of devolution. If we are arguing that Wales should be able to borrow and raise what it wants to spend, it should have the power to tax as it sees fit.

Overall, although I cannot pretend that I would not prefer it if there were no lockstep, under the circumstances I am willing to accept it, if it means the increased accountability and responsibility for the Welsh Assembly that this Bill will deliver.

Hywel Williams: I agree entirely with the hon. Gentleman about the lockstep, but if taxes were reduced across all bands we would retain a certain amount of progressivity. The progressiveness of the system itself can vary depending on whether the rate goes up or down, so the lockstep is not a full answer to the question of progressivity in respect of income tax.

Roger Williams: I accept the hon. Gentleman’s argument, but that is the form in which the Bill appears, and rather than take the risk of losing the powers, my party is prepared to accept it.

On borrowing powers, I share some of the concerns outlined by my hon. Friend the Member for Ceredigion (Mr Williams), who will speak later, on the issue of writing a borrowing figure into the Bill. In the Welsh Liberal Democrat submission to the Silk commission, we argued for borrowing powers equivalent to those proposed for the Scottish Parliament—a capital borrowing limit of 10% of the total capital budget each year, with a cap at about 10 times the amount. We also asked for a

[Roger Williams]

very small amount of revenue borrowing, which would be a better, more sustainable approach to the borrowing arrangements.

In addition to the Bill's financial measures, I welcome a number of constitutional moves, including those on double-jobbing, five-year terms and the lifting of the ban on dual candidacy. The move to five-year terms will help ensure that issues relating to the Assembly will receive the hearing they deserve during election campaigns. In the 1999 Assembly elections, I stood at both constituency and regional level but failed to get elected in either, so it is not a fail-safe system. Those Assembly elections took place at the same time as local government elections and Carmarthenshire had multi-member wards. There were polling booths with the words, "Remember you can vote for two candidates," written above them. Obviously, that referred to the local government election, but it confused a lot of electors and resulted in an enormous number of spoilt ballots, because they were not aware of the complexity of the system. I think that having separate election days is very important.

When legislating on a ban on dual candidacy in 2006, the then Labour Government said that the process "devalues the integrity of the electoral system in the eyes of the public and acts as a disincentive to vote in constituency elections." However, in reality it has reduced voter choice and undermined the credibility of the electoral system by punishing parties for being successful. I believe that the Opposition's often used argument that turnout would diminish because voters would be unprepared to vote in elections in which some losing constituency candidates were likely to be elected as regional candidates is unfounded. Dual candidacy is accepted by the electorate in Scotland and, indeed, for the London Assembly.

We heard from Labour's Welsh conference over the weekend that Labour would like to see Wales's powers brought into line with those in Scotland and move towards the reserved powers model. I and my Liberal Democrat colleagues would wholeheartedly support that, but I remind the Opposition that they had 13 years to address those issues. In its 2011 manifesto, Labour made a commitment

"not to seek powers to vary income tax".

That was a straightforward rejection, so I am very pleased to hear that Labour has changed its view and I look forward to the passage of this Bill through Parliament.

7.19 pm

Hywel Williams (Arfon) (PC): I am very pleased to speak in this debate, because we in Plaid Cymru welcome the chance—at long last—to debate the Wales Bill, modest as it is. We particularly welcome the fact that the Bill is a vehicle for implementing greater financial powers for Wales. Those powers need to be looked at very carefully in Committee, and I look forward to such a debate, as does my hon. Friend the Member for Carmarthen East and Dinefwr (Jonathan Edwards). However, we cannot help but feel that the Bill is a lost opportunity to implement the full recommendations of the cross-party Commission on Devolution in Wales, chaired by Paul Silk.

I first want to reflect for a moment on the process and the time that it has taken to get to the Bill today. Following the overwhelmingly successful referendum in 2011—we in Plaid Cymru, as part of the One Wales

coalition Government, had pushed for it—and realising the growing appetite of the people of Wales for greater control of their lives, as well as perhaps mindful of the growing appetite across these islands for constitutional change, the Westminster Government set up the Commission on Devolution in Wales to consider the devolution of further powers. Each of the main four parties nominated a commissioner. Eurfyl ap Gwilym served with distinction for Plaid Cymru, and I commend his work and that of the other commissioners.

The commission was instructed to produce two reports—the first on financial powers, and the second on wider policy issues. It was specifically instructed not to look at the issue of funding, namely the Barnett formula. As we have already heard, the independent commission headed by Gerry Holtham noted that Wales loses out on about £300 million each year. I take the point made by the hon. Member for Vale of Glamorgan (Alun Cairns), who is no longer in his place, that the figure varies, but if the UK economy takes off, as we all fervently hope and as the Government certainly hope, the loss will be increased.

The commission produced a highly commendable piece of work in November 2012. Its first report was a complex package of recommendations. I use the word "package" advisedly, because part of our concern about the Bill is that the whole package has not been adopted. We in Plaid Cymru wanted more, as our submission to the commission attests, but we gathered round the compromise that had a chance to work precisely because it was a package of reforms. I know that the commission came to its conclusions after a great deal of hard bargaining.

Albert Owen: The hon. Gentleman is making a very interesting point about the balance on the commission, but surely it is the place of Parliament to debate and decide changes in laws, not just to rubber-stamp commissions.

Hywel Williams: I take the hon. Gentleman's point entirely. However, the commission was set up by the Government to look very closely at the question and it came to a unanimous judgment, but they then decided to adopt only some parts of its report. My point is that I wanted them to adopt the entire recommendations of part I of the Silk report. It is disappointing that they did not, because we can see the package of reforms that the commission came to as its conclusion.

It is also massively disappointing that the Government waited so long to respond to the report. We were told that they would respond in the spring of 2013. Then it was pushed to the summer. I remember making the point in the Welsh Grand Committee, when the Secretary of State said that spring officially ends in June, that July in Welsh is *Gorffennaf*—*gorffen haf*—which means the end of summer. We waited, and autumn came. The nights were drawing in, the countdown to Christmas began and, eventually, a full year after the commission produced its report, the Government responded.

Glyn Davies: I am listening to the hon. Gentleman's speech with great interest, but does he accept that moving forward with a Bill to recommend tax-raising powers for the National Assembly for Wales is a huge advance in devolution that will, if such powers are

granted, transform the Assembly's authority? Does he agree that introducing those powers in a Bill as quickly as the Government have done—we are debating it today with a view to taking it through in this Parliament—is quite a creditable performance?

Hywel Williams: I am indeed very glad that the Bill is before us, as I said at the start of my speech, but I am contrasting the time between the commission reporting and the Government responding. We suddenly have the Bill before us today. I certainly welcome that, but I have no idea why it has appeared so quickly; it is not for me to comment on the lack of other Government business.

I know that the term “a slap in the face for Wales” is very well used, and I hope that it will be reported tomorrow by our friends in the BBC, but I must say that to ignore such a fundamental report—as the hon. Gentleman has just pointed out—for so long is somewhat disrespectful. More importantly for us in Plaid Cymru and for other hon. Members, it is also damaging to the political and economic progress that our country can make. The Welsh Government continue to be denied the powers that they should be able to exercise—they are also denied the funding that they should have—and that were recommended by Gerry Holtham. However, we are where we are—but where are we?

Towards the end of last year, the Prime Minister swept into the Senedd building in Cardiff bay to a media fanfare and the flashes of cameras, and announced new financial powers for Wales, but the proposals were rather light on detail. Indeed, the Prime Minister had discovered “anti-gravitas”, as I called it at the time, in making a proposal that then seemed to float away. It was not until some weeks later that we learned that all was not as it seemed. The Government had cherry-picked the cross-party Silk commission's recommendations—accepting some, but only in part, and even omitting others.

The draft Wales Bill was published in January, and the Welsh Affairs Committee, of which I was a member, was tasked with its pre-legislative scrutiny, with a tight turnaround for producing a report. I must say that I enjoyed the process of scrutinising the Bill, and I pay tribute to all Committee members and to the hon. Member for Monmouth (David T. C. Davies), for his chairmanship. Contrary to his rather fierce, if not sometimes eccentric, persona in this Chamber, he was the model of a balanced Chairman, and I was very glad, if slightly surprised, that he acted in that way.

To return to the narrative, the Government then seemed to be in a hurry, and we now have the Bill. The Welsh Affairs Committee sessions took evidence from a variety of independent academics, civil society groups and even elected politicians from both this place and the National Assembly for Wales. Interestingly, even Opposition party leaders from Cardiff graced the Committee's sittings. That move was not uncontroversial, because the Committee's purpose is of course to scrutinise the Government at Westminster. Having the party leaders from Cardiff caused a certain amount of head scratching, because it was something of a first. However, it indicated that this was not some humdrum scrutiny exercise of a small Whitehall Department or a minor Bill because, as was pointed out by the hon. Member for Montgomeryshire (Glyn Davies), the Committee was considering part of the blueprint for the next stage in our national political development, and it deserved such a level of scrutiny.

The consensus that began to emerge was that borrowing powers were vital to allowing the Government of Wales, formed of whichever party or parties, to be able to borrow for investment to boost our economy and create jobs. However, the consensus was that the lockstep on income tax rates meant that the provision could not realistically be varied, because the power was unusable. Other than the duo of the Secretary of State for Wales and his Treasury colleague, the Exchequer Secretary—unsurprisingly—all agreed that it would be far better to have the ability to vary each individual income tax band rate.

During sittings of the Welsh Affairs Committee, I pointed out a paradoxical effect of raising or lowering tax rates with a lockstep. If we raise the tax rates with a lockstep, the higher rates are then less progressive than the lower ones: if we raise tax by a penny on the 20p band, we increase it by a twentieth, while if we raise it by a penny in the 40p band, we increase it by a fortieth. We should bear that slightly obscure ratio issue in mind. Equally, a decrease has a similar effect.

The cross-party Silk Commission recommended in the first place that we should not have a lockstep. I proposed an amendment in discussions on the Welsh Affairs Committee report—I proposed that the Committee recommended dropping the lockstep. Unsurprisingly, our three friends from the Tories voted against my amendment; the hon. Member for Ceredigion (Mr Williams) and I voted for it; but, unaccountably, Labour members of the Committee managed to abstain. Even though they have publicly declared opposition to the lockstep in the Committee, they did not step up to the plate.

Jonathan Edwards: How baffled is my hon. Friend on the Labour party's position on the lockstep? The First Minister says he wants to get rid of it. The shadow Secretary of State said today that he supports it. Who speaks for Labour?

Hywel Williams: I remain baffled—that is all I can say. Irrespective of Labour party internal divisions and wrangling, Labour has said that greater financial powers should have been granted, but now it is possibly saying that they should not be. The Tories remain divided on the lockstep. The greater part of the group in the Assembly complains that income tax powers with the lockstep are unusable, but the other part supported the London party and was given the sack.

I referred to the referendum when the hon. Member for Caerphilly (Wayne David) was in his place. The formulation of the question, if we ever have a referendum, will be extremely difficult, but rather than make the point myself, I shall but quote from the widely respected economist, Gerry Holtham, who told the Welsh Affairs Committee that Welsh politicians are being asked to

“fight a highly losable referendum. Tax is not popular, and, to be frank, neither are politicians at the present time. It is most unfair, but there it is. You are asking them to fight a losable referendum for a tax power they can't use. It doesn't look like a high-odds proposition to me.”

I tend to agree with him, particular given the possible complexity of the question, and the possible lack of a no campaign, which has been referred to.

The hon. Member for Nottingham North (Mr Allen), the constitutional expert and Chair of the Political and Constitutional Reform Committee, urged members of

[Hywel Williams]

the Welsh Affairs Committee to seek to amend the legislation so that the lockstep is removed. He has said that the requirement for a referendum on the limited income tax powers is “ridiculous”. The Secretary of State, however, sung the praises of the lockstep, saying that it could be used to vary all rates and would put Wales at a competitive advantage. He has also noted his opposition to the devolution of long haul air passenger duty, as that would put Bristol airport at a competitive disadvantage. On the one hand, he argues against a competitive advantage, but, on the other, he refers to a competitive disadvantage. That does not seem particularly coherent to me, but there we are. In evidence to the Welsh Affairs Committee, the First Minister seemed to say that he wants Wales both to have a tax competition advantage and not to have one, as expertly adduced in a telling question asked by the hon. Member for Aberconwy (Guto Bebb). That incoherence shows that the cherry-picking of the Silk recommendations falls apart. It is a whole package.

On Labour’s new-found conversion to the need for reform of the Barnett formula, Plaid Cymru has been pointing out the consistent underfunding of Wales through the block grant for well over a decade, but successive Labour Secretaries of State have assured us that “the Barnett formula serves Wales well”.

I am sorry that the right hon. Member for Neath (Mr Hain) is not here, because those are his words. I know them by heart because I have heard them so often. His consistent standpoint is that the formula serves Wales well and we meddle with it at our peril. I will not intrude on Labour’s private grief and confusion, and the further inconsistency on Barnett that Labour’s leader in the Scottish Parliament seems to generate so effectively and so unconsciously. After 13 years in power when Labour could have sorted the formula, it now cries for fair funding—the hon. Member for Pontypridd (Owen Smith) says that income tax powers without fair funding is a “Tory trap”.

Wales should be fairly funded, as Plaid Cymru has long argued, because every day we lose around £1 million in additional funding. Those figures change, as the hon. Member for Vale of Glamorgan has said—he would no doubt jump up and remind me were he in his place. We lose around £1 million every day, which we could spend on improving our health service, tackling the scandal of poverty or building new schools. For now, the Labour position is no fair funding and no income tax powers for Wales. We know why. That is Labour’s position because it fears that, if we address Barnett, its anti-independence campaign in Scotland will be finally scuppered. Oddly, therefore, the Labour party says in Wales that we must reform Barnett, but the very same unified and indivisible Labour party says in Scotland that we must not reform Barnett.

Meanwhile, the UK Government water down the Silk recommendations to conform to their fundamentally anti-devolutionist view that Wales cannot possibly have something that Scotland does not have. As we have seen this past week, events in Scotland may overtake them all.

Albert Owen: May I ask the hon. Gentleman what the view of Plaid Cymru’s sister party in Scotland is? If there is a no vote, which I hope there is, in the referendum

in Scotland, will he and the sister party—the Scottish National party—argue for reform of Barnett in Scotland, which could reduce Scottish revenues from the UK Government?

Hywel Williams: My job is to represent Wales. The Labour party advertises itself as the unified, indivisible Labour party in England, Scotland and Wales. The hon. Gentleman’s point is bogus.

It is important that we now move forward, whatever the weaknesses hon. Members on both sides of the House might find in the Bill. Realistically, income tax might not be varied for some time, or ever, depending on what happens in the referendum, but the Bill will give access to vital borrowing and investment powers.

The Silk commission produced its second report earlier this month. Plaid Members say that Wales should be moving to a reserved powers model as swiftly as possible. We believe it would make more sense to have a referendum on the Silk part II recommendations. That larger and more substantive referendum would consider both true income tax-varying powers and wider policy powers. We will table amendments to preserve the integrity of the Silk report recommendations. Given that the principle of fiscal devolution has been conceded in respect of the other tax-varying powers, we say there is no need for a referendum on a simple income tax-sharing model. I agree with the hon. Member for Islwyn (Chris Evans), who is in his place, who said today that that should be the case. We will seek to amend the Bill accordingly.

Mr David Jones: At the risk of appearing to carp, I should point out to the hon. Gentleman that, a moment ago, he accused the Conservative party of cherry-picking the recommendations of the Silk commission. Is he not cherry-picking, too, when he says that we should dispense with the referendum, which, after all, was recommended by the commission?

Hywel Williams: Our argument is on a package of measures, but the Government have cherry-picked. Our ambition—I make no apology whatever for it—is to have both Silk I and II and even more implemented.

Jonathan Edwards: The Secretary of State has cherry-picked the Silk commission’s recommendations on the ability to vary income tax. Because he has cherry-picked, why does he not devolve the lockstep without the referendum, and then have a referendum on removing the lockstep? That would be a practical way of moving forward, and of preserving the Silk commission proposals and recommendations.

Hywel Williams: That might be a way forward, but I have no idea how we would formulate a coherent question on the lockstep, as I have said. We should work towards all parties committing to a tax-sharing model in their 2015 manifestos, so that that could be achieved without the need for a costly referendum. Then in the future we could possibly have a referendum on the power to vary income tax, along with the wider powers expected as part of Silk II.

Plaid Cymru believes that constitutional change should not happen simply for its own sake, but because it represents the means to create a better society in Wales—more prosperous, more just, more equal and more

democratic. That is our positive case. The financial powers recommended in the first report by the Silk commission represent some of the means to achieving that. They empower, but with them comes responsibility—a responsibility that Plaid Cymru would welcome.

Most of the debate has been focused on Wales. As a nationalist, I am pleased to quote an English Member—my hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham North again. He said:

“I start from the premise that the UK is the most massively over-centralised of all the western democracies and I find that deeply unhealthy.”

That point is about England and devolution all round—if I may use that 19th century phrase. He continued:

“I welcome this Bill very strongly because it is a step, not a leap—it is a step in the right direction.”

7.41 pm

Simon Hart (Carmarthen West and South Pembrokeshire) (Con): I welcome the Bill, which contains much that will benefit the residents of west Wales in particular. The more I listened to the speeches today, especially from the right hon. Member for Neath (Mr Hain), the more I came to the conclusion that we must be doing the right thing, given the level of opposition that he expressed.

I probably have more in common with my hon. Friend the Member for Monmouth (David T. C. Davies), the Chairman of the Select Committee, than I should perhaps readily and publicly admit. That is because I am not an anti-devolutionist but I am a reluctant devolutionist. I am pragmatic about it and I accept that we are where we are. I am reluctant because, in the time that I have lived in and represented my area, I have never had a business—small, medium or anything in between—come and tell me about the need for further devolution or for further powers to be devolved to Cardiff. In many cases, I have been on the end of contrary suggestions. Very few people say that the one thing standing between them and sustainability and profitability is more politicians, more devolution and more of the confusion that can sometimes result.

Nor have I heard from many members of the public about the need for further devolution. I suppose that that is a contradictory comment, because when put to the test in a referendum the result is somewhat different, but not many people talk to me about the need to devolve the criminal justice system, the police or other such matters. I therefore come at the issue from a very schizophrenic position, knowing that we are where we are—as the hon. Member for Arfon (Hywel Williams) has just said.

My hon. Friend the Member for Monmouth and I come into step on the danger of mission creep. I do not always admit to sharing the views of the former Prime Minister Mr Blair, but I will on this occasion, because he said:

“I was never a passionate devolutionist. It is a dangerous game to play. You can never be sure when Nationalist sentiment ends and separatist sentiment begins.”

That was not entirely different from what Donald Dewar had said at the time that the Scottish Parliament was set up. He very explicitly said that he saw it as the end of the debate about independence—but a few short years later we are on the eve of a referendum on Scottish independence. That troubles me because—as other hon. Members have said—we appear to be travelling in one direction only, towards independence in all but name.

The Bill is a chance to put all that to bed. It strikes the correct balance between practical considerations and ideological objectives. Above all, it is a Bill that has the voter, the ratepayer and the business man and woman in mind, rather than the ambitions of politicians, either here or in Cardiff.

I want to touch on one and a half issues—both constitutional—and I shall be as brief as I can, because the afternoon seems to be dragging on into the night. The first issue is fixed-term Parliaments. When I was on the Political and Constitutional Reform Committee, we looked at this in some detail, and there was very little objection to the notion of fixed-term Parliaments. They were felt to have the potential to reduce uncertainty and instability, to give a clear timetable for the next election, and to provide more effective forecasting and the ability to prioritise more effectively. All of that is a given. There was not quite so much consensus on whether the term should be four years or five. The general view is that we are one of a relative minority of countries across the globe that have opted for five years. Nobody considers it to be much of a problem except when a collision of dates occurs, perhaps between elections to this Parliament and to the Welsh Assembly. Even then, the Electoral Reform Society was not particularly alarmed by the fact that the public may have to make a choice between candidates in Cardiff and candidates in Westminster. I agree: plenty of evidence suggests that people are capable of making an informed and intelligent decision in two simultaneous elections.

I am concerned that if boundaries were to change as a result of future legislation, asking people to vote for candidates on different boundaries might cause confusion, and we would need to guard against that. People ask how likely that is to happen, and it is probably some way off, but there is a more immediate problem. If there were to be—God forbid—a yes vote for Scottish independence in September, the whole basis of our future government could be affected by people who will spend only a few months in this House. The question is—and I suspect that Plaid Cymru Members will sympathise, and perhaps even Members from other parties—whether we could legitimately have an election in May 2015, the outcome of which was decided by people who would not be in this House for very many weeks thereafter. That is an argument—I put it no more strongly than that—for deferring the general election until after those matters have been resolved, which would then bring us into collision with the Welsh Assembly elections, now set for May 2016. Although I do not have too much of a problem with a dual election, we need to consider that that might be an inevitable outcome of a result in favour of independence—albeit unlikely—in Scotland later this year.

I do not intend to say much about double-jobbing, although it is an area of the Bill that I was concerned about until I heard the speech by the right hon. Member for Neath, who compelled us to accept his arguments even though they were at odds with the independent evidence available. As I result, I came to the view that I must be wrong and the Bill must be right. It is a bit rich—and I would say this if the right hon. Gentleman were in his place—for a former Secretary of State, who was partially responsible for the legislation and the problems that he highlighted, to go against the only authoritative independent evidence that is available to us from the Electoral Reform Society and the Electoral

[Simon Hart]

Commission. To suggest that they are wrong and he is right is taking the House for fools, so I am completely confident that the inclusion of double-jobbing in the Bill is the right approach.

I shall conclude, as I know that other hon. Members wish to round off the evening with a flourish. The tax position is more an area of expertise for my hon. Friend the Member for Aberconwy (Guto Bebb) than it is for me, but the situation is confused, and it would be further confused if we were to expand—perhaps post boundary reviews and all the elections we have mentioned, and taking into account the evidence provided to the Select Committee on our various visits around the country—the number of Members of the Welsh Assembly. It is an extraordinary suggestion that the Assembly in its current form does not contain sufficient expertise to deal with tax-varying powers, if that is what the Welsh nation wishes. Yet academic after academic, witness after witness, has come to us over the last few months suggesting that that is an inevitable consequence of the passage of the proposal. I think that would cause considerable concern in the minds of the business and voting community in Wales. It would be poor timing to suggest that what Wales needed was more politicians rather than fewer. There are cost and electoral implications and all sorts of economic and social considerations. I very much hope that the Secretary of State or the Minister can reassure us that such an outlandish and inappropriate proposal will not come into effect during our lifetime.

Mr David Jones *rose*—

Simon Hart: I was going to finish on that point, but I will take an intervention.

Mr Jones: Before my hon. Friend resumes his perch, he will recall that the First Minister indicated that he felt that the Assembly as currently constituted, with 60 Members, could cope comfortably with new powers.

Simon Hart: I thank the Secretary of State for his intervention. The First Minister did, and a number of other canny politicians in the Welsh Assembly also came to that conclusion, but the academic and independent evidence tended to point in a different direction. We used the expression “direction of travel” earlier and there seemed to be a slightly surprising thirst for a larger institution in Cardiff than I was comfortable with. I think the First Minister was just guarding against an unhelpful headline in the *Western Mail* and was being über-cautious, whereas his academic colleagues who gave evidence to the Committee were a little more forthright.

7.51 pm

Chris Evans (Islwyn) (Lab/Co-op): It is always a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Carmarthen West and South Pembrokeshire (Simon Hart). He is always badgering us—ha, ha, ha!—about the Welsh Assembly.

This Bill is a missed opportunity. It is a Bill of nothing but smoke and mirrors. For too long—since 1999—we have been running around having no satisfaction with the Assembly. We had the Government of Wales

Act 2006, which did not settle the constitutional argument. We have had Assembly after Assembly and Welsh Members of Parliament wasting their time talking about constitutional matters. Constitutional navel gazing is okay in the ivory towers of academia, but when the cost of the Silk commission is £1 million, the cost of the Williams report is £155,000 and the cost of the 2011 referendum was £5.89 million, it is time to draw a line. This Bill was our opportunity to do that, but we have had a timid response from a Government who have never, ever secured support in Wales.

Hywel Williams: I am slightly surprised that the hon. Gentleman is talking about constitutional navel gazing when all I have heard from Labour Members is speech after speech about the complexities and even the theology of list membership and constituency membership.

Chris Evans: I can only speak from my own experience. I use the Blackwood High street test when I go to Islwyn. If I walked down that street now and asked people what they thought of the Assembly, unfortunately I would be met with disinterest from most of them. If I talked about the constitutional arguments we have had today or to anybody tuning in today, they would wonder why we were talking about the Wales Bill. They would be more concerned about health, education and transport than debating giving further powers to the Assembly. That is the simple fact.

What we see in this Bill is an anomaly. On the one hand, we see the Government lifting the ban on dual candidacy, yet they are also banning double-jobbing. It seems to me that there is something fundamentally undemocratic about the way the Welsh Assembly operates. If there is a vacancy or a resignation under the first-past-the-post system, there is a by-election. That is correct; that is the model we follow in this place. However, as the Secretary of State for Wales will know, if there is a vacancy or a resignation from the list, people move up one. That is not democratic; there is no looking for a further mandate.

There are serious problems with our electoral system. First, it is difficult to understand. People in Gwent will say to me, “Why are thousands of Labour votes thrown away and I have a Tory”—or someone from the nationalist party—“representing me, but I’ve not voted for them? What is the point in voting Labour in the first-past-the-post system, yet voting Labour in the top-up system but getting no Labour AMs?” That is the situation we have to face and we are not talking about it. When we talk about dual candidacy, I think basic fairness says that in a race of four people, somebody has got to win and somebody has got to lose. Nobody gets the consolation prize of going to the Assembly.

The most damning case against dual candidacy appears in the impact assessment, which says:

“The Government of Wales Act 2006 modified the original devolution settlement to ban candidates at an Assembly election standing simultaneously in both a constituency and on a regional list. This provision has been considered unfair on smaller parties in Wales who may have a smaller pool of high quality candidates to represent them in elections.”

What the impact assessment is saying is that smaller parties in Wales, such as the Liberal Democrats or the nationalists, might not have enough high-quality candidates to stand; therefore, we should relax the rules on dual candidacy.

I do believe it is right to end double-jobbing. It makes no sense and it does not allow MPs or AMs to represent their constituents effectively. That part of the Bill is right, but the worst thing about the Bill is that we will have to come here again in a couple of years' time and debate the constitutional settlement. That is turning people off not only the Assembly, but politics in Wales, because all that Wales is dominated by at the moment is constitutional arguments.

And so we come to the great part of the Bill: the devolution of income tax. The Government accepted the Silk commission recommendation that Wales should have the power to vary income tax, subject to a referendum. However, they did not accept the model presented by the Silk commission, which would allow bands to be varied independently. Instead, they would need to be changed in lockstep. If the Government want to commission a report at a cost of £1 million in these economic circumstances, surely they should have included all the Silk recommendations and we could have debated them on the Floor of the House. The devolution of tax-raising powers is not a priority—we can see that in our constituency postbags every week. We need a triple test. We need to talk about the issue of fair funding and a period of assignment to see whether it is in the interests of Wales and the UK to devolve income tax.

We already know that Wales is underfunded to the tune of £300 million, but varying income tax powers will not address the issue of fair funding. Once the power to partially set income tax rates is devolved, the block grant will be reduced by an amount equivalent to the Welsh share of current tax receipts. To accept this power while the block grant underfunds Wales would be irresponsible and lock in underfunding for ever. The Wales Bill does not commit to reform of the Barnett formula either, even though the Secretary of State himself has said that the formula is coming towards the end of its life. Again, that proves that this is only a piecemeal Bill and that we will unfortunately be back here on the Floor of the House, however boring and irritating we find these constitutional debates.

If we are to devolve tax powers, there needs to be further examination by the Treasury and Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs to see how that will affect tax rates on both sides of the border. When we talk about jobs and the economy, it is also important to note that they are being created only by private sector businesses. We should therefore be speaking to those businesses and asking how their PAYE and payroll systems would be affected by the devolution of tax, but we are not. When we are varying tax powers, we also have to bear in mind that many more people live close to the Wales-England border and have to cross that border than live close to the Scotland-England border. Nearly half the Welsh population lives within 25 miles of the English border, while 10% of the English population live within 25 miles of the other side. That is 6.3 million in total. In contrast, just 4% of the Scottish population live within 25 miles of the English border.

Jonathan Edwards: The hon. Gentleman is quoted in the *Daily Post* today as saying that Wales should have the same fiscal package as Scotland. Is that his position or is it not?

Chris Evans: Yes, it is.

The fact that the Welsh border is significantly more densely populated than that of Scotland means that the complexity associated with different tax rates is much greater in Wales, for both employers and employees. Again, however, very little Treasury analysis has been conducted. Members may talk of a Scottish model, as the hon. Member for Carmarthen East and Dinefwr (Jonathan Edwards) did, but I think that more work must be done. We must have a report. We must know the facts and figures before we proceed further. We must seek a fair system for the whole of the United Kingdom. We cannot allow tax powers in Wales to be different from those in Scotland and England. The one thing that we have to realise is that, for all our constitutional debates, there is not an economic border on the Bristol channel, or to the north-west on Offa's dyke. Business does not operate in that way. Business will go where business costs are lower.

Glyn Davies: The hon. Gentleman is making a very interesting speech. However, I should like him to clarify one point. On the one hand he tells us that he supports the Labour proposition that the Welsh Assembly should be given the same fiscal powers as Scotland and, on the other, he seems to be arguing the complete opposite. Which is it to be?

Chris Evans: Perhaps, when that I was in full flow, the hon. Gentleman missed the point that I was making. I believe that, before we proceed, there must be a report—an impact assessment, giving facts and figures—on what will happen if we devolve tax-raising powers. That is the way in which business works. An impact assessment is the most effective and efficient way of putting the facts across.

I have spoken for a long time, but let me finally say something about borrowing powers and the devolution of minor taxes. Like many members of my party, including the First Minister, I have called for more borrowing powers. The Welsh budget has been cut by 10% during the current Parliament, and the Welsh Assembly's capital budget has been reduced by nearly a third. I therefore welcome the borrowing powers in the Bill. As was agreed in intergovernmental talks last year, initial borrowing will be available before the devolution of minor taxes in order to finance improvements to the M4, and those of us who have to travel up the M4 every week will welcome those improvements. The amount must be agreed between the Welsh Assembly and the United Kingdom Government.

Borrowing powers linked to the minor taxes when they are devolved will be limited to £500 million for current spending and £500 million for capital projects. I hope that that will be looked at. If, or when, income tax is devolved, the borrowing limit will increase to £1 billion. If the Government underwrite that, it can be arranged now. The devolution of stamp duty and landfill tax will give the Assembly an independent revenue stream worth about £200 million a year, and it will be interesting to see how that money is spent. However, those taxes will not be devolved until April 2018, three years into the next Parliament.

I believe that we could have had a wide-ranging debate about the devolution settlement, not only in Wales but in this country, but the Government have been timid in their response to the Silk commission, and we are now faced with the inconvenience of having to

[Chris Evans]

revisit the Bill. I fear that, instead of talking about the bread-and-butter issues that affect my constituents, we are once more boring them silly with talk of constitutional matters and constitutional reform, which simply switches people off. I support the Bill, but I believe that there is more work to be done on it, and I hope that it will be improved by amendments tabled in Committee.

8.3 pm

Mr Mark Williams (Ceredigion) (LD): It is a privilege to be called to speak in the debate. I was going to say that it was a privilege to be called at an early stage, but it has been a lengthy debate, and we may be here for much longer still. I do not think that the remark made by the hon. Member for Carmarthen West and South Pembrokeshire (Simon Hart) about the debate drawing to a close is quite appropriate yet. In any event, I am delighted to have an opportunity to reiterate Liberal Democrat support for the Bill, which represents another important milestone in the process of devolution. I pay tribute to the initiatives taken by the right hon. Member for Chesham and Amersham (Mrs Gillan), a former Secretary of State for Wales—although she is not in the Chamber at present—and by the present Secretary of State.

At the beginning of his speech, the hon. Member for Caerphilly (Wayne David) described the Bill as a ragbag and a compromise. Of course it is a compromise in part, because two political parties—the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats—have been working together. That compromise, if it was one, appeared in the coalition document, in which we spoke of delivering the referendum that was a leftover from the previous Labour Government. We also spoke of establishing the Silk commission and enabling it to deliberate, and we spoke of introducing legislation. On all three counts, the coalition Government have delivered what we said we would deliver immediately after the last general election.

I think that it would be a huge lost opportunity if the National Assembly Government did not take advantage of the powers that the Bill provides. Based on the recommendations of the Silk commission, it follows on from the work of Lord Richard, Gerry Holtham and the All Wales Convention, and devolution in Wales has been thoroughly and forensically tested through their reports. The hon. Member for Islwyn (Chris Evans) spoke of the need for a report and the need for more detail, but we have spent the last 10 years constructing the case for fiscal devolution and the devolution of powers. The evidence base is there, which is why the Government are introducing the Bill. It takes us further along the devolution journey to the end of the road—a place where, I believe, we shall have a steady and strong constitutional settlement that will be good for Wales and for the United Kingdom as a whole.

Party politics aside, I think it important to remember that all the great steps forward in devolution have been made when progressive forces in all parties have come together. The referendums of 1997 and 2011 came about because parties worked together in constituencies to promote the cause. As the Secretary of State said, the Conservative party is committed to a referendum if given the opportunity, and I should be pleased to share a platform with him to illustrate the consensus that exists on the issue.

As was said earlier, the success of Silk part 1—and, indeed, part 2—has been the consensus that was arrived at between all four parties. The contributions of Sue Essex and, more recently, Jane Davidson, along with Rob Humphries from my party, Nick—now Lord—Bourne, Dr Eurfyl ap Gwilym and the other commissioners have been huge, and the outcomes have been achieved on the basis of consensus. Long may that continue—although I am not entirely hopeful, having endured four hours of this debate.

Those of us who embrace localism believe that the key argument for the Bill is about promoting accountable devolution, and establishing a renewed sense of the legitimacy of the Assembly and its Government. I do not deny the legitimacy of any elected Assembly Member—that is a key principle—but I will sometimes deny Assembly Members the capacity to justify their decisions on the basis of the financial decisions of others. The accountability argument is compelling: a Government who spend money but have no responsibility for raising it cannot make their voters bear the full burden of their decisions. That seems to me a very clear and straightforward principle.

I believe that the conspiracy theory that we have heard from Labour Members has no place in the debate. I am sad that the hon. Member for Swansea West (Geraint Davies) is not present. When we were sitting, as we often do, in the Welsh Affairs Committee, I thought that the conspiracy theory was limited to him, but it seems to be remarkably infectious among Labour Members. I think that the principle is clear: if we want our Government to be legitimate, we must link the decisions that are made with the money that is raised.

As the hon. Member—my hon. Friend the Member—for Arfon (Hywel Williams) pointed out, that logic causes my view to diverge slightly from those of some of my hon. Friends when it comes to the issue of the lockstep; but that is a debate to be had in Committee. Perhaps the parameters of devolution in my mind are a little broader than those in the minds of some Government Members, but I do not believe that anything that I have heard from Opposition Members, or anything that we discussed in the Select Committee, should deviate from support for the Bill this evening and in the future. I simply want the Government in Cardiff to have the tools to do the job—to have their hands on the economic levers—which inevitably means the release of borrowing, for instance. This Wales Bill gives the Welsh Government additional tools to grow the Welsh economy and help Wales compete in the global race and create a stronger economy.

I have always considered Paul Silk's work to be a package, which is how he has described it in one or two briefings to Members of Parliament. I am glad that most of the recommendations have been adopted by the Government, although they have not been adopted in their entirety and there have been allegations of cherry-picking. I also respect what he said about the need for a referendum, and I respect the point made by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State about how the referendum question on fiscal responsibility was presented to the Scottish people. I just express a slight fear and concern about referendum fatigue. We had the initial referendum in 1997, and we had the referendum in 2011, mercifully scrapping the dreaded legislative competence order process. There were Members who are now on the Opposition Benches who told us that the

LCO process would be written on a tablet of stone and would be there for generations. In 2011, we got rid of that, which was one of the worst kinds of sticking-plaster solutions to devolution.

There is the prospect of more referendums after this one, however. Some of us subscribe to the reserved powers model, and some of us very much hope our party manifestos will be strong on Silk part 2 recommendations, but the pressure will be on for another referendum, and I just express the concern about referendum fatigue. I am not going to be charged with creating the wording of this referendum question, but it would be much better if those varying issues of critical importance to Wales could be bound together in one general question.

Susan Elan Jones: I am interested in what the hon. Gentleman is saying about referendums. I well remember the referendum in, I think, February 2011—it was certainly cold enough. Having been told by rather a lot of people in north-east Wales that north-east Wales would vote no, it strengthened the process in terms of full law-making powers that north-east Wales voted very conclusively yes. I think sometimes referendums can do that.

Mr Williams: I share that sentiment and referendums can also lead to people in different parties working together to make a compelling case. We would all applaud that, and I think even the good people of Monmouthshire voted yes?

David T. C. Davies: No.

Mr Williams: Sorry, not quite, but the vote was much better than before. I think there was a bit of a swing of opinion. We certainly welcome the fact that people along the borders voted in bigger numbers for this, although I stand corrected. I am still slightly shocked by the glowing appraisal my hon. Friend the Member for Monmouth (David T. C. Davies) gave of Liberal Democrat policy on federalism; he commended us on that. However, I take on board the point made by the hon. Member for Clwyd South (Susan Elan Jones).

Mr David Jones: It would appear that my hon. Friend's sole, or at least principal, concern about the Bill is the issue of the referendum, but does he agree that when we are talking about whether Wales should have a different tax basis from the rest of the country, that is something that concerns every resident of Wales and people should have their say on that?

Mr Williams: I do agree with that. I should, perhaps, make it clear that I was warning about referendum fatigue in the future. I have signed up to the Silk package and he has made that recommendation very clearly, as has my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. We must be very mindful of that fatigue in the future, however.

The hon. Member for Islwyn talked about the Blackwood high street survey that he unofficially—or maybe officially—makes when he is back in his constituency. He said that nobody raises these issues. I would just say that there is a case to be made in respect of our business community. People come to talk to me about business rates and the lack of clarity on responsibility over business rates, and there is a case for fully devolving

them to the National Assembly. Over the past nine years I have dealt with many cases involving this subject. I can think of many constituents who have come to me struggling with issues about where responsibility lies. Therefore, I am particularly pleased that decisions will, because of this Bill, be made closer to Wales and that rates can be more responsive to the needs of Welsh businesses.

The Federation of Small Businesses in Wales agrees that businesses in Wales are facing the most onerous business rates of any constituent nation of the UK. We do not have many options available to us, such as, for example using different multipliers for different-sized firms, and it hits our small businesses hard. Small businesses are the backbone of the Welsh, and particularly the Ceredigion, economy.

The Select Committee addressed that issue. Now that the Government have made their position on it clear, I would like to know how they intend to take forward their policy on devolving business rates completely. We need a clear settlement of business rates, which gives politicians the incentive to be creative on business rate policy and to be accountable for it.

I am also pleased about the Government's views on the full devolution of stamp duty and landfill tax. It is true that those taxes are not massive generators of revenue; they generate about £200 million a year out of an overall budget of £15 billion, which is 0.3%. However, I welcome the fact that stamp duty and landfill tax could be used to encourage inward investment and business generation in Wales, providing a much needed boost to the economy.

Moving on to the key issue of borrowing powers, the Select Committee urged in our pre-legislative scrutiny report that by the time of the publication of the Bill the Government should have set out how they decided the limits of the £500 million current account and the £500 million for capital account borrowing. That was an incredibly worthwhile report, and I think that the Government should acknowledge that there is a need for pre-legislative scrutiny of all Bills of this nature. Comparing the lobbying and transparency Bill with this Bill, the work we have undertaken on the Select Committee will serve the process very well. I remember that the Welsh Liberal Democrat leader, Kirsty Williams, came before the Select Committee and made the comparison between the settlement for Scotland and the settlement for Wales.

We also talked about, and sought clarification on, the issue of bonds, and I am encouraged that the Government seem willing to consider further whether it might be appropriate for the Welsh Government to issue bonds alongside the other measures.

Jonathan Edwards: The hon. Gentleman is reading out a range of measures included in the Bill, which were included in Silk. One measure that was in Silk that was not included in the Bill is the devolution of airport duty tax. How disappointed is he that that has not been included, especially considering that our airport is now owned by the people of Wales?

Mr Williams: I know the hon. Gentleman has worked vigorously on this issue. I think that argument is very much in flux. I think there is some way for the hon. Gentleman to convince us that that needs to be included,

[Mr Mark Williams]

although I appreciate what he says about Silk being clear on that and the Government having taken a different view.

Many local bodies can issue bonds, such as local housing associations, and, to reference Scotland again, the Scotland Act 2012 allows for the UK Government to devolve bond-issuing powers without any further primary legislation. I believe that there should be parity.

On the subject of borrowing, above all else I think it would be very strange if a national Parliament did not have the borrowing powers enjoyed by the most menial of local authorities. The capacity to do that is important, but important though the question of borrowing is—in particular for the work that needs to be undertaken around Newport and the M4—we should not kid ourselves that borrowing is the sole panacea that will lead to stimulation of the economy. Borrowing ultimately means paying back, with interest. Successful borrowing will be dependent on the competence of the Government doing the borrowing, and it will not solve all the problems.

As I said earlier, we should be striving for a reserved powers model for Wales, rather than facing the spectre of holding a referendum each time a section of policy is handed down from Westminster on a piecemeal basis. That is not to understate the huge strides forward that we have made in the Bill, however. I commend the Secretary of State and the Financial Secretary to the Treasury, my hon. Friend the Member for Bromsgrove (Sajid Javid) for everything they have done to ensure that this issue has been pursued to this point. For a Liberal in Government, this represents a proud moment. There will be an even prouder moment when we have the opportunity to put the Bill on to the statute book.

As I have said, the work of Silk has been a consensual process, with parties from all sides working towards an effective and beneficial devolution process for Wales. I sincerely hope—although I am not totally hopeful—that as we all play our part in passing the Bill through Parliament, the level of consensus that we achieved at the beginning of the process will be resurrected. I do not know what the weather was like in Llandudno at the weekend—it was sunny and clear on the west Wales coast—but it strikes me that a haze might have descended on the town. There is clarity on the Liberal Democrat Benches, and clarity among our Friends on the nationalist Benches, but I have to say that there is deep fog on the other side.

8.21 pm

Albert Owen (Ynys Môn) (Lab): It is a pleasure to participate in the debate. When this matter was last discussed in the Welsh Grand Committee, I was the Chair of the Committee, so I had to remain impartial. I listened to a lot of the arguments, however, and this is my opportunity to express my views on the Bill and the devolution settlement.

I am a proud devolutionist, and I am proud of my party's record on devolution. That process did not begin with the setting up of the National Assembly for Wales. One of my predecessors, the late Cledwyn Hughes, was one of the architects of devolution. He was the second Secretary of State for Wales after Jim Griffiths, but before Labour came into Government in 1964 he worked in opposition to establish the first Welsh Office

and to devolve powers and responsibilities. Democratic devolution then came into being with the setting up of the National Assembly.

I am pleased to follow the hon. Member for Ceredigion (Mr Williams), and I agree with a lot of what he said. He asked about the weather in Llandudno. It has not been widely reported that unity broke out among members of the Labour party in Llandudno. Whether he perceived clarity or not, we certainly had an excellent conference, with unified speeches from the leader of the Labour party in Wales—[*Interruption.*] The hon. Member for Shrewsbury and Atcham (Daniel Kawczynski) seems to disagree with me on that. I do not think he was there, although I am sure he takes a great deal of interest in the matter.

At our conference, we saw a First Minister and a future Prime Minister agreeing on huge policy issues, including reserved powers. That was radical, and in the tradition of Labour pro-devolutionism. It was an excellent conference, and coming after the Plaid Cymru conference, it is not difficult to compare a good one with a car crash. We heard that Plaid Cymru members had fallen out over issues such as what constituted Welshness. By contrast, we were talking about the economy and the constitutional measures that a Labour Government would introduce, so if the hon. Member for Ceredigion wants reserved powers, I suggest that he tell the good people of Ceredigion to vote Labour. A Labour Government would deliver that. We would deliver on our promise, just as we delivered on our promise to establish a National Assembly for Wales.

The Secretary of State for Wales and I go back a long way politically. When we were debating the setting up of the National Assembly for Wales, we were on different sides of the argument, and I remember that we were on a panel with Lord Dafydd Elis-Thomas. Of the three of us, only two agreed with devolution; the third did not. I welcome the fact that the Secretary of State has now progressed in the right direction, however.

Jonathan Edwards: Is the hon. Gentleman saying that the First Minister now supports the lockstep proposals of the UK Government, which the shadow Secretary of State advocated earlier? That is not what the First Minister has been telling the people of Wales for the past three or four months.

Albert Owen: The shadow Secretary of State set out the Labour party's position in Llandudno on Sunday, and that is the position that we will proudly put to the electorate in a forthcoming election. I understand that Plaid Cymru does not support devolution per se; it supports it as a vehicle for independence. That is the difference between us. Yes, we have grown-up conversations in Wales, but the people of Wales elect more Labour representatives than Plaid Cymru representatives. Plaid Cymru is the "party of Wales" in name only. Yes, the Labour party has differences of opinion within it—any modern democratic party does—but we now have a clear position, following our conference, and I hope that we will go on to get a majority Government in this place so that we can change the laws to best reflect the views of the people of Wales.

I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Islwyn (Chris Evans) to an extent. Whether we like it or not, the people of Wales are not that interested in Silk; they

are not that interested in constitutional issues. I and many others have supported devolution for many years, but I understand that not everyone is interested in it. Politics is the art of the possible. I would have liked an Assembly to be established in 1979, but the proposal was defeated convincingly by the people of Wales. I would have liked to see a stronger Assembly in 1997, but I was far more pragmatic and mature by then, and I realised that we pro-devolutionists needed to compromise in order to get the measure through.

I do not accept what the hon. Member for Ceredigion said about referendum fatigue. It is fundamentally important, when we are proposing major constitutional changes such as the setting up of new bodies in Scotland, Wales and other parts, including London, that we should have a referendum. Equally, it is right to hold a referendum when we are proposing to give more law-making powers to the National Assembly for Wales. We should also have one to decide the changes on taxation. I would have liked to see those powers established in 1997, but I know that we would have lost the referendum if we had proposed them at the time.

Mr Mark Williams: The clear case for a referendum on this issue was made in the Silk report. How many referendums does the hon. Gentleman envisage us having to endure as we head along the devolution road?

Albert Owen: I tried to answer that question earlier when I said that a referendum should be held when we are proposing a huge political or constitutional change. These taxation measures constitute such a change, as did the devolution of law-making powers and the setting up of the Assembly itself. When it comes to significant constitutional changes, I believe in trusting the people. I did disagree with the hon. Member for Arfon (Hywel Williams) when he said, “We’ll just take the recommendations of a commission.” We are a democratic body; we are elected Members of Parliament; we represent people and communities, and we are here to represent their views. Again, I think Plaid Cymru has been caught out slightly, because it is saying, “We want all the bits of the Silk commission, but we do not want the referendum.” Either you want it all or you do not want it all—it is pretty simple.

Jonathan Edwards: Surely the powers cannot be used on the lockstep. That is Labour’s position: those bands cannot be varied because of the lockstep. The referendum should therefore be on the need to remove the lockstep to allow the bands to be varied. Surely that should be the basis of the referendum; it should not be a referendum on devolving the lockstep.

Albert Owen: That is the hon. Gentleman’s position. I have made my position clear: when there are major changes on taxation, there should be a referendum. I am therefore supporting that measure in the Bill. We would lose most of the people of Carmarthen and Ynys Môn if we started talking about the lockstep. The serious problem we have is that when we eventually go to the people of Wales on a taxation referendum, we have to boil it down—[*Interruption.*] If he stops chuntering from a sedentary position, I will try to give an answer on a simple question that we understand in the first place. The beauty of a referendum is that we need to boil things down. The question as it is

framed now would not be easy, which is what we have to work towards. That is where I am coming from on this issue.

It is very logical that the Bill proposes borrowing powers for the National Assembly for Wales. The hon. Member for Ceredigion talked about the abilities of community councils and town councils to borrow in a way that the Assembly cannot, so this is a natural progression. Many things such as stamp duty and landfill tax can produce the revenue streams to help with that borrowing. It is eminently sensible that that happens.

I repeat that we need to consult the people of Wales and a referendum on the income tax issues in the Bill, so I support that approach. Not having those things would be out of sync with what we have done in the past, when we set up the Assembly and when we had a referendum on increasing its law-making powers. I supported both those referendums and I would support this one, too, but we have to get it right. I am as confused as anybody who has spoken in this debate about exactly what we are going to be telling the people of Wales. I know this is only a Second Reading and it is right that we debate these issues, but in Committee—that is the place to do it—we shall deal with the nitty-gritty of what the taxation actually means. The figures produced in the explanatory notes and in the Government’s various Command Papers are not easy to digest, so we need to have that scrutiny, which this House of Commons does best, before we finalise things.

There has been much debate about the position outlined by my Front-Bench team, and on that I agree slightly with the hon. Member for Carmarthen East and Dinefwr (Jonathan Edwards); those details need fleshing out just as much as any others. The purpose of parliamentary democracy is to have that debate and that parliamentary scrutiny, so that is the way we need to move forward. I have been consistent on the referendums issue, and I believe we must have a referendum if we are to move to being able to vary income tax powers or whatever the end result is of this Bill going through both Houses of Parliament.

I wish to discuss the electoral arrangements, as I am slightly confused as to why these provisions have been bolted on to this financial measure, other than to suit a deal done between the coalition parties and Plaid Cymru to try to get the Bill through. We have heard about the Government of Wales Acts. I supported doing away with the dual candidacy because I thought it was unfair and undemocratic that a person who stands for election in a seat and loses, often comfortably, can then arrive in that democratic institution through another means—that is fundamentally wrong.

When we had a debate in this House some time ago—I cannot cite the *Hansard* reference—the Under-Secretary told us about the consultation exercise, when people were in favour of keeping the ban on dual mandates.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales (Stephen Crabb) *rose—*

Albert Owen: I am happy to take an intervention if the hon. Gentleman wishes to be helpful.

Stephen Crabb: I am glad the hon. Gentleman will take an intervention on that. He will be as aware as anybody that a significant number of the people responding

[Stephen Crabb]

to that consultation saying they were in favour of the ban were Labour Welsh Assembly Members.

Albert Owen: I do not know who the people were. The hon. Gentleman may well be right, but Labour is obviously the biggest party in Wales and has a strong voice there, unlike some other parties. It was a consultation exercise—[*Interruption.*] I am getting chuntering remarks from the hon. Member for Carmarthen East and Dinefwr again, but perhaps Plaid Cymru should also have had enough intelligence to do standard letters to put its view across in this open consultation. The point I am making is that this coalition proposal, supported by Plaid Cymru, is on the wrong side of the argument. These parties are doing it for their own political reasons. Nobody has said to me, “Wasn’t it terrible what you did in 2006 when you banned the dual mandate?” Nobody has raised the issue and it is right to leave things as they are. I shall be voting against the measure when the time comes, for the reasons I have given.

Individuals have been mentioned, which is wrong, but I must mention the leader of Plaid Cymru who, when she was elected, made a bold statement that she was not going to stand on the list. She made the brave decision to go before the electorate as an individual and leader of her party. She chose the seat for Rhondda, which she had every right to do, but now she has the jitters. She no longer feels secure in her statement, so she wants the lifeboat of a list place to get her into the Assembly for Wales; that is what this is all about. That is why I point to a deal being done. I smell a dirty deal here between the coalition parties and Plaid Cymru.

Mr David Jones: I have to say that the hon. Gentleman has raised a red herring there. I assure him that there has been absolutely no deal with Plaid Cymru. He knows me well enough to know that of all the parties in this House, Plaid Cymru is probably the last one I would ever do a deal with.

Albert Owen: I will take the Secretary of State’s word on that, but he is pandering to its views and helping it out. I certainly will not be doing that when it comes to voting on this Bill.

There are lots of things in this Bill that I do support. I have mentioned some already including the borrowing powers, the landfill tax and the stamp duty measures. I will support the Bill on Second Reading if there is a Division, but I will be working with Members from across the House to scrutinise it so that we get to a position where it is sellable to the people of Wales in a referendum, because I am, first and foremost, a democrat and a devolutionist, and a proud one too.

8.36 pm

Guto Bebb (Aberconwy) (Con): It is a pleasure to speak in this important debate. I will be brief, as most of what I had intended to say has already been said, and said quite eloquently. It is important to touch on some of the arguments that have been made today.

Let me start with the issue of double-jobbing. We have had a degree of confusion from the Opposition Benches over the issue of whether or not a list Member can stand in a constituency. Such confusion ill becomes

this Chamber, because the argument we have heard is basically one against the d’Hondt system of electing Members to any Assembly, which is one with which I have some sympathy. The decision to choose that system was taken by the Labour Government, by the right hon. Member for Neath (Mr Hain) who is no longer in his place. It is odd to argue that that system is being used in a way that allows people to stand in individual constituencies and on the list in almost every single country that operates it apart from Ukraine and Wales. It is difficult to argue that Wales should be following the lead from Ukraine rather than from any other democratic country in Europe.

That argument is a red herring, and it is undoubtedly the case that the gerrymandering happened in 2006 when the ban came into place. If Opposition Members, who have given us a number of anecdotal stories about the issue, were to go to mid-Wales, they would hear plenty of people talking about the loss they felt when my hon. Friend the Member for Montgomeryshire (Glyn Davies) failed to be returned to the Assembly, because of the change in the legislation by the Labour party. He was a fine Assembly Member, and would have continued to be so if it were not for the gerrymandering of the system. It is clear that this Bill aims to address that matter, and it addresses it in a way that represents the views of the civic society and three of the political parties in Wales. It is a shame that the parochial and partisan nature of the Opposition means that they cannot support this much-needed change.

It is also important to point out that I sympathise with some of the comments made by the hon. Member for Rhondda (Chris Bryant), who is no longer in his seat, in relation to the issue of five-year terms. As a member of the Welsh Affairs Committee, I have supported the recommendation as it stands, but I have some reservations. It is not necessarily the case that I am opposed to an extension to five years to the Assembly term; it is more that I have reservations about taking a five-year term as a norm. I would be fairly relaxed if we decided to move to four-year terms in Westminster and the Assembly.

I fully accept that the argument for a five-year term for the Assembly is to ensure that the two elections do not clash, but I have reservations about whether five years is, in any way, shape or form, better than four. As things stand, the intention of the legislation is to ensure that Assembly elections can be held separately from Westminster elections, which is something that I support. However, I also agree with the hon. Member for Rhondda that we always seem to extend terms rather than reduce them, which is a shame.

Let me turn to the issues of importance in the Bill. My personal view is that the key issue is financial and fiscal accountability. We can talk about all the elements of the legislation, but in truth we are considering an attempt to ensure that the Welsh Government and the Welsh Assembly are accountable for fiscal decisions made in Wales. It is here that we see the confusion in the Opposition’s argument.

Yes, it certainly was a sunny Saturday in Llandudno. As I did not want to impose myself on the Welsh Labour party conference, I was personally in Llanfairfechan, where the weather was also suitably good. However, we should reflect on the confusion that came out of the Welsh Labour conference. When I argued in not one but

two Welsh Grand Committees for the concept of fiscal accountability, I was informed in fairly robust terms by the hon. Member for Pontypridd (Owen Smith) that the Welsh Assembly did not need any further accountability. Indeed, I can quote the hon. Gentleman, who is no longer in his seat, directly:

“I have just made the point that I do not believe for a moment that having additional responsibility for tax-varying powers would confer any extra degree of accountability on the Welsh people.”—
[*Official Report, Welsh Grand Committee*, 5 February 2014; c. 18.]

I am delighted to see that he has just returned to his seat. He made those comments on 5 February, yet at the conference on Sunday we had his new Llandudno declaration. Clearly, a road to Damascus conversion occurred somewhere along the A470 between Pontypridd and Llandudno.

Albert Owen: It will come as no surprise to the hon. Gentleman that we are a democratic party and our conferences are the places where we make such decisions as a democratic body. I know that he has been a member of other parties, but that is the position of the Labour party. If he wants clarification, perhaps he should ask questions rather than giving opinions.

Guto Bebb: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for that intervention. I am sure that the Labour party is a democratic institution; it also believes strongly in the hereditary principle, as we have found out from Aberavon.

The hon. Member for Pontypridd made a clear statement in the Welsh Grand Committee on 5 February that there was no need for fiscal devolution for the Welsh Government to have any further accountability, yet in his speech in Llandudno on Sunday he clearly made the point that the further devolution of income tax varying powers so that they were on a par with those in Scotland was necessary to give that accountability.

Mr David Jones: I think I ought to tell my hon. Friend that I ventured into Llandudno on Saturday and it was reasonably quiet there. Does he not get the impression, as I do, that far from its being a damascene conversion on the part of the shadow Secretary of State, it is more likely that he has been leaned on by his bosses in London and Cardiff?

Guto Bebb: I would not want to offer an opinion on whether the hon. Gentleman has been leaned on or not. There is clearly a significant difference between the comments made in the Welsh Grand Committee on 5 February and the speech delivered in my constituency on Sunday and those differences need to be reflected on, because ultimately I agree with the speech that he made on Sunday. There is clearly a need for fiscal accountability for the Welsh Government. If we are to have grown-up politics in Cardiff Bay, it is important that decisions about spending and raising money should be taken by the elected politicians there. It is a step in the right direction to have a proposal in the Bill that will allow the Assembly, if it so desires, to trigger a referendum to allow a degree of control over income tax to be devolved to the Welsh Assembly in Cardiff. That is the key point about this legislation, which attempts to work with the grain of Welsh public opinion. The income tax variation is not being imposed on Wales; the Welsh Government, or the Welsh Assembly for that matter, are being allowed the ability to ask for those powers

and trigger a referendum. The challenge for the Welsh Government will be to ask themselves whether to trigger that referendum or not.

Let me make a brief final point about the tax accountability issue, as I am aware that the debate has gone on for quite a while. The Select Committee had a significant and long discussion about whether we needed a lockstep or not. As some Opposition Members may wish to remind me, we had that debate in the Welsh Conservative party too. My own view is that the lockstep is something I can comfortably live with. The hon. Member for Arfon (Hywel Williams) made an interesting point on the arguments about whether the progressive nature of our tax system would be affected by the lockstep. He argued about whether, if we increased taxes by a penny on the standard rate and a penny on the 40p rate, we would make the system less progressive. The reverse argument can be put. For example, if we reduced the standard rate by 2p and the 40p tax rate by 2p, that would in effect be more progressive because it would give a 10% cut to the standard rate taxpayer and a 5% cut to the 40% taxpayer. As a Welsh Conservative who believes in lower taxes, I am confident that those powers will be necessary to reduce taxes in Wales. If we reduce taxes using the lockstep, the result will be a more, rather than a less, progressive system. The principle of fiscal accountability justifies the imposition of the lockstep at this point in time. As such, I am happy to support the Bill as it stands.

8.45 pm

Geraint Davies (Swansea West) (Lab/Co-op): It is always a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Aberconwy (Guto Bebb). It is interesting that he should mention Ukraine at a time when Victor Yanukovich is recommending referendums across Ukraine for more autonomy for its regions.

The Bill is, at best, a pig's breakfast, but when there is nothing else on the table I guess that the parties will coalesce around it. To be fair, one reason why it is a pig's breakfast is that the constitutional settlement across the United Kingdom is diverse. The settlements in Northern Ireland, London and Wales—

David T. C. Davies *rose*—

Geraint Davies: I am coming to Monmouth in a moment—and Scotland are very different. It is worth bearing in mind that it might not be timely to make concrete decisions when we do not know the verdict of the Scottish people on becoming independent. We do not know whether that decision will gather pace for the devolutionary process in Wales.

David T. C. Davies: I just wondered whether the hon. Gentleman could clarify whether the Bill is a dog's breakfast or a pig's ear. I have never heard of a pig's breakfast before.

Geraint Davies: It is a new constitutional phenomenon that I have just introduced. I am sure the hon. Gentleman will delight in it, being a person who indulges in that sort of thing.

If I may reference Scotland for a moment, rational and emotional powers are at play. There are people who thought that Scottish independence was going to go

[Geraint Davies]

down the tube because of currency, the EU and inward investment, but now, of course, the wind is blowing in a different direction. The people of Scotland feel that they are being told that they cannot live without us and there are the emotions of divorce, so there is a mixture of rational economic argument and emotion. The feeling in Wales is that, rather than facing years and years of Tory austerity, we want to decide our own thing. The reality is that if Scotland leaves the UK we will end up with more Conservative Governments, because of the residual demography, and that will change the appetite for devolution.

Plaid Cymru would obviously like Wales to go down the road of independence and it sees this as a stepping stone. It talks about fair deals and fair funding for Wales even in the knowledge—this is an important point on what is behind the Tory agenda, too—that the difference between taxes raised versus expenditure in Wales is about £15 billion. The Conservative plot is to reduce the number of Welsh MPs, give borrowing and tax raising powers to Wales and forget about giving Wales its fair share of both revenue and capital. In the case of Scotland, the difference, coincidentally, is also about £15 billion, but it currently makes up that difference in oil.

We therefore have a situation where it is convenient for everybody to go along this path, but the people of Wales want fair funding now. What that means in relation to the Barnett formula, as has been mentioned, is an extra £300 million a year. Wales should have the same needs-based formula as the English regions. It is not difficult to work that out, so that should just move forward.

With regard to capital, like other parts of Britain outside London and the south-east, Wales gets a small fraction of the investment per head that London gets—London gets about £5,000 per head and Wales gets about £500 per head. That is a problem for everyone outside London. If we migrated some of that investment outside London, we could put pressure on the system to make it more balanced. Britain is quite unusual in that respect. In Germany, for example, Berlin does not dominate Munich or Dusseldorf, so there is no necessity for that balancing.

If the response in Wales is, “Well, we are not getting enough money to do our own thing, so we will have to borrow it,” who will pay for that borrowing? That is the real fear, because there is no money on the table for that. Then there is the false analysis that the borrowing needs to be hypothecated against an income stream from income tax or other taxes, and that the amount of borrowing should be determined by the size of those streams. Frankly, that is just false. It is not the case that in order to justify more borrowing we need more income tax devolution. It is the case that the amount of money Wales will get in future, as the Secretary of State argues, will be broadly the same; it will not be distorted by this method.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Neath (Mr Hain) and I fear that we will end up with less money over time because the tax take per penny of income tax is 70% of what it is in England. If we assume for a moment that the global amount of money remains the same, then where does the extra money for paying back the borrowing

come from? Well, it comes from nowhere. The reality is that the money would be paid back by top-slicing revenue, which means top-slicing the amount of money for services. That is what will happen if Wales does not get its fair share of UK funding.

We have already seen the signs and symptoms of the stealthy stranglehold that the Tories want to put on Wales, with the recent U-turns on the valleys lines. All of a sudden we hear, “Here you are. You can borrow some money.” A moment ago there was going to be electrification from Paddington to Cardiff and then through to Swansea, including the valleys, but all of a sudden we are told, “Well, the small print states that the Welsh Assembly has to do that, and it can do that by borrowing.” In fact, the commitment to go through to Swansea is not even fulfilled. The Government said that they would electrify the line from Paddington to Cardiff and then from Bridgend to Swansea, but they will not do the bit in the middle. If the Welsh Assembly Government say that they will not do that because they have another priority, which they might have, as is their right, we will have a bit in the middle that is not electrified, and that is not electrification through to Swansea, so the Government have broken their word.

Albert Owen: I am a little confused by my hon. Friend’s terminology, because he talks about small print. I do not see any small print. The Prime Minister made a statement to the BBC in which he said that he would pay for electrification to Swansea and the valleys. That was in his statement, not in any small print.

Geraint Davies: Perhaps I have been misinterpreted. There was no small print. There was a big announcement, as my hon. Friend has just said, by the Prime Minister, the Secretary of State and others. The small print I was referring to was the weasel words in the long-winded document that was exchanged between Ministers, which presumably changed the headline proposition. It had been, “We will provide this,” and then the Minister argued, “When we went through it all I found here on page 23 that it says that actually it is interpreted in this way, so according to our lawyers the Welsh Government will have to do that.” That is not what we heard on the radio.

Mr David Jones: The hon. Gentleman will know that there was a letter, signed by Carl Sargeant, the relevant Welsh Minister, confirming that there was an agreement. Is that small print?

Geraint Davies: The Prime Minister said that the UK Government would pay for the electrification of the railway lines, which are essentially UK infrastructure. I think that it is disgraceful, frankly, that while £52 billion is to be spent on HS2, the Secretary of State will not even fight for that extra bit of money for Wales. We desperately need it. He should resign.

Owen Smith: I just want to clarify for the House that the Prime Minister said:

“It’s this government”—

I presume he means Her Majesty’s Government—

“that’s putting the money into the electrification of the railway line all the way up to Swansea and, of course, the valley lines.”

Geraint Davies: Which valleys was he talking about?

The Secretary of State, in concluding his lamentable speech, said that this bit of legislation would make Wales more competitive, fairer and more accountable and that it would deliver economic growth. If I believed that, I would support the Bill wholeheartedly, rather than in a lukewarm fashion. What is really involved is a “Wonga economics” trick—“You can borrow all this money. Don’t worry, it’ll be all right. You can spend it on the railways and roads. Spend some more and we’ll give you some more and if you tax more you can have more,” and all that. Globally, however, there will not be any more; the money has to be paid back. There will be less overall revenue for core services such as health and education.

Members will be glad to hear that I will not speak for much longer, as people want to wind up the debate, but I want to say that the whole essence of devolving income tax is about competition and confusion. Labour Front Benchers have said that we do not want a competition, and I think it intrinsically wrong to generate more and more different sorts of tax competition across the United Kingdom. It is not healthy and it generates confusion for inward investors. It is not something that we want.

I mentioned the smaller taxes such as stamp duty, which are seen as peripheral and unimportant. However, Boris Johnson has jumped on his hind legs and started squawking that he now wants stamp duty on the back of what we are having in Wales. He wants £1.3 billion. The issue is undermining the national accounts of the United Kingdom. It is no longer about small fry and throwing crumbs to Wales; it is distorting the stability of public economics in Britain, and we need to think about that carefully.

One problem has been that the Silk commission was made up of people who know about the Welsh Assembly and have been inside the system; they were talking to each other and to small groups of people in cold church halls. Questions that were not asked or answered include, “What will happen in a few years’ time if London or Yorkshire wants this? What will it look like?” Some people mentioned cross-border health and education; we can add cross-border tax differences to that. Will such things be a help or hindrance to the people of Wales? There is by no means a clear answer.

The Tories are not generating a regionally balanced economic growth perspective; the majority of economic growth is funded by mortgages and consumer debt in London and we are again seeing the emergence of a twin-track economy. Where will the devolution of different taxes at different rates to different parts of the UK end up, when greedy London wants more than its fair share, gobbling up the core of the resources for Britain as a whole?

Wales is increasingly being pushed into being decoupled from the speed boat of London, which will zoom away. We need to have our fair share of economic stimulus and investment and to a large extent what I have been discussing is a decoy from the real matter at hand, which is to get the right money for Wales now before we talk about the intricacies of tax devolution.

8.58 pm

Nia Griffith (Llanelli) (Lab): We have had a good discussion on the Wales Bill, and a wide range of views have been expressed. We will broadly support the Bill,

although we will table amendments in Committee. I put on the record straight off that we disagree with the clause on dual candidacy.

We heard from the right hon. Member for Chesham and Amersham (Mrs Gillan), a former Secretary of State for Wales. She welcomed the Bill and the cross-party participation on the Silk commission. However, she was the only person who regretted that the Bill did not include a clause to reduce the number of MPs in Wales and she felt strongly that there should be no reform of the Barnett formula until the deficit had been brought down—quite what she meant by that, we are not absolutely sure.

The hon. Member for Monmouth (David T. C. Davies), in characteristic form, told us that he saw the Bill as part of a relentless devolution of powers to Wales and likened it to sleepwalking to independence. However, he expressed his support for a federal system. He told us that he would vote and campaign for no in any referendum, although he did rather like the idea of borrowing powers, especially if they led to a relief road for the M4.

We then heard from the hon. Member for Forest of Dean (Mr Harper), who, when he had finished smearing Labour in Wales, got down to the point—

Mr Harper: I am sorry, but the only comment I made about the NHS in Wales was about mortality statistics, and I was quoting exactly the right hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Ann Clwyd). If quoting her is smearing, I plead guilty, but I do not think I was doing that; I was raising legitimate concerns on behalf of my constituents.

Nia Griffith: Indeed. Perhaps I will move on then. The hon. Gentleman also said that he wanted road bridges to be built with money raised from the Severn road bridge; again, we wonder quite where he is going with that one.

Returning to the Bill, the hon. Gentleman raised valid points about the devolution of stamp duty and land being divided, and referred to confusion between people with certain postcodes whereby, for example, somebody with a Newport postcode ends up, in effect, being put in Wales when in fact they are in England. He also mentioned the complexities of payroll for small businesses in the event of devolution of income tax. I think he is really saying that there needs to be a very thorough impact assessment on all these issues, and we would certainly call for that.

The hon. Member for Brecon and Radnorshire (Roger Williams) emphasised the benefits of holding elections on separate days to avoid confusion, although not all Members agreed. He reiterated his support for the reserved powers model of devolution whereby the assumption should be that the National Assembly for Wales has powers in the devolved areas of responsibility unless otherwise specified.

The hon. Member for Carmarthen West and South Pembrokeshire (Simon Hart) said that it is difficult to find anybody in his patch who is interested in more devolution, so perhaps he spends more time in South Pembrokeshire than in west Carmarthenshire. He agreed with the hon. Member for Monmouth about devolution creep. He also noted his disagreement with the academics who are calling for more Assembly Members.

[*Nia Griffith*]

The hon. Member for Aberconwy (Guto Bebb) found himself agreeing with my hon. Friend the Member for Rhondda (Chris Bryant)—that must be a first—on the idea that if anyone changes the term of a Government, it is always to increase it rather than decrease it, and he was sceptical about the need for an increase to five years.

The hon. Member for Arfon (Hywel Williams), speaking on behalf of Plaid Cymru, expressed severe disappointment that the Bill did not fully reflect the Silk commission recommendations. He described the thorough scrutiny of the draft Bill by the Welsh Affairs Committee and explained the potential difficulties in enthusing the electorate about a referendum on tax. He mentioned the Barnett formula and the need for funding reform and told us that Plaid Cymru would table an amendment to allow for devolution of income tax without a referendum.

The hon. Member for Ceredigion (Mr Williams) reminded us that he is a strong supporter of localism and firmly believes that decisions made should be linked with any money raised. He wants to see a positive impact in terms of working together for a referendum. He compared the very thorough scrutiny of the draft Bill with the complete lack of scrutiny of the transparency of the lobbying Bill before it came to this House.

My hon. Friend the Member for Swansea East (Mrs James) talked about borrowing and expressed concern about the unfairness to Wales in contrast with Scotland, where it is calculated as 10% of capital budget rather than being contingent on the devolution of taxes.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Neath (Mr Hain) spoke very eloquently about banning dual candidacy, quoting Lord Richard's evidence to the Welsh Affairs Committee. He reminded the House of the very considerable, bare-faced abuse of the list system and quoted the leaked memorandum from Leanne Wood, the leader of Plaid Cymru, in which she gives explicit instructions to her party's list Assembly Members to direct their time and resources—paid for by the taxpayer, Mr Deputy Speaker—to Plaid Cymru's target seats. He also emphasised the need for shared risk on taxation and making sure that Wales does not in any way miss out if income tax powers are devolved.

My hon. Friend the Member for Caerphilly (Wayne David) expressed disappointment that the Bill falls short of fully reflecting what was in the Silk commission report. He also gave contemporary examples of how the list system is being abused, with list Members neglecting much of their area in order to focus almost exclusively on one part of it, with a view to standing for that constituency—exactly following the advice of the Plaid Cymru leader, Leanne Wood, to ignore constituents' problems and focus solely on what will bring electoral advantage.

My hon. Friend the Member for Islwyn (Chris Evans) reminded us that people have a lot of concerns, and do not have only constitutional issues on their minds. Again, he was concerned about the large number of people living within easy commuting distance of the border and the effects that any change in tax rates could have on either side of the border. He called for a thorough impact assessment.

My hon. Friend the Member for Ynys Môn (Albert Owen), who is a fervent devolutionist but is not for

devolution as a route to independence, said it was vital to work with people and to have a referendum on all important decisions.

My hon. Friend the Member for Swansea West (Geraint Davies) referred to the current dispute about railway funding, saying that it was a good example of his worries that weasel words might mean giving with one hand but taking away with the other. He also said that we should look carefully at what exactly the intentions behind the Bill are.

I turn now to some of the more mundane issues dealt with by the Bill. We very much welcome the devolution of the land taxes—stamp duty and landfill tax. They will provide an independent income stream against which the Welsh Government can borrow. We hope that the devolution of those taxes can take place as soon as possible and that the process will not be subject to any unnecessary delays. We understand the logic of the time scale but we urge that it should not be allowed to slip.

We welcome the borrowing powers that the Bill will legislate for, not least because this Tory-led Government have cut the Welsh budget by 10% over the course of this Parliament and have reduced the Welsh Government's capital budget by nearly a third. Borrowing powers will enable the Welsh Government to invest in vital infrastructure projects to help boost economic development.

Jonathan Edwards: The Labour party continually attack the UK Government—and rightly so—for their huge cuts to capital expenditure in Wales, but the Government are following the exact budget lines set by the previous Chancellor of the Exchequer before the 2010 election. The Labour party set a path to cut capital budgets in Wales by 40%. That is what the UK Government have delivered.

Nia Griffith: The hon. Gentleman knows full well that the Opposition have very different priorities from the Government in the way that we deal with budgets and decide what our priorities are. Quite frankly, I think that he needs to do a bit more homework before he begins to make these suggestions.

I turn now to income tax. The Opposition do not accept that there is no accountability without the devolution of income tax. The National Assembly for Wales and the Welsh Government are accountable through elections, and Welsh Ministers are subject to the usual scrutiny procedures. Let us look at councils: more of a council's budget comes through the block grant than from council tax, but nobody says that councils cannot borrow and that council borrowing has to be contingent on further devolution of some income tax powers.

None the less, we accept that the Welsh Government are slightly anomalous in not having the power to raise revenue. The devolution of a number of minor taxes will rectify that anomaly. It should be noted that in their evidence to the Silk commission the Welsh Labour Government did not actually seek the power to vary income tax. However, since the publication of the Silk commission report we have said that we support the recommendation to give Wales the power partially to vary income tax, contingent on a triple lock. That consists of fair funding, agreed by the Welsh and UK Governments; the power being subject to a referendum; and the power being in the long-term interests of Wales—that is to say that it should be tested during a period of assignment.

We would like the Secretary of State to give further details on the period of assignment and to provide reassurances about the ability of HMRC to monitor a Welsh rate of income tax. We believe that further examination is needed of the impact of tax competition arising from different rates of income tax on either side of the border. We want to ensure that that looks at the behavioural aspects of what might happen if income tax rates vary on either side of the border.

Turning to the constitutional issues, we believe that the question of five-year terms is a matter for the Assembly. It may not be practical to table an amendment to that effect, but we want to put on record our belief that it should be something for the Assembly to decide.

On double-jobbing, we are very clear that we do not think that an individual should be an MP and an AM at the same time. It is not practical or fair to the electorate and we certainly support the ban in the Bill.

A number of my hon. Friends have referred to dual candidacy and I want to focus on one aspect of it, namely that the impact assessment notes that more people find it confusing and dislike it than those who favour it, and that smaller parties need the system because they are struggling to find candidates. It is pathetic that some of the smaller parties are finding it difficult to find candidates of the right quality. They should be asking themselves why it is that they cannot find anyone. Is the Liberal Democrats' problem that no young person wants to knock on doors and explain why the Liberal Democrats propped up the Tories to put up student fees to £9,000 in England while in Wales the Labour Welsh Government pegged fees at £3,500? I cannot see any young person wanting to stand for the Lib Dems. Will young people want to stand for Plaid Cymru when they are worried that they might be told, "If you haven't got two parents who were born in Wales, you can't represent Wales"?

Hywel Williams: Disgraceful!

Nia Griffith: Well, that is the sort of thing we have heard Plaid Cymru say about whether the captain of the Welsh rugby team should be captain or not. *[Interruption.]* Plaid Cymru Members can shout and protest all they like, but that is what they said only three weeks ago.

Jonathan Edwards: A smear!

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Lindsay Hoyle): Order. I think the hon. Members for Arfon (Hywel Williams) and for Carmarthen East and Dinefwr (Jonathan Edwards) need to calm down a little. In fairness, everybody has been able to put their point of view. I am sorry they do not accept what the shadow Minister is saying, but they cannot shout from the Benches in that way.

Nia Griffith: I am not sure how the Conservative party will find people to stand for it when many of its Members are simply rubbishing Wales in order to further their electoral interests in England. It may be very difficult for the Conservatives to find people, but if they can they should not try to overturn the ban on the dual candidacy. That is the whole point, is it not?

Hywel Williams: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Nia Griffith: I think I have been asked to keep going by Mr Deputy Speaker.

Mr Deputy Speaker: Don't bring me into this! I certainly did not say that. It is up to the shadow Minister whether she wishes to give way, not the advice from the Chair.

Nia Griffith: In that case, Plaid Cymru Members have had one intervention already and I think that is enough, especially as they have had a long time today to raise different issues.

We in Llanelli felt let down by the abuse of the dual candidacy system. It was like having a massive cuckoo sitting in a nest in which it did not belong, neglecting all the other constituencies and focusing solely on one, whereas the proper role of a list Assembly Member is to look at broader issues, as Joyce Watson is doing with human trafficking and Rebecca Evans with disability.

We are strongly opposed to clause 2, which would reverse the ban on dual candidacy. Apart from that, we are generally in favour of the Bill and welcome it. I will table amendments in Committee and we will oppose dual candidacy, but all in all we are in favour of the Bill.

9.13 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales (Stephen Crabb): It is a pleasure to close this important debate and it is good, as ever, to follow the hon. Member for Llanelli (Nia Griffith), who on this occasion gave an uncharacteristically churlish speech. I want to call her out on her comments about the contribution by my hon. Friend the Member for Forest of Dean (Mr Harper), who is always the model of courtesy and graciousness in his contributions in this House. His remarks about Wales were based on evidence and truth and were carefully made, so I commend him. He is a former Cabinet Office Minister, so he is familiar with issues pertaining in particular to fixed-term Parliaments. This evening's debate has been enriched by his participation. It has also been enriched by the speeches of not one, but two former Secretaries of State. It was good that the right hon. Member for Neath (Mr Hain) and my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesham and Amersham (Mrs Gillan), who is no longer in her place, both gave very thoughtful contributions on issues about which they have a lot of experience.

We also heard from the Chairman of the Welsh Affairs Committee, which did a fantastic job in scrutinising the draft Wales Bill. The speech by my hon. Friend the Member for Monmouth (David T. C. Davies) in fact attracted not just praise from Liberal Democrats, but a slightly backhanded compliment from the right hon. Member for Neath, who described him as having "sincere and intelligent extremism". As I am sure the right hon. Gentleman knows better than most hon. Members in this House, extremism in the defence of liberty is no vice at all.

We have had a fascinating and wide-ranging debate during the past few hours on matters directly, and sometimes indirectly, related to the Wales Bill. There were excellent speeches from both sides of the House, and I thank all hon. Members for their speeches.

I will limit my remarks to the Bill, but I first want to say that, regardless of points of disagreement, there has been a broad measure of consensus on and support for

[Stephen Crabb]

the Bill by all parties in the House. Just as a Dulux colour sheet has different shades, there have been different shades of support—ranging from frosty and cold by my hon. Friend the Member for Monmouth to rather grudging and unenthusiastic by Opposition Members through to warm by my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesham and Amersham. There has been support for the Bill and, as we go into Committee, we should not forget that this wide-ranging Bill enjoys broad support from hon. Members and parties across the House.

The vast majority of hon. Members clearly support the Government's move towards achieving a strong measure of fiscal devolution that will give the National Assembly for Wales control of devolved taxes for landfill and land transactions, and enable the Welsh Government to borrow for capital investment. I hope that such a positive position continues as the Bill progresses.

I should perhaps start with the lockstep, a term that few hon. Members had probably heard before the Silk commission did its work, but one with which we are certainly becoming increasingly familiar. I know that the Government's proposals to allow the Assembly to vary income tax rates uniformly—in other words, in lockstep—subject to a referendum, concern some hon. Members on both sides of the House. Let me be clear that this Government believe that the structure of income tax is a key mechanism to redistribute wealth across the whole of the United Kingdom, including Wales and, as such, that wealth redistribution is properly determined at UK level. The lockstep is consistent with the principle that fiscal devolution should not unduly benefit one part of the UK at the expense of another, which would result in what at least one hon. Member has called a race to the bottom. I am pleased that that position is one that now seems to enjoy the support of Labour Front Benchers, although that was not clear when we last discussed it in the Welsh Grand Committee.

There would be a real risk of a so-called race to the bottom if the Welsh Government were able to set substantially lower rates for higher or additional rate taxpayers without needing to change the basic rate. Far from making the income tax powers unusable, as some hon. Members have suggested, the lockstep makes the powers very usable, as my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State explained at the start of the debate. Devolving income tax would give the Welsh Government a crucial lever to reduce taxes across the board in Wales to make it a lower-tax economy and put money back into the pockets of hard-working people across Wales.

If electors in Wales decide in a referendum in favour of income tax devolution, the Welsh Government would become responsible for almost half the income tax generated in Wales. In reducing the tax burden on working people in Wales, the Welsh Government would reap the benefits of a growing Welsh economy and gain access to a significantly larger revenue stream to finance further borrowing. With vision and foresight, the Welsh Government could grasp that virtuous circle with both hands.

Some Opposition Members, not least the right hon. Member for Neath, raised concerns about how the application of devolved income tax will work in practice. There was some discussion of that in the last sitting of the Welsh Grand Committee, when there was a lot

of confusion about whether Welsh budgets would be detrimentally affected by the devolution of 10p of income tax. Following the Welsh Grand Committee, I circulated a letter to all members of the Committee explaining, with a practical example, how that would work. I would therefore hope there would be some clarity, but the right hon. Member for Neath said that there is a risk that Wales will be cast adrift. Let me explain to him that the system of income tax devolution we are proposing protects Welsh funding in two ways. First, the lockstep retains the redistributive structure of income tax across the UK, as I have just described. Secondly and crucially, the block grant adjustment mechanism, which we are calling indexed adjustment, means that Wales is protected from UK-wide shocks. For example, if the UK tax base were to decline, the block grant adjustment will be reduced accordingly. Reducing the block grant adjustment thereby increases the Welsh block grant. Therefore, the finances of the Welsh Government are protected through that mechanism.

Mr Hain: I am grateful for the Minister's views. Is he saying that, if the Welsh Government raise less, Westminster will compensate more?

Stephen Crabb: That is not what I am saying. A key principle of the mechanism is creating the incentive for the Welsh Government to create the conditions for the economy in Wales to grow, so that they can reap the fruits and benefits of a growing Welsh economy. The protection kicks in when there are shocks and changes that affect the overall UK tax base. When changes would otherwise have a detrimental impact on Welsh Government revenues, Welsh Government revenues are protected because of the indexation. I shall circulate further information to right hon. and hon. Members.

Geraint Davies: Is the Minister saying that there are only upsides? Is he saying that, if the Welsh Government do well and grow the Welsh economy, they get a greater share of overall UK revenue, and if things go the wrong way from their point of view or the UK point of view, they still get that share or more and it never goes down? I cannot believe that.

Stephen Crabb: There is a lot of upside in the proposals, which I hope Opposition Members have the intelligence and foresight to recognise. In fact, the Silk commission calculated that Wales would have been better off under the system we are proposing had it been in place in the past decade. That answers the question asked by the right hon. Member for Neath—he asked whether Wales will be better off. The Silk commission estimated that, had the system been in place in the past 10 years, the people of Wales would have been better off. I hope that that also provides assurance to the hon. Member for Swansea West (Geraint Davies), who sees the Bill as a nasty plot and conspiracy.

Some Opposition Members have sought to link the devolution of income tax to so-called fair funding. That is another diversion they are throwing up, and another barrier they are erecting, so that they do not have to contemplate greater and truer accountability for the Government in Cardiff Bay, which they would prefer not to contemplate. The joint statement from the UK and Welsh Governments in October 2012 established a clear process to review relative levels of funding for

Wales and England in advance of each spending review. The announcement recognised that levels of funding for Wales relative to England were not currently converging, but that, if convergence in funding is forecast to resume during the period, both Governments are committed to discussing a sustainable and fair solution. The fair funding mechanism agreed with the Welsh Government in 2012 worked very well in practice ahead of the last spending review. I hope that that, too, reassures hon. Members.

Current funding levels are well within the parameters recommended as fair by the Holtham commission. Safeguards are in place to address convergence if and when it resumes. Therefore, the funding regime for Wales should not be seen as a barrier to income tax devolution. That is one more smokescreen the Opposition are throwing up to disguise their basic opposition to, and dislike of, fiscal devolution.

A number of hon. Members mentioned borrowing powers for capital investment. There is clearly a broad consensus on all sides in favour of giving the Welsh Government the ability to borrow to invest in Wales's infrastructure. Some Opposition Members want the Welsh Government to be able to borrow more than the £500 million permitted under the Bill—some suggested they should be able to borrow a virtually unlimited amount. The UK Government have set the limit considerably higher than we would have if we had used the tax and borrowing ratios we used in the Scotland Act 2012. Had we done that, the borrowing limit would be closer to £100 million, based on the taxes devolved in the Bill. We have set a higher capital borrowing limit of £500 million initially, but with flexibility for that limit to be increased if the Welsh Government gain access to further independent streams of funding, such as an element of income tax. If Opposition Members want to see the Welsh Government have a greater borrowing capacity, they should join us in campaigning for a yes vote in an income tax referendum.

What we are not prepared to accept is reckless borrowing without the means of paying that money back. Borrowing must be commensurate with the independent revenue streams. The Government have not worked hard over the last four years to build a reputation for financial prudence and competence, and tackling Britain's deficit effectively, only to throw away that hard-earned reputation by allowing the Welsh Government to borrow beyond their means.

The hon. Member for Swansea East (Mrs James) said that she would welcome sight of the “workings-out”—I think that was the phrase she used—to help her to understand how we arrived at the £500 million borrowing limit. I suggest that she looks at pages 26 and 27 of the Command Paper that was published alongside the Bill, which is clear on the rationale and the basis for deciding on the £500 million figure. It is higher than would have applied if we had stuck closely to the Scottish ratios, and that is because we want the Welsh Government to crack on with the job of improving the M4. That was agreed with Welsh Ministers, and it gives them the tools to make progress quickly and to tackle that major infrastructure problem.

The hon. Lady also asked why Northern Ireland's position was different. Northern Ireland is not a good benchmark for hon. Members to use in comparing borrowing regimes. The Northern Ireland Executive

exercise many of the powers and responsibilities that are exercised by local authorities in other parts of the UK. In particular, they collect the equivalent of council tax and business rates and have borrowing powers similar to those held by local authorities.

Opposition Members did not talk much about borrowing, which will have a huge, transformational impact in allowing the Welsh Government to invest in new infrastructure in Wales, and nor did they talk much about the impact of lowering taxes in Wales, creating a low-tax economy and creating new jobs. They saved most of their energy and time for discussing the ending of the ban on dual candidacy. In fact, the right hon. Member for Neath used large chunks of a speech he made in 2006, if my memory serves me right. It has been like “Groundhog Day” as Opposition Members—although I am sure they were reflecting the concerns they have heard in their constituencies—manned the barricades to oppose a sensible measure—

Albert Owen: Is the Minister criticising Opposition Members for referring to a measure in the Bill? Surely it is the purpose of a Second Reading debate to talk about the measures in the Bill?

Stephen Crabb: I am criticising Opposition Members on two counts. One is the amount of time that they took talking about a relatively minor issue, when they could have used their time to better effect by talking about the real, everyday concerns of the people of Wales who will be affected by the measures in the Bill. I also criticise Opposition Members on this issue because they are wrong. They are in the minority. All other parties support the measure. Wales is the only country with such a ban on dual candidacy.

Wayne David: Will the Minister give way?

Stephen Crabb: I have been very generous with my time, and I am not giving way again.

The Bill provides the Welsh Government with the means to take active steps to improve the lives of hard-working people in Wales. It will allow the Welsh Government to tailor devolved taxes to best fit the specific needs of Wales; it will make them accountable for some of the money they raise, not just the money they spend; and it will give them the tools to grow the Welsh economy. It also provides them with the means to make much needed investment in critical infrastructure in Wales and, if they choose, to call a referendum to devolve a portion of income tax. It is a Bill I am pleased to commend to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a Second time.

WALES BILL (PROGRAMME)

Motion made, and Question put forthwith (Standing Order No. 83A(7)),

That the following provisions shall apply to the Wales Bill:

Committal

The Bill shall be committed to a Committee of the whole House.

Proceedings in Committee

(2) Proceedings in Committee of the whole House shall be completed in two days.

(3) The proceedings shall be taken on the days shown in the first column of the following Table and in the order so shown.

(4) The Proceedings shall (so far as not previously concluded) be brought to a conclusion at the times specified in the second column of the Table.

Table	
Proceedings	Time for conclusion of proceedings
<i>First day</i>	
Clauses 1 to 5, new Clauses relating to Part 1, new Schedules relating to Part 1, Clauses 8 to 11, Schedule 1, Clauses 12 and 13, new Clauses relating to the subject matter of Clauses 8 to 13 and Schedule 1, new Schedules relating to the subject matter of Clauses 8 to 13 and Schedule 1	The moment of interruption on the first day
<i>Second day</i>	
Clauses 6 and 7, Clauses 14 and 15, Schedule 2, Clauses 16 to 22, remaining new Clauses relating to Part 2, remaining new Schedules relating to Part 2, Clauses 23 to 29, remaining new Clauses, remaining new Schedules, remaining proceedings on the Bill	The moment of interruption on the second day

Consideration and Third Reading

(5) Any proceedings on Consideration shall (so far as not previously concluded) be brought to a conclusion one hour before the moment of interruption on the day on which those proceedings are commenced.

(6) Proceedings on Third Reading shall (so far as not previously concluded) be brought to a conclusion at the moment of interruption on that day.

Programming committee

(7) Standing Order No. 83B (Programming committees) shall not apply to proceedings in Committee, to any proceedings on Consideration or to proceedings on Third Reading.

Other proceedings

(8) Any other proceedings on the Bill (including any proceedings on consideration of Lords Amendments or on any further messages from the Lords) may be programmed.—(Claire Perry.)

Question agreed to.

WALES BILL (MONEY)

Queen's recommendation signified.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith (Standing Order No. 52(1)(a)),

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Wales Bill, it is expedient to authorise:

- (1) the payment out of money provided by Parliament of:
 - (a) any expenditure incurred by virtue of the Act in respect of any referendum held under the Act, and

(b) any increase attributable to the Act in the sums payable under any other Act out of money so provided; and

- (2) any increase attributable to the Act in the sums payable under the Government of Wales Act 2006 out of the National Loans Fund.—(Claire Perry.)

Question agreed to.

WALES BILL (WAYS AND MEANS)

Motion made, and Question put forthwith (Standing Order No. 52(1)(a)),

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Wales Bill, it is expedient to authorise:

- (1) the imposition, by virtue of a resolution of the National Assembly for Wales, of charges to income tax in relation to Welsh taxpayers.
- (2) any increase in charges to tax by virtue of:
 - (a) provision made by or by virtue of the Act in relation to the Welsh basic rate, Welsh higher rate or Welsh additional rate of income tax, or
 - (b) provision made by the Act in relation to the definition of "Scottish taxpayer" in Part 4A of the Scotland Act 1998.
- (3) the making of provision, by Act of the National Assembly for Wales, for imposing a tax to be charged on the acquisition of:
 - (a) an estate, interest, right or power in or over land in Wales, or
 - (b) the benefit of an obligation, restriction or condition affecting the value of any such estate, interest, right or power,
- (4) the making of provision, by Act of the National Assembly for Wales, for imposing a tax to be charged on disposals to landfill made in Wales,
- (5) the amendment of the Government of Wales Act 2006 by Order in Council so as to:
 - (a) specify, as an additional tax about which provision may be made by Act of the National Assembly for Wales, a tax of any description, or
 - (b) make any other modifications of the provisions relating to such taxes which Her Majesty considers appropriate, and
- (6) the payment of sums into the National Loans Fund.—(Claire Perry.)

Question agreed to.

Jonathan Edwards: On a point of order, Mr Speaker. I appreciate that you were not here at the time, but the hon. Member for Llanelli (Nia Griffith) made an unjustified and improper comment about me and refused to take an intervention during her winding-up speech. Is it in order for the hon. Lady to make such a comment? What advice could you give me about securing a withdrawal and what advice would you give the hon. Lady?

Mr Speaker: Whatever my capacities, it is very difficult for me to reach a conclusion about a matter to which I was not privy. As the hon. Gentleman sagely observed at the start of his attempted point of order, I was not myself present in the Chamber, so I am not party to the facts. If I were a cynical soul, I would imagine that he was seeking to continue the debate.

Jonathan Edwards indicated dissent.

Mr Speaker: The hon. Gentleman assures me, with an air of wide-eyed innocence, that he has no such motivation. I simply counsel him, off the top of my

head, that this is not a matter for the Chair—not, at any rate, as things stand—but that he, as a diligent and indefatigable Member, with great versatility, will be aware of the devices that are available to him to pursue this matter to a satisfactory conclusion, but almost certainly not now.

Business without debate

WALES BILL (CARRY-OVER)

Motion made, and Question put forthwith (Standing Order No. 80A(1)(a)),

That if, at the conclusion of this Session of Parliament, proceedings on the Wales Bill have not been completed, they shall be resumed in the next Session.—(*Claire Perry.*)

Question agreed to.

DELEGATED LEGISLATION

Mr Speaker: With the leave of the House, we shall take motions 7 to 11 together.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith (Standing Order No. 118(6)),

REPRESENTATION OF THE PEOPLE

That the draft European Parliamentary Elections (Amendment) Regulations 2014, which were laid before this House on 24 February, be approved.

That the draft Representation of the People (Combination of Polls) (England and Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2014, which were laid before this House on 24 February, be approved.

SOCIAL SECURITY

That the draft Statutory Sick Pay Percentage Threshold (Revocations, Transitional and Saving Provisions) (Great Britain and Northern Ireland) Order 2014, which was laid before this House on 15 January, be approved.

TAX CREDITS

That the draft Tax Credits, Child Benefit and Guardian's Allowance Reviews and Appeals Order 2014, which was laid before this House on 12 February, be approved.

That the draft Tax Credits (Late Appeals) Order 2014, which was laid before this House on 12 February, be approved.—(*Claire Perry.*)

Question agreed to.

DELEGATED LEGISLATION

Mr Speaker: With the leave of the House, I propose to take motions 13 and 14 together.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith (Standing Order No. 118(6)),

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

That the draft Local Authorities (Conduct of Referendums) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2014, which were laid before this House on 5 March, be approved.

That the draft Local Authorities (Conduct of Referendums) (Council Tax Increases) (England) (Amendment No. 2) Regulations 2014, which were laid before this House on 24 February, be approved.—(*Claire Perry.*)

Question agreed to.

DELEGATED LEGISLATION (FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE TO INDUSTRY)

Motion made, and Question put forthwith (Standing Order No. 9(6)),

That the Motion in the name of Secretary Vince Cable relating to Financial Assistance to Industry shall be treated as if it related to an instrument subject to the provisions of Standing Order No. 118 (Delegated Legislation Committees) in respect of which notice has been given that the instrument be approved.—(*Claire Perry.*)

Question agreed to.

PETITION

Planning inspectors and the National Planning Policy Framework

9.33 pm

Jacob Rees-Mogg (North East Somerset) (Con): I am very pleased to bring to the House a petition brought to me by the mayor of Midsomer Norton, among others, that has been signed by so many people, so numerous as the stars in the heaven and as the sand which is upon the seashore.

The petition states:

The Petition of residents of North East Somerset,

Declares that the Petitioners believe that while the principles of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) are worthy, its implementation has led to negative consequences that were not anticipated; further that the Petitioners believe that when the Planning Committee of a local authority, which has a draft Core Strategy, refuses a planning application on strategic grounds, the application is often allowed on appeal by the Planning Inspector on the basis of non-strategic, site-by-site considerations; and further that the Petitioners believe that as a result, unsustainable development in the Somer Valley is being approved on sites often remote from employment and transport infrastructure, in accordance with the priorities and interests of developers rather than the carefully researched and democratically agreed plans of the Local Authority.

The Petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons urges the Government to take the necessary steps to allow Planning Inspectors at appeal hearings to take into account and give great material weight to the cumulative effect of proposed developments; further that the House requests that the Government allows Planning Inspectors to interpret the sustainability principle in the NPPF on an area rather than merely on a site specific basis and further that the House requests the Government to take the necessary steps to allow Planning Inspectors at appeal hearings to give weight to the strategic proposals of a draft Core Strategy while it is going through the lengthy approval process.

And the Petitioners remain, etc.

[P001340]

Planning (Walsall South)

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

9.35 pm

Valerie Vaz (Walsall South) (Lab): I do not know what to say other than “How do I follow that?” However, the theme of my speech is very similar to that of the petition presented by the hon. Member for North East Somerset (Jacob Rees-Mogg).

Thank you, Mr Speaker, for granting me an Adjournment debate on what is becoming a very controversial issue in Walsall South. What I am about to describe are not only threats to the green belt, but threats to those of us who oppose a planning application in support of it. I refer in particular to an application for 59 large detached houses in Great Barr Park.

I am sad to say that one of the developers has already made a complaint about me to the Labour party. I think that that is because he believes that I am supporting the residents too much, although I am not quite sure what his grounds are. Moreover, a leaflet has been delivered which makes defamatory statements about me, about my hon. Friend the Member for West Bromwich East (Mr Watson)—who is in the Chamber—and about a residents’ group, the Beacon Action Group, and its chairman Mr Bob Winkle. A personal attack on me has been made by Mr Peter Allen, a consultant for the applicants, who does not live in Walsall South, on the letters page of the *Great Barr Observer* and the *Walsall Advertiser*. Both Mr Allen and the applicants appear to want to interfere in my work as a Member of Parliament, but more of that later.

The planning committee of Walsall metropolitan borough council has made two other decisions allowing building on the green belt. It decided that the historic Three Crowns pub should be converted into a single dwelling, and that three additional houses should be constructed, despite the advice of planning officers that that would reduce the openness of the green belt. That was decided in September 2011, but nothing has been built, and the site still lies derelict save for a car wash for which there was no permission. The footprint of the Three Crowns School could have been used as a community building, but there are now to be eight detached houses on the site. According to some of my correspondence with constituents, the planning committee was not given the full history of the site before it made its decision—a decision that the planning casework unit upheld.

However, the development that is causing the biggest controversy and the most personal attacks on people who oppose it is the one on which I want to focus: the development of Great Barr Park and Hall. My main concern, which I hope the Minister will address, is the use of enabling development to bypass planning law and the national planning policy framework on the green belt. As the Campaign to Protect Rural England suggested in a report published last week, the green belt is not safe. While I welcome the Minister’s written statement of 6 March 2014, local people who are directly affected, and the current framework, are being ignored in the whole process.

Since 2012, when the current owners bought the land, residents of Great Barr Park have been unaware of behind-the-scenes discussions with English Heritage and

the council, and with the self-styled historical consultant Peter Allen. The site was the subject of an inquiry in 2001, and at a public meeting Mr Allen said:

“Forget any romantic notion of bringing Great Barr Hall back to the way it was in Lady Scott’s time. There is no roof; the stucco and underlying brickwork are badly decayed... all doors and fireplaces have been stolen; floorboards, ceilings and staircases have disappeared”.

Great Barr Hall, he said, was

“a derelict shell—that is the...reality.”

That is what he said in 2001, and that is exactly the situation now, with English Heritage says that there is absolutely nothing of historic value in the building. So why are the developers being able to use this building as enabling development to bypass the planning framework on the green belt? The application fails all the tests set out in paragraphs 80, 88 and 89 of the NPPF, and the developer’s own statement says it will have an impact on the openness of the green belt.

If allowed, this development will extend Walsall, Birmingham and Sandwell into the countryside and the gap between them will be eroded. It will not safeguard the countryside from encroachment, nor does it assist with urban regeneration by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land—all set out in the NPPF.

Then there is the use of agricultural land near Chapel lane. An inspector said at the inquiry that the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food—now the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs—

“considers the farmland within the site to be high quality and would object to development.”

What safeguards are there to ensure that the local planning authority is not there to support the developers, particularly when it is clear, and there is a prima facie case, that the development does not meet the NPPF guidance? The planning authority should have refused it if it was applying the NPPF. Instead, it is engaged in an exercise, and a letter on the council website stated

“we would very much like to continue to work with you towards delivering an acceptable proposal.”

Peter Allen’s website states:

“After prolonged and close scrutiny it is now endorsed by, amongst others, Walsall MBC, English Heritage...and the Environment Agency”—

and that was before the residents were even aware of the application. There is now a disclaimer on the website, however.

My constituents were provided with the notice of planning application on 23 December 2013 and given 21 days to respond. How cynical is that! Incensed by this and bewildered, some constituents contacted me. Some who would have been affected did not even receive the notice. The vicar of St Margaret’s church, Rev. Rutter, who knows about the Scott family whose history is based around the church and who built the hall, has not even been consulted on or informed of the notice of planning application. He could have told English Heritage that a reference to a chapel was never located in the hall and has always been in the church.

The Beacon Action Group, which has been around for the last 31 years, set up a public meeting to discuss the plans. On 1 February, two MPs—my hon. Friend the Member for West Bromwich East (Mr Watson) and I—heard the views of the residents. All those who spoke

to me were opposed. We were not there to give our view, but to hear the views of the residents. The plans were up and people could see them for themselves, and they were horrified.

The hall was to become a wedding and conference centre, but there is one already and it is called St Margaret's church—and conferences have taken place at the nearby Holiday Inn. Agricultural land would be swallowed up by houses: 59 in total across the site, and they would not be affordable homes. Residents who have had access to the park for over 20 years would be restricted to twice a year, and even now some are being escorted out of the park.

There is an ancient woodland called Gilbert's wood which has a bluebell wood, which Rev. Rutter, who is a botanist, says has taken 200 years to establish, with native English Bluebells. An access road will go right through it, but it seems that in the planning statement it was all systems go except for the local residents. English Heritage could have either saved the building or provided a grant, but did neither. It has known about the hall since 2001. Successive owners have promised to repair the hall but this has never happened, and even in the current application the intention is not to do anything to repair the hall until 10 years on.

Why did English Heritage refuse to meet residents who know more about the history, like Rev. Rutter and the Beacon Action Group? I had to deal with the extraordinary situation of an English Heritage officer refusing to meet me unless Walsall council was present—refusing to meet an MP on the site, refusing to listen to residents, and propping up a building which by its own admission has no historic value at all, and allowing its name to be used to endorse the application.

As for the council, it either knows the guidance or it does not. It has outlined no special circumstances, so why is it leading the applicants on? It seems to want to silence the residents, too. The residents have put up posters, some along a grass verge. The council sent a truck along to remove the posters, even though the grass verge was not on Walsall land but on Sandwell land. It is trying to silence the residents. The applicants' schedule of works states that the hall will not be restored for another 10 years. Moreover, this is not about housing. The council said in 2011, in response to the draft NPPF, that

"there is plenty of capacity for house building not just for the next 5 years but until 2026".

The green belt is not secure. According to the Minister's own figures in a written answer to me, of the 419 applications for development that have been referred to the casework unit, 10 have been called in and all the others were allowed. Of the 10, seven are under consideration, one was withdrawn and two were approved. With those odds, my constituents and those of other Members do not stand a chance of protecting the green belt. They do not stand a chance in the face of bullying, threats and intimidation by those who have financial means and who do not want to apply the guidance.

Will the Minister tell me why local authorities are engaging with developers when the guidance is clear? Why are they engaging with developers and not listening to residents' concerns? Why did the council not consult all stakeholders, including the Merrions Wood trust and the residents of Merrions close, of Birmingham

road, for which there are traffic implications, and of Skip lane and other roads? The council is rushing out notices each time it is told that people have not been consulted. Who is it working for? Why is it allowing supporters of the development to say that the authority making the decision has endorsed the proposal as though the decision has already been made?

I ask the Minister to issue further guidance immediately to all local authorities about the green belt, to make them aware of his written statement and to confirm that brownfield sites should be used first in all circumstances. The green belt is under further threat from the general permitted development order coming into force on 6 April, which will allow agricultural buildings to be turned into residential use. Sadly, the statistics and the evidence do not hold up. Will the Minister please reassure me that the green belt is safe?

Back in Walsall South, walking down Chapel lane towards St Margaret's church, there is a beautiful silence. We know we are in the countryside there, and the church provides a setting for contemplation and serenity. That will all be lost as a result of a few people making life intolerable for the many, and for the generations to come.

9.47 pm

Mr Tom Watson (West Bromwich East) (Lab): I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Walsall South (Valerie Vaz) and the Minister for allowing me to make this brief contribution to the debate.

Mr Speaker, this discussion takes me back to a contribution that you made as a Back Bencher some years ago. There was a debate on how low-flying military helicopters were affecting horse riders, and you sagely warned the Minister that you were not going to go away. My hon. Friend's contribution tonight has made it very clear to those developers that she is not going to go away either, and I will be standing right behind her. I am deeply impressed with the commitment she has shown to her constituents and mine in raising this important matter, which I hope the Minister will take seriously.

Hundreds of residents in West Bromwich East and Walsall South are opposing this application through the Beacon Action Group, led by the doughty campaigner Bob Winkle. The proposed development is contrary to all Government guidelines on the use of the green belt, including the national planning policy framework, and to local plans in the metropolitan boroughs of Sandwell and Walsall. Walsall council has already identified its housing needs for about the next decade and does not require the use of this prime green belt land. Sandwell council says that if the application as it stands is passed, it could set a dangerous precedent for development on green belt land, not just locally but nationally.

What is particularly concerning about this application is the manner in which the developers have failed to consult the community adequately. Indeed, in my view, they have misled them. They told local residents that English Heritage was in favour of the proposals, but that is not the case. They told Great Barr residents that local historian Peter Allen was in favour of the proposals to modify the dilapidated Great Barr hall, yet they did so without telling them that he had been enlisted as a consultant on the project. They also told local residents that it would lead to the restoration of Great Barr hall,

[Mr Tom Watson]

but only in 10 years' time, and in my view they have not adequately explained how they will pay for it. I just say to the Minister that this application has been a textbook example of how developers can alienate a community and propose to destroy the green belt in the name of profit. Local people believe the proposed application should never see the light of day.

9.50 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government (Nick Boles): It is a pleasure to reply to the debate secured by the hon. Member for Walsall South (Valerie Vaz), and I congratulate her on securing a debate on an issue of such great concern to her and her constituents. I am sure she was delighted when the hon. Member for West Bromwich East (Mr Watson) said that he was standing right behind her—I am not sure everyone is so delighted when he says such a thing, but I know that in this case it is well intentioned, and certainly for her protection and nothing else. The hon. Lady will understand that I cannot talk about any particular application, but I hope I can reassure her about the protection for the green belt in national policy, the further clarification of the protections we have issued in national planning guidance and routes open to her and the hon. Gentleman should they feel that this or any other application merits further inspection and decision making by Ministers.

First, let me deal with the policy on the green belt. The protections for the green belt in the national planning policy framework are simply as strong or stronger than any protection in any policy that preceded it. Nothing about the policy in the framework has in any way diluted the protection of the green belt relative to the previous position. The NPPF makes it clear that changes to green belt boundaries should be made only in exceptional circumstances, and through a local plan process involving a great deal of consultation with local people and robust examination by a planning inspector. As that policy position is so strong, the latest data show that between 2012 and 2013 just 0.02% of the total green belt changed status—became developed having been previously undeveloped. That is a tiny proportion of the 13% of land in England that has designation as green belt. So I can reassure the hon. Lady that the protections for the green belt remain very strong. I also have to say, as she raised this, that some of the claims made in the recent report by the Campaign to Protect Rural England were simply false and based on a spurious reading of very partial evidence.

The hon. Lady is also right to point out that there is a second test in national policy: when is inappropriate development in the green belt nevertheless acceptable? The policy makes it clear that inappropriate development

can be permitted only in very special circumstances, and she referred to her belief that in this case those circumstances have not been demonstrated. We have made it clear in a written ministerial statement, which we then reiterated in the planning guidance to which she referred, that it is very unlikely that unmet housing need, of itself, will be sufficient to provide the very special circumstances to justify inappropriate development in the green belt. That is why in recent times we have called in for ministerial decision a number of planning applications proposing such development in the green belt, because we were keen to ensure that this very important area of national policy was being abided by and adhered to in decisions about green belt development.

That leads me on to the route that is open to the hon. Lady and the hon. Gentleman. When an application comes before a local authority, we as a Government prefer that decisions on it are taken locally, by the local authority. However, there are some applications that raise particular issues that have a greater relevance than simply their local impact. It is possible, in rare cases, to ask for an application to be called in for ministerial decision. The way that that works is that the planning authority will go through its process of determining the application, but before it can issue the decision—before the decision itself has statutory force—the Department and the Secretary of State will have an opportunity to look at the particular application and consider whether to call it in for ministerial decision. If the Secretary of State concludes that it is an appropriate application to call in for ministerial decision, there will then be an inquiry by a planning inspector, who will make a recommendation on that planning application to the Secretary of State. The Secretary of State or one of the other Ministers in the Department will then make the decision on that planning application.

I cannot prejudge whether the hon. Lady will want to avail herself of that course of action—of writing to the Secretary of State to request any application to be called in—nor can I prejudge what the decision might be likely to be in any particular case if she were to do so. All I can say is that many other Members, on both sides of the House, have taken this route on very particular applications that raise issues that are of more than local significance and that are right at the heart of national policy. While it is rare, there have been several cases relating to inappropriate development in the green belt where the Secretary of State has concluded that it is appropriate to call it in for ministerial decision rather than to allow the local authority to determine it.

I hope that that gives the hon. Lady a perspective and an avenue that she might usefully be able to explore.

Question put and agreed to.

9.57 pm

House adjourned.

Written Statements

Monday 31 March 2014

BUSINESS, INNOVATION AND SKILLS

Companies House

The Minister of State, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (Michael Fallon): I have set Companies House the following targets for the year 2014-15.

Public Targets

Customer

CH Direct services are available 99.7% of the time.
 WebCheck services are available 99.7% of the time.
 WebFiling services are available 99.7% of the time.
 Software filing services are available 99.9% of the time.
 98% of document images ordered by search customers are available within the CH Direct download area within 35 seconds.
 Achieve an overall satisfaction score of more than 88% in the Companies House satisfaction survey conducted by Ipsos Mori by end November 2014.
 To achieve a monthly soft compliance rate of 99% for accounts submitted to Companies House.
 To achieve a monthly soft compliance rate of 98% for returns submitted to Companies House.
 CEO to respond to all letters delegated to him from MPs within 10 working days of receipt.

Digitisation

To achieve an average electronic filing target of 70% for accounts (received and accepted) by the end of the year.
 To achieve an average electronic filing target of 87.5% for all transactions (excluding accounts) by the end of the year.

Staff Engagement

Ensure that the average working days lost per person is no more than 7.5 days.

Process

To reduce carbon created from utilities by 10% per building user, at Crown Way (compared with previous year) by end of March 2015.
 99.9% of electronic transactions received are available to view on the public record (image format) within 48 hours.
 99.8% of electronic images on CH systems are complete and legible.
 99.8% of paper images on CH systems are complete and legible.

Finance

95% of all undisputed invoices are paid within five days of receipt.
 Taking one year with another, to achieve a 3.5% average rate of return based on the operating surplus expressed as a percentage of average net assets.
 Achieve by 2016-17 a reduction, in real terms, of 25% compared to 2013-14 in the operational monetary cost of the operation's organisational costs (three-year target).

COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Architects Registration Board

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government (Stephen Williams): I am today announcing the start of the periodic review of the Architects

Registration Board. Periodic reviews are part of the Government's commitment to ensuring that all arm's length bodies continue to have regular challenge on their remit and governance arrangements.

The review will examine whether there is a continuing need for the board's functions architect registration under the Architects Act 1997). Should the review conclude there is a continuing need for the board's functions it will go on to assess the most effective and value-for-money means of delivery and the appropriate control and governance arrangements needed to meet the recognised principles of good corporate governance. I will inform both Houses of the outcome of the review when it is completed.

A copy of the terms of reference for this review has been placed in the Library of the House.

DEFENCE

Nuclear Safety Committee/Nuclear Research Advisory Council

The Secretary of State for Defence (Mr Philip Hammond): I am today announcing the start of the triennial reviews of the Defence Nuclear Safety Committee (DNSC) and the Nuclear Research Advisory Council (NRAC). Triennial reviews are part of the Government's commitment to ensuring that non-departmental public bodies continue to have regular independent challenge.

The DNSC's remit includes all safety aspects relating to the naval nuclear propulsion plant and nuclear weapon systems, including related issues of design, development, manufacture, storage, in-service support, handling, transport, operational training, support facilities and capabilities, and the safety of workers and the public.

The NRAC is responsible for reviewing the atomic weapons establishment (AWE) nuclear warhead research and capability maintenance programme, including the requirement for above ground experiments and other facilities and techniques necessary to develop and maintain a UK nuclear weapon capability in the absence of underground testing; NRAC also examines AWE's programme of international collaboration.

The reviews will examine whether there is a continuing need for DNSC and NRAC's function, their form and whether they should continue to exist at arm's length from Government. Should the reviews conclude there is a continuing need for the bodies, they will go on to examine whether the bodies, control and governance arrangements continue to meet the recognised principles of good corporate governance.

I will inform both Houses of the outcome of the reviews when they are completed.

Defence Support Group

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence (Mr Philip Dunne): The strategic defence and security review 2010 set out this Government's commitment to selling the Defence Support Group (DSG), currently a trading fund of the Ministry of Defence (MOD). This

decision took account of the front line's enduring requirement for DSG's services, and concluded that, in principle, it was no longer necessary for Government to own and operate these capabilities. Contractor support to maintain equipment, including major platforms, has been recognised practice in the air and maritime domains for many years, so continued support to the land domain by DSG under new ownership is entirely analogous. There is significant potential for the land-focused elements of DSG in the private sector. We intend to structure the sale in such a way as to preserve continuing assured access to the services provided by DSG through a contract for service provision.

Over recent months, the MOD has conducted a pre-qualification process with industry and developed the prospectus on which DSG will be taken to market. As part of these preparations, including market testing and internal assessment, I have decided that the electronics and components business unit (ECBU) of DSG, and its sites at Sealand and Stafford, will be excluded from the sale and retained in the MOD. I have now taken the decision to launch the sale of the land-focused business of DSG.

An invitation to negotiate has now been issued to nine potential single bidders and consortia who passed the pre-qualification stage. The nine parties represent a very strong and credible field of interested parties, demonstrating the high degree of market interest from the private sector and confidence in the DSG sale.

The DSG work force and trade unions are being informed in parallel. The final sale decision will be taken later in the year after final bids have been received and evaluated.

Sustaining the capabilities provided by DSG remains of critical importance to the Ministry of Defence and the British Army. Selling the land business of DSG will be the best way to enable transformation into the long-term partner for the delivery of heavy vehicle repair services to the Army that we now require.

ENERGY AND CLIMATE CHANGE

Radioactive Waste (Thermal Analysis Review)

The Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change (Mr Edward Davey): In November 2013, the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority's radioactive waste management directorate (RWMD) informed my Department of a modelling error in their assessments of the on-site cooling time required for spent fuel from new nuclear reactors before it could be placed in an off-site geological disposal facility (GDF).

RWMD subsequently corrected the error and published revisions of two disposability assessments and a feasibility study that included data from the model. These can be found at: <http://www.nda.gov.uk/rwmd/producers/latest.cfm> and I have placed copies of these reports in the Libraries.

There is no impact on safety at any existing site, as the corrections only increase the estimated length of time for which spent fuel from any new reactors would need to be kept in interim storage.

All other aspects of the corrected reports remain unchanged and RWMD has confirmed that the error does not affect future planning for a GDF.

My Department has thoroughly assessed RWMD's corrected figures in relation to a number of previous decisions and policy areas, some of which were debated by Parliament. We have concluded that the corrected figures have no substantive impact on policy or previous decisions, including the Hinkley Point C deal.

I set out below our consideration and findings.

Regulatory Justification of the EPR and AP1000 reactor designs.

My predecessor published decisions in October 2010 that the EPR and AP 1000 nuclear reactor designs were justified in accordance with the justification of practices involving ionising radiation regulations 2004 ("the justification regulations"). These decisions took the form of Statutory Instruments which were approved by both Houses of Parliament in November 2010.

Justification decisions involve assessing the benefits of proposed new radioactive practices against their potential detriment to health. The published decisions took account of RWMD's modelling of interim storage times.

The justification regulations make provision for the circumstances in which a review may be undertaken. My assessment is that the revised modelling does not create any new health detriments that were not considered during the justification process and does not raise any new issues about the ability to manage interim storage that may impact on the benefits of the EPR or AP 1000 reactors.

I have therefore concluded that the revised modelling does not meet the "new and important" criteria needed to consider reviewing the justification decisions and that I do not need to review my predecessor's decisions.

Nuclear National Policy Statement and Hinkley Point Development Consent

The nuclear national policy statement sets the framework for development consent decisions under the Planning Act 2008. It was approved by Parliament and designated in July 2011. It included a statement on waste disposal, based on RWMD's assessments, which made clear that interim storage would be needed on a range of time scales, during which facilities would continue to be effectively regulated.

The material in the NPS was referred to by the planning inspectorate in its advice to me on the application for development consent for the new nuclear power station at Hinkley Point and referred to by me in my decision.

There are no reasons to believe that the regulatory regime could not effectively regulate the increase in interim storage times under RWMD's revised assessments and I have therefore concluded that there are no grounds for a review of the nuclear NPS or any of the decisions taken with reference to it.

Funded Decommissioning Programmes (FDP) and Waste Transfer Contracts

No decisions have yet been taken on whether or not to approve the funded decommissioning programme for Hinkley Point C. Further to the publication of the corrected reports, the developer has been asked to update their respective FDP submission for the site and this information will be taken into account in any decision.

Euratom Article 37

General data were provided to the Commission in relation to the planned spent fuel storage facilities at Hinkley Point C. This data focused on the overall plans for storage, rather than the storage period, and already takes into account a margin of error that includes the corrected figures.

We have drawn the attention of the European Commission to the re-published reports, as they provide an opinion on article 37 applications, but do not believe that any further action is necessary.

Generic Design Assessment (GDA) and Site licensing and permitting

The original disposability reports written by RWMD were used as evidence in the GDA process and cited in the regulators' technical findings.

Further to the corrected disposability reports being published, the regulators are working with EDF (the recipient of the GDA design acceptances for the EPR design) to assess if there are any impacts to their GDA decision and findings.

Should any changes be required these will be addressed as part of the wider, ongoing site licensing and permitting process. Similarly any impact to the findings for the AP1000 design would be addressed in any subsequent assessment or site licensing and permitting process.

Nuclear Liabilities Financing Assurance Board

The Minister of State, Department of Energy and Climate Change (Michael Fallon): On 10 October 2013, I announced through a written ministerial statement—*Official Report*, column 31WS—the commencement of the triennial review of the Nuclear Liabilities Financing Assurance Board (NLFAB). I am now pleased to announce the completion of the review.

NLFAB plays an important role providing independent and expert advice to Ministers on the financing arrangements in the funded decommissioning programme (FDP). Under the Energy Act 2008 the operator must submit the FDP to the Secretary of State. Nuclear related construction can only take place once the FDP has been approved by the Secretary of State.

The review concludes that the functions performed by NLFAB are still required and that it should be retained as an advisory non-departmental public body (NDPB). The review also looked at the governance arrangements for the body in line with guidance on good corporate governance set out by the Cabinet Office. The report makes some recommendations in this respect; these will start to be implemented shortly.

The full report of the NLFAB review of can be found on the gov.uk website: <http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/triennial-review-report-nuclear-liabilities-financing-assurance-board-nlfab> and copies have been placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS**Common Fisheries Policy**

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (George Eustice): The UK Government are today launching a package of public consultations concerning the implementation of reforms to the common fisheries policy (CFP).

As part of the reform of the CFP, a new basic regulation and common market organisation of fishery and aquaculture products (CMO) entered into force on 1 January 2014. The new European maritime and fisheries fund (EMFF), which will support our fishing industry under these reforms, is due to be adopted shortly. The package of consultations being launched today covers aspects from all three of these areas.

Securing fundamental reform of the CFP was crucial, but successfully implementing these reforms is of equal importance to ensure that we can safeguard our marine environment and all those who rely on it.

One the most important achievements of the CFP reform negotiations is the phased introduction of a landing obligation, also known as a discard ban. The landing obligation will put an end to the wasteful practice of discarding, preventing fish being thrown back into the sea after being caught unless under very specific exemptions. This will start in 2015 for pelagic fisheries, and be rolled out to other fisheries from 2016.

The consultations launched today set out the Government's proposed approach to implementing the pelagic landing obligation in England. Some of the main issues that we are gathering views on include how we will ensure our stocks are managed sustainably, how we monitor compliance and how we manage available quota to match it to the catch that would previously have been discarded.

At the same time we are seeking views on how we can best use the EMFF to support implementation of the reformed common fisheries policy. We are also consulting on a new national aquaculture strategy and how we implement changes to the fish labelling legislation in England and introduce new legislation on marketing standards in England and Wales for fishery and aquaculture products.

The CFP reform has attracted interest and passion from many different groups. A key element to making these reforms work in practice will be continuing to work closely with all those affected. This is why my Department will continue to work closely with the fishing industry and other interested groups as we develop our policy to implement these reforms.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE**UN Commission of Inquiry (Democratic People's Republic of Korea)**

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr Hugo Swire): On 28 March the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) passed a resolution on the situation of human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK). I would like to update the House on this resolution and the role the UK has played in its passing.

Unlike in recent years, the resolution was not adopted by consensus. In part this reflects the current composition of the Human Rights Council, which is less supportive of country specific resolutions. But it also reflects the fact that this year's resolution was much stronger, following the horrific findings of the Commission of Inquiry (COI) into human rights violations in the DPRK and the comprehensive recommendations set out in the inquiry's report. I am pleased to report that the final text of the resolution supports the report and makes clear the need

for violators of human rights and perpetrators of crimes against humanity to be held to account. This includes a specific request that the UN Security Council consider referral of the situation in the DPRK to the appropriate international criminal justice mechanism.

The resolution also proposes concrete measures to ensure the work of the COI is continued. The mandate of the special rapporteur is extended and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) is requested to provide the rapporteur with increased support, including through a new structure to strengthen monitoring and documentation of the situation of human rights in the DPRK, as well as through engagement and capacity building of others working to address this issue. These measures will ensure that whenever and however the DPRK regime is brought to account, the material will be there to build a strong case against those responsible for violations.

The UK played an active role in negotiations on the resolution, working with EU partners and Japan to ensure a strong first draft, with clear language on accountability. Officials lobbied hard to ensure the resolution would pass, as did I both during my own visit to Geneva at the beginning of the Council and subsequently.

The reports of human rights violations in the DPRK that are documented by the COI are systematic and deeply disturbing. It is incumbent on the international community to respond. This resolution is a good start.

On 31 March 2014, during a pre-planned and pre-advised live-fire exercise, a small number of DPRK artillery shells landed in waters south of the Northern Limit Line (NLL) in the Yellow sea. The South Korean military responded with its own artillery fire into waters on the northern side of the NLL. There were no reported casualties. We would urge both sides to exercise restraint and not to retaliate further. We do not believe this incident is connected to the COI.

UN Human Rights Council (Sri Lanka)

The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr William Hague): Further to my written ministerial statement of 18 March 2014, *Official Report*, column 40WS, the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) passed a resolution on Sri Lanka on 27 March. This resolution calls for an international investigation into allegations of violations and abuses of international law on both sides during the civil war, and for progress on reconciliation, human rights and a political settlement. The British Government are pleased with this outcome and strongly believe that it was the right decision.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister committed the UK to calling for an international investigation following his visit to Sri Lanka last year where he witnessed the situation on the ground first hand. The UK was an important co-sponsor of the resolution, alongside the US, Montenegro, Macedonia and Mauritius.

The passing of this resolution sends an important and strong message to the Sri Lankan Government—that they must address the grievances of the recent past in order to help secure lasting peace and reconciliation, and a prosperous future for all the people of Sri Lanka.

The resolution represents a significant step forward in ensuring the truth is established for the Sri Lankan people.

By voting in favour of this resolution, the international community has shown that it has listened to the many independent voices, including the High Commissioner for Human Rights herself and domestic support in Sri Lanka, calling for an international investigation and helped the UNHRC to establish a strong and unambiguous resolution. The United Kingdom will continue to work with the UNHRC and our international partners to ensure proper implementation of this resolution. We encourage the Sri Lankan Government fully to co-operate with the resolution, and to work alongside the international community for the benefit of its people.

It is important also to recognise that Sri Lanka is an extraordinary country with enormous potential and the end of the conflict presents an opportunity for it to become a strong and prosperous nation. This resolution will help to address the legitimate concerns of all communities. It presents an opportunity to tackle the root causes of conflict, continued human rights concerns and set Sri Lanka on the right path for reconciliation. We hope that the Sri Lankan Government will embrace that opportunity.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Alcohol Licensing

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mrs Theresa May): The Government have consulted on whether to relax licensing hours nationally for England matches with late kick-off times during the FIFA World cup in June and July 2014. Following this, the Government have decided to relax licensing hours nationally to mark England's participation in the tournament.

The relaxation of licensing hours will relate to the sale of alcohol for consumption on the premises and the provision of late night refreshment in licensed premises in England, at specified dates and times only.

Today I am publishing the Government response to the consultation.

A copy of the Government response to the consultation will be placed in the House Library. It is also available at: www.gov.uk/government/consultations/world-cup-licensing-hours.

European Police College (Relocation)

The Minister for Policing, Criminal Justice and Victims (Damian Green): The Government have decided to opt in to the member state initiative for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council to relocate the European Police College (CEPOL) from Bramshill (UK) to Budapest (Hungary) (European Union Document Nos. 2013/0812 (COD), ENFOPOL 395 CODEC 2773 PARLNAT 307).

The current CEPOL Council decision states that the headquarters of CEPOL shall be in Bramshill. The draft regulation replaces the part of the CEPOL Council

decision that specifies Bramshill, with a statement that the seat shall be in Budapest. The Bramshill site is owned by the Home Office, and is also currently used by the College of Policing. The site costs the Home Office £5 million per annum to run, and is not economically viable. The Home Secretary therefore decided in December 2012 that Bramshill should be sold. It was placed on the market in the summer with a listing price of £20 million to £25 million, and we are on schedule to complete the sale by March 2015. The sale of Bramshill means that we will be unable to continue housing CEPOL there.

The publication of the draft regulation is an important step towards ensuring that CEPOL vacates the Bramshill site in good time for any sale. Buyers would expect vacant possession, so in the context of securing the sale it is very much in UK interests to support the proposal. CEPOL have been guaranteed occupation of the site until September 2014, as the new site in Budapest will not be ready to house CEPOL until the end of August 2014.

We are keen to co-operate fully in the process of moving CEPOL from Bramshill to its new location. To give CEPOL staff some much needed assurance this process needs to be completed quickly. The regulation has been helpfully progressed in the EU to accommodate our objectives in moving CEPOL from Bramshill.

Annual Assessment of Policing (England and Wales)

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mrs Theresa May): Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary has today laid before Parliament his annual assessment of policing in England and Wales in accordance with section 54 of the Police Act 1996. Copies are available at: www.hmic.gov.uk and in the Vote Office.

JUSTICE

Court and Tribunal Reform

The Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice (Chris Grayling): My noble Friend the Ministry of Justice, Lord Faulks QC, has made the following written ministerial statement:

In a written ministerial statement made by my right hon. Friend the Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice on 26 March 2013, *Official Report*, column 94WS, he set out his intentions for officials to begin exploring proposals for the reform of the resourcing and administration of the courts and tribunals service.

This work has now concluded and today the Lord Chief Justice, the Senior President of Tribunals and the Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice will announce a programme of reform to deliver—through the use of modern technology, an improved estate and modernisation of current working practices—a more effective, efficient and high performing courts and tribunals administration that will improve the services provided to the public at a significantly lower cost.

This reform will be led and implemented by the board of HM Courts and Tribunals Service, an agency accountable to the Lord Chancellor, the Lord Chief Justice and the Senior President of Tribunals.

A copy of the announcement the Lord Chief Justice, the Senior President of Tribunals and the Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice will make will be placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

ELECTORAL COMMISSION COMMITTEE

Individual Electoral Registration

Mr Gary Streeter (South West Devon): The Electoral Commission has today published an update on its assessment of overall progress in preparing for the transition to individual electoral registration (IER), which is due to commence in June 2014. This follows on from its assessment published in October 2013. The report also includes its assessment of electoral registration officers' (EROs) performance in 2013, including its assessment of how well EROs are performing against the first of two new standards that have been specifically designed to support them in preparing for and delivering the transition to IER from June 2014.

The Commission's report makes it clear that since its last assessment of IER readiness, significant progress has been made. While more work remains to be done to ensure the required IT system and contingency arrangements are in place ahead of the start of the transition in June 2014, other areas of concern—such as the allocation of funding to EROs—have now been resolved. In addition, the Cabinet Office has detailed delivery plans in place for the final testing of the IT systems and has good relationships and agreements in place with their key delivery partners. It will be important for all those involved in preparing the IT systems for use to support the Cabinet Office fully in this final phase.

Progress has also been made in developing contingency arrangements but full information on contingency planning and the technical support available to EROs during the transition has not yet been shared with EROs. The Cabinet Office should finalise the detail of this work and communicate it to EROs and their staff as soon as possible. In the case of both the IT system and contingency arrangements, the Commission will continue to monitor progress closely.

The Commission's report also sets out the conclusions of its assessment of all EROs' public engagement strategies and found that they all have the right plans in place to identify the challenges for their particular local area and what mechanisms they will use to engage with residents to maximise registration.

Assessing ERO's 2013 performance at the 2013 canvass against the existing household registration standards, the Electoral Commission found the vast majority met all their standards. However, five in England did not meet the house-to-house enquiry standard in 2013, down from 30 that did not meet the same standard in 2012. House-to-house canvassing is a crucial element in ensuring the registers are as complete and accurate as possible during the transition to IER and the Commission is therefore working with those EROs to ensure they have plans in place for household canvassing as part of the move to IER.

The Commission will continue to monitor and support EROs during the transition to IER, ensuring that they deliver the activities set out in their plans and engagement strategies, to ensure that the potential of IER to deliver more accessible, more trusted and more secure voting registers is realised.

These activities have been designed to ensure that the Commission is able to answer important questions at crucial points during the transition process, including informing the ministerial decision, which will need to be taken very soon after the UK general election in May

2015, on whether to bring the end point for IER transition forward from the current date in December 2016 to December 2015.

The Commission's report has been placed in the Library and is available on its website here: <http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/>.

Petitions

Monday 31 March 2014

OBSERVATIONS

COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

South Stoke Plateau (Bath and North East Somerset)

The Humble Petition of the residents of the parish of South Stoke and its neighbouring parishes and wards of Bath and North East Somerset, here represented by South Stoke Parish Council and the South of Bath Alliance,

Sheweth that it is the intention of Bath and North East Somerset District Council's Amended Core Strategy to develop the land known as the Odd Down/South Stoke Plateau with the building of 300 new homes.

Wherefore your Petitioners pray that your honourable House ask Her Majesty's Government to recognise the importance of the openness of this land, which forms part of the Setting of the Bath World Heritage Site and of the Wansdyke Scheduled Ancient Monument, and to maintain the current Statutory protections of the Green Belt and Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty designations for all of the South Stoke Plateau and so maintain the site free of development in perpetuity.

And your Petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray, &c—[Presented by Jacob Rees-Mogg, *Official Report*, 10 March 2014; Vol. 577, c. 147.]

[P001330]

Observations from the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, received on Friday 28 March 2014:

The Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government has made clear to all local authorities the role and importance of land designations such as Green Belt, Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, World Heritage Site, and Scheduled Ancient Monument. The Government's objectives for these areas are set out clearly in the National Planning Policy Framework, and all relevant policies in the Framework are a material consideration for a local authority which is working on its Local Plan or determining a planning application.

We have maintained strong protections for the Green Belt. The Framework makes it clear, for instance, that openness and permanence are essential characteristics of a Green Belt. This Government continue to attach great importance to Green Belt as a way to prevent sprawl and encroachment on open countryside, and as a vital "green lung" for many communities. Our abolition of top-down regional strategies removed the threat to Green Belt round many towns and cities.

His quasi-judicial role in the planning system prevents the Secretary of State—and other Ministers—intervening during the process of Plan-making. Draft Plans have to be submitted for formal examination by an independent planning inspector appointed by the Secretary of State, and a strict duty of impartiality is in place. Moreover, whatever Plan is adopted, it is possible that a development

proposal affecting this area might come within the Secretary of State's jurisdiction, so it would be inappropriate to comment on the issues raised in the petition.

The petitioners should also be aware that Green Belts are designated by local authorities, not law or central Government. Alterations to a Green Belt boundary can be made, but only in exceptional circumstances, using the Local Plan process. If any conflict of policy or planning priorities arises, it is for the local authority to weigh all the material considerations and decide what is right for the land in question. The petitioners should continue to ensure that their local authority is mindful of their hopes and concerns.

HOME DEPARTMENT

The Right of Anton Kainga to Remain in the UK

The Petition of residents of the UK,

Declares that the Petitioners believe that Anton Kainga, a tennis coach in Nottingham and an internationally qualified tennis professional from Malawi, who has exceptional talent and love for the sport of tennis, is unfairly being removed from the UK; further that the Petitioners believe that some members of the tennis club will suffer and will not be able to pursue their chosen career of becoming professional tennis players as a result of this decision; further that the Petitioners believe that during the 11 years he has lived in Great Britain Anton Kainga has inspired children and adults to love and play tennis; further that the Petitioners believe that Anton Kainga has inspired children, with one member of the tennis club being home-schooled so that he can commit to the game and play the qualification round of \$10,000 tournaments and Anton Kainga needs to be at this child's side for him to reach his full potential; further that the Petitioners believe that Anton Kainga is a mentor, best friend, second dad and invaluable coach to this child who understands not only this child's tennis but his medical condition and further that the Petitioners believe that only Anton Kainga can guide this child towards his dream of a career as a professional tennis player.

The Petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons urges the Home Office to reconsider their decision to deport Anton Kainga and grant him the right to remain in the UK.

And the Petitioners remain, etc.—[Presented on 4 March 2014; *Official Report*, Vol. 576, c. 9P.]

[P001327]

Observations from the Secretary of State for the Home Department:

Mr. Kainga voluntarily departed the UK on 6 March 2014. He did this whilst detained as an immigration offender, pending his enforced removal.

All and any outstanding representations made by Mr. Kainga and his legal representatives were responded to and substantively concluded prior to his departure. These included the matter of Mr. Kainga's tennis tutorage, which was raised by a Member of the House and responded to by the Immigration and Security Minister on 6 March 2014.

The Government recognised that although Mr. Kainga had made a contribution with his tennis coaching, he had also exhausted all appeal rights within the United Kingdom and had no lawful basis to remain in the UK under the Immigration Rules, or on a discretionary basis outside of those rules.

The Government decided that his removal was appropriate, legitimate and conducive to the public good for the purposes of effective immigration control, and they maintain that decision.

Written Answers to Questions

Monday 31 March 2014

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

Anaerobic Digestion

Mr Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what proportion of energy generation was produced through anaerobic digestion in each of the last three years; and what steps his Department is taking to increase the levels of energy production through that source. [193780]

Dan Rogerson: The following table details UK energy generation from anaerobic digestion over the period requested:

<i>UK energy generation from anaerobic digestion</i>			
	2010	2011	2012
Percentage of supply	0.15	0.20	0.23
Percentage of final consumption	0.22	0.29	0.33

The Government is committed to increasing energy from waste through anaerobic digestion. We continue to provide financial support for its growth through low carbon incentives, the Green Investment Bank and a Driving Innovation Fund to reduce costs and improve efficiency. We have also provided support through a loan fund.

Most of the actions in our 2011 Anaerobic Digestion Strategy have been delivered to help overcome barriers to deployment and facilitate an increase in energy from this source. Other actions are ongoing.

Coastal Erosion

Jim Shannon: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs if he will seek to involve all the regions and constituent parts of the UK in developing a UK-wide strategy to tackle coastal erosion. [193538]

Dan Rogerson: Flood and coastal erosion risk management is a devolved matter for each Administration. DEFRA provides strategic overview for the management of coastal erosion in England.

Environment Agency

Maria Eagle: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what the current staffing complement is in the Environment Agency's legal services and operations departments; and how many staff have applied to leave under such staff reduction plans. [191772]

Dan Rogerson: As of 28 February this year, the Environment Agency directly employs 8,532 full-time employees within Operations and Legal Services. These figures exclude employment agency staff and contractors and are rounded to whole full-time equivalent numbers.

The Environment Agency has received 1,003 requests to leave the organisation under its voluntary early release scheme.

Maria Eagle: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (1) how many legal and enforcement cases there were in each geographic area of the Environment Agency on 26 February 2014; and how many such cases were (a) under investigation, (b) being considered for enforcement action, (c) being considered for legal action by the legal services department and (d) issued and proceeding through the courts; [191773]

(2) how many enforcement cases run by the Environment Agency were (a) under investigation, (b) proceeding, having been issued in the courts and (c) completed on 26 February 2014. [191771]

Dan Rogerson: For points (a) to (d) following, the data was gathered for the purpose of answering these sections on 14 March this year and relates to that date, not 26 February.

(a) The number of current investigations in the Environment Agency regions at 14 March is:

<i>Region</i>	<i>Total</i>
Midlands	108
South West	213
North West	208
Anglian	272
South East	537
Yorkshire/North East	198

(b) All of the above investigations will be considered for enforcement action in due course.

(c) The number of cases being considered for legal action by the Environment Agency's legal services department is:

<i>Region</i>	<i>Total</i>
Midlands	58
South West	66
North West	47
Anglian	22
South East	58
Yorkshire/North East	146

(d) The number of cases issued and proceeding through the courts is:

<i>Region</i>	<i>Total</i>
Midlands	21
South West	24
North West	44
Anglian	28
South East	31
Yorkshire and North East	94

The Environment Agency does not believe that there were any cases resolved on 26 February this year. However, it can routinely take three to four weeks for the Environment Agency's records to be finalised.

Environment Protection: British Overseas Territories

Dr Offord: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what steps have been taken as part of the initiative to address threats to marine ecosystems in the Overseas Territories in the Caribbean. [193172]

George Eustice: DEFRA ran a research competition in 2011 on understanding and addressing threats to marine ecosystems in the Overseas Territories in the Caribbean. The competition was won by the university of Newcastle and has been running for three years in Anguilla, Turks and Caicos and the British Virgin Islands, with the full support of the relevant Overseas Territories' Governments. The project combines natural and social science and will identify major threats to coral reef health in the Caribbean and potential solutions for their sustainable management. The final report will be published later this year.

Fishing Vessels

Kerry McCarthy: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs pursuant to the answer to the hon. Member for Richmond Park, of 3 February 2011, *Official Report*, column 907W, on fishing vessels, what progress has been made on the creation of a global record of fishing vessels by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation and what work is being undertaken by his Department on the mandatory use of International Maritime Organisation numbers for fishing vessels for the purposes of improving transparency in the global fishing industry. [193468]

George Eustice: Significant progress has been made with the establishment of the global record of fishing vessels. In December 2013, at its 28th session, the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) adopted Resolution A.1078(28). This makes fishing vessels of 100 gross tonnage or above subject to the IMO Ship Identification Number Scheme. This number will become the unique vessel identifier to be used in the global record.

Discussions are ongoing at EU level as to the process to be adopted to acquire IMO numbers for those vessels that do not currently have them.

Kerry McCarthy: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what assessment his Department has made of the use of flag brokers and flags of convenience by illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing vessels; and what representations he has made to his EU counterparts on this matter. [193471]

George Eustice: DEFRA, together with the Marine Management Organisation, regularly monitors the movements of fishing vessels on Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) lists and discusses the implications with the Commission and other member states. Under the EU IUU Regulation, any flag state that wishes to validate catch certificates for the export of fisheries products to the EU must first notify the Commission that it is able to ensure its fishing fleet is compliant with all appropriate rules and laws.

Flood Control

Chris Ruane: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs how much was spent on flood defences per head of population in (a) England and (b) each region of England in each year since 2009. [193403]

Dan Rogerson: The information requested is as follows:

<i>Average spend per head on flood and coastal erosion risk management in England</i>					
	£				
2008-09	10.62				
2009-10	11.83				
2010-11	12.52				
2011-12	10.71				
2012-13	10.77				
<i>Average spend per head on flood and coastal erosion, risk management in each of the Environment Agency regions</i>					
<i>EA region</i>	<i>2008-09</i>	<i>2009-10</i>	<i>2010-11</i>	<i>2011-12</i>	<i>2012-13</i>
Anglian	18.86	16.75	17.70	18.98	20.93
Midlands	9.96	11.01	12.10	9.31	7.04
Yorkshire and North East	9.52	12.51	12.07	11.15	11.10
North West	8.64	9.66	11.47	8.69	8.70
South East	7.92	10.08	10.10	8.91	9.26
South West	16.19	15.80	18.43	11.77	13.21

The figures for each year is the total DEFRA spend on flood and coastal erosion risk management divided by the most recent ONS population estimate for mid-2012.

Forests

Chris Ruane: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs pursuant to the answer of 29 January 2014, *Official Report*, column 552W, on forests, if he will make it the Environment Agency's policy to record this information in future. [193372]

Dan Rogerson: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave 24 March 2014, *Official Report*, column 32W.

Chris Ruane: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs pursuant to the answer of 30 January 2014, *Official Report*, column 694W, on forests, what discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for International Development over the lessons to be learnt from her Department's contour afforestation schemes in developing countries. [193377]

Dan Rogerson: There have been no discussions with the Secretary of State for International Development, the right hon. Member for Putney (Justine Greening) on research her Department has conducted in developing countries into contour afforestation schemes.

Hunting Act 2004

Caroline Lucas: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs pursuant to the contribution by the Prime Minister of 5 March 2014, *Official Report*, column 886, whether he has received

and examined any proposals to amend the Hunting Act 2004; and if he will take steps to ensure that any such proposal will be subject to (a) a full consultation by his Department, (b) a full impact assessment with supporting data and modelling made available to Parliament and (c) a free vote in the House. [192855]

George Eustice: DEFRA received representations about an amendment to the Hunting Act that would help, in particular, upland farmers deal with the problem of fox predation of their lambs. We recognise the difficulties some hill farmers face but there are no plans to introduce an amendment to the Hunting Act.

The commitment in the coalition agreement is to bring forward a motion on a free vote on the repeal of the Hunting Act. This commitment still stands and a vote will come forward at an appropriate time.

Pest Control

Jim Shannon: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs when he expects his Department's consultation on pest control to be concluded; and what the outcome has been of his Department's discussions on this matter with representatives of shooting organisations. [193539]

George Eustice: Natural England's consultation on the general and class licences it issues under wildlife legislation closes on 19 May 2014. All those who use these licences or have an interest, including shooting organisations, are encouraged to provide their views to Natural England by the closing date.

A summary of responses received will be published after the consultation has ended.

The consultation and associated documents can be viewed on Natural England's website at:

www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/regulation/wildlife/licences/wildlifelicencingconsultation.aspx

Pet Foods: China

Mr Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what progress he has made in persuading China to recognise UK export health certificates for pet foods. [193338]

George Eustice [*holding answer 27 March 2014*]: Officials continue to work closely with the pet food industry to complete the questionnaires required by the Chinese authorities as the first stage in negotiations towards agreeing an export health certificate for pet food exports.

Sheep: Theft

Miss McIntosh: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what recent representations he has received on sheep rustling. [193319]

George Eustice: DEFRA has not received any such representations recently.

Water Charges

Mr Sanders: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs with reference to the letter of 19 March 2014 from the Parliamentary Under-Secretary for Water, Forestry, Rural Affairs and Resource Management to the hon. Member for Torbay, what the evidential basis is for his statement that offering a water company funding for domestic users who happen to occupy business premises would risk such a payment being classified as state aid under European legislation. [193604]

Dan Rogerson: This rebate is for household customers of South West Water only. It would be inappropriate to subsidise the water bills of large businesses from limited public funds. We could not distinguish between small and large businesses without spending public money on a bureaucratic application process which would further reduce the funding available to support household customers. Furthermore, any payment of public funds to a business of any size is open to challenge under the European State Aid rules. If such a payment was determined as unlawful, those businesses would be legally liable. This risk would be disproportionate to the benefit conferred by the annual £50 reduction. Therefore, in the case of 'mixed use' premises, the bill reduction can only apply where the person liable to pay the council tax is not also liable to pay business rates for those premises.

ENERGY AND CLIMATE CHANGE

Electricity Generation

Nicholas Soames: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change how many spare (a) generator step-up transformers and (b) transmission transformers are held in the UK. [193422]

Michael Fallon: Electricity generation in the U.K. is privatised and the decisions on spare step-up transformers are for the individual generator businesses. Electricity transmission operations in the UK are private, regulated businesses. Decisions on spare transmission connected transformers are matters for the transmission businesses, to meet the licence conditions under which they operate; they form an important component in the provision of reliability of supply. The Department of Energy and Climate Change does not hold data on generator step-up transformer or transmission connected transformer quantities held as spares by industry.

Nicholas Soames: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change which companies manufacture (a) generator step-up transformers and (b) transmission transformers in the UK. [193423]

Michael Fallon: The Department of Energy and Climate Change does not hold comprehensive data on generator step-up and transmission connected transformer manufacturers in the U.K. The transformers used in the privatised electricity industry are sourced from manufacturers such as Alstom Grid based in Staffordshire, among others in the UK and globally.

Energy

Andrew Percy: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change what estimate he has made of the number of people who have switched energy suppliers in (a) Brigg and Goole constituency, (b) Yorkshire and Humber and (c) England in each of the last 60 months. [193622]

Gregory Barker: DECC does not hold any sub-national data on switching energy suppliers, data is only available for Great Britain. This data is published in table 2.7.1 of the DECC publication Quarterly Energy Prices, which is made available online at the link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/quarterly-domestic-energy-switching-statistics>

Energy: Housing

Mr McKenzie: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change what estimate he has made of the average time it takes for householders who have installed energy efficient products in their property to recover their costs; and if he will make a statement. [193739]

Gregory Barker: The Department's latest estimates for households installing energy efficient products in their property do not assume a single payback period. The time required to recover installation costs will depend on a large number of factors, specific to the household. Some of the main influencing factors are: the property's type and size; the measures installed and their cost; the household's pattern of energy use before the installation; the energy efficiency of the property before the installation; and whether or not there was a subsidy to contribute to the measure's cost.

All the Department's take-up projections for energy efficiency measures assume that the households installing measures will recover all the installation costs, with payback ranging from 0 to 25 years.

Environment Protection: Taxation

Tom Greatrex: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change pursuant to the contribution of the Minister of State of 3 March 2014, *Official Report*, column 721, on Government levies on energy bills, what assessment he has made of the potential effects of a freeze of the carbon floor price on the number and capacity of projects that will be brought forward under the levy control framework. [193690]

Michael Fallon: The levy control framework has been designed with the flexibility to be able to respond to policy changes. The Government expects to meet its renewable energy ambition as set out in the Electricity Market Reform Delivery plan within the Levy Control Framework.

Tom Greatrex: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change pursuant to the contribution of the Minister of State of 3 March 2014, *Official Report*, column 725, on Government levies on energy bills, when he plans to present to the House the first annual report on consumer-funded policies, covering actual expenditure and forecast expenditure. [193691]

Michael Fallon: The first annual report on consumer-funded levies will be published to a timetable consistent with Ofgem's reporting on the renewables obligation for 2013-14, scheduled for March 2015. Officials are currently considering how that date could be brought forward.

Fossil Fuels: Russia

Nicholas Soames: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change what the value of UK imports of (a) coal, (b) gas and (c) oil from Russia was in each of the last five years for which figures are available. [193420]

Michael Fallon: The value of UK imports of coal, primary oil and petroleum products from Russia between 2008 and 2012 are shown in the following table:

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
	<i>£ million</i>				
Coal	1,570	1,130	533	945	1,092
Primary oil	2,184	1,156	1,278	2,316	3,321
Petroleum products	1,091	770	1,186	1,805	1,819

There was no gas imported directly from Russia by the UK.

Nicholas Soames: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change what proportion of the UK's (a) coal, (b) gas and (c) oil requirements were met by imports from Russia in each of the last five years for which figures are available. [193421]

Michael Fallon: The amounts of coal and oil imported from Russia by the UK for each year between 2008 and 2012 compared to total UK demand for those fuels are shown in the following table:

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
<i>Coal</i>					
Import (thousand tonnes)	21,249	17,726	8,322	12,126	16,933
Proportion of demand (percentage)	33	34	15	22	25
<i>Primary oil</i>					
Import (thousand tonnes)	8,295	5,065	5,000	6,058	7,491
Proportion of demand (percentage)	10	7	7	8	11
<i>Petroleum products</i>					
Import (thousand tonnes)	1,435	2,066	2,306	2,407	2,630
Proportion of demand (percentage)	2	3	3	4	4

There was no gas imported directly from Russia by the UK.

Fuel Oil: North West

Jake Berry: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change what estimate he has made of the number of properties in (a) Rossendale and Darwen constituency and (b) the North West which do not have mains gas access and which use domestic heating oil. [193301]

Michael Fallon: Estimates for the number of households which do not have mains gas and which use domestic heating oil are not available. However, the number of households that did not have access to a mains gas supply in the Rossendale and Darwen constituency can be estimated by combining figures for the lower layer super output areas that most closely match this area.

In 2012, there were approximately 1,100 households (3%) which had no access to mains gas. The number of households that did not have access to mains gas in the north-west is estimated to be 156,000 (5% of households within the north-west).

These data are available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/lsoa-estimates-of-households-not-connected-to-the-gas-network>

Fuel Oil: Yorkshire and the Humber

Andrew Percy: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change what estimate he has made of the number of properties in (a) Brigg and Goole constituency and (b) Yorkshire and the Humber which do not have mains gas access and which use domestic heating oil. [193904]

Gregory Barker: Estimates for the number of households which do not have mains gas and which use domestic heating oil are not available. However, the number of households that did not have access to a mains gas supply in the Brigg and Goole constituency can be estimated by combining figures for the lower layer super output areas that most closely match this area.

In 2012, there were approximately 4,400 households (12%) which had no access to mains gas. The number of households that did not have access to mains gas in Yorkshire and the Humber is estimated to be 127,000 (6% of households within Yorkshire and the Humber).

These data are available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/lsoa-estimates-of-households-not-connected-to-the-gas-network>

Public Appointments

Mrs Gillan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change who has been appointed as a non-executive director of his Department since the publication of information on non-executive directors in his Department's annual report and accounts 2012-13; what the date of each such appointment was; what annual fee is payable to each such person; what expenses and allowances each such person has claimed to date; and what other interests or employment each such person has. [193606]

Gregory Barker: Since the last annual report Martin Stewart has joined the Department as lead non-executive director on 3 June 2013; and Tom Kelly joined on 3 February 2014.

Martin Stewart is CEO of Eurotaxglass Ltd, he is also a non-executive director and chair of the audit committee on London 2017 Ltd, and non-executive director and chair of the audit committee of SIS Ltd.

Tom Kelly is currently the corporate communications director at Network Rail. He moves to become strategic communications adviser for HS2 on 1 April 2014.

Their fees are £20,000 PA and £15,000 PA respectively. Neither has claimed expenses from the Department since taking up their role.

Solar Power

Mr McKenzie: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change what estimate he has made of the number of houses in the UK that have solar panels. [193737]

Gregory Barker: The latest published statistics show that as at the end of December 2013, there were 427,897 solar panel installations on domestic properties, representing 97% of the total number of solar panels installed in GB (442,102).

Statistics to the end of March 2014 will be published at 9:30 am on Wednesday 23 April 2014 on the DECC Statistics webpage:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/sub-regional-feed-in-tariffs-confirmed-on-the-cfr-statistics>

Working Hours

Lucy Powell: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change what proportion of employees in his Department of each (a) civil service pay grade and (b) gender work (i) reduced hours, (ii) flexi-time, (iii) from home, (iv) a compressed working week, (v) job share, (vi) term-time only and (vii) part-time. [193962]

Gregory Barker: The Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC) has a flexible working policy which allows its staff to apply to work through a range of flexible working options. These include part-time working, job sharing, compressed hours, as well as working from home on an occasional or more regular basis or as part of a formal arrangements where staff are officially based at home. DECC does not hold central records of those staff who have made a statutory application for flexible working.

Information relating to staff who work part-time is recorded centrally and the proportion of those by (a) civil service pay grade and (b) gender is set out in the following tables:

	Civil service pay grade	
	Full-time	Percentage Part-time
AO	89	11
EO	93	7
HEO	96	4
FASTSTREAM	100	0
SEO	95	5

Civil service pay grade

	Full-time	Percentage	
		Part-time	
G7	91	9	
G6	86	14	
SCS	91	9	
Total	92	8	

Gender

	Full-time	Percentage	
		Part-time	
Female	86	14	
Male	98	2	
Total	92	8	

TRANSPORT**All Party Groups**

Chris Ruane: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what his Department's policy is on allowing officials to appear before all-party parliamentary groups. [193565]

Stephen Hammond: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by the Minister for the Cabinet Office and Paymaster General, my right hon. Friend the Member for Horsham (Mr Maude) on 26 March 2014, *Official Report*, column 300W.

Driving: Young People

Andrea Leadsom: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he plans to announce the findings of the Green Paper on improving the safety and reducing risks to young drivers. [193736]

Mr Goodwill: The safety of young people on our roads is very important to us. Too many young people die, too often; we are wrestling with how to make things safer, while not unduly restricting the freedom of our young people. We want young people to be able to get to work and training, to education and to leisure activities, and we want them to do so safely. We are finding this a difficult balance, with passionate voices on both sides.

On 27 January 2014, we held a meeting with the insurance industry and agreed the Department would commission new research into how telematics can change the behaviour and attitudes of learner drivers. We look forward to insurance companies sharing their data so that we can undertake this research.

We are also in the process of undertaking some focus groups with parents, young people and employers to get a better understanding of the issues from their perspective.

Fines

Lilian Greenwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what the (a) date, (b) amount and (c) reasons were for any fines or penalties his Department has paid to HM Treasury since May 2010. [193583]

Stephen Hammond: The following table shows fines and penalties collected and passed on to HM Treasury by the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency:

Financial Period	Late Licensing Penalties	Traditional Enforcement	Wheel-Clamping	Continuous Insurance Enforcement		Total
				£ million		
2010-11	29	12	8	0		49
2011-12	24	7	5	2		38
2012-13	28	6	5	3		42
2013-14 ¹	13	5	5	4		27

¹ The figures for 2013-14 are interim (April - February) and subject to year-end adjustments.

The Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (which now includes the Vehicle and Operator Services Agency) also collects fines and penalties on behalf of HM Treasury, figures are shown as follows and are not yet available for 2013-14. Fixed penalties are recouped from

drivers and operators of PCV/LGVs for a number of different possible infractions. Bus penalties—the Traffic Commissioners may impose financial penalties against bus operators as part of their regulatory role.

Financial Period	Fixed Penalties	Bus Penalties	£000	
			Total	
2010-11	2,431	197	2,628	
2011-12	2,142	41	2,183	
2012-13	1,808	221	2,029	

Fisheries

Kerry McCarthy: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he plans to ratify the International Labour Organisation amendment C188 on the Work in Fishing Convention, in respect of a minimum age for work on a fishing vessel, minimum medical standards,

basic work agreements, occupational health and safety, and social security. [193467]

Stephen Hammond: The Government supports the principles behind the International Labour Organisation Convention on Work in Fishing (No. 188), and is working

with the fishing industry to develop proposals for implementation of the Convention, including those aspects listed above.

The UK will make a final decision on the appropriateness and timing of ratification once the impacts on the industry have been identified and assessed.

High Speed 2 Railway Line

Mr O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) with reference to HS2 Plus published on 17 March 2014, on what basis he has decided that the North's integrated station should be Crewe; and what alternative locations were considered; [193260]

(2) if he will consider rerouting High Speed 2 phase 2 through Stoke-on-Trent rather than Crewe as part of his consideration of the public responses to his Department's consultation. [193262]

Mr Goodwill: We have received over 10,000 responses to the Phase Two consultation. These are still being analysed and considered, and no decisions on the Phase Two route have been taken. We are considering the recommendation on Crewe as part of our response to the Phase Two consultation which will include analysis and consideration of the proposals to reroute the line through Stoke-on-Trent, as well as all other responses to the consultation. I will respond to the consultation on Phase Two later this year.

Mr O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether there will be a review of the cost-benefit analysis of High Speed 2 following the decision to revise the High Speed 2 and High Speed 1 link. [193263]

Mr Goodwill: We will continue to revise and update the economic case for HS2 as new project milestones are reached, such as decisions on the preferred route for Phase 2, to ensure it is based on the best available evidence and latest understanding of the project, including taking account of the decision to remove the existing proposals for the HS1-HS2 link from the scheme.

Mr O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what estimate he has made of how much more tickets for journeys on High Speed 2 will cost than for journeys on conventional trains; and how the cost of tickets for journeys on High Speed 2 will be calculated. [193264]

Mr Goodwill: The strategic case for HS2 assumes that fares are similarly priced between services that operate on and off the HS2 infrastructure. However, the key decisions on fares and services on HS2 once services open in 2026 will be taken by future Governments, as part of determining wider rail policy for the GB rail network as a whole.

Mr O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport pursuant to the answer of 28 February 2014, *Official Report*, columns 511-2W, on High Speed 2 railway line, at what URL the March 2012 reports of HS2 Ltd are published; and on what pages of those reports the evidence that led to the decision to route via Crewe rather than Stoke-on-Trent is set out. [193269]

Mr Goodwill: The March 2012 report setting out the options that HS2 Ltd considered for Phase Two, and describing the process of analysing and refining them, can be viewed at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/options-for-phase-two-of-the-high-speed-rail-network>

The information relating to Stoke-on-Trent is in section 4.3 (pages 34 to 69).

Further information can also be found in the 'HS2 Phase Two Engineering Options Report West Midlands to Manchester (parts 1 and 2)' at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/hs2-phase-two-engineering-options-report-west-midlands-to-manchester>

Section 7 in part 2 of the report sets out the history of line of route options studied (pages 279 to 283).

Responses to the Phase Two consultation are being considered currently and no decisions have yet been taken on the route. We will make an announcement in the autumn.

Mr O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport pursuant to the answer of 28 February 2014, *Official Report*, columns 511-2W, on High Speed 2 railway line, what calculations were done to demonstrate that alternative schemes would fail to deliver sufficient additional capacity; and what the passenger load factor of High Speed 2 will be as against the passenger load factor of longer trains. [193270]

Mr Goodwill: Since 2009 we have considered a wide range of alternative options to a high speed railway including the use of alternative modes, a conventional speed line and upgrades to the existing rail network. The alternatives do not release capacity for commuter and freight services, fail to offer a robust solution to the problem of poor service performance and would significantly disrupt services as upgrade work is carried out.

All of the calculations to demonstrate that alternative schemes would fail to deliver as much capacity as HS2 to address future levels of over-crowding have been published. These are summarised in the Strategic Case for HS2 released in October 2013

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/hs2-strategic-case>

From the October 2013 economic case, and for the standard case run, the average all-day load factor for HS2 services in 2036 for the full network is 41%, and accordingly higher during peak periods. Equivalent data for the alternatives has been published in the HS2 Strategic Alternatives Final Report (Atkins, 2013)

http://assets.hs2.org.uk/sites/default/files/inserts/S%26A%201_Economic%20case_0.pdf

Mr O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport pursuant to the answer of 27 February 2014, *Official Report*, column 455W, on High Speed 2 railway line, on what basis it has been calculated that the (a) expense of and (b) disruption caused by adopting double-decker carriages on the West Coast Main Line would be greater than that of the construction of High Speed 2. [193271]

Mr Goodwill: Since 2009 we have considered a wide range of alternative options to a high speed railway including the use of alternative modes, a conventional

speed line and upgrades to the existing rail network. The alternatives do not release capacity for commuter and freight services, fail to offer a robust solution to the problem of poor performance and would significantly disrupt services as upgrade work is carried out.

The March 2010 High Speed 2 Strategic Alternatives Study considered the potential for using double deck trains on WCML as one means of enhancing capacity on conventional rail routes between London and the West Midlands/North West. It found that while double decking, and the less expensive alternative of train lengthening, would increase the number of passengers per train there is a practical limit to the expansion of capacity on WCML and only limited opportunity to reduce journey times.

All of the calculations to demonstrate that alternative schemes would fail to deliver as much capacity as HS2 to address future levels of over-crowding have been published. These are summarised in the Strategic Case for HS2 released in October 2013 which can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/hs2-strategic-case>

Before such trains could be used on the West Coast Mainline, the route (including diversionary routes) would need to be gauge cleared to allow sufficient space for the trains to operate. This would involve raising all overhead wires, raising bridges, modifying platforms on the route, modifying station canopies, moving or raising all signal gantries and other signage on the route, and lowering track in the tunnels. Work would need to be carried out to modify existing depots or to provide new ones. Additional works would also be required to enable line speeds to be maintained on the route.

Helen Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of the effect of a regional transport hub at Crewe on the proposal by Warrington Borough Council for an alternative route for the High Speed 2 line north of Crewe; and if he will make a statement. [193627]

Mr Goodwill: HS2 Ltd will undertake work to consider proposals for a hub station at Crewe as part of the consideration of the responses to the Phase Two consultation. This closed on 31 January and all responses, including that from Warrington Borough Council, are currently being considered. No decisions have yet been taken on the route but we will make an announcement on this in the autumn.

Helen Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment his Department has made of the potential economic benefits to (a) the North-West and (b) Warrington of further upgrading the West-East line as proposed in the HS2 Plus Report. [193697]

Mr Goodwill: No specific assessment has yet been made. In response to the HS2 Plus report, we have commissioned HS2 Ltd and Network Rail to undertake work to allow proposals to accelerate construction of the Crewe section of HS2 Phase Two and to build a new integrated hub station at Crewe to be looked at in detail as part of the consideration of the public consultation responses to Phase Two. We have also commissioned HS2 Ltd and Network Rail to make recommendations on enhancing connectivity in the midlands and the north before our response to the Phase Two consultation.

Mr Jamie Reed: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what the proposed service pattern is for classic-compatible High Speed 2 trains serving Carlisle when (a) High Speed 2 phase 1 and (b) High Speed 2 phase 2 opens; [193890]

(2) what plans he has for Penrith North Lakes, Oxenholme Lake District and Lancaster to be served by classic-compatible High Speed 2 trains. [193891]

Mr Goodwill: HS2 will provide a very significant expansion of the rail network's ability to carry passengers and freight, resulting in improvements to rail services throughout the country. It is too soon to set a final train timetable at this stage, but HS2 Ltd and Network Rail have begun a process which will allow us to identify the best possible use of the post-HS2 rail network.

One set of assumptions, amongst many, has been developed for business case modelling purposes. These assumptions are clearly set out in "The Economic Case for HS2: Assumptions Report" published in October 2013

http://assets.hs2.org.uk/sites/default/files/inserts/SA%2020_PFM%20assumptions%20report_V3_0.pdf

Railways

Lilian Greenwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to review the National Rail Conditions of Carriage. [193586]

Stephen Hammond: The Secretary of State has an approval role under the Ticketing & Settlement Agreement for changes to the National Rail Conditions of Carriage. The Association of Train Operating Companies is responsible for the management of the National Rail Conditions of Carriage and it is for them to propose changes to the Secretary of State for approval.

Railways: Chester

Stephen Mosley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport pursuant to the answer of 24 March 2014, *Official Report*, column 4W, on railways: Chester, if he will hold discussions with the Secretary of State for Wales on the potential implications for (a) rail services in Chester and (b) Chester railway station of the recommendation in the report on the Commission on Devolution in Wales that the Wales and Borders rail franchise should be devolved to the National Assembly for Wales. [193684]

Stephen Hammond: The Secretary of State would be happy to discuss these matters with the Secretary of State for Wales when they next meet.

Railways: South West

Mr Sanders: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what compensation will be available to train operating companies as a result of the rail line closures in the South West of England in early 2014. [193600]

Stephen Hammond: Any compensation for the train operators in respect of the rail line closures in the south west of England in early 2014 would be paid by Network Rail in accordance with the track access agreement between Network Rail and the individual train operating companies, as regulated by the Office of Rail Regulation.

Transport: Schools

Mr Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what recent estimate he has made of the number of schools that undertake cycling training; whether his Department provides information to schools on the wearing of cycle helmets by children; and if he will take steps to ensure that a Travel to School Policy becomes compulsory for all local education authorities in relation to schoolchildren and safety. [193554]

Mr Goodwill: The Department for Transport provides funding for the delivery of Bikeability cycle training in England. Currently approximately 8,177 schools take part in training delivered by either their Local Highway Authority or School Games Organiser Host School.

Bikeability courses include discussions on helmets during the equipment check. Those wearing helmets are taught how to fit and adjust them correctly and there are also wider discussions on safety equipment and what to wear.

The Department for Education expects local authorities to meet its Home to School Transport Duties which includes ensuring safe walking routes and sustainable local travel. There are no plans to change the legislation or the policies that underpin this.

HOME DEPARTMENT

All Party Groups

Chris Ruane: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what her Department's policy is on allowing officials to appear before all-party parliamentary groups. [193560]

Karen Bradley: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by the Minister for the Cabinet Office and Paymaster General, my right hon. Friend the Member for Horsham (Mr Maude) on 26 March 2014, *Official Report*, column 292W.

Asylum

Sarah Teather: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many asylum applicants receiving support under section 4 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 have been receiving support for more than (a) two years, (b) four years and (c) six years; and if she will make a statement. [193593]

James Brokenshire: Data specific to your request can be found in the following table.

<i>Band cases</i>	<i>Number</i>
Up to two years	2,008
More than two years	822
More than four years	473
More than six years	212
Total	3,515

Sarah Teather: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when she will announce the asylum support rates for 2014-15. [193594]

James Brokenshire: There are no immediate plans to change the support rates provided to destitute asylum seekers.

Asylum: Pregnant Women

Ms Abbott: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department with reference to the report by the Refugee Council, *When Maternity Doesn't Matter*, what steps her Department has taken to reform the dispersal policy of the former UK Border Agency. [193461]

James Brokenshire: The report covers procedures for accommodating pregnant asylum seekers who are destitute. The Home Office has been consulting about changes to these procedures and is considering some detailed suggestions by the Refugee Council and Maternity Action. Once that is completed we will move towards finalising and publishing revised guidance on the procedures.

Borders: Personal Records

Stephen Timms: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what the current status is of the Border Systems Programme (BSP); what the timescale is for tendering and choosing suppliers; and when the BSP is expected to be developed and rolled out. [192403]

James Brokenshire: The e-Borders programme has been incorporated within the Border Systems' scope of work. Border Systems now assumes responsibility for the Warnings Index and the wider Border Force portfolio of technology projects. Border Systems will build on the foundations of the e-Borders programme, strengthening even further our border security.

The procurement approach to replacing the primary border security elements of the Border Systems Programme will reflect broader Government ICT and Commercial strategy, and there will be no single, large supplier. The Home Office will lead development, with services procured from a range of providers, potentially including small and medium enterprises.

By March 2015 the Border Systems Programme aims to:

- complete resilience of all current business critical systems;
- develop replacement primary border security systems;
- provide additional capability to support commitments on exit checks;
- establish a programme for the next generation of Radiological and Nuclear detection (Cyclamen);
- continue the implementation of second generation e-Gates across the estate;
- develop and implement new freight targeting capability for sea containers;
- establish contracts to purchase new detection equipment;
- continue to assure live operations of existing systems.

Deportation

Mr Hanson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many serious misconduct complaints related to the use of control and restraint during enforced removal were referred to the Professional Standards Unit in each year since 2010. [193473]

James Brokenshire: Complaints made by, or on behalf of, detainees are managed in accordance with Detention Services Order 3/2011. All allegations of serious misconduct are referred to the Home Office Professional Standards Unit (PSU) for investigation. These include allegations made against staff who work in the detention estate or who are engaged in escorting work.

Data on the number of complaints referred to the PSU is not recorded. Only data of those complaints where PSU have agreed to investigate are recorded. The number investigated relating to the use of control and restraint during enforced removal is detailed as follows:

2010: 42

2011: 30

2012: 39

2013: 19.

These figures are based on management information, which is subject to change, and does not form part of our publicised statistics.

Entry Clearances

George Galloway: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) for what reasons there are differential rates for visas for dependents of British citizens coming from non-EU countries and visas for dependents of EU non-British citizens domiciled in Britain; [193115]

(2) if she will abolish the differential rates for visas paid by British and EU non-British citizens living in the UK for dependents outside the EU and make the cost of all such visas the same as the EU rate. [193116]

James Brokenshire: Dependents of British citizens from non-EU countries who wish to enter the UK are required to apply for entry under the immigration rules. In line with its legislative powers, the Home Office sets immigration and nationality fees to reflect the administrative cost of processing an application as well as benefits and entitlements that may accrue if an applicant is successful. These fees apply to foreign national family members of British citizens applying for entry under the immigration rules. The Home Office believes that it is right that those who use and benefit most from the immigration system contribute to its running costs.

The rights of EU nationals to live and work in other European Union member states, and to be accompanied by their non-EU family members, are set out in European Union law, in directive 2004/38/EC ("the free movement directive"), by which all EU member states are bound. The free movement directive does not cover the rights of EU citizens living in their country of nationality, so it does not apply to British nationals living in the UK. The free movement directive requires member states to issue entry clearance visas to non-EU family members of EU nationals free of charge.

EU Justice and Home Affairs

Naomi Long: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what progress she has made regarding the 2014 opt-out pursuant to Article 10(4) of Protocol 36 of the Lisbon Treaty; and what timetable she has set for the UK opting back in to the measures to which that decision relates. [192623]

Karen Bradley: On 24 July 2013 the Prime Minister wrote to the President of the Council of Ministers exercising the UK's opt-out from all police and criminal justice measures agreed before the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty.

The Government has also announced 35 measures that it will seek to rejoin in the national interest. These are contained in Command Paper 8671:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/235912/8671.pdf

Illegal Immigrants: Employment

Mr Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what measures her Department has introduced in the last year to reduce the number of businesses employing illegal immigrants. [193823]

James Brokenshire: Employers have a duty to ensure that their employees have the right to work in the UK, and this duty has been underpinned by a civil penalty scheme since 2008. The Government is taking measures to ensure a tougher response to employers who use illegal labour, while simplifying arrangements for legitimate businesses to conduct right to work checks.

To deter employers from using illegal workers, the Home Office is doubling the maximum penalty to £20,000. The Government is also using the current Immigration Bill to make it easier to enforce unpaid civil penalties in the civil courts. In addition, with the creation of the new Immigration Enforcement Directorate last year, there has been a 47% increase in illegal working enforcement operations and a corresponding increase in civil penalties imposed, with 1,862 penalties served in 2013-14 (to the end of February) compared to 1,270 in 2012-13. We are also ensuring greater collaboration across Government to increase our "enforcement reach" and the range of sanctions that can be brought to bear against rogue employers who exploit illegal workers.

Immigrants: Detainees

Sarah Teather: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people held in immigration removal centres and who refused food or fluids have been transferred to prisons since May 2013. [193784]

James Brokenshire: No persons held in immigration removal centres have been transferred to prisons since May 2013 due to refusal of food or fluids.

Unmanned Air Vehicles

Mr Watson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what the purpose and scope of the current trials of the Aeryon Skyranger unmanned system based in Gatwick are; if she will publish policy on the storage and use of data obtained in the course of such trials; and if she will make a statement. [R] [193036]

Damian Green: Sussex constabulary is undertaking a trial of the Aeryon Skyranger to assess the contribution it might make to the policing of Gatwick airport. This trial is an operational matter for the chief constable.

In determining the storage and use of data obtained through this trial, the force will be subject to a duty to have regard to the surveillance camera code of practice issued as guidance under the Protection of Freedoms Act 2012.

DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER
All Party Groups

Chris Ruane: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister what his Office's policy is on allowing officials to appear before all-party parliamentary groups. [193385]

The Deputy Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by the Minister for the Cabinet Office and Paymaster General, the right hon. Member for Horsham (Mr Maude), on 26 March 2014, *Official Report*, column 300W.

NORTHERN IRELAND
Terrorism

Mr Dodds: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what discussions she has had with victims of terrorism in Northern Ireland since the announcement of the administrative scheme to issue letters to on-the-run terrorist suspects. [190863]

Mrs Villiers: Since 25 February, I have had one meeting directly with the victims of terrorism but matters relating to victims have been raised at a number of other meetings.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL
All Party Groups

Chris Ruane: To ask the Attorney-General what the Law Officers' Departments' policy is on allowing officials to appear before all-party parliamentary groups. [193381]

The Attorney-General: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to him by the Minister for the Cabinet Office and Paymaster General, my right hon. Friend the Member for Horsham (Mr Maude), on 26 March 2014, *Official Report*, column 300W.

HOUSE OF COMMONS COMMISSION
Portcullis House

Mr Frank Field: To ask the hon. Member for Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross representing the House of Commons Commission, how many fire alarms have sounded in Portcullis House in the last 12 months; on how many of these occasions the London Fire Brigade arrived to attend a fire; and on how many of these occasions the London Fire Brigade discovered a fire. [193305]

John Thurso: There have been three fire alarms resulting in evacuations from Portcullis House in the last 12 months. One of these alarms, on 24 March 2014, led to the attendance of the London Fire Brigade. On this occasion the alarm was triggered by a heat detector following the

overheating of a grill in the Lower Ground Kitchens as well as the triggering of a manual call point. No fire was discovered.

WALES

All Party Groups

Chris Ruane: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what his Department's policy is on allowing officials to appear before all-party parliamentary groups. [193567]

Stephen Crabb: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer given by the Minister for the Cabinet Office and Paymaster General, my right hon. Friend the Member for Horsham (Mr Maude), on 26 March 2014, *Official Report*, column 300W.

Business

Andrew Rosindell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what assessment he has made of the growth prospects of small and medium-sized enterprises in Wales. [193670]

Mr David Jones: 190,000 small and medium-sized businesses in Wales will be helped by a significant package of support measures announced at Budget 2014, including doubling the Annual Investment Allowance to £500,000 from April 2014 until 31 December 2015, and measures to improve the availability of finance.

EDUCATION

Academies

Bill Esterson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education who owns the freehold of schools which have converted to academies; and what restrictions there are on the use of such freeholds. [193219]

Mr Timpson: When community schools convert to academies, the freehold is retained by the local authority and a lease is granted to the academy trust.

There are strict rules protecting publicly funded land used by academies, regardless of who holds the freehold. This is set out in published guidance, which is available at:

www.gov.uk/government/publications/protection-of-school-playing-fields-and-public-land-advice

A copy of the guidance has been placed in the House Library.

All Party Groups

Chris Ruane: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what his Department's policy is on allowing officials to appear before all-party parliamentary groups. [193386]

Elizabeth Truss: I refer the hon. Member to the response of 26 March 2014, *Official Report*, column 300W, provided by the Cabinet Office.

Children in Care

Steve McCabe: To ask the Secretary of State for Education pursuant to the answer of 18 March 2014, *Official Report*, columns 556-7W, on children in care, if he will place in the Library (a) the results of the virtual school head pilots conducted between September 2007 and August 2009 and (b) all training materials produced by his Department. [193843]

Mr Timpson: The evaluation report of the virtual school head (VSH) pilots was published in August 2009 and can be viewed from the following link:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/222044/DCSF-RR144.pdf

In March 2010 the Department published a VSH toolkit based on the experiences of the pilots and other local authorities that had developed services using the virtual school model. The toolkit can be viewed from the following link:

<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20131027134109/http://media.education.gov.uk/assets/files/pdf/v/virtual%20school%20head%20toolkit.pdf>

A group of virtual school heads are currently revising the toolkit.

A copy of the evaluation report and the original toolkit will be placed in the Library of the House when it is complete.

The enhanced materials for school leaders and governors about the impact of being looked after on children's educational attainment that have been developed through the National College for Teaching and Leadership (NCTL) are currently available only through license to training providers.

NCTL has supported Bath Spa University and Bath and North East Somerset local authority to develop training materials on attachment. This new training resource, 'An Introduction to Attachment and the Implications for Learning', which includes video footage, is available on the NCTL website members' site:

<http://www.nationalcollege.org.uk/index/docinfo?id=651084&filename=an-introduction-to-attachment-and-the-implications-for-learning-and-behaviour.pdf>

Foster Care

Steve McCabe: To ask the Secretary of State for Education whether his Department issues guidance to local authorities on how best to make use of unutilized foster carers. [193526]

Mr Timpson: The Department for Education has not issued guidance to local authorities on how best to make use of unutilised foster carers. Local authorities are required, under section 22G of the Children Act 1989, to take steps that secure, so far as reasonably practicable, sufficient accommodation within the authority's area that meets the needs of children that the local authority is looking after, and whose circumstances are such that it would be consistent with their welfare for them to be provided with accommodation that is in the local authority's area ('the sufficiency duty').

Since April 2013 the Department has been working with consortia of local authorities and sector partners to:

1. develop and test innovative solutions for the recruitment and retention of foster carers

2. identify gaps in the capacity of the foster carer workforce
3. develop effective strategies for recruiting and retaining foster carers.

We will be sharing the lessons learned and disseminating any tools that have been developed during the project more widely following testing.

Free School Meals

Stephen Timms: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will estimate the cost to the public purse of extending entitlement to free school meals to all claimants of universal credit once universal credit has been fully rolled out. [193248]

Mr Laws: Our broad estimate of extending entitlement to free school meals to all families in receipt of universal credit is that it would cost up to an extra £750 million per year. This is lower than previous estimates because of the implementation of the universal infant free school meals policy from September 2014.

Mr Sanders: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make an estimate of the capital costs incurred by schools as a result of the implementation of universal infant free school meals; and whether the capital funding provided by his Department to schools to date covers such costs. [193576]

Mr Laws: The Department for Education consulted with a number of local authorities and schools in the autumn, in order to assess the potential capital needs to meet the new universal infant free school meal (UIFSM) entitlement. Circumstances differ between schools, and between authorities, but those discussions gave us an assessment of the range of likely costs.

Based on those discussions, we believe the £150 million of capital funding announced last December is an appropriate figure to support schools and authorities in meeting the new UIFSM entitlement. We know that many schools and authorities are still in the process of considering the best way of delivering this. That is why we are supplementing this capital support with the package of implementation support measures announced on 6 March, in order to offer advice and guidance to schools and local authorities that need assistance in implementing the policy.

Mr Sanders: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what discussions he held with schools and local authorities for the purposes of drafting departmental advice on universal infant free school meals. [193601]

Mr Laws: Since the announcement of universal infant free school meals (UIFSM), departmental officials have engaged in a number of discussions with primary school head teachers and their representatives, local authorities and other interested parties, to explore how this policy can be implemented so that the benefits of universal free school meal provision for children and families are maximised.

The content of the departmental advice document on universal infant free school meals, which was published on 6 March, was based on feedback gathered through these discussions. Before it was published, the document was commented on by the Department's UIFSM external reference group, which includes representatives from schools and local authorities.

Richard Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for Education when he will announce (a) additional funding for and (b) a help and advice service to schools on universal free school meals. [193900]

Mr Laws: The Chancellor announced in his autumn statement on 5 December that we would be providing over £1 billion of additional revenue funding over the next two financial years, and £150 million of capital funding in 2014-15, to support the introduction of universal infant free school meals.

On 6 March we published a departmental advice document which sets out further information about the funding available and about the support available to schools. This document is available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/universal-infant-free-school-meals>

On 6 March we also launched a support service, which consists of a telephone and online advice service for schools, local authorities and caterers and a direct-support service for schools facing significant challenges. The service is being provided by school food experts, the Children's Food Trust and the Lead Association for Catering in Education, in conjunction with a number of delivery partners. More information is available at:

<http://www.childrensfoodtrust.org.uk/Root/schools/schoolfoodplan>

Free Schools: Lancashire

Jake Berry: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what applications he received from groups in Lancashire to establish a new free school in (a) 2013 and (b) 2014 to date. [193300]

Mr Timpson: The Department for Education publishes a list of every application received in all the completed application rounds on the gov.uk website.

Applications received in wave 4 can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/free-schools-wave-4-application-information>

Applications received in wave 5 can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/free-schools-wave-5-application-information>

Applications received in 2013 to establish free schools were part of waves 4 and 5. As the published list states, two applications were received from groups in Lancashire in wave 4: Burnley High School and Steiner Academy Lancaster. No applications from groups in Lancashire were received in wave 5.

Applications received so far in 2014 are part of wave 6. The Department for Education will publish a list of all applications received shortly after the assessment process is complete, in the same way it has for previous rounds.

GCSE: Brigg

Andrew Percy: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many children received A* to C grades in GCSE (a) mathematics, (b) English, (c) geography and (d) sciences in Brigg and Goole constituency in each year since May 2010. [193906]

Mr Laws: The table gives the number and proportion of pupils who received A*-C grades in GCSE (a) mathematics (b) English (c) geography and (d) sciences in Brigg and Goole constituency in each year since May 2010. Regional and national figure have been included as appropriate comparators.

Achievements at GCSE¹ for pupils² at the end of key stage 4 for Brigg and Goole parliamentary constituency. Years: 2009/10 to 2012/13 (revised)³. Coverage: England⁴, state-funded schools (including academies and CTCs)

		No. of eligible pupils ¹	No. achieving a grade A*-C in GCSE mathematics	% ³ achieving an A*-C grade in GCSE mathematics	No. achieving a grade A*-C in GCSE English	% ³ achieving a grade in GCSE English	No. achieving a grade A*-C in GCSE geography	% ³ achieving an A*-C grade in GCSE geography	No. achieving a grade A*-C in GCSE Science ⁶	% ³ achieving an A*-C grade in GCSE Science ⁶
2012/13	Brigg and Goole	1,055	773	73.3	753	71.4	250	23.7	642	60.9
	Yorkshire and the Humber	58,260	40,659	69.8	39,017	67.0	11,207	19.2	31,650	54.3
	England ⁴	569,118	406,585	71.4	390,004	68.5	122,252	21.5	330,569	58.1
2011/12	Brigg and Goole	1,051	787	74.9	718	68.3	152	14.5	622	59.2
	Yorkshire and the Humber	58,520	39,403	67.3	38,063	65.0	9,202	15.7	31,968	54.6
	England ⁴	559,076	388,487	69.5	375,015	67.1	99,713	17.8	330,422	59.1
2010/11	Brigg and Goole	1,079	680	63.0	757	70.2	161	14.9	618	57.3
	Yorkshire and the Humber	59,052	36,063	61.1	38,912	65.9	9,047	15.3	31,906	54.0
	England ⁴	564,863	368,922	65.3	392,153	69.4	96,364	17.1	333,682	59.1
2009/10	Brigg and Goole	1,068	686	64.2	705	66.0	121	11.3	644	60.3

Achievements at GCSE¹ for pupils² at the end of key stage 4 for Brigg and Goole parliamentary constituency. Years: 2009/10 to 2012/13 (revised)³. Coverage: England⁴, state-funded schools (including academies and CTCs)

	No. of eligible pupils ¹	No. achieving a grade A*-C in GCSE in mathematics	% ⁵ achieving an A*-C grade in GCSE mathematics	No. achieving a grade A*-C in GCSE English	% ⁵ achieving an A*-C grade in GCSE English	No. achieving a grade A*-C in GCSE geography	% ⁵ achieving an A*-C grade in GCSE geography	No. achieving a grade A*-C in GCSE Science ⁶	% ⁵ achieving an A*-C grade in GCSE Science ⁶
Yorkshire and the Humber	60,181	35,499	59.0	38,010	63.2	8,821	14.7	33,828	56.2
England ⁴	575,970	360,532	62.6	382,870	66.5	98,098	17.0	346,131	60.1

¹ Full GCSEs only have been included (Full GCSEs, double awards, accredited international certificates and their predecessor iGCSEs and AS levels).

² Pupils at the end of key stage 4 in each academic year.

³ Figures for 2009/10 to 2011/12 are based on final data, figures for 2012/13 are based on revised data.

⁴ The figures in this table do not include pupils recently arrived from overseas.

⁵ The percentage of pupils achieving each of the subjects is based on the number of eligible pupils at the end of key stage 4 and hence the denominator may include pupils who did not enter the given subject.

⁶ Science subjects include: applied science, additional applied science, science (core), additional science, environmental and land-based science, biology, chemistry, physics, AQA level 1/level 2 GCSE in science B and AQA level 1/level 2 GCSE in science A.

Source:

National Pupil Database

Home Education: Lancashire

Jake Berry: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many children are home-schooled in (a) Lancashire and (b) Rossendale and Darwen constituency. [193308]

Elizabeth Truss: The information requested is not held by the Department.

Home Education: Yorkshire and the Humber

Andrew Percy: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what estimate he has made of the number of children who are home-schooled in (a) Yorkshire and the Humber and (b) Brigg and Goole constituency. [193905]

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

Mathematics: Teachers

Lisa Nandy: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how the 60 mathematics teachers brought to the UK from Shanghai for an exchange organised by his Department were chosen. [193216]

Elizabeth Truss: We launched the maths teacher exchange between England and China in March 2014. The exchange will start in the next academic year. We are in the process of confirming arrangements, including which teachers from Shanghai will participate.

Nurseries

Lucy Powell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what estimate he has made of the number of workplace nurseries available to staff in (a) his Department and (b) his Department's executive agencies or non-departmental public bodies in (i) 2010, (ii) 2013-14 and (iii) 2014-15. [192442]

Elizabeth Truss: The Department for Education, its executive agencies and non-departmental public bodies do not provide workplace nurseries for staff.

The Department's approach to child care support focuses on providing flexibility for staff in arranging child care provision. As part of the overall benefits package, the Department provides a child care voucher scheme to help cover the cost of nursery and pre-school for children under school age and forms of out of school care for school age children. This enables staff with child care responsibilities to be more flexible as to when and where they access child care support.

Ofsted

Steve McCabe: To ask the Secretary of State for Education who is responsible for monitoring and approving the use of Government-funded credit cards by employees of Ofsted. [193569]

Mr Laws: This question is a matter for Ofsted. Her Majesty's Chief Inspector, Sir Michael Wishaw, has written to the hon. Member, and a copy of his response has been placed in the House Library.

Steve McCabe: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what records his Department keeps of use of Government-funded credit cards by employees of Ofsted. [193571]

Mr Laws: This question is a matter for Ofsted. I have asked Her Majesty's Chief Inspector, Sir Michael Wilshaw, to write to the hon. Member. A copy of his response has been placed in the House Library.

Primary Education: Computers

Andrew Percy: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what assessment he has made of the current level of teachers teaching ability whilst using tablet computers in primary schools. [193624]

Elizabeth Truss: The available evidence suggests that teachers adapt quickly to using tablets as a tool for learning.

Primary Education: Surrey

Mr Gibb: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what assessment he has made of education standards in primary schools in Surrey. [R] [193815]

Mr Laws: In Surrey local authority, 89%, 85% and 86% of primary pupils achieved level 4 or above in the reading test, writing teacher assessment and mathematics test respectively. The performance of Surrey is higher than all schools nationally where 86%, 83% and 85% achieved level 4 or above in reading, writing and mathematics respectively.

This information is published in table 11 to 16 of the “National curriculum assessments at key stage 2: 2012 to 2013”¹ statistical first release. This is available in the “Local authority and regional tables: SFR51/2013” document. This document also contains information on pupil progress.

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-curriculum-assessments-at-key-stage-2-2012-to-2013>

Pupils: Bullying

Chris Heaton-Harris: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many people with learning disabilities reported being bullied at school in each year for which figures are available. [193311]

Mr Timpson: The Department for Education does not collect information on the number of people with learning difficulties reported being bullied at school.

The Government is clear that bullying, for whatever reason, is totally unacceptable. All schools are required, by law, to have a behaviour policy with measures to address all forms of bullying including that which occurs online. Schools have the freedom to shape these measures in the context of their particular local circumstances and pupils’ needs. Schools are held closely to account by Ofsted for how well they deal with pupil behaviour and safety, which includes bullying.

We are also providing £4 million of funding over two years from spring 2013 to four organisations—Beatbullying, the Diana Award, Kidscape and the Anti-bullying Alliance (ABA) with the National Children’s Bureau (NCB)—to develop effective initiatives that prevent and tackle all forms of bullying.

As part of their funding, the ABA has recently published a guide to cyber-bullying for SEND young people, which contains advice for schools on developing effective anti-bullying practice and we link to this report in our departmental advice on bullying.

Jake Berry: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what steps his Department is taking to reduce absences from school due to bullying. [193533]

Elizabeth Truss: The Government has made tackling all forms of bullying a top priority. It is never acceptable for a child to be bullied, victimised or harmed in any way

and the Government does not want any young person to be absent from school due to the effects of bullying.

All schools are required, by law, to have a behaviour policy with measures to prevent all forms of bullying among pupils. Ofsted now holds schools clearly to account for their effectiveness. Under the current Ofsted framework, school inspectors consider pupil behaviour and safety, which includes how well schools prevent bullying, harassment and discrimination.

In the Education Act 2011, we strengthened teachers’ powers to discipline pupils for poor behaviour, including bullying. They can now issue same day detentions, confiscate banned items and search for, and if necessary delete, inappropriate images on mobile phones which might be linked to cyber-bullying.

We are also providing £4 million of funding over two years from spring 2013 to four organisations:

Beatbullying;
the Diana Award;
Kidscape; and
the National Children’s Bureau

to develop effective measures in school to prevent and tackle bullying.

Good schools create a positive ethos with clear expectations about pupil behaviour that prevent bullying from happening in the first place and deal with it quickly if it does occur.

We recognise the effect that bullying can have, that is why on 17 March 2014 we published a factsheet to help schools identify and support pupils which is available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/preventing-and-tackling-bullying>

Schools: Asbestos

Dr Huppert: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will issue to schools specific guidance on removing asbestos from premises. [193714]

Mr Laws: The guidance from the Health and Safety Executive is that, if asbestos is undamaged and unlikely to be disturbed, then it is usually safer to leave it in place and to manage it as required by the Control of Asbestos Regulations 2012. If asbestos is found to be in an unsealed, damaged or poor condition, then it should be repaired, sealed, enclosed or removed using trained personnel. The Department for Education has no plans to issue school-specific guidance.

Schools: Finance

Nic Dakin: To ask the Secretary of State for Education pursuant to the Statement of 13 March 2014 by the Minister for Schools, *Official Report*, columns 927-29, how much of the £350 million announced for the fair funding proposals will be allocated from the Exchequer in addition to that already indicated in his Department’s budget. [193407]

Mr Laws: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to the hon. Member for Cardiff West (Kevin Brennan) on 24 March 2014, *Official Report*, column 84W.

Achievements at GCSE¹ for pupils² at the end of key stage 4 for Brigg and Goole parliamentary constituency. Years: 2009/10 to 2012/13 (revised)³. Coverage: England⁴, state-funded schools (including Academies and CTCs)

		No. of eligible pupils ¹	No. achieving an grade A*-C in GCSE mathematics	% ⁵ achieving an A*-C grade in GCSE mathematics	No. achieving an grade A*-C in GCSE English	% ⁵ achieving an A*-C grade in GCSE English	No. achieving an grade A*-C in GCSE geography	% ⁵ achieving an A*-C grade in GCSE geography	No. achieving an grade A*-C in GCSE Science ⁶	% ⁵ achieving an A*-C grade in GCSE Science ⁶
2012/13	Brigg and Goole	1,055	773	73.3	753	71.4	250	23.7	642	60.9
	Yorkshire and the Humber	58,260	40,659	69.8	39,017	67.0	11,207	19.2	31,650	54.3
	England ⁴	569,118	406,585	71.4	390,004	68.5	122,252	21.5	330,569	58.1
2011/12	Brigg and Goole	1,051	787	74.9	718	68.3	152	14.5	622	59.2
	Yorkshire and the Humber	58,520	39,403	67.3	38,063	65.0	9,202	15.7	31,968	54.6
	England ⁴	559,076	388,487	69.5	375,015	67.1	99,713	17.8	330,422	59.1
2010/11	Brigg and Goole	1,079	680	63.0	757	70.2	161	14.9	618	57.3
	Yorkshire and the Humber	59,052	36,063	61.1	38,912	65.9	9,047	15.3	31,906	54.0
	England ⁴	564,863	368,922	65.3	392,153	69.4	96,364	17.1	333,682	59.1
2009/10	Brigg and Goole	1,068	686	64.2	705	66.0	121	11.3	644	60.3
	Yorkshire and the Humber	60,181	35,499	59.0	38,010	63.2	8,821	14.7	33,828	56.2
	England ⁴	575,970	360,532	62.6	382,870	66.5	98,098	17.0	346,131	60.1

¹ Full GCSEs only have been included (Full GCSEs, double awards, accredited international certificates and their predecessor iGCSEs and AS levels).

² Pupils at the end of key stage 4 in each academic year.

³ Figures for 2009/10 to 2011/12 are based on final data, figures for 2012/2013 are based on revised data.

⁴ The figures in this table do not include pupils recently arrived from overseas.

⁵ The percentage of pupils achieving each of the subjects is based on the number of eligible pupils at the end of key stage 4 and hence the denominator may include pupils who did not enter the given subject.

⁶ Science subjects include: applied science, additional applied science, science (core), additional science, environmental and land-based science, biology, chemistry, physics, AQA level 1/level 2 GCSE in science B and AQA level 1/level 2 GCSE in science A.

Source:

National Pupil Database

Tom Blenkinsop: To ask the Secretary of State for Education pursuant to the statement of 13 March 2014, *Official Report*, columns 427-29, on school funding, what the (a) total and (b) per-pupil funding for each local authority area will be for 2015-16. [193989]

Mr Laws: I announced on 13 March that in 2015-16, in addition to funding all local authorities at the same cash level per pupil as in 2014-15, we will provide a £350 million boost to the least fairly funded local authorities in the country. We have published a consultation document online, indicating the possible effects of this funding boost on some local authorities:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/fairer-schools-funding-2015-to-2016>

We will be able to announce final decisions on per pupil funding for each local authority in 2015-16 after we have considered responses to this consultation, which closes on 30 April. We will be then able to announce the total funding for each local authority in 2015-16 once final pupil numbers are confirmed.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE

All Party Groups

Chris Ruane: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what his Department's policy is on allowing officials to appear before all-party parliamentary groups. [193557]

Mr Lidington: Foreign and Commonwealth Office officials regularly meet with parliamentarians, including All Party Groups. They provide briefings to groups both in writing and in person, and our embassies overseas assist with visits whenever parliamentarians are travelling on official business.

Bahrain

Ian Lucas: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent reports he has received on the security situation in Bahrain. [193551]

Hugh Robertson: We stay in close contact with the Government of Bahrain on the security situation, most recently when the Secretary of State for the Home Department, my right hon. Friend the Member for

Maidenhead (Mrs May), met the Bahraini Interior Minister on 24 March. The UK has expressed concern over the recent IED attacks in Bahrain and condemns all acts of violence.

Mr Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent reports his Department has received on breaches of medical neutrality and the supply of medical care for people injured by security forces in Bahrain; and if he will make a statement. [193845]

Hugh Robertson: We expect the Government of Bahrain to meet all its human rights obligations and ensure all patients have access to all the medical care they require.

Mr Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent reports he has received on the death in custody of Jaffar al Durazi in Bahrain; and if he will make a statement. [193846]

Hugh Robertson: Following the death of Jaffar Mohamed Al Derazi, on 27 February, the Bahrain Public Prosecution Office announced that he died of natural causes, as a result of a sickle cell disease. We understand the Ministry of Interior's ombudsman is launching his own investigation and I await the findings.

Mr Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent assessment he has made of progress by the Government of Bahrain towards ending torture and abuse of detainees since 2011; and if he will make a statement. [193847]

Hugh Robertson: We welcome the steps the Government has taken to improve accountability, including through the establishment of the Office of the Police Ombudsman and an independent Prisoners' and Detainees' Commission. However, we remain concerned by continuing allegations of mistreatment and torture and encourage the Bahraini Government to carry out thorough and transparent investigations into these allegations.

Mr Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent reports he has received on the level of medical support given to victims of torture in Bahrain; and if he will make a statement. [193848]

Hugh Robertson: We expect the Government of Bahrain to meet all of its human rights obligations and ensure all defendants have access to all the medical care they require.

Mr Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent reports he has received of confessions obtained through torture being used as evidence in terrorism cases in Bahrain; and if he will make a statement. [193849]

Hugh Robertson: The British Government consistently and unreservedly condemns torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. We have not

received any specific evidence of the use of torture to extract confessions for terrorism cases. We continue to work with the Bahraini authorities to share best practice on torture prevention measures and address allegations of mistreatment.

Mr Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what reports he has received on the work and methods of the Special Investigation Unit in Bahrain; and if he will make a statement. [193850]

Hugh Robertson: We welcome the establishment of the Special Investigations Unit to determine the accountability of those who have committed unlawful or negligent acts, but we have concerns about the low conviction rates. We encourage the Special Investigations Unit to continue to conduct thorough and transparent investigations into all incidents.

Mr Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assistance his Department has provided to (a) the Office of the Police Ombudsman and (b) the Special Investigation Unit in Bahrain since May 2010; and if he will make a statement. [193851]

Hugh Robertson: In 2013, we funded Northern Ireland Cooperation Overseas (NICO) work with the Office of the Police Ombudsman on several priority areas. This included sharing UK best practice on complaints procedures, investigation reports and the role of prison inspection. We have built on this work, and since early 2014 we have been supporting NICO to deliver a 15 month package of support to help build the capacity of the Ombudsman's Office, increase accountability and public confidence.

Mr Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent reports he has received of reprisals against individuals who raise complaints with the Office of the Police Ombudsman in Bahrain; and if he will make a statement. [193852]

Hugh Robertson: We have not received any reports of reprisals against individuals who raise complaints with the Office of the Police Ombudsman.

China

Jim Shannon: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with his Chinese counterpart on ending the illegal wildlife trade. [193754]

Mr Swire: The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, my right hon. Friend the Member for Richmond (Yorks) (Mr Hague), raised the issue of the illegal wildlife trade during his Strategic Dialogue with Chinese State Councillor Yang Jiechi at the end of February. The Secretary of State expressed his thanks for the participation of the Chinese delegation in the London Conference on the Illegal Wildlife Trade earlier that month, and encouraged China to support the follow-up conference to be held in Botswana in 2015.

Egypt

Ms Abbott: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will raise with his Egyptian counterpart the jailing of journalists for legitimate news reporting activities and the case of Mr Hossam Meneai; and if he will make representations calling for Mr Meneai's release. [193534]

Hugh Robertson: The UK is very concerned by the deterioration in freedom of expression in Egypt, and the arrest and charging of several journalists, including Mr Meneai who was released in February. On 6 February, the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, my right hon. Friend the Member for Richmond (Yorks) (Mr Hague), made clear the UK's concerns about the closure of political space and the restrictions on freedom of expression in Egypt, including the arrests of human rights activists and journalists. We are monitoring the journalists' cases closely and will continue to urge the Egyptian Government to demonstrate it is committed to respecting fundamental human rights, including the right of journalists to operate without fear of prosecution.

Ms Abbott: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will take diplomatic steps to respond to reports of violations of human rights and judicial processes in the simultaneous sentencing to death of 529 people in Egypt; and if he will make a statement. [193616]

Hugh Robertson: The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, my right hon. Friend the Member for Richmond (Yorks) (Mr Hague), made a statement on 24 March saying he was 'deeply concerned' by the reports that 528 individuals were sentenced to death by a court in Al Minya, Egypt. He urged the Egyptian authorities to ensure full respect for defendants' rights, and expressed hope that they would review this unacceptable sentence.

Human Trafficking

Jake Berry: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what role the UK's embassies and consulates play in preventing human trafficking in source countries. [193547]

Mr Swire: Britain's diplomatic missions implement a Human Trafficking Strategy overseas, on behalf of her Majesty's Government. They work with foreign governments in source and transit countries to build their capacity to disrupt and tackle human trafficking. They support local investigators to increase prosecutions for human trafficking offences and conduct awareness raising projects. They contribute to the UK's and international efforts to combat trafficking by ensuring that UK interests are effectively represented bilaterally and in multilateral fora including the EU and the UN. Our missions also address the root causes of human trafficking through the Department for International Development's work in the world's poorest countries.

Middle East

Dr Offord: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment his Department has made of the implications on regional security of the announcement by the Israeli Defence Force of the discovery of a tunnel extending 700 metres into Israel from Gaza. [193772]

Hugh Robertson: We have not made an assessment of this issue.

Dr Offord: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent assessment his Department has made of Iran's financial and material support for terrorist groups in the Middle East. [193773]

Hugh Robertson: We continue to have serious concerns about Iran's support for groups such as the military wings of Hamas and Hezbollah, armed groups in Iraq, and across the region. There is a significant body of international sanctions which targets such activity, including UN prohibitions on the export of weapons by Iran, that the UK supports. The UK believes that this Iranian activity has a serious destabilising effect on regional security and calls on Iran to respect its international obligations.

Mozambique

Kerry McCarthy: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent discussions he has had with the Government of Mozambique on efforts to end violence against women; and what representations he has made on that country's draft criminal code which may allow those accused of sexual violence to avoid prosecution if they marry the victim. [193990]

Mark Simmonds: The UK is a strong supporter of the convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women (CEDAW) and is strongly committed to advancing women's rights which Mozambique ratified in 1997. Officials at our high commission in Maputo regularly engage with the Government of Mozambique on the issue of women's rights, including in the context of CEDAW, which we consider to be an essential tool to progress gender equality domestically and internationally.

We have a number of concerns about the provisions set out in the draft Mozambican Penal Code Review Bill and have raised these at the highest level in the Mozambican Parliament. We understand that draft article 223 (which could have allowed those accused of sexual violence to avoid prosecution if they marry the victims) will not now be included in the legislation proposed to Parliament.

Palestinians

Mr Burrowes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent representations he has made to the Palestinian Authority about reports that cultural and sporting events in the Palestinian Territories are named after Palestinian terrorists. [193767]

Hugh Robertson: I refer my hon. Friend to my answer of 25 March 2014, *Official Report*, columns 189-90W.

Robert Halfon: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the Palestinian Authority on the publication on Fatah's Facebook page of maps depicting geographic Israel replaced by Palestine. [193872]

Hugh Robertson: Our consulate-general to Jerusalem raised the issue of incitement on Fatah's Facebook page with the Palestinian Authority Prime Minister Rami Hamdallah on 6 March 2014.

Robert Halfon: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the Palestinian Authority on recent comments by the senior Fatah official Ahmed Assaf on Dalal Mughrabi. [193873]

Hugh Robertson: We have not raised this issue with the Palestinian Authority.

Qatar

John Mann: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps the Government is taking to ensure that UK companies involved with construction around the Qatari World Cup 2022 provide good conditions of work. [193282]

Hugh Robertson: The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, my right hon. Friend the Member for Richmond (Yorks) (Mr Hague), and Business Secretary launched the UK's Action Plan on business and human rights in September 2013. It sends a clear message to British companies of our expectation about business behaviour, including those operating overseas. We welcomed Qatar's recently launched Workers Charter, developed with the International Labour Organisation, which seeks to protect the rights of migrant employees. We expect all businesses to comply with the Charter.

Russia

Paul Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs in which G8 sub-groups Russia has been a participant in the last 10 years; and what assessment he has made of the effect on the work of such sub-groups arising from the suspension of Russia from the G8. [193291]

Mr Lidington: There have been numerous G8 working groups over the past 10 years. Russia has participated in all these working groups as a member of the G8.

No decision has yet been taken on how to proceed with these working groups following suspension of the G8.

South Korea

Kerry McCarthy: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the South Korean government on monitoring and controlling the South Korean distant water fishing fleet following the formal warning issued to South Korea by the EU about frequent illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing violations in west Africa. [193472]

George Eustice: I have been asked to reply on behalf of the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.

In accordance with the terms of the illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) regulation, responsibility for engaging with third countries that have been identified as not co-operating in the fight against IUU fishing rests solely with the European Commission. While that engagement process is under way, it would not be appropriate for individual member states to make direct approaches to identified countries.

South Sudan

Mr Bellingham: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what diplomatic efforts his Department is making to support the Intergovernmental Authority on Development in bringing both sides of the South Sudanese conflict to the negotiating table and securing a deal for political reform. [193313]

Mark Simmonds: The UK is co-ordinating closely with the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) on the South Sudan peace process, including through the UK Special Envoy to the Peace Talks who has been based in Addis Ababa since January. We have committed \$1 million to the IGAD mediation efforts, and have provided technical advice and personnel to the Monitoring Verification Mechanism established by IGAD to monitor the cessation of hostilities.

Stephen Mosley: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what reports he has received on the role and influence of South Sudan's neighbouring countries in the conflict in South Sudan. [193645]

Mark Simmonds: South Sudan's neighbouring countries have played an important role in calling for parties to show leadership in reaching a political settlement, and to respect the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement. Our Special Envoy to South Sudan recently visited Ethiopia, Kenya, Sudan and Uganda to encourage them to continue to push for peace in South Sudan. At the same time, since the outbreak of conflict, we have been clear to all of South Sudan's neighbours that their actions should not contribute in any way to the escalation of violence.

Spain

Mr Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what reports he has received on the plans of the Spanish Government to grant Spanish citizenship to the descendants of Sephardic Jews who were expelled from Spain in the 15th century; whether he has made representations to the Spanish Government on that matter; and if he will seek assurances about the capability and integrity of the proposed system for establishing eligibility for such grants of citizenship. [193598]

Mr Lidington: I have not received any reports on the Spanish Government's plans to grant citizenship to the descendants of Sephardic Jews who were expelled from Spain in the 15th and 16th centuries, beyond what has been reported in the media. Citizenship policy is a member state competence.

St Petersburg International Economic Forum

Mr Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether the Government plans to send representatives to the St Petersburg International Economic Forum; and if he will make a statement. [193696]

Mr Lidington: We continue to monitor events closely in Ukraine, including Crimea, and are considering carefully any HMG representation at the St Petersburg International Economic Forum.

Ukraine

Caroline Lucas: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether the commitment in the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement signed by the EU and the interim Ukraine administration on 21 March 2014 to a political dialogue designed to promote gradual convergence on foreign and security matters with the aim of Ukraine's ever-deeper involvement in the European security area reflects an EU policy objective of Ukraine eventually joining NATO; and if he will make a statement. [193782]

Mr Lidington: While NATO and the EU play complementary and mutually reinforcing roles in supporting international peace and security, they are separate organisations. There is no connection between the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement and NATO membership.

Ukraine, has a long standing relationship with NATO and is a valued contributor to a number of NATO operations. The UK Government continues to support defence reform in Ukraine and hopes that its Government will continue to work with NATO in the future.

COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Affordable Housing: Lancashire

Jake Berry: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government how many affordable homes have been (a) started and (b) completed in (a) Rossendale and (b) Darwen since May 2010. [193548]

Kris Hopkins: The Homes and Communities Agency publishes information every six months about the number of affordable housing starts on site and completions for programmes it funds, broken down by local authority. This information can be found here:

<http://www.homesandcommunities.co.uk/housing-statistics>

These statistics do not include information on any affordable housing that has not been reported to the Homes and Communities Agency, such as some affordable housing funded solely through developer contributions.

Over 170,000 new affordable homes have been delivered in England since April 2010 (to the end of September 2013). Our Affordable Homes Programme will lever in £19.5 billion of public and private investment over the current spending review period. Over 2015-18, we will be investing a further £23 billion in public and private funding for affordable housing.

Betting Shops

Clive Efford: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government if he will bring forward legislative proposals to give local authorities powers to restrict the number of betting shops opening in their areas; and if he will make a statement. [193727]

Nick Boles: I refer the hon. Member to my answer of 4 December 2013, *Official Report*, columns 741-42W, which outlines the broad advice we give to councils who want to use article 4 powers to tackle localised problems in relation to betting shops.

The Budget announced the Government's intention of creating a wider 'retail' use class, excluding betting shops and payday loan shops.

The Department for Culture, Media and Sport is undertaking a broader review of gambling policy.

Carbon Monoxide: Alarms

Mr Gregory Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government if he will review the effectiveness of the regulations covering the installation of carbon monoxide detectors in homes. [193742]

Stephen Williams: In England, building regulations provide that a carbon monoxide alarm should be installed where a new solid fuel burning appliance is installed. My Department keeps these regulations under constant review through its work with its key partners in industry and its links with the cross Government group on carbon monoxide.

We are also engaged in a review into property conditions in the private rented sector, this will carefully consider whether landlords of privately rented accommodation should be required to install carbon monoxide alarms in their properties.

Fire Services: Floods

Mr Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government if he will bring forward proposals to impose on fire and rescue services a statutory duty to respond to flooding. [194057]

Brandon Lewis: I refer the hon. Member to my answer of 16 January 2014, *Official Report*, column 610-11W.

Fire Services: Northamptonshire

Andy Sawford: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government how many people were employed at Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue in each of the last five years. [192230]

Brandon Lewis: To assist the hon. Member, the following table shows staffing strength figures across the last 10 years, alongside the number of incidents attended.

As of 31 March	Wholetime firefighter	Staffing strength			Fire incidents
		Retained duty system firefighters	Fire Control	Non- uniformed	
2003-04	311	195	26	6	6,640
2004-05	298	211	23	65	4,743
2005-06	288	192	20	86	4,694
2006-07	287	222	19	83	4,465
2007-08	276	196	17	80	3,808
2008-09	276	243	23	82	3,465
2009-10	269	232	20	93	3,165
2010-11	298	269	24	91	2,746
2011-12	284	191	21	53	2,714
2012-13	279	207	21	63	1,945

Note:

Full-time equivalents except for Retained Duty System which are 24 hour units of cover.

Ground Rent

Andrew Percy: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government how many rentcharge payers his Department has arranged to receive rentcharge redemption in (a) England, (b) Yorkshire and Humber and (c) Brigg and Goole constituency. [192396]

Kris Hopkins [holding answer 20 March 2014]: This information is not centrally held in the form requested.

Ground Rent: Greater Manchester

Andrew Gwynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government (1) what estimate he has made of the number of freehold properties in Greater Manchester subject to chief rents; and if he will make a statement; [192151]

(2) how many Rentcharge payers his Department has arranged to receive Rentcharge redemption in (a) England, (b) the North West and (c) Greater Manchester in each of the last five years. [192166]

Kris Hopkins: This information is not centrally held in the form requested.

Housing: Construction

Daniel Kawczynski: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government what assessment he has made of the level of control that local planning authorities are able to exert in ensuring that developers deliver housing on sites identified as part of an authority's five-year supply. [185630]

Nick Boles: It is for local planning authorities to assess the likely delivery of sites that make up their five year supply. They should update their five year supply annually, and in doing so replace sites that are no longer likely to deliver housing in the five year period with ones that are.

This Government has introduced a wide ranging package to support stalled house building. These include the Get Britain Building investment fund aiming to unlock new homes on stalled sites, and a £474 million

investment fund in local infrastructure for stalled locally-supported, large scale housing sites and commercial development. Our investments to date are helping to bring forward new homes, boosting the construction industry and stimulating economic growth.

The Growth and Infrastructure Act enables developers with any Section 106 agreement, irrespective of the date of signature, to apply for a review of the affordable housing component to ensure development is not being made unviable by unrealistic requirements. Such unrealistic Section 106 agreements result in no development, no regeneration and no community benefits: a sensible review can result in more housing and more affordable housing. Since September 2013, we have let lapse the temporary measure (introduced by the last Administration) which allowed developers to roll forward their planning permissions; this ending of the measure will increase the incentive for developers to start on site before permission expires. We are also now seeking to tackle the inappropriate use of planning conditions and speed up the process of gaining non-planning consents.

In addition, we have a comprehensive programme to sell surplus and redundant public sector land and property, freeing up taxpayers' money and providing land for new homes.

Local Government Finance: Warrington

Helen Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government how much was received by Warrington Borough Council in council tax support funding in each year that such support has been available; and what estimate he has made of the amount that council will receive for 2015-16. [187788]

Brandon Lewis [holding answer 24 February 2014]: The Government provided £3.3 billion to local authorities for localised council tax support in 2013-14 and intends to maintain this level of funding in cash terms in 2014-15 and 2015-16. There is no separately identifiable amount for this support at a local authority level within retained business rates or revenue support grant. Warrington borough council also received £270,363 in transition grant in 2013-14.

Multiple Occupation

Mr Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government (1) how many multiple occupancy properties there were in the UK in each of the last 10 years; [193639]

(2) if he will make an assessment of the fire safety of houses converted into multiple occupancy properties; [193642]

(3) what estimate he has made of how many multiple occupancy properties do not have the correct licence; [193641]

(4) if he will make an assessment of potential effect on a neighbourhood of houses being converted into multiple occupancy properties; [193640]

(5) what recent representation he has received on multiple occupancy properties. [193638]

Kris Hopkins: The Department collects data based on an evolving annual question to local authorities

"of how many Houses of Multiple Occupancy are there in your authority"

to

"estimate how many Houses of Multiple Occupancy are in your authority".

The estimated total number of houses of multiple occupancy in England over the last 10 years are:

	<i>Estimated number</i>
2003-04	381,361
2004-05	392,230
2005-06	384,622
2006-07	390,315
2007-08	373,002
2008-09	411,964
2009-10	399,560
2010-11	426,834
2011-12	429,065
2012-13	462,693

Sources:

1. 2003-04 to 2010-11: Housing Strategy Statistical Appendix.
2. 2011-12 to 2012-13: Local Authority Housing Statistics.

As of 2012-13, 59,441 houses in multiple occupancy were estimated to be mandatory licensable dwellings as defined in section 55(2) (a) of the Housing Act 2004 and Statutory Instrument 371/2006. The Department has not made any estimate of the number that do not have the correct licence.

There is a statutory duty on local authorities to licence larger higher risk houses of multiple occupation of three or more storeys housing five or more unrelated persons. The mandatory houses of multiple occupation licensing regime addresses poor management practices and aims to secure a reduction in death and injury from fire and other health and safety hazards, and ensures adequate provision of amenities.

In addition to licensing powers, local authorities are responsible for the Housing Health and Safety Rating System, which provides a risk based evaluation tool for local authorities to identify and protect against potential risks and hazards to health and safety from any deficiencies identified in dwellings. The Housing Act 2004 imposes a duty on local authorities, in partnership with their local Fire Rescue Authority, to take enforcement action against serious (Category 1) hazards. Furthermore, the Building Regulations (Part b) require smoke detection in all new and converted properties.

Local authorities that are concerned about the number of houses of multiple occupation in their area may issue an Article 4 Direction under the Town and Country Planning Act (General Permitted Development) Order 1995. The effect of issuing an Article 4 Direction is that planning permission must be sought before converting a single use dwelling into a house of multiple occupation.

The Department does not make any central assessment of the fire safety of houses converted into houses of multiple occupation, their potential effect on local neighbourhoods or their licensing status. These are matters for local authorities to consider when exercising their powers and duties.

We have not received any recent representations from organisations concerning houses in multiple occupation. However, we have begun a review on conditions in the private rented sector. A discussion paper closed on 28 March 2014 and has elicited responses from a wide

range of organisations. These responses will be used to inform the next stage of the review.

New Towns

Roberta Blackman-Woods: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government what principles and criteria new developments will be required to meet in areas designated as garden cities. [193457]

Kris Hopkins: We will be publishing a prospectus on locally-led garden cities in due course.

Roberta Blackman-Woods: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government which organisation and individuals (a) Ministers and (b) officials in his Department have met to discuss the recently announced garden city prospectus; and how many such meetings have been held with each organisation or individual. [193459]

Kris Hopkins: Ministers and officials routinely meet a wide range of individuals and organisations on issues relating to housing and planning, including supporting locally-led large scale development. Details of Ministers' meetings with external organisations are available on my Department's website.

New Towns: Ebbsfleet

Roberta Blackman-Woods: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government (1) what proportion of the Government's proposed Ebbsfleet development will be funded by (a) the private sector and (b) public-sector resources; [193426]

(2) what plans his Department has for how the new development corporation at Ebbsfleet will work with existing local authorities; [193435]

(3) when he plans to publish detailed proposals for the new development corporation announced for Ebbsfleet; and if he will make a statement; [193429]

(4) how the Government's proposed Ebbsfleet development will be funded; [193428]

(5) what consultations the Government has undertaken in drawing up plans for its proposed development at Ebbsfleet; [193425]

(6) what infrastructure his Department has planned and what resources it has allocated in relation to the development of housing at Ebbsfleet. [193424]

Kris Hopkins: At this year's Budget, we announced that we would consult on the creation of an Urban Development Corporation to deliver a new Garden City at Ebbsfleet. Discussions with the local authorities and other local partners are already under way, and we will consult formally on the draft order in due course.

The Government will fund the creation and administration of the Corporation. We will consult with local partners on its precise scope and remit.

The Budget also announced that up to £200 million funding for infrastructure will be available to support the work. Once established we expect the Corporation to identify funding priorities. Any public funding will be subject to proper value for money considerations.

Non-domestic Rates

Andy Sawford: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government when he plans to publish guidance on how local authorities can keep business rates linked to green energy and carbon neutral or passive developments; and what proportion of business rates he expects local authorities to retain.

[193464]

Brandon Lewis: The business rates retention scheme ensures that authorities keep 50% of business rates income from all properties, including green energy and carbon neutral or passive developments, in their local areas. In addition, the Government has already made regulations to ensure that business rates from new renewable energy projects will be retained in full by the relevant local authorities. The regulations can be found at the following address:

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2013/108/contents/made>

Parking

Stella Creasy: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government if he will make an assessment of the potential effects of the provisions of the Consumer Rights Bill on the provision and management by local authorities of controlled parking zones.

[193160]

Jenny Willott: I have been asked to reply on behalf of the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills.

Unless otherwise excluded, the provisions of Part 1 Chapter 4 (the Services Chapter) of the Consumer Rights Bill will apply to contracts where a trader provides a service to a consumer.

A motorist who does not comply with the waiting restrictions, or permitted parking conditions if available, in a controlled parking zone will be contravening the applicable traffic regulation order. This would not give rise to a contractual claim under the Services Chapter of the Consumer Rights Bill.

Parking services may be contractually provided by a trader to a consumer, for example private companies offering parking services near major airports are very likely to be held to be providing them under a contract, and where that is the case the Services Chapter of the Bill would apply.

Wind Power

Julie Elliott: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government how many onshore wind farm applications for what wind capacity were received by the Secretary of State in each month in (a) 2009, (b) 2010, (c) 2011, (d) 2012 and (e) 2013; and how many of those applications of what capacity had been recommended for consent by the Planning Inspectorate.

[193073]

Kris Hopkins [*holding answer 25 March 2014*]: I can confirm that 47 onshore wind farm appeals were recovered by the Secretary of State between 2009 and 2013.

	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
January	1	—	1	—	4
February	—	—	—	1	1
March	2	1	2	—	2
April	—	—	—	1	1
May	—	—	1	—	1
June	—	1	1	1	1
July	—	—	1	—	2
August	—	—	—	3	—
September	—	1	1	1	1
October	—	1	—	5	3
November	—	1	1	—	1
December	—	—	—	2	—

Of these recovered appeals since 2009, I would note that 21 are still in progress; 14 were rejected; eight were allowed as per the Inspector's suggestion. Five were rejected by Ministers taking a different opinion to the inspectors' suggestions; and four were withdrawn.

All cases pre-date the final published planning practice guidance issued this year by my Department.

The Department does not hold information on the energy capacity of onshore wind farms subject to a planning appeal.

DEFENCE

All Party Groups

Chris Ruane: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what his Department's policy is on allowing officials to appear before all-party parliamentary groups.

[193384]

Anna Soubry: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by the Minister for the Cabinet Office and Paymaster General, my right hon. Friend the Member for Horsham (Mr Maude), on 26 March 2014, *Official Report*, column 300W.

Armed Forces: Complaints

Mrs Moon: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many service complaints submissions of each type were received by the Service Complaints Wing in each year since 2010; how many such complaints were heard at (a) Level 1, (b) Level 2 and (c) Army Board level; what time was taken for each complaint to be completed at each level; and if he will make a statement.

[192874]

Anna Soubry: The Secretary of State for Defence, my right hon. Friend the Member for Runnymede and Weybridge (Mr Hammond), announced changes to the Service Complaints System on 13 March 2014, *Official Report*, column 35WS, which should lead to higher proportion of complaints being decided more quickly.

The following tables show since 2010 the number of service complaints received by the Service Complaints Wing in each year, the number of informal complaints and service complaints at Level 1, Level 2 and Army Board level resolved in each year, and the average time it has taken in days for complaints to be resolved in each year.

Informal complaints have been included in these statistics and this is the first stage of a complaint. If it cannot be resolved, or an individual does not want to try to resolve their complaint informally, they are entitled to submit a service complaint.

<i>Cases received from 2010</i>					
<i>Type of Complaint</i>	<i>2010</i>	<i>2011</i>	<i>2012</i>	<i>2013</i>	<i>2014¹</i>
Service Complaints ²	390	—	—	—	—
Informal	—	470	620	870	210
Referred to Level 1 ³	—	150	700	360	150
Referred to Level 2	—	20	50	130	20
Referred to Level 3	—	20	140	20	10
<i>Cases Resolved since 2010</i>					
<i>Type of Complaint</i>	<i>2010</i>	<i>2011</i>	<i>2012</i>	<i>2013</i>	<i>2014¹</i>
Redress of Complaint ⁴	30	10	*	10	0
Service Complaints	200	140	40	120	10
Informal	—	60	150	270	50
Level 1	—	90	160	360	140
Level 2	—	*	10	40	10
Level 3	—	0	*	40	10
<i>Average Time in Days to Resolve Complaints since 2010</i>					
<i>Level of Complaint</i>	<i>2010</i>	<i>2011</i>	<i>2012</i>	<i>2013</i>	<i>2014¹</i>
Informal	—	110	160	210	100
Level 1	—	120	250	310	240
Level 2	—	190	310	390	440
Level 3	—	0	480	630	720

¹ Until 20 March 2014.

² Until 1 January 2008, complaints were managed under single service policies and recorded on JPA as redress of complaints. A tri-Service policy was introduced and from 1 January 2008, JPA was amended to capture service complaints. The current complaints process was revised on 7 June 2010 and introduced the levels. It was not possible to record the entire process i.e. Levels 1, 2 and 3 on JPA until 1 January 2011. Therefore, it has not been possible to provide the full breakdown of information for 2010.

³ Figures shown in this answer for service complaints received at Level 1 may differ from the number published in the Service Complaints Commissioner's Annual Reports as the figures in this answer include any informal complaints which were subsequently raised to Level 1.

⁴ The previous service complaints and redress of complaints processes did not include the levels currently used, therefore it has not been possible to provide this breakdown for those complaints which were raised and/or resolved in 2010.

In accordance with the Data Protection Act and our obligations in relation to the protection of confidentiality when handling personal data, the figures provided have been rounded to the nearest 10, where '*' denotes a number less than, or equal to five. When rounding up number to the nearest 10, numbers ending in '5' have been rounded to the nearest multiple of 20 to prevent systematic bias.

Mrs Moon: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many service complaints were taken to an employment tribunal in each year since 2008; how

many such cases were found against his Department; how much compensation was paid as a result of such findings in each such year; and if he will make a statement. [192877]

Anna Soubry: Service complainants must have made a valid Service complaint about the same matter, and have not withdrawn it, for the employment tribunal (ET) to be able to consider their complaint. The following table sets out details of ET claims lodged by Service personnel on this basis in each calendar year from 2008.

<i>Calendar year</i>	<i>Number of ET claims lodged in year</i>	<i>ET claims found against the MOD</i>	<i>Total ET award paid (£)</i>
2008	40	2	16,000
2009	23	1	1—
2010	32	1	6,000
2011	25	1	2—
2012	23	2	44,000
2013	27	0	—

¹ Withheld.

² To be decided.

Notes:

1. More than one ET claim may be brought by the same individual.
2. The ET judgment and any award may have been made in a different year to the year the ET claim(s) were lodged or the year the associated Service complaint(s) were submitted.
3. Financial data has been withheld in one case where the ET judgment left the amount of the award to be agreed between the parties rather than determined by the ET. The agreed sum is confidential.

Mrs Moon: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many service complaints at each level are still open and unresolved since (a) 2010, (b) 2011 and (c) 2012; and if he will make a statement. [193107]

Anna Soubry: The information requested is shown in the following table.

	<i>From 2010</i>	<i>From 2011</i>	<i>From 2012</i>	<i>Total</i>
Level 1	6	43	141	190
Level 2	7	36	71	114
Level 3	13	73	74	165
Total	31	152	286	469

The Ministry of Defence recognises that delays in the Service complaints process can cause unnecessary anxiety to those involved. In addition to the longer-term changes to the role of the Service Complaints Commissioner announced by the Secretary of State for Defence, my right hon. Friend the Member for Runnymede and Weybridge (Mr Hammond) on 13 March 2014, *Official Report*, columns 35-36WS, all three Services are working hard to reduce the backlog, and to identify how processes can be improved to reduce the time it takes to address Service complaints.

Mrs Moon: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many complaints have been made in each year of operation of the Service Complaints Commission at each level of representation from (a) women and (b) minority ethnic personnel in each branch of the armed forces; and if he will make a statement. [193108]

Anna Soubry: Under the current Service complaints systems, complaints can be considered at three levels, but this distinction does not apply to how a complaint is made.

Data on Service complaints by gender was not recorded until 2012, following a recommendation by the Service Complaints Commissioner in her 2011 annual report. The number of complaints received by each branch of the Services from women in 2012 was as follows:

Naval Service: 41

Army: 68

RAF: 41.

Data on the number of complaints received by the Services from minority ethnic personnel has not previously been collected, but is being assembled for the 2013 Annual Report which is due to be published shortly.

Armed Forces: Disciplinary Proceedings

Mrs Moon: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many (a) serving and (b) ex-serving members of each branch of the armed forces were out of time to make an official complaint following their being wrongly disciplined following receipt of a police caution; and if he will make a statement. [191501]

Anna Soubry: A service complaint must normally relate to an event which happened in the previous three months. As it is no longer the policy to consider administrative action against service personnel who are in receipt of a police caution, all personnel who have been subject to such action in the past would now be out of time. However, the regulations allow for a complaint to be allowed after the end of the three-month period if it is considered just and equitable to do so.

Mrs Moon: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what steps he has taken to reverse sanctions still having an effect after November 2008 on serving members of each of the armed forces who were disciplined following receipt of a police caution; how many serving members of the armed forces were so involved; and if he will make a statement [191504]

Anna Soubry: No steps have been taken to reverse sanctions still having an effect after November 2008. Information on the number of serving personnel affected could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mrs Moon: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether a Defence Instruction Notice has been circulated detailing the impact of a summary hearing on the Police National Computer; and if he will make a statement. [193113]

Anna Soubry: A Defence Instruction Notice on this subject has not been issued. I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 5 March 2014, *Official Report*, column 843W, which gave details of the booklet "Your rights if you are accused of an offence under the Service justice system" provided to everyone who is accused of a service offence.

Armed Forces: Offenders

Mrs Moon: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what progress his Department has made on addressing

its wrongful application of the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (Exceptions) Order 1975 to the cases of 1,400 individuals; and if he will make a statement. [192923]

Anna Soubry: The Ministry of Defence is aware of this issue and is exploring a range of potential options.

Armed Forces: Pensions

Dan Jarvis: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what pension cost saving has been made from the early termination of employment of armed forces personnel; [193625]

(2) what advice on pensions has been given to armed forces personnel who are made redundant. [193626]

Mr Dunne: The final costs and savings from the armed forces redundancy programme will depend on a number of factors such as the level of natural departures, salary, rank and length of service of the personnel selected. We have made no estimate of the pension cost savings accruing specifically from the redundancy programme, since this is part of broader workforce reductions. We estimate, however, that by 2021-22 we will have achieved cumulative savings of some £23 billion as a result of reductions in service and civilian personnel and greater efficiency in the conduct of non-front line activities.

Service personnel are provided with clear and accessible information with which to understand their entitlements under the armed forces redundancy and pension schemes, including through the provision of booklets and more detailed information in Joint Service Publications. However, the Ministry of Defence does not provide financial or legal advice, and neither can we take responsibility for individual financial decisions. Personnel who require such advice are directed by their Unit HR staffs to a list of Services Insurance and Investment Advisory Panel (SIAP) approved independent financial advisers. However, personnel are, of course, free to use the services of any independent financial adviser.

Army: Disciplinary Proceedings

Mrs Moon: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will place in the Library any legal advice his Department has received on the legality of the AGAI 67 internal sanctions regime; and if he will make a statement. [193648]

Anna Soubry: Legal advice is not disclosed, as it is subject to legal professional privilege.

Defence Animal Centre

Mr Kevan Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many staff were employed at the Defence Animal Centre at Melton Mowbray in each year since 2010. [193060]

Anna Soubry: The number of staff employed at the Defence Animal Centre in each year since 2010 is shown in the following table:

	<i>Staff Numbers</i>
2010-11	235
2011-12	230
2012-13	225
2013-14	240

The data has been rounded to the nearest five to limit disclosure and ensure confidentiality. The 2013-14 figures reflect a temporary surge in personnel who were recruited on fixed-term contracts and staff numbers are therefore expected to reduce in line with the drawdown of operations in Afghanistan.

Mr Kevan Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many animals of what species are currently held in the Defence Animal Centre in Melton Mowbray. [193061]

Anna Soubry: As at March 2014 there were around 250 dogs and around 130 horses being held in the Defence Animal Centre.

The horses will go on to perform ceremonial duties with either the Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment or the King's Troop Royal Horse Artillery.

The dogs will go on to perform a variety of roles including protection dogs, patrol dogs, explosions and drug detection dogs, and search dogs.

Dmitry Firtash

Helen Goodman: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will publish all contacts between his Department and Mr Dmitry Firtash since May 2010. [193181]

Anna Soubry: We are not aware of any contact between the Ministry of Defence and Mr Dmitry Firtash since May 2010.

Internet

Jim Shannon: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what services his Department provides that are (a) available online only and (b) planned to move to online only. [190362]

Anna Soubry: The Ministry of Defence provides public-facing services that are digital by default as a general principle but alternative means are provided where a specific user group has particular access requirements. For example, the Service Personnel and Veterans Agency provides alternative means of accessing all its public-facing services.

There are, however, instances where services are provided exclusively online:

initial career applications to join the Royal Navy, Army and RAF and related medical questionnaires can only be completed online. These can, however, be completed at the appropriate recruitment offices if required.

the cancellation or amendment of any UK Defence Standard which is not protectively marked is only notified online.

Joint Strike Fighter Aircraft

Thomas Docherty: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions he or officials of his

Department have had with their US counterparts on the annual report of the US Defense Department Office of Test and Evaluation on the F-35 programme. [193585]

Mr Dunne: UK officials are embedded within the US Joint Strike Fighter Programme Office and so had full visibility of the US Director Operational Test and Evaluation (DOT&E) report.

The report is an annual activity, aimed at independently assessing joint strike fighter performance, with DOT&E staff having full access to the programme.

All of the issues raised in the 2013 report are well-known by Ministry of Defence officials and are being actively managed by the programme.

Military Aid: Floods

Miss McIntosh: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent representations he has received on the work of military personnel in flood recovery operations. [193213]

Mr Francois: Defence personnel have, and continue to, provide invaluable support to the relief efforts. Defence's contribution peaked at 5,000 personnel—from all three services and the reserves—providing everything from sandbagging to aerial reconnaissance, as well as highly visible reassurance to the public. This contribution to the national effort in response to flooding was at the behest of the respective local authorities.

As of 21 March 2014, the Ministry of Defence still has 220 personnel committed in the field. They are assigned to support the Environment Agency, inspecting 150,000 flood defence assets across England. This task is expected to be completed by 4 April 2014. The Defence contribution will continue after this through the standard joint regional liaison officer network.

Military Bases

Mr Watson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how his Department is consulted, informed or otherwise involved in the procurement of communications systems and services at US bases in the UK. [R] [193037]

Mr Francois: At United States Visiting Forces (USVF) bases in the UK, the USVF operate a number of US communications systems. The USVF are responsible for the procurement of these communications systems and associated services, and liaise with the Ministry of Defence as appropriate.

Public Expenditure

Vernon Coaker: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence by how much his Department underspent in (a) 2010-11, (b) 2011-12 and (c) 2012-13. [192643]

Mr Philip Hammond [holding answer 25 March 2014]: The Ministry of Defence Annual Report and Accounts provide a complete analysis of underspend in each year. The reports are available on the gov.uk website at the following links:

2010-11:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/27067/mod_ara1011.pdf

2011-12:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/35009/20121206_mod_annual_report_12.pdf

2012-13:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/222874/MOD_AR13_clean.pdf

RAF Menwith Hill

Fabian Hamilton: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many (a) US service personnel, (b) US civilians and contractors, (c) RAF personnel, (d) UK army personnel, (e) UK navy personnel, (f) UK civilians, (g) US military chaplains, (h) UK military chaplains and (i) UK contractors' personnel were employed at RAF Menwith Hill in the latest period for which figures are available. [192892]

Mr Francois: The number of personnel at RAF Menwith Hill are given in the following table and are current as of 24 March 2014.

	Number
US Military	303
US Civilians and Contractors	748
Royal Air Force	3
Army	0
Royal Navy	6
UK Civilians	360
US Military Chaplains	2
UK Military Chaplains	0
UK Contractors	179

The number of police officers are not included in the figure for UK civilians, as the Department does not release the details of police officers at particular locations for security reasons.

Type 26 Frigates

Jake Berry: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what the timetable is for the introduction of the Type 26 Frigate. [193523]

Mr Dunne: The Type 26 Global Combat Ship programme is currently in its assessment phase. As is the standard practice with equipment projects, the build programme will not be set until the main investment decision has been taken, when the design is more mature, which is currently expected towards the end of 2014.

Ukraine

Nicholas Soames: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has to retain a permanent British garrison in continental Europe in response to recent events in the Crimea; and if he will make a statement. [193348]

Mr Philip Hammond: In the 2010 strategic defence and security review, the Government took the decision to withdraw all forces from Germany by 2020 for reasons explained in that document. Basing all of the UK's reaction forces together in the Salisbury plain training

area allows them to train effectively together ahead of deployments. Retaining forces in Germany—or choosing to base them elsewhere in continental Europe—would not be effective or desirable in optimising force generation and preparedness. Recent events in Ukraine will be taken into consideration as part of the analysis informing the next national security strategy and strategic defence and security review.

Unmanned Air Vehicles

Mr Watson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence pursuant to the answer of 17 March 2014, *Official Report*, column 504W, on unmanned air vehicles, in which countries Royal Air Force operators have been trained. [R] [193035]

Mr Francois: Royal Air Force Reaper Remotely Piloted Air Systems operators are trained in the UK and the US.

LEADER OF THE HOUSE

Electronic Government: Petitions

Jake Berry: To ask the Leader of the House how many e-Petitions have led to debates being arranged in the House since their introduction. [193795]

Mr Lansley: Since the launch of the Government e-petitions site, 27 petitions have reached the 100,000 signature threshold making them eligible for consideration for debate. The topics of 22 have been the subject of debate in the House of Commons, most as a direct result of the e-petition. Seven of these debates have taken place in Westminster Hall on a Monday afternoon, in the additional time made available specifically for the consideration of e-petitions.

Issues raised in e-petitions which have not reached the 100,000 signature threshold have also been debated regularly in the House.

WOMEN AND EQUALITIES

All Party Groups

Chris Ruane: To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities what the Government Equalities Office's policy is on allowing officials to appear before all-party parliamentary groups. [193558]

Mrs Grant: I refer the hon. Member to the reply from the Minister for the Cabinet Office and Paymaster General, my right hon. Friend the Member for Horsham (Mr Maude) of 26 March 2014, *Official Report*, column 300W.

Carers

Mrs Hodgson: To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities (1) what progress her Department has made on the establishment of regional pilots to test different ways to support carers to remain in work; which regions have been selected to run such pilots; what funding is being

made available for such pilots; and when she expects such pilots to begin; [193490]

(2) what steps she is taking to assist people with caring responsibilities to set up their own small business. [193491]

Jenny Willott: The Government Equalities Office (GEO), the Department of Health, and the Department for Work and Pensions are working together with the Social Care Institute for Excellence to develop five regional pilots to:

investigate the take-up and use of an assistive technology fund to support carers who are in employment;

develop the care market for self-funders, to provide services that are outside traditional care services; and

support carers to set up their own business.

GEO is providing £40,000 to scope the work, which includes identifying possible locations, key partners and cost options for the pilots, and we anticipate the launch of these pilots in June 2014.

Females

Miss McIntosh: To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities what assessment she has made of trends in the number of women in public life. [193212]

Mrs Grant: Women are now increasingly represented in public life but there is still more to be done. In 1979, only 3% of Members of Parliament were women; today, 22.6% are women. The 2010 general election also had 877 women candidates, which was a new record and an increase of approximately 22% on the 2005 general election. In addition, 45% of new appointees to public boards between April 2013 and September 2013 were women and the Government has set an aspiration that this figure will be 50% by the end of this Parliament.

To help ensure greater representation of women in public and political life, the Government has enabled parties to use positive action, should they wish, to increase participation by under-represented groups; extended to 2030 the ability for parties to use women-only shortlists; and secured agreement with the three main parties to collect and publish data on the diversity of their candidates.

Females: Business

Mrs Hodgson: To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities what meetings (a) she, (b) Ministers in her Department and (c) officials in her Department have held with (i) the British Banking Association and (ii) other relevant organisations to discuss access to finance for female entrepreneurs. [193492]

Jenny Willott: Ministers and officials regularly meet with stakeholders, including the British Banking Association (BBA), to discuss access to finance for female entrepreneurs. In 2013, Government and the BBA published a joint report "Banking on Women" on this issue and we continue to work with them to ensure delivery of the recommendations arising from that report.

Older Workers

Mrs Hodgson: To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities what meetings (a) she, (b) Ministers in her

Department and (c) officials in her Department have held with (i) Age UK and (ii) the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education to discuss the trialling of new approaches to supporting the skills development of older workers. [193487]

Jenny Willott: Equalities Ministers have chaired roundtable discussions on older workers in July 2012 and in September 2013; both of these meetings involved Age UK and considered skills development. Other participants included Older Women's Network Europe, National Council of Women, Employers' Network for Equality and Inclusion, the Age and Employment Network, Carers UK, Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, Equality and Human Rights Commission and Centrica. Officials also frequently meet with a range of organisations to discuss older workers, including Age UK and the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education.

Mrs Hodgson: To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities (1) what progress her Department has made in developing guidance and toolkits for employers on retention practices for older workers; [193488]

(2) with which organisations and individuals her Department has co-operated on the development of guidance and toolkits for employers on retention practices for older workers. [193489]

Steve Webb: I have been asked to reply on behalf of the Department for Work and Pensions.

We intend to build on the existing products available at:

www.dwp.gov.uk/agepositive

notably 'Employing older workers: an employer's guide to today's multi-generational workforce' and 'Employer case studies: employing older workers for an effective multi-generational workforce' published by DWP and the 'Healthy Ageing Workplaces On-line Toolkit for employers and workplace managers' developed by the Age Action Alliance.

In order to develop these existing resources further we have approached key stakeholders, including the CBI, TUC, Age UK, Carers UK and many more.

The Government is committed to publishing a Framework for Action on Extending Working Life later in the spring where we will say more about the development of guidance and toolkits.

Public Expenditure

Mrs Hodgson: To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities what the programme budget of the Government Equalities Office was in (a) 2009-10, (b) 2010-11, (c) 2011-12, (d) 2012-13 and (e) 2013-14; and what the real terms proportional change was between 2009-10 and 2013-14. [193257]

Mrs Grant: The programme budgets for the Government Equalities Office from 2009-10 are:

<i>Financial year</i>	<i>GEO Programme Budget Allocation (£000)</i>
2009-10	6,161
2010-11	6,993

<i>Financial year</i>	<i>GEO Programme Budget Allocation (£000)</i>
2011-12	9,100
2012-13	11,000
2013-14	10,704

The real term proportionate variance in budget between 2009-10 and 2013-14 is an increase of 60%.

Mrs Hodgson: To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities what the staffing budget of the Government Equalities Office was in (a) 2009-10, (b) 2010-11, (c) 2011-12, (d) 2012-13 and (e) 2013-14; and what the real terms proportional change was between 2009-10 and 2013-14. [193258]

Mrs Grant: The staffing budgets for the Government Equalities Office from 2009-10 are:

<i>Financial year</i>	<i>GEO Staffing Budget Allocation (£000)</i>
2009-10 ¹	9,617
2010-11 ¹	9,525
2011-12	7,388
2012-13	8,377
2013-14	6,400

¹ The budget for 2009-10 and 2010-11 includes the staffing budget of the Women's National Commission which ceased to exist at the end of 2010. Further decreases to the administration budget have occurred through internal efficiency savings and a reorganisation of the GEO staffing structure.

GEO became a part of DCMS in 2012. This transfer involved the integration of all the corporate and support functions of GEO, including HR, finance, press and communications, ministerial support and strategy and planning, with those teams in DCMS. The administration budget for GEO for 2014-15 (unlike the figure for 2013-14 and previous years) does not include those corporate and support functions and therefore cannot be compared with the budgets from the previous years on a like for like basis.

Mrs Hodgson: To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities what the staffing budget for the Government Equalities Office is for (a) 2014-15 and (b) 2015-16 years. [193265]

Mrs Grant: The administration budget for the Government Equalities Office (GEO) for 2014-15 is £3.8 million. The budget for 2015-16 has not yet been finalised.

GEO became a part of DCMS in 2012. This transfer involved the integration of all the corporate and support functions of GEO, including HR, finance, press and communications, ministerial support and strategy and planning, within those teams in DCMS. The administration budget for GEO for 2014-15 (unlike the figure for 2013-14 and previous years) does not include those corporate and support functions and therefore cannot be compared with the budgets from previous years on a like for like basis.

Mrs Hodgson: To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities what the Government Equalities Office programme budget is for (a) 2014-15 and (b) 2015-16. [193268]

Mrs Grant: The programme budget for the Government Equalities Office in 2014-15 is £10.6 million. The budget for 2015-16 has not yet been finalised.

UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women

Mrs Hodgson: To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities when she expects to meet each of the recommendations in the concluding observations of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women on the Seventh Periodic Report of the UK Government. [193218]

Jenny Willott: Following the examination of the UK's seventh Periodic Report to the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women in July 2013, and in accordance with our legally binding obligations under CEDAW, we are obliged to submit to the Committee the following reports on the steps taken to implement their recommendations on:

- i. Abortion laws and services in Northern Ireland by November 2014; and
- ii. Legal Aid and access to justice by November 2015.

The Government is fully committed to eliminating all forms of discrimination against women and the continued implementation of CEDAW to make the Convention a reality for all women in the UK. We are working with relevant Government Departments, the devolved Administrations and our overseas territories to consider the Committee's recommendations in their most recent concluding observations. The UK's eighth periodic report to the CEDAW Committee is due to be submitted to the Committee in 2017, where we will outline the action we have taken to implement those recommendations.

In accordance with our obligations under this Convention, we are required to report on the recommendations by 2017 and be examined by the Committee in 2018.

Mrs Hodgson: To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities what steps the Government has taken to meet each of the recommendations in the concluding observations of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women on the Seventh Periodic Report of the UK Government; and what progress has been made on each recommendation. [193233]

Jenny Willott: Following the examination of the UK's seventh Periodic Report by the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women in July 2013 I wrote to all my relevant ministerial colleagues asking them to consider the Committee's recommendations. Departments are taking forward the individual recommendations as appropriate, while my Department will be monitoring progress of implementation on a quarterly basis. In addition we have worked with the Women's Resource Centre and other NGOs to raise awareness of the recommendations and consult on priorities for implementation. In accordance with our obligations under this Convention, we are required to report on the recommendations by 2017 and be examined by the Committee in 2018.

Vocational Guidance

Mrs Hodgson: To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities if she will publish guidance and make available resources for parents to enable them to help their children make well-informed career and subject choices. [193493]

Jenny Willott: In November 2013, we published the Government's Women and the Economy Action plan. We announced that the Government Equalities Office (GEO) is developing a toolkit for parents to enable them to support their daughters make well-informed career and subject choices. It is working with the PSHE (Personal, Social, Health and Economic) Association and consulting with a range of schools, teenage girls and their parents to develop an online resource that will be piloted later this year. We know that parents are the most important influences of children's career choices, and the aim of this toolkit will be to offer information, advice and links to further resources to support parents in this vital role.

Women's Business Council

Mrs Hodgson: To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities (1) how many full-time equivalent members of staff she has allocated to support the work of the Ministerial Taskforce established to implement the recommendations of the Women's Business Council; [193483]

(2) what meetings (a) she, (b) Ministers in her Department and (c) officials in her Department have held with external organisations or individuals to discuss the work programme of the Ministerial Taskforce established to implement the recommendations of the Women's Business Council; [193485]

(3) what assessment she has made of the achievements to date of the Ministerial Taskforce established to implement the recommendations of the Women's Business Council; [193484]

(4) how many meetings of the Ministerial Taskforce established to implement the recommendations of the Women's Business Council have been held; on what date each such meeting was held; who attended each such meeting; and how many further meetings she expects will be held in 2014. [193482]

Jenny Willott: Ministers have met twice since June 2013 to oversee delivery of the recommendations for government arising from the Women's Business Council report and to drive progress on Government's action plan, which was published in November 2013.

The first meeting of this group was held on 5 September, chaired by the Secretary of State and attended by the Ministers for Women and Equalities, the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Education and Childcare, Minister of State for Employment and the Minister of State for Universities and Science. A further meeting was held on 27 November, again chaired by the Secretary of State and attended by the Ministers for Women and Equalities, the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Education and Childcare, the Minister of State for Employment, the Minister of State for Care and Support and senior officials representing the Economic Secretary to the Treasury and the Minister of State for Universities

and Science. The next meeting of the group is to take place on 3 April, with further meetings likely to be held later this year.

The secretariat for the ministerial group is provided by officials from the Government Equalities Office as part of their usual duties, supported by officials in other Departments. There are frequent and ongoing discussions involving Ministers and officials from several Government Departments and their external delivery partners to take forward the commitments within the action plan.

CABINET OFFICE

Balance of Payments

Jonathan Reynolds: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office what recent estimate he has made of the UK's current account deficit. [193883]

Mr Hurd: The information requested falls within the responsibility of the UK Statistics Authority. I have asked the authority to reply.

Letter from Peter Fullerton, dated March 2014:

On behalf of the Director General for the Office for National Statistics, I have been asked to reply to your recent Parliamentary Question asking what recent estimate has been made of the UK's current account deficit (193883).

The current account deficit for Quarter 4 2013 was estimated to be £22.4 billion, which equates to 5.4% of GDP. These estimates were published on 28 March 2014 as part of the Balance of Payments publication and are the latest available.

Further details on the latest Balance of Payments estimates can be found at:

<http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/bop/balance-of-payments/q4-and-annual-2013/index.html>

Cancer

Andrew Percy: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office what the mortality rate from cancer has been in (a) Brigg and Goole constituency, (b) Yorkshire and Humber and (c) England in the last 15 years. [193620]

Mr Hurd: The information requested falls within the responsibility of the UK Statistics Authority. I have asked the authority to reply.

Letter from Peter Fullerton, dated March 2014:

On behalf of the Director General for the Office for National Statistics, I have been asked to reply to your recent Parliamentary Question asking what the mortality rate for deaths caused by cancer has been in (a) Brigg and Goole constituency, (b) Yorkshire and The Humber and (c) England in the last 15 years. [193620].

The most recent figures available are for 2012. Table 1 shows the age-standardised mortality rate where cancer was the underlying cause of death for England, the region of Yorkshire and The Humber and the Brigg and Goole parliamentary constituency from 1998 to 2012 (where available). Rates are not presented for Brigg and Goole before 2001 because the corresponding population estimates are not available.

The number of deaths registered in England and Wales each year by sex, age, cause, marital status, and place of death are published annually on the National Statistics website at:

www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/vsob1/mortality-statistics--deaths-registered-in-england-and-wales--series-dr-/index.html

Table 1: Age-standardised mortality rates where cancer was the underlying cause of death, Brigg and Goole parliamentary constituency, Yorkshire and the Humber region and England, deaths registered each year from^{1,2,3,4,5} 1998 to 2012

	Brigg and Goole	Yorkshire and The Humber	England
1998	n/a	203.2	194.5
1999	n/a	198.4	189.4
2000	n/a	190.7	185.8
2001	218.0	194.6	187.6
2002	201.7	197.5	186.9
2003	183.2	192.8	183.1
2004	189.1	188.0	179.7
2005	165.8	184.6	177.4
2006	190.9	183.0	176.0
2007	205.5	184.8	174.3
2008	188.2	181.4	172.6
2009	176.6	178.4	169.5
2010	159.8	176.6	167.6
2011	165.5	177.6	166.7
2012	163.4	175.4	165.6

n/a = Not available.

¹ Age-standardised rates per 100,000 population, standardised to the 1976 European Standard Population (ESP). Age-standardised rates are used to allow comparison between populations which may contain different proportions of people of different ages. For more information on ESP, see the ONS website: <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/user-guidance/health-and-life-events/revise-european-standard-population-2013--2013-esp/index.html>

² Underlying cause of death was defined using the International Classification of Diseases, Tenth Revision (ICD-10) codes C00 to C97 for the period 2001 to 2012, and International Classification of Diseases, Ninth Revision (ICD-9) codes 140 to 208 for the period 1998 to 2000.

³ Figures are based on deaths registered, rather than deaths occurring in the years 1998 to 2012. Further information on registration delays for a range of causes can be found on the ONS website:

www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/user-guidance/health-and-life-events/impact-of-registration-delays-on-mortality-statistics/index.html

⁴ Figures exclude deaths of non-residents.

⁵ Figures are based on boundaries as of February 2014.

Debts

Stewart Hosie: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office what estimate he has made of the value of unsecured debt owed by individuals in each income decile in each year since 2010. [193861]

Mr Hurd: The information requested falls within the responsibility of the UK Statistics Authority. I have asked the authority to reply.

Letter from Peter Fullerton, dated March 2014:

On behalf of the Director General for the Office for National Statistics, I have been asked to reply to your recent Parliamentary Question asking what estimate he has made of the value of unsecured debt owed by individuals in each income decile in each year since 2010 (193861).

The Office for National Statistics does collect information on unsecured debt owed by households and individuals from the Wealth and Assets Survey; a longitudinal study of the economic circumstances of households in Great Britain. However, currently only data pertaining to the first two waves of the survey (2006/08 and 2008/10) are available. The main findings from the survey for the period 2010/12 will be published in May 2014. Furthermore, 2010/12 was the first period that full income data were collected on the survey. These data require further quality assurance and will not be available until June/July 2014. It is not possible to look at unsecured debt by income decile for the previous two waves which have been published.

Electoral Register

Chris Ruane: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office pursuant to the answer of 14 May 2013, *Official Report*, columns 291-2W, on the Electoral Register, whether the information on how many (a) UK- and

(b) foreign-born citizens over the age of 18 and qualified to vote in UK parliamentary elections in each English and Welsh parliamentary constituency is now available.

[193803]

Mr Hurd: The information requested falls within the responsibility of the UK Statistics Authority. I have asked the authority to reply.

Letter from Caron Walker, dated March 2014:

On behalf of the 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 whether the information on how many (a) UK- and (b) foreign-born citizens over the age of 18 and qualified to vote in UK parliamentary elections in each English and Welsh parliamentary constituency is now available. (193803)

The 2011 Census did not collect information about citizenship although passports held and countries of birth were collected and can be used as a proxy.

The specially commissioned table (CT0240) includes the following three categories of those who are eligible to vote in UK Parliamentary elections:

Born in UK;

Commonwealth citizens that are resident in the UK, and either have leave to enter or remain in the UK or not require such leave. It also includes citizens of British Crown Dependencies and British Overseas Territories.

Born elsewhere but with a British passport.

A copy of the table will be placed in the Library of the House.

Government Departments: Internet

Adam Afriyie: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office what steps he is taking to incentivise departmental officials to bring old Government data sets online in accessible formats. [193287]

Mr Maude: The UK has been recognised as the international leader in data transparency. During our presidency of the G8 in 2013 we led Members to commit to publishing data openly by default as a matter of principle through the Open Data Charter.

Departments are engaging the public and special interest groups about the most important data held by Government (whether old or new); publishing open data strategies and reporting to Parliament on progress on a quarterly basis.

Those data sets that are judged to have the most significant economic and social impact we refer to as the national information infrastructure, and are our priority for making available and accessible.

Government Procurement Service

Mr Thomas: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office if he will take steps to encourage the Government Procurement Service to adopt (a) UN Global Compact and (b) ILO standards; and if he will make a statement. [193994]

Mr Hurd: This Government's procurement policy is to award contracts on the basis of value for money, which means the optimum combination of cost and quality over the lifetime of the project.

The Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 requires commissioners to consider the economic, environmental and social benefits of their approaches to procurement before the process starts, at the pre-procurement stage.

Wider socio-economic criteria can be taken into account at tender evaluation stage if they relate directly to the subject matter of a contract from the point of view of the contracting authority.

Minimum Wage

Mr Denham: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office with reference to the annual survey of hours and earnings published on 12 December 2013, if he will estimate the number and proportion of (a) men and (b) women in (i) full-time and (ii) part-time work in each (A) local authority area and (B) parliamentary constituency earning the national minimum wage in April 2013 defined as (1) adults aged 21 years and over earning less than £6.24, (2) youths (aged 18 to 20) earning less than £5.03 and (3) 16 to 17 year olds earning less than £3.73. [193516]

Mr Hurd: The information requested falls within the responsibility of the UK Statistics Authority. I have asked the authority to reply.

Letter from Peter Fullerton, dated March 2014:

On behalf of the 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, with reference to the annual survey of hours and earnings, published on 12 December 2013, if he will estimate the number and proportion of (a) men and (b) women in (i) full-time and (ii) part-time work in each (A) local authority area and (B) parliamentary constituency earning the national minimum wage in April 2013 defined as (1) adults aged 21 years and over earning less than £6.24, (2) youths (aged 18 to 20) earning less than £5.03 and (3) 16 to 17 year olds earning less than £3.73. (193516)

The Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE), carried out in April each year, is the most comprehensive source of earnings information in the United Kingdom. Hourly levels of earnings are estimated from ASHE, and are provided for employees on adult rates of pay, whose earnings for the survey pay period were not affected by absence. However, estimates for the number and proportion of national minimum wage jobs at the sub-Regional geographies defined above are not available from ASHE for reasons of quality.

Related information is available in the National Minimum Wage Low Pay Commission Report 2014, which contains some estimates for minimum wage jobs, as defined above, by Regions, gender and full-time/part-time:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/288841/The_National_Minimum_Wage_LPC_Report_2014.pdf

Ovarian Cancer: Brigg

Andrew Percy: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office how many and what proportion of women in Brigg and Goole constituency were diagnosed with ovarian cancer in each of the last five years. [193908]

Mr Hurd: The information requested falls within the responsibility of the UK Statistics Authority. I have asked the authority to reply.

Letter from Peter Fullerton, dated March 2014:

On behalf of the 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 and what proportion of women in Brigg and Goole constituency were diagnosed with ovarian cancer in each of the last five years [193908].

The latest available figures for newly diagnosed cases of cancer (incidence) are for the year 2011. Table 1 provides the number of (a) newly diagnosed cases of ovarian cancer, and (b) the proportion

(per cent) of the female population with a diagnosis of ovarian cancer, for the years 2007 to 2011, for women in Brigg and Goole parliamentary constituency.

The latest published figures on cancer incidence for England are available in the following link:

<http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/vsob1/cancer-statistics-registrations--england--series-mb1-/index.html>

Table 1: Number of newly diagnosed cases of ovarian cancer and the percentage of the female population with a diagnosis of ovarian cancer, Brigg and Goole parliamentary constituency 2007 to 2011^{1, 2, 3, 4}

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Brigg and Goole	13	8	10	9	14
Percentage of Brigg and Goole Female population diagnosed	0.03	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.03

¹ Cancer of the ovary is coded as C56 (Malignant neoplasm of ovary), according to the International Classification of Diseases Tenth Revision (ICD-10).

² Cancer incidence figures are based on newly diagnosed cases registered in each calendar year.

³ Figures are based on boundaries correct as at February 2014 and exclude non-residents.

⁴ Percentages are calculated using mid-year population estimates for Brigg and Goole parliamentary constituency.

Source:

Office for National Statistics (ONS)

Personal Savings

Mr Gregory Campbell: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office what estimate he has made of the average personal savings in each year from 2010 to 2013. [193745]

Mr Hurd: The information requested falls within the responsibility of the UK Statistics Authority. I have asked the authority to reply.

Letter from Peter Fullerton, dated March 2014:

On behalf of the Director General for the Office for National Statistics, I have been asked to reply to your recent Parliamentary Question asking the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate he has made of the average personal savings in each year from 2010 to 2013 (193745).

The Office for National Statistics does collect information on the personal savings of households and individuals from the Wealth and Assets Survey; a longitudinal study of the economic circumstances of households in Great Britain. However, currently only data pertaining to the first two waves of the survey (2006/08 and 2008/10) are available. The main findings for the period 2010/12 will be published in May 2014.

Table 1 below presents gross financial wealth for eligible adults for the years 2006/08 and 2008/10.

Table 1: Estimated gross financial wealth¹ of individuals²: Great Britain, 2006/08 and 2008/10³

	Median (£)
2006/08	2,200
2008/10	3,000

¹ Gross financial wealth for individuals includes any formal financial assets held such as: current accounts in credit, savings accounts, ISAs, fixed-term investment bonds, unit trusts, shares, saving bonds and gilts, life insurance; plus any informal financial assets such as monies either loaned or saved with friends and family. It does not include endowments associated with a mortgage as this is only collected at a household level.

² Includes eligible adults only i.e. those over the age of 16 and not in full-time education.

³ The distribution of wealth is highly skewed. Therefore, the median is a better measure of average. The mean, which provides the arithmetic average, is likely to be influenced by high values so it does not reflect the experience of most individuals and is therefore not presented within the table.

Note:

The figures quoted are estimates and are based on a responding sample of 54,951 individuals at wave one and 36,218 at wave two.

Source:

Wealth and Assets Survey, Office for National Statistics.

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Afghanistan

Ms Abbott: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development whether her Department has made an assessment of the level of risk experienced by female human rights defenders in Afghanistan; and what arrangements are in place to support their work and create a safer environment. [193460]

Justine Greening: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the right hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne East (Mr Brown), on 17 March 2014, *Official Report*, column 398W.

Africa

Chris Heaton-Harris: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what commitments the UK has to support people with learning disabilities in Africa. [193406]

Lynne Featherstone: Learning difficulties are just one of many different types of disability that DFID supports through its overseas programmes. The UK does not have a separate commitment around this.

For example, as highlighted in the recent DFID education position paper, DFID is committed to ensuring that all children are able to complete a full cycle of quality education and is increasingly focusing on the most marginalised, including those children with disabilities. For example, in Zimbabwe, through UNICEF, DFID is supporting 32 special schools nationwide to provide technical equipment for visual and hearing impaired, physically and mentally challenged and children with speech and language difficulties. In Ethiopia, through the General Education Quality Improvement Programme, DFID provides larger grants to schools which have a higher percentage of children with special educational needs.

Developing Countries: Abortion

Mr Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development pursuant to the contribution of the Prime Minister of 19 March 2014, *Official Report*, column 781, what steps her Department (a) has taken and (b) plans to take in the next six months to ensure that UK aid is not used to facilitate or procure gender-based abortions; and if she will make a statement. [193296]

Lynne Featherstone: The UK Government does not promote or support abortion on the grounds of gender alone. Our work on girls' education, women's empowerment, skills and jobs aims to increase the 'value' of girls and women in society and therefore tackle the pressures and incentives that drive preferences for male children.

In 1994 over 180 states including the UK, signed the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, agreeing to "eliminate all forms of discrimination against the girl child". To this end, we support and will continue to support Governments' efforts to prevent sex selective abortion. We do this through our own reproductive health programmes, and through key partner's such as the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA),

Developing Countries: Forests

Chris Ruane: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development pursuant to the answer of 21 January 2014, *Official Report*, columns 187-88W on developing countries: forest, in which of her Department's sponsored projects afforestation is used to minimise the risk of flooding. [193374]

Lynne Featherstone: DFID does not fund any projects which have a primary aim of using afforestation to minimise the risk of flooding.

Some DFID projects involve afforestation that may have a secondary effect of minimising flooding. For example, DFID is supporting upland communities in Nepal to reforest slopes above their villages. This provides important benefits to local livelihoods and also reduces the risks of flooding and landslides.

Developing Countries: Sanitation

Jim Dobbin: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what assessment she has made of the World Health Organisation and United Nations Children's Fund report entitled Integrated Global Action Plan for the Prevention and Control of Pneumonia and Diarrhoea; and whether she intends to take the steps recommended in this report to support integrated healthcare solutions, incorporating water, sanitation and hygiene strategies. [193676]

Lynne Featherstone: The report outlines a clear action plan for preventing and controlling pneumonia and diarrhoea. The UK's approach is in line with this plan. Overall the UK provides £1 billion in bilateral health aid. This supports targeted, cost-effective interventions, delivered through strengthened, more efficient and effective health systems in a total of 34 countries. In addition the UK aims to tackle the broader determinants of health such as water, sanitation, hygiene and nutrition. DFID has a target to reach 60 million people with water, sanitation and hygiene interventions by December 2015, recognising that the benefits from these are multiplied when delivered through an integrated approach.

Palestinians

Guto Bebb: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what processes are in place to ensure that (a) individuals and (b) non-governmental organisations in the Palestinian Territories receiving UK aid payments are not associated with terrorist organisations. [193825]

Mr Duncan: There are comprehensive safeguards in place to ensure UK money is not used to benefit terrorist organisations, either directly or indirectly. In the Occupied Palestinian Territories we work with trusted partners including the UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), which regularly checks staff names, suppliers and other payees against a recognised database of names of persons listed as being associated with terrorist organisations. All our partners commit to taking appropriate steps to ensure that the funds we provide are not used to provide assistance to, or otherwise support, terrorists or terrorist organisations, in full compliance with UK and EU anti-terror legislation.

Guto Bebb: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development (1) whether any Palestinian Authority civil servant has been refused UK aid payments on the grounds of links with terrorist organisations; [193984]

(2) what processes are in place to ensure Palestinian Authority civil servants in receipt of UK aid payments are not associated with terrorist organisations and have no previous record of terror offences. [193826]

Mr Duncan: The UK only supports salaries of Palestinian civil servants on the EU's list of vetted beneficiaries who meet strict eligibility criteria and are not linked to terrorist organisations. Recipients are taken from an EU list of eligible civil servants. The EU regularly checks all names on the list against a recognised database of persons listed as being associated with terrorist organisations.

South Sudan

Mr Bellingham: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what recent assessment she has made of the humanitarian situation in Jonglei and the Upper Nile in South Sudan; and what steps she is taking to support those who are being displaced or affected by the conflict. [193318]

Lynne Featherstone: The humanitarian situation in South Sudan remains extremely serious. There are rising humanitarian needs, but access constraints, including active hostilities, continue to hamper the humanitarian response in some areas. DFID has provided direct funding to NGOs operating in Upper Nile and Jonglei states, to provide shelter, water and sanitation facilities and emergency medical care; and also funded emergency logistics to airlift aid works and humanitarian supplies to those in need across the country. The World Food Programme has started airdrops of food supplies this week to both Jonglei and Upper Nile states, in sites with high concentrations of people.

The UK has so far committed £12.5 million of new funding to the response since December 2013, and redirected £19 million of earlier commitments to be reprioritised to the crisis. We are reviewing with the humanitarian country team and donors on the ground how to best reach and support the displaced populations, particularly in difficult to reach areas and within the current security context.

Special Olympics

Chris Heaton-Harris: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what support her Department has given to Special Olympic projects in the last five years. [193315]

Lynne Featherstone: DFID has not provided support for any special Olympic projects in the last five years.

West Africa

Kerry McCarthy: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what steps her Department is taking to improve the capacity of governments and civil society in the west African coastal region to reduce illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing and protect local artisanal fishing. [193478]

Lynne Featherstone: DFID supports the International Partnership for African Fisheries Governance and Trade (PAF), a programme led by the African Union. It aims to improve how fisheries are managed throughout Africa and to tackle problems such as illegal fishing.

The programme has helped to set up the 'Stop Illegal Fishing' (SIF) initiative. The SIF website is now a major source of information and news used by African countries on the issue. One of the activities SIF has supported in West Africa has been to work with the fishing industry in Liberia, Guinea and Sierra Leone to develop a regional agreement against illegal fishing in the Gulf of Guinea.

CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

Arts

Dan Jarvis: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what steps the Government is taking to support (a) creative, (b) film, (c) music and (d) video games industries. [190855]

Mr Vaizey: Government is committed to working with the creative industries, primarily through the Creative Industries Council, to further boost their economic worth. Examples of support include creative content tax reliefs: last year Government introduced new tax reliefs for the animation and high end TV production sectors, a tax relief to support video games production will be introduced pending EU state aid clearance. At autumn statement 2013 the Government also announced a package of changes to the existing Film Tax Relief to support the sector and its cultural and economic contribution, subject to state aid approval.

Specific Government initiatives for the music industry include the £2.5 million Music Export Growth Scheme, announced in September 2013 and funded by UKTI.

Government also supports the creative sectors through funding for arm's length bodies including the Sector Skills Councils, the BFI and the Arts Council of England. For example, Government is providing an additional £16 million in 2013-14 and 2014-15 for Creative Skillset to match fund skills initiatives in the film, television, animation, visual effects and video games sectors. The Arts Council is providing funding to the music industry through a range of programmes, including the £500,000 Momentum Music Fund which helps sustain and develop the careers of talented emerging artists and bands. In total, the Arts Council will invest around £70 million a year in music organisations up until 2015.

Betting Shops

Clive Efford: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what discussions she has had with the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills and the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government on changes to planning regulations relating to betting shops and changes of use for business premises; and if she will make a statement. [193728]

Mrs Grant: The Government is undertaking a policy review of gambling, which will report before Easter. The Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport and I have consulted with Ministers from a number of different Departments as part of this review.

Convention on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage

Kerry McCarthy: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport when the Government plans to ratify the 2001 UNESCO Convention on the Protection of Underwater Cultural Heritage. [193466]

Mr Vaizey: The UK Government is currently considering the recently published Impact Review on the 2001 UNESCO Convention and a decision on whether we should review our position will then be made.

Cycling

Mr Sanders: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what funding her Department makes available to allow non-elite disabled cyclists to acquire specialist sporting equipment. [193574]

Mrs Grant: Sport England's Get Equipped fund is investing £1.1 million into 141 community sports clubs to provide specialist sports equipment for disabled people. This includes £107,490 invested into specialist cycling equipment across 12 projects.

Direct Selling

Mike Crockart: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport when she plans to respond to the Culture, Media and Sport Select Committee's fourth report of Session 2013-14 on Nuisance Calls, HC 636. [190995]

Mr Vaizey: We will shortly provide a substantive response to the Culture Media and Sport (CMS) Select Committee's recommendations and conclusions, which were set out in their report of 5 December 2013.

Football

Clive Efford: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport when she will hold the first meeting of the working party to discuss the future of football governance; and if she will make a statement. [193729]

Mrs Grant: A proposal from Supporters Direct for an expert group on supporter ownership in football is under consideration by government and the football authorities, including terms of reference and timeframes of any resulting work in the area.

Clive Efford: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport which Government departments will be represented on the working party to discuss the future of football governance; and if she will make a statement. [193730]

Mrs Grant: All aspects of a potential expert group on supporter ownership in football are under consideration, including suitable government representation on the group.

Gaming Machines

Graham Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what progress has been made on her Department's reviews of regulation of fixed odds betting terminals; and if she will make a statement. [193290]

Mrs Grant: The Government is undertaking a policy review of gambling, which is considering the regulation of category B2 gaming machines. This will report before Easter.

Public Libraries

Sarah Teather: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what guidance her Department has issued to local authorities on support for community-run libraries. [193592]

Mr Vaizey: No guidance has been issued by the Department, however, the Arts Council England and the Local Government Association publication 'Community Libraries research Learning from experience: guiding principles for local authorities' (January 2013) identified factors which local authorities might find helpful when considering how best to design and manage their own library services. In addition, Locality, a registered charity that receives funding from the Department for Communities and Local Government, provides an online platform and resource for the community library network, bringing together advice and guidance, peer networking and access to a range of resources and remote support.

Religious Broadcasting

Jim Shannon: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what discussions she has had with the BBC Trust on the BBC's exercise of its responsibilities to provide religious broadcasting. [193545]

Mr Vaizey: The Secretary of State has had no discussions with the BBC Trust about religious broadcasting. Under the terms of its Charter and Agreement the BBC is operationally and editorially independent of Government.

Special Olympics Great Britain

Chris Heaton-Harris: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what funding Special Olympics Great Britain has received from her Department in each of the last five years. [193353]

Mrs Grant: The Special Olympics Great Britain (SOGB) received the following sums from Sport England during the past five years

	<i>Award (£)</i>	<i>Programme</i>
2009	200,000	Investment in the 2009 Special Olympic summer games
2011	225,000	Joint investment in SOGB and Mencap for 2011 to 2013 period
2013	191,000	Additional funding for SOGB to deliver 2013 summer games

Sports: Learning Disability

Chris Heaton-Harris: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what provisions are in place as part of the Government's Olympic Legacy commitments for people with learning disabilities. [193316]

Mrs Grant: A key part of the legacy from London 2012 is securing lasting benefits for disabled people, and this includes people with learning disabilities. The key aims of the legacy for disabled people were set out in "London 2012: a Legacy for Disabled People", a report published by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport and the Office for Disability Issues in April 2011, which outlined the key legacy opportunities from the Olympic and Paralympic games for disabled people. These key aims were to:

- support opportunities to participate in sport and physical activity;
- promote community engagement through the games;
- transform the perception of disabled people in society.

Sport England have provided funding to Mencap Sport/Special Olympics GB to help them support and guide governing bodies as they create opportunities for people with learning disabilities, and to help deliver the Special Olympics summer games. 42 out of 46 National Governing Bodies funded by Sport England have specific targets for the participation of disabled people.

The recently launched campaign to secure a physical activity legacy from the games, "Moving More, Living More" aims to promote physical activity for all, and specifically highlights the importance of interventions and opportunities to help disabled people become more active.

The Paralympic Legacy Advisory Group has been established by Government and the Mayor of London to bring fresh insight, challenge and new ideas to ensure that the legacy for all disabled people is as strong as possible. This group is made up of representatives from disabled people's user-led organisations, leading disability charities, Paralympians, broadcasters and business.

Tourism

Miss McIntosh: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what steps she plans to take to promote tourism in (a) North Yorkshire and (b) the UK. [193211]

Mrs Grant: This Government is doing much to promote tourism in both North Yorkshire and the UK as a whole. North Yorkshire will benefit from a number of thematic campaigns currently being run by VisitEngland which can be found at

<http://www.visitengland.com/>

North Yorkshire will also feature in VisitBritain's forthcoming Countryside is GREAT campaign.

For the UK as a whole, VisitEngland's Holidays at Home are GREAT campaign, has been launched and will be shown on mainstream terrestrial channels from 1 April 2014. The GREAT campaign, led by VisitBritain, showcases the very best of what Britain has to offer in order to encourage the world to visit, study and do

business with the UK. VisitBritain also do a number of specific and bespoke campaigns to encourage overseas visitors to the UK. These can be found at

<http://www.visitbritain.com/en/EN/>

TREASURY

Annuities

Stephen Timms: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the effect of the changes announced in the 2014 Budget Statement on the price of annuities; and if he will make a statement. [193587]

Mr Gauke: At Budget, the Government announced significant reforms to the pensions market, giving people greater choice about how to access their defined contribution pension savings. The Government expects the change to the pensions market to stimulate innovation and new competition in the retirement income market. This new flexibility will help consumers choosing to buy an annuity to get a better deal in a much more competitive market place.

The shape of the market will be driven by the choices consumers make, placing power back into the hands of savers. As retirement changes, many people may opt to buy an annuity later in life, allowing them to benefit from higher annuity rates or at a time that better suits their individual circumstances.

The Government is currently consulting on these reforms, and intends to respond to the consultation before the summer recess.

Cathy Jamieson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what steps he is taking to protect those who wish to take out an annuity against a significant deterioration in the annuity market reducing the pool of resources and both raising the cost of annuities and reducing their rate of return. [193898]

Mr Gauke: At Budget, the Government announced significant reforms to the pensions market, giving people greater choice about how to access their defined contribution pension savings. For many people, purchasing an annuity will remain the best way to secure an income in retirement.

Rather, the new flexibility will help consumers choosing to buy an annuity to get a better deal in a much more competitive market place. The Government expects the change to the pensions market to stimulate innovation and new competition in the retirement income market. The shape of the market will now be driven by the choices consumers make, placing power back into the hands of savers.

As retirement changes, many people may, for example, opt to buy an annuity later in life, allowing them to benefit from higher annuity rates or at a time that better suits their individual circumstances.

Assets: Russia

Nicholas Soames: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what estimate he has made of the value of Russian financial assets held in the UK; [193415]

(2) what estimate he has made of the value of UK financial assets held in Russia. [193414]

Sajid Javid: Consolidated external claims and unused commitments of UK-owned monetary financial institutions (excluding central bank) and their branches and subsidiaries worldwide are available from the Bank of England website,

www.bankofengland.co.uk/statistics/Documents/bankstats/current/tab4.2.xls

External business of monetary financial institutions operating in the UK are also available, from

www.bankofengland.co.uk/statistics/Documents/bankstats/current/tab3.2.xls

These include data about the UK financial sector's claims on and liabilities to Russia. No equivalent official data is available for Russian firms' assets and liabilities in respect of the UK.

Aviation

Catherine McKinnell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer for what reason the amount allocated to the Regional Air Connectivity Fund in line 37 of Table 2.1 of Budget 2014 is £10 million per annum and the increase in funding listed at paragraph 2.42 for that Fund is £20 million per annum. [193327]

Nicky Morgan: The Government announced a £10 million per annum regional air connectivity fund at the 2013 spending round. At the Budget the Government increased this by £10 million per annum to double the size of the fund to £20 million per annum.

Aviation: Scotland

Cathy Jamieson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what discussions he has had with Ministers in the Scottish Government on extending the scope of the existing Regional Air Connectivity Fund. [193664]

Danny Alexander: We announced in the Budget that the Regional Air Connectivity Fund will be increased to £20 million per year, and extended to include the provision of start-up aid for new routes from regional airports. This support will be available to airports in Scotland as well as the rest of the UK.

As was the case with previous Administrations, it is not the Government's practice to provide details of all meetings and discussions. But I regularly meet with the Scottish Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Employment and Sustainable Growth to discuss matters that are relevant to Scotland.

Children: Day Care

Tristram Hunt: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what provision he has made in funding for the tax-free childcare scheme beyond 2015 for increased take up from childcare resulting from maternal employment. [192992]

Nicky Morgan: Information on the behavioural effects accounted for in the expenditure of tax-free child care can be found in the Budget 2014 policy costings document:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/293740/PU1638_policy_costings_budget_2014.pdf

Mr Bain: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what discussions he had with Atos and employers providing workplace-based child care before the announcement of his policy on tax relief for child care. [193517]

Nicky Morgan: As part of the process of policy development Ministers and officials meet with a wide range of stakeholder.

As was the practice with the previous Administration, the Government does not disclose the details of these meetings.

Mr Bain: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make an assessment of the effects of the introduction of tax relief on childcare on existing employer-provided childcare schemes in each of the next four financial years. [193535]

Nicky Morgan: Delivering tax-free child care: the Government's response to the consultation on design and operation confirmed that employer-supported child care (child care vouchers and directly-contracted child care) will be closed to new entrants when tax-free child care is introduced. Parents who already receive support through that scheme will be able to continue receiving support for as long as they continue to be employed by their current employer, and the employer continues to offer the scheme. Workplace nurseries will not be affected by the changes.

The document can be viewed at:

www.gov.uk/government/consultations/tax-free-childcare

Mr Bain: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the administration costs of the introduction of tax relief on childcare in each of the next four financial years. [193536]

Nicky Morgan: Information on how the cost of managing child care accounts in tax-free child care can be found in the Budget 2014 policy costings document, available at:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/293740/PU1638_policy_costings_budget_2014.pdf

Coinage

Andrew Gwynne: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what assessment has made of the overall cost to the economy of conversion to the new £1 coin; [193131]

(2) what assessment he has made of the cost to the vending sector of converting all vending machines to accept the new £1 coin; [193130]

(3) what assessment he has made of the cost to the gaming industry of converting all video games machines, slot machines and other arcade machines to accept the new £1 coin; [193129]

(4) if he will make funding available to help the (a) retail sector, (b) gaming industry and (c) vending machine operators meet the cost of the introduction of the new £1 coin; [193128]

(5) what assessment he has made of the cost to the telecommunications industry of converting all telephone boxes to accept the new £1 coin; and if he will make funding available to this industry to help meet such costs; [193027]

(6) what assessment he has made of the cost to (a) local authorities and (b) other parking operators of converting all ticket machines and meters to accept the new £1 coin; and if he will make funding available to help meet such costs; [193026]

(7) what assessment he has made of the cost to the retail sector of converting all shopping trolley anti-theft guards to accept the new £1 coin. [193025]

Nicky Morgan: The Budget announced that the existing £1 coin will be replaced with a more modern and secure design. After 30 years in circulation, the current coin has become vulnerable to counterfeiting.

There will be a public consultation this summer that will focus on how to manage impacts on industry and other affected parties. The Government is committed to working with these organisations to minimise costs and disruption.

The Government plans for the new coin to be introduced in 2017. This timeline was decided expressly to allow industry three years to plan for the change.

John Mann: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what consultation process is being held on the new £1 coin; and what steps he is taking to ensure that such a consultation includes representation from all parts of the country, charities and other non-industry groups. [193321]

Nicky Morgan: The Budget announced that the Government will introduce a new, highly secure £1 coin.

The Treasury will undertake a public consultation in the summer focusing on managing impacts on industry and other affected parties. The consultation will be open to views from all parts of the country and all stakeholders. More details of the consultation process will be published in due course.

Credit Unions

Adam Afriyie: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many credit unions were operating in the UK in (a) 2010-11, (b) 2011-12 and (c) 2012-13. [193285]

Sajid Javid: The Government does not hold information on the numbers of credit unions operating in the UK. The data is held by the Financial Conduct Authority and the Prudential Regulation Authority.

Currencies

Nicholas Soames: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans he has to support the development of virtual currency exchanges in the UK; and if he will make a statement. [193416]

Sajid Javid: The Government is working with the broader financial technology industry to identify the barriers to entry and growth that financial technology

businesses in the UK experience and to identify potential ways for lowering them. Virtual currency exchanges have been involved in this work.

Nicholas Soames: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the risk of virtual currencies facilitating money laundering and other financial offences. [193417]

Sajid Javid: We are engaging with law enforcement and others across Whitehall to assess the exact nature of financial crime risks posed by virtual currencies. We are also working with international bodies on the issue, such as the Financial Action Task Force.

Financial Services

John Mann: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what regulatory standards he plans to put in place to ensure people have access to high quality financial advice. [193280]

Sajid Javid: At Budget 2014, the Government announcement that all those retiring with a defined contribution pension pot will be offered free and impartial face-to-face guidance at the point of retirement.

The Government has asked the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA), working closely with the Pensions Regulator and the Department for Work and Pensions, to co-ordinate the development of robust standards for this guidance and a framework for monitoring compliance. In developing these standards the FCA will work in partnership with consumer groups, the Pensions Advisory Service, and the Money Advice Service.

The Government is now consulting on how this guarantee is best delivered through its consultation document, 'Freedom and Choice in Pensions', available here:

www.gov.uk/government/consultations/freedom-and-choice-in-pensions

Gift Aid

Mr Gregory Campbell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much gift aid was reclaimed by charities in (a) 2009 and (b) 2013. [193744]

Nicky Morgan: HMRC publishes data on repayments of gift aid to charities in table 10.1 of its National Statistics at:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/256802/table10-1.pdf

Housing: Taxation

Mr Clappison: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether flats will be liable for the possible introduction of a levy on higher value homes. [193787]

Mr Gauke: The Government does not intend to introduce a new levy on higher value homes.

Income Tax

Mr Gordon Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish, using the 2011-12 data for higher rate taxpayers, how many and what proportion of the taxpaying population were in each taxpaying

category in each region and nation of the UK; and what tax receipts accrued to the Exchequer from each such group in the last year for which data are available.

[193030]

Mr Gauke: The information is given in the following table.

Income tax liabilities of higher and additional rate taxpayers, by region and country, 2011-12

Region	Total Income		Total amount of tax (£)
	Number of taxpayers (thousands)	Proportion of all taxpayers (percentage)	
<i>Taxpayers liable at higher rate (excluding additional rate taxpayers)</i>			
United Kingdom	3,570	11.6	54,400
England	3,090	10.0	47,390
North East	93	0.3	1,310
North West	301	1.0	4,310
Yorkshire and the Humber	207	0.7	2,980
East Midlands	208	0.7	3,060
West Midlands	235	0.8	3,410
East	394	1.3	6,060
London	685	2.2	11,200
South East	696	2.3	11,100
South West	271	0.9	3,960
Wales	105	0.3	1,460
Scotland	281	0.9	4,100
Northern Ireland	55	0.2	786
<i>Taxpayers liable at additional rate</i>			
United Kingdom	262	0.9	37,500
England	237	0.8	34,240
North East	3	0.0	330
North West	13	0.0	1,690
Yorkshire and the Humber	9	0.0	1,070
East Midlands	10	0.0	1,040
West Midlands	11	0.0	1,210
East	31	0.1	3,810
London	88	0.3	15,500
South East	59	0.2	8,110
South West	13	0.0	1,480
Wales	3	0.0	302
Scotland	13	0.0	1,520
Northern Ireland	2	0.0	253

Note:

Incomes are allocated to regions and countries according to the residence of the recipient. The postcode has been used to determine the county and hence the region for the overwhelming majority of cases. Some members of the Forces and Merchant Navy, together with a small number of people serving overseas and people with overseas addresses have not been allocated to regions, but have been included in the UK figures. There are also a small number of people in the sample where it was not possible to identify their postcode and therefore identify the correct region. These have also been included in the UK figures. This explains why the regional amounts do not add up to the UK total.

Source:

Survey of Personal Incomes 2011-12

Insolvency: Civil Proceedings

John Glen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimate he has made of how much will be collected annually by HM Revenue and Customs through successful insolvency litigation with the use of damages-based agreements.

[193369]

Mr Gauke: No estimate of the amount that will be collected annually under these agreements has been made.

John Glen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimate he has made of the annual cost to HM Revenue and Customs of the reforms to insolvency litigation under the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012.

[193370]

Mr Gauke: No estimate of the annual cost to HM Revenue and Customs has been made.

John Glen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much HM Revenue and Customs collected following successful insolvency litigation cases in each year since 2010.

[193371]

Mr Gauke: HMRC does not define whether insolvency litigation is a success or not purely in terms of what is collected. There are a number of other reasons for embarking on such action, for instance compliance and the protection of other creditors. HMRC does not hold information in the format requested.

Investment Trusts

Mr Baron: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what steps the Government has taken to ensure that investment trusts are excluded from legislation on packaged retail investment products presently being considered by the European Parliament.

[193988]

Sajid Javid: The Packaged Retail Investment Products (PRIps) Regulation will create a standardised disclosure document, called a Key Information Document that will apply to all PRIps manufactured in Europe regardless of the legal form (with the exception of UCITS, which have their own regime). This will create a level playing field for investment products and make it easier for investors to compare substitutable products. Since investment trusts companies are substitutable with other packaged retail investment products, the Government supports their inclusion in the regulation. The Government has however advocated a transitional exemption for those investment trust companies which have recently adopted the disclosure regime designed for UCITS.

Mortgages

Stewart Hosie: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many endowment mortgage complaints have been rejected by insurance companies and upheld by the Financial Ombudsman Service since 2010.

[193862]

Sajid Javid: The Government does not collect data on the number of cases upheld by the Financial Ombudsman Service (FOS). The FOS routinely collects and publishes statistics about the complaints referred to them, which they make publicly available on their website.

Mortgages: Interest Rates

John Mann: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what steps he is taking against mortgage lenders who breach the terms of tracker-rate mortgage contracts and unilaterally increase the interest rate charged.

[193279]

Sajid Javid: The independent Financial Conduct Authority is responsible for the conduct regulation of residential mortgages, and sets the rules lenders are required to meet to ensure that consumers are treated fairly.

It is worth being aware that when mortgage regulation was introduced in October 2004, it drew a distinction between owner-occupiers who face losing their home if things go wrong and buy-to-let landlords, whose properties are investments and who do not face the same risk. The Government is committed to regulating only where there is a clear case for doing so, in order to avoid putting additional costs on businesses that would ultimately lead to higher costs for customers.

Pensions

Cathy Jamieson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what steps he has taken to ensure that free and impartial guidance will be available to (a) drawing down their pensions at 55 and (b) taking partial retirement. [193747]

Mr Gauke: Alongside the more flexible pension reforms, the Government announced a new guarantee that everyone with a defined contribution pension will be offered free and impartial face to face guidance on their financial choices in retirement when they retire.

It is important that this guidance ensures that consumers are empowered and equipped to make the most of their pension savings, and to make decisions that best suit their personal circumstances and risk appetite for the duration of their retirement. That is why the Government is introducing a new guarantee that all individuals with a defined contribution pension in the UK approaching retirement will be offered guidance at the point of retirement. How best to deliver this guidance forms part of the Government's consultation, "Flexibility and Choice in Pensions".

Revenue and Customs

Steve McCabe: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) if he will publish the guidance given to HM Revenue and Customs on how that body should exercise its new powers to directly remove money from an individual's bank account; [193549]

(2) what steps HM Revenue and Customs is required to take to prove that a debt is owed before officials directly extract money from a person's bank account. [193550]

Mr Gauke: The Government will publish a consultation on the implementation of this measure shortly.

As announced at Budget 2014, the Direct Recovery of Debts will focus on debtors who owe at least £1,000 and have been contacted multiple times by HMRC to pay. A minimum aggregate balance of £5,000 will be left across all accounts, including ISAs, after the debt is recovered.

Roads: Scotland

Cathy Jamieson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what discussions he has had with the Scottish Government on the allocation of funds from the Potholes Challenge Fund. [193666]

Danny Alexander: The Potholes Challenge Fund will be open to bids from local authorities in England.

The Scottish Government received Barnett Consequentials based on additional funding for the Department for Transport associated with the Fund at Budget 2014.

Stamp Duty Land Tax

Nick de Bois: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) how many sales of properties that qualified for the 15 per cent stamp duty land tax rate have taken place in (a) England and (b) London to date; [190752]

(2) how many sales of properties that qualified for the seven per cent stamp duty land tax rate have taken place in (a) England and (b) London to date; and if he will make a statement; [190754]

(3) what the average stamp duty yield in London is; and what this figure is as a proportion of the average London house price in the most recent month for which data is available; [190758]

(4) what the average stamp duty yield is in the UK; and what this figure is as a proportion of the average UK house price in the most recent month for which data is available; [190759]

(5) how much revenue accrued to the Exchequer from stamp duty land tax in each of the last 10 years for which figures are available; [190767]

(6) how much revenue accrued to the Exchequer from stamp duty land tax (SDLT) from properties in Greater London in each of the last 10 years for which figures are available; and what this figure represents as a proportion of total SDLT receipts; [190768]

(7) what estimate he has made of the number of first time buyers in London who did not pay stamp duty land tax on the purchase of a new home between 1 April 2010 and 24 March 2012; [190769]

(8) how many sales of properties in each London borough qualified for the (a) three, (b) four and (c) five per cent stamp duty land tax in (i) 2010, (ii) 2011 and (iii) 2012; [190770]

(9) how many sales of properties that qualified for the (a) three per cent, (b) four per cent and (c) five per cent stamp duty land tax rate took place in London in (i) 2010, (ii) 2011 and (iii) 2012; and what proportion such sales represent of the total property sales in England at these bands. [190777]

Mr Gauke: HMRC has published stamp tax statistics for 2012-13 and we are therefore able to provide estimates for that year.

The number of properties chargeable at the 15% rate is less than 100 nationally and is too small to break down into smaller geographical areas.

The number of properties chargeable at the 7% rate in England is estimated to be approximately 3,100 and in London approximately 2,300.

Stamp tax statistics for 2013-14 will be published on 27 September 2014 and thereafter will be available for supplementary analysis.

The average stamp duty land tax yield in London and the UK for 2012-13 can be derived from the HMRC publication 'UK Stamp Tax statistics 2012-13', which is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-stamp-tax-statistics>

The total number of transactions, value of transactions and stamp duty land Tax yield can be found in table 4.2. The average yield for residential properties in London is approximately £16,230, which represents 3.6% of the average residential property transaction.

The average yield for the UK is approximately £5,283, which is 2.3% of the average residential property transaction.

Total yield from stamp duty for the past 10 years can be found in the HMRC publication 'Tax and NICs receipts: statistics table' at this link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/hmrc-tax-and-nics-receipts-for-the-uk>

Yield attributable to residential property for the UK and by Government office region is published in table

2.2 of 'UK Stamp Tax statistics 2012-13', linked above. Yield for non-residential properties for the most recent year is contained in table 4.2 of that publication and historic data is held in the National Archives:

http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/*/http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/stats/stamp_duty/menu.htm

Relief from stamp duty land tax was available for residential property transactions where the consideration was more than £125,000 and not more than £250,000 and where the effective date of the transaction was on or after 25 March 2010 and before 25 March 2012. HMRC estimates that approximately 37,000 purchasers claimed First Time Buyer's relief in London during that period.

The following table contains estimates of the number of transactions that took place in each London borough, the total for London and what that represents as a proportion of the total for England. Figures for the 3% and 4% bands are given for 2010-11. For 2011-12 and 2012-13 figures are also given for the 5% band.

	2010-11			2011-12			2012-13		
	3%	4%	3%	4%	5%	3%	4%	5%	
Barking and Dagenham	110	1-	110	1-	1-	110	1-	1-	
Barnet	2,040	1,200	2,000	790	250	2,100	890	200	
Bexley	620	40	680	60	1-	790	50	1-	
Brent	1,040	350	1,180	300	100	1,240	310	80	
Bromley	2,020	630	2,020	510	110	2,180	560	70	
Camden	940	1,400	1,190	900	530	1,190	910	390	
City of London	700	440	790	360	120	830	360	70	
Croydon	1,220	270	1,180	190	40	1,390	220	1-	
Ealing	1,420	550	1,380	510	110	1,780	670	110	
Enfield	1,030	250	960	200	40	1,100	220	1-	
Greenwich	690	170	1,050	160	50	1,070	200	40	
Hackney	370	100	1,190	350	30	1,640	520	40	
Hammersmith	1,300	1,270	1,390	930	460	1,290	980	460	
Haringey	750	520	1,080	390	140	1,230	420	140	
Harrow	1,340	290	1,220	210	50	1,340	250	40	
Havering	790	150	760	90	1-	800	90	1-	
Hillingdon	1,430	210	1,340	250	1-	1,460	230	1-	
Hounslow	920	380	900	270	110	1,040	290	80	
Islington	690	470	1,470	740	210	1,550	790	240	
Kensington and Chelsea	880	3,000	750	1,130	1,620	650	1,070	800	
Kingston upon Thames	1,280	390	1,140	340	60	1,300	390	60	
Lambeth	1,140	490	1,830	560	140	2,160	730	140	
Lewisham	860	170	1,080	150	1-	1,430	210	1-	
Merton	970	560	1,020	440	180	1,150	470	120	
Newham	170	1-	280	1-	1-	370	1-	1-	
Redbridge	1,260	210	1,160	180	1-	1,200	180	1-	
Richmond upon Thames	1,670	1,360	1,420	950	360	1,650	1,000	330	
Southwark	1,280	500	1,750	560	150	1,640	690	150	
Sutton	810	150	850	170	1-	940	140	1-	
Tower Hamlets	1,410	290	1,860	390	90	2,340	460	60	
Waltham Forest	590	40	710	40	1-	970	60	1-	
Wandsworth	2,770	1,770	2,830	1,460	470	2,990	1,540	420	
Westminster	1,360	3,090	1,460	1,540	1,560	1,390	1,560	980	
London	35,800	20,700	40,000	15,100	7,000	44,300	16,400	5,000	
As percentage of England	25	42	28	41	61	29	42	57	

¹ Figures suppressed to protect taxpayer confidentiality

Estimates are rounded to the nearest 10 transactions at borough level and 100 for London. Small estimates have been suppressed in order to maintain taxpayer confidentiality.

Stock Market: Channel Islands

Alun Cairns: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what discussions he has held with the Guernsey Financial Services Commission on its investigation into the Channel Islands Stock Exchange over its recognised status and the recent reported allegations of wrongdoing. [193331]

Mr Gauke: There have been no discussions with the Guernsey Financial Services Commission in relation to the Channel Islands Stock Exchange's Recognised Stock Exchange designation.

Tax Allowances: Personal Pensions

Mr Gregory Campbell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much income tax relief was payable in respect of personal pension contributions for income taxed at (a) 40 per cent and (b) 20 per cent in 2012-13; and how many people in each category received such relief. [193743]

Mr Gauke: Tax relief on pension contributions is the primary means by which the Government incentivises saving for retirement. The estimated contributions made to personal pensions and total tax relief in 2012-13 may be found in the published National Statistics produced by HMRC here:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/285089/PEN6.pdf

The latest available estimates (from 2011-12) of the number of people receiving income tax deductions for their personal pension contributions and the value of deductions by different income levels can be found in Table 3.8 at the following link:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/276037/tables3-1_3-11.pdf

Tax Evasion

John McDonnell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many evasion referrals were made by the taskforces established by HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) to crack down on tax evasion and tax avoidance to the HMRC Evasion Referral Team in each tax year from 2011-12; and how many of those referrals were adopted as working cases by the HMRC's (i) Criminal Investigation, (ii) Specialist Investigation and (iii) Local Compliance Fraud business units. [193119]

Mr Gauke: The figures requested are in the following table:

	Number			
	<i>Taskforce Evasion Referrals received</i>	<i>Adopted by Criminal Investigations or the Criminal Taxes Unit</i>	<i>Adopted by Specialist Investigations</i>	<i>Adopted by Local Compliance Fraud</i>
2011-12	128	14	0	1
2012-13	336	38	6	24

	Number			
	<i>Taskforce Evasion Referrals received</i>	<i>Adopted by Criminal Investigations or the Criminal Taxes Unit</i>	<i>Adopted by Specialist Investigations</i>	<i>Adopted by Local Compliance Fraud</i>
2013-14	557	68	9	52

The figures only cover the period up to 28 February 2014. As at that date there were still 118 referrals being reviewed some of which may subsequently be adopted.

The referrals are made by HMRC officers when they suspect or discover evasion. The process is designed to escalate this type of case to a specialist team—Criminal Investigation, Specialist Investigation or Local Compliance Fraud—for review. If the case is not adopted by one of these teams it is returned to the referring officer to deal with.

John McDonnell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many evasion referrals were made to the HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) Evasion Referral Team in each tax year since 2011-12; and how many of those referrals were adopted as working cases by HMRC's (a) Criminal Investigation, (b) Specialist Investigation and (c) Local Compliance Fraud business units in each such year. [193124]

Mr Gauke: The figures requested are in the following table:

	Number			
	<i>Tax Evasion Referrals received</i>	<i>Adopted by Criminal Investigations or the Criminal Taxes Unit</i>	<i>Adopted by Specialist Investigations</i>	<i>Adopted by Local Compliance Fraud</i>
2011-12	3,584	262	121	244
2012-13	2,888	330	119	215

The figures only cover the period up to 28 February 2014. As at that date there were still 565 referrals being reviewed some of which may subsequently be adopted.

The referrals are made by HMRC officers when they suspect or discover evasion. The process is designed to escalate this type of case to a specialist team—Criminal Investigation, Specialist Investigation or Local Compliance Fraud—for review. If the case is not adopted by one of these teams it is returned to the referring officer to deal with.

Tax Evasion: Travellers

Philip Davies: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the annual amount of tax evasion attributable to gypsies and travellers. [193018]

Mr Gauke: In 'Measuring Tax Gaps 2013' HMRC estimated that evasion accounted for around £5.1 billion (15%) of the total tax gap in 2011-12. This can be found at the following link:

<http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/statistics/tax-gaps/mtg-2013.pdf>

These estimates cannot be disaggregated by Gypsies and travellers.

Taxation: Environment Protection

Catherine McKinnell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer with reference to paragraph 2.30 of Budget 2014, what the (a) total and (b) annual monetary value will be of the compensation package for higher electricity costs for energy intensive industries resulting from the renewables obligation and feed-in tariffs; what the eligibility criteria for this scheme will be; and what estimate he has made of the number of energy intensive industries that will meet these criteria. [193580]

Nicky Morgan: These schemes will begin in 2016-17. Departments' spending plans for years beyond 2015-16 will be set out at future spending reviews. The detailed design of the scheme will need to take account of EU state aid guidelines. The final policy design, compatible with state aid, will determine which companies are eligible and how many there will be.

Taxation: Pensions

Cathy Jamieson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer on what basis the projection in the Budget 2014 that the pension proposals will generate £1.2 billion in marginal taxation by 2018-19 was calculated. [193892]

Mr Gauke: The Government estimates that the greater flexibility, announced for pensioners at Budget 2014, will result in faster withdrawal of pension income than would otherwise have been the case. The methodology behind this costing—which was certified by the Office for Budget Responsibility—can be seen in the “Budget 2014: Policy Costings” document (p. 11), available here:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/295067/PU1638_policy_costings_bud_2014_with_correction_slip.pdf

<i>HOD</i>	<i>2009-10</i>	<i>2010-11</i>	<i>2011-12</i>	<i>2012-13</i>
Income Tax	9,703,600,140.60	11,062,294,029.42	12,032,623,916.28	12,452,181,005.78
VAT	52,098,844,904.82	65,208,522,155.96	75,332,913,101.11	74,730,895,023.43
Corporation Tax	8,993,368,840.74	5,012,774,914.88	6,999,305,350.27	4,619,517,414.07
National Insurance Contributions.	381,775,025.34	359,560,830.57	233,269,374.25	749,910,875.73

Children: Day Care

Stella Creasy: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make an assessment of the potential effects of the provisions of the Consumer Rights Bill on the administration and provision of child care vouchers; and if he will make a statement. [193161]

Jenny Willott: I have been asked to reply on behalf of the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills.

Where child care services are provided by a trader (eg a nursery school) to a consumer (eg a parent) under a contract, then Chapter 4 (the Services Chapter) of the Consumer Rights Bill will apply.

This chapter requires that these traders provide services with reasonable care and skill and in line with certain

Taxation: Rebates

John McDonnell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) how many tax refunds were withheld for inquiry to be made in the tax years (a) 2009-10, (b) 2010-11, (c) 2011-12 and (d) 2012-13 for (i) income tax, (ii) value added tax, (iii) corporation tax and (iv) national insurance; [193120]

(2) what part by value of the tax refunds paid without being held for inquiry subsequently were reclaimed from the taxpayer to whom they were paid in the tax years (a) 2009-10, (b) 2010-11, (c) 2011-12 and (d) 2012-13 for (i) income tax, (ii) value added tax, (iii) corporation tax and (iv) national insurance; [193121]

(3) what the value of tax refunds withheld for inquiry to be made was in the tax years (a) 2009-10, (b) 2010-11, (c) 2011-12 and (d) 2012-13 for (i) income tax, (ii) value added tax, (iii) corporation tax and (iv) national insurance; and what part by value was subsequently remitted to the taxpayer making the claim. [193122]

Mr Gauke: We are unable to provide the level of analysis asked for in these questions. HMRC does not have case tracking systems that can generate reports at the level of detail requested and any attempt to collate the information manually could only be done at disproportionate cost.

John McDonnell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many tax refunds were made in the tax years (a) 2009-10, (b) 2010-11, (c) 2011-12 and (d) 2012-13 for (i) income tax, (ii) value added tax, (iii) corporation tax and (iv) national insurance; and what the total value of refunds was in each such category in each such year. [193123]

Mr Gauke: The figures shown represent the value of repayment figures as included in the accrued net revenue figures in the Statement of Revenue, Other Income and Expenditure which are published in the Annual Report and Accounts. We hold only the total value not number of repayments made by tax type.

information given about the service. If that is not the case, the chapter sets out remedies which the consumer is entitled to, such as a repeat performance or, failing that, a reduction in price. Consumers may also be entitled to damages under the common law and the Bill makes this clear. Where there are other enactments which apply, this chapter makes clear that those take precedence (clause 53), which ensures that current standards still apply where they are set out in existing enactments.

In the case of child care vouchers offered under an employer-supported child care scheme, the contract for provision of child care is between the parent (consumer) and the child care provider (the trader), therefore child care provided using the voucher scheme is covered by this chapter of the Consumer Rights Bill.

We expect that, overall, consumers will benefit from the proposed reforms to the services regime. We estimate quantified benefits of £33 million per annum, of which £9 million is from the reduced risk of consumer detriment. In addition to these quantified benefits there are a range of economic benefits that have not been quantified. The reforms would deliver market-wide changes through promoting confident consumers, experimenting with new products or services and switching suppliers, which in turn should drive innovation, greater competitiveness and deliver new opportunities for economic growth.

The Government is also committed to improving the accessibility, affordability and quality of child care. To that end we are encouraging schools to offer more nursery provision, making it easier for people to take up childminding by introducing childminder agencies, and have introduced a new entitlement to funded early education for the least advantaged two-year-olds.

HEALTH

Botulinum Toxin

Jim Shannon: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what safeguards are in place to protect people against health problems arising from operations involving the use of botulism toxin. [193542]

Dr Poulter: As a licensed medicine the safety of botulinum toxin itself is not under question and I refer the hon. Member to the written answer given by the Minister of State, Department of Health, the hon. Member for North Norfolk (Norman Lamb), on 28 January 2014, *Official Report*, column 492W, which sets

out the current arrangements for regulation of botulinum toxin products. However, as with other injectable products patients may experience adverse outcomes.

Brain: Injuries

Jim Shannon: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps his Department is taking to reduce the number of cases of concussion in (a) football and (b) other contact sports. [193544]

Jane Ellison: The NHS Choices website provides the public with general advice on reducing the risk of concussion when participating in sport. This advice includes wearing a helmet, where appropriate, and ensuring participation is supervised by a properly qualified and trained person.

However, matters concerning action to prevent concussion cases in sport would be the responsibility of the Department for Culture, Media and Sport.

Cancer

Luciana Berger: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what estimate he has made of the proportion of total funding for cancer research carried out in the UK that came from government in (a) 2010-11, (b) 2011-12, (c) 2012-13 and (d) 2013-14. [193693]

Dr Poulter: The following figures provide an estimate of funding for cancer research, provided by the National Cancer Research Institute (NCRI) Cancer Research Database 2010 to 2013. This includes only direct spend on cancer research, or spend which directly supports cancer research.

	£			
	Database			
	2010	2011	2012	2013
Research Council spend (BBSRC, MRC, ESRC)	118,618,495	123,958,071	106,204,054	90,108,328
Health Department spend (England, Scotland, Wales, NI)	75,939,121	85,522,676	87,398,281	84,585,155
Total Government spend (Research Councils + Health Departments)	194,557,617	209,480,747	193,602,335	174,693,483
Non-Government NCRI Partners spend (Charities)	309,700,809	311,933,001	313,681,324	328,119,144
Total NCRI Partner spend	504,258,426	521,413,748	507,283,659	502,812,627

Key:

BBSRC—Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council

MRC—Medical Research Council

ESRC—Economic and Social Research Council

Note:

These figures have not been adjusted for inflation.

Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease

Stephen McPartland: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much his Department has spent on research into chronic obstructive pulmonary disease in each of the last five years. [193220]

Dr Poulter: Expenditure by the Department through research programmes, research centres and units, and research fellowships on research on chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) is shown in the following table.

	£ million
2009-10	1.1
2010-11	1.3
2011-12	2.7
2012-13	4.2
2013-14	14.5

¹ Estimated.

Total spend is higher than the figures shown because expenditure by the National Institute for Health Research Clinical Research Network (CRN) on COPD cannot be disaggregated from total CRN expenditure.

Stephen McPartland: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what estimate he has made of the

proportion of pulmonary rehabilitation services that were at full provision in (a) 2010, (b) 2011 and (c) 2012; [193223]

(2) how much the NHS spends on provision of pulmonary rehabilitation services in England; and how much the NHS spends on provision of cardiac rehabilitation services in England. [193224]

Jane Ellison: No estimate has been made of pulmonary rehabilitation services that were at full provision in the years requested as this information is not held centrally. It is for local commissioners to determine the requirements to meet the needs of their local populations.

The current national Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease audit will provide some information on the range and quality of pulmonary, rehabilitation services when it reports next year. Further information can be found at:

www.rcplondon.ac.uk/projects/national-copd-audit-programme-starting-2013

The Department does not collect data on how much the national health service spends on the provision of pulmonary and cardiac rehabilitation services in the format requested.

The Department collects reference costs annually from NHS trusts and NHS foundation trusts in England. However, these costs cover a broader range of procedures and some costs associated with cardiac and pulmonary rehabilitation may relate to different services.

Cost data related to providing cardiac rehabilitation and pulmonary rehabilitation services for 2012-13 to NHS trusts and NHS foundation trusts are listed in the following table.

Description	Total cost (£ million)
Rehabilitation for Acute Myocardial Infarction and Other Cardiac Disorders	10.4
Rehabilitation for Respiratory Disorders	24.1
Rehabilitation for Other Disorders	304.0

The following table shows the total cost to NHS trusts and NHS foundation trusts in 2012-13 for out-patient attendances for the service descriptions of cardiac rehabilitation and programmed pulmonary rehabilitation.

Service description	Total cost (£ million)
Programmed Pulmonary Rehabilitation	0.1
Cardiac Rehabilitation	1.9

Stephen McPartland: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much funding his Department provided for awareness-raising work for chronic obstructive pulmonary disease in (a) 2011, (b) 2012 and (c) 2013. [193235]

Jane Ellison: The Department did not run any specific public awareness campaigns on chronic obstructive pulmonary disease in 2011, 2012 or 2013. However, the Department's Marketing team spent £460,000 in financial year 2010-11, £3,160,000 in 2011-12 and £8,210,000 in

2012-13 on mass media to raise awareness of the dangers of smoking, which is one of the main causes of chronic obstructive pulmonary disease.

In addition Public Health England recently ran a pilot campaign in Oldham and Rochdale to raise awareness amongst the public about the importance of visiting their general practitioner with symptoms of breathlessness. The campaign ran from 24 February for four weeks. The key messages of the campaign were

"If you get out of breath doing things you used to be able to do, tell your doctor. Getting out of breath could be a sign of heart or lung disease. Finding it early makes it more treatable, so don't ignore it, tell your doctor."

It is too early to have results for the Breathlessness campaign yet.

Cystic Fibrosis

Julian Sturdy: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment he has made of the quality of psychological support available to individuals with cystic fibrosis who receive a lung transplantation. [193292]

Jane Ellison: NHS Blood and Transplant is continuing to work with transplant centres to consider practical steps within the current system which could improve patient outcomes. It continues to review the current allocation process and works with international organisations to share learning to improve processes.

The Department is aware that the Cystic Fibrosis Trust published a report on 10 March 2014—"Hope for all: Improving lung transplantation for people with cystic fibrosis"—which sets out 13 recommendations around organ donation and transplantations for people living with cystic fibrosis. The report covered pre-and-post lung transplant standards for care, including psychosocial support.

Dementia

Jim Shannon: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment his Department has made of recent progress in the diagnosis of dementia and in the availability to the public of improved methods of diagnosis. [193540]

Norman Lamb: The current dementia diagnosis rate, 2012-13, is 48.7%, an increase from 46% in 2011-12. NHS England has set the first ever national ambition to improve dementia diagnosis rates to two-thirds by March 2015.

A dementia breakthrough challenge to demonstrate a step change in dementia diagnosis, with a prize of £1 million, has been set up by NHS Improving Quality.

Dental Services: Cumbria

Tim Farron: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many children (a) are and (b) are not registered with a dentist in (i) Cumbria and (ii) South Lakeland; [194021]

(2) how many people (a) are and (b) are not registered with a dentist in (i) Cumbria and (ii) South Lakeland. [193992]

Dr Poulter: Information is not available in the format requested.

Under the current dental contractual arrangements, introduced on 1 April 2006, patients do not have to be registered with a national health service dentist to receive NHS care. The closest equivalent measure to “registration” is the number of patients receiving NHS dental services (“patients seen”).

This data is available at Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) level. Cumbria CCG covers Carlisle, Eden, Allerdale, Copeland, Furness and South Lakeland areas.

The number of children seen by an NHS dentist in the 24-month period ending 31 December 2013 is shown in the following table:

	<i>Number of patients seen</i>	<i>Percentage of population</i>
England	7,876,013	69.0
North of England region	2,353,508	73.7
Cumbria, Northumberland, Tyne and Wear area team	280,298	74.5
Cumbria CCG	69,694	72.9

Notes:

1. Percentage of the population figures use Office for National Statistics (ONS) mid-year population estimates for 2011.
2. 0.2% of all data are assigned to an “Unallocated” CCG, usually because of an invalid postcode. These can still be assigned to an area team as this information is included in the raw data provided by the Business Service Authority (BSA), and thus they can also be allocated to a region.

Source:

NHS Dental Statistics for England: 2013/2014, Second quarterly report
www.hscic.gov.uk/pubs/dental1314q2

The number of patients seen by an NHS dentist in the 24-month period ending 31 December 2013 is shown in the following table:

	<i>Number of patients seen</i>	<i>Percentage of population</i>
England	29,909,023	55.9
North of England region	9,248,752	61.1
Cumbria, Northumberland, Tyne and Wear area team	1,167,012	60.5
Cumbria CCG	275,648	54.6

Notes:

1. Percentage of the population figures use ONS mid-year population estimates for 2011.
2. 0.2% of all data are assigned to an “Unallocated” CCG, usually because of an invalid postcode. These can still be assigned to an area team as this information is included in the raw data provided by the BSA, and thus they can also be allocated to a region.

Source:

NHS Dental Statistics for England: 2013/2014, Second quarterly report
www.hscic.gov.uk/pubs/dental1314q2

Drugs

Mr David Davis: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what steps he plans to take to ensure that clinical data from pharmaceutical companies on drugs over 15 years old is made available to clinical researchers; [193812]

(2) what steps his Department is taking to advance and promote transparency in the pharmaceutical industry in publishing data on drugs over 15 years old.

[193813]

Norman Lamb: The Government encourages the Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry to work with its members to share and promote best practice on clinical trial data transparency and data sharing. The new Clinical Trials Regulation that will be formally adopted by the Council of Ministers and the European Parliament in April or May this year obliges the European Commission to produce a guideline on the formatting and sharing of raw data on a voluntary basis.

Mr David Davis: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will take steps to ensure that the Medical and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency does not destroy clinical trial data on drugs licensed over 15 years ago; and if he will make a statement. [193986]

Norman Lamb: Under the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) records management policy, all information is retained for seven years unless there is a legal, regulatory, or business need to keep them for a shorter or longer period, or they are considered to be of lasting historic interest. The MHRA retains key documents relating to the agency’s assessment and decision-making processes, such as original assessment reports or papers submitted to advisory committees for advice. Some of these records are in turn filed permanently at the National Archives.

Under clinical trial regulations, the sponsor or other owner of the data must retain all documentation pertaining to the trial as long as the product is authorised. This documentation includes the trial protocol, methodology of the trial, with conditions under which it is performed and managed, details of the investigational product, the reference medicinal product and/or the placebo used, any standard operating procedures used for conducting the trial, all written opinions on the protocol and procedures, the investigator’s brochure, case report forms on each trial subject, final report and audit certificate(s), if available, and staff training records. The final trial report is retained by the sponsor or subsequent owner, for five years after the medicinal product is no longer authorised and the MHRA can request this information from the sponsor.

The MHRA’s approach to retention and disposal of information is kept under review.

<http://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/path-qa-review.pdf>

Drugs: Misuse

Dan Jarvis: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps the Government is taking to ensure that people are fully informed of the health risks of taking legal highs. [193689]

Jane Ellison: Education plays an important role in helping to ensure that young people are equipped with the information they need to make informed, healthy decisions and to keep themselves safe.

The Talk to FRANK service provides young people in England with friendly, confidential advice and information about drugs, including 'legal highs'/New Psychoactive Substances (NPS) and has tips on how to resist peer pressure to experiment. The service is provided through a range of channels (helpline, website, SMS, email, web chat) to suit a variety of different needs.

Drug education is part of the science national curriculum at key stage 2 and key stage 3 and provision in this area can be built on through Personal, Social, Health and Economic education.

From July to October 2013, the Home Office ran communications activity targeted at young people aged 13-18 to raise awareness of the risks, consequences and harms of NPS amongst those contemplating using these drugs by signposting them to the FRANK website for further information and advice about the effects and risks of NPS.

NPS will continue to remain a key work priority in drug policy and the Minister for Crime Prevention is currently leading a review to look at how the United Kingdom's response to new psychoactive substances can be enhanced beyond the existing measures.

The review is being conducted by an expert panel, which is looking at the potential enhancement of the current legislative framework as well as health and education.

Eyes: Diseases

Dan Jarvis: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what research his Department has commissioned into Leber's Hereditary Optic Neuropathy in the last five years; [193777]

(2) what assessment has been made of the effectiveness of the drug Idebonen in treating Leber's Hereditary Optic Neuropathy. [193778]

Dr Poulter: We have made no such assessment and the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence has not issued any guidance on the use of idebenone for the treatment of Leber's hereditary optic neuropathy (LHON).

Subject to contract, the Department's National Institute for Health Research has approved £0.5 million funding for a trial stratifying patients with LHON for idebenone therapy using mitochondrial DNA analysis.

Foetal Death

Jim Dobbin: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what disciplinary action he plans to take against hospital managers and workers who have incinerated foetal remains against the wishes of the parents. [193307]

Dr Poulter: Responsibility for ensuring that staff comply with their hospital's policy on disposal of fetal remains lies with the relevant national health service trust or NHS foundation trust. Any disciplinary action considered necessary as a result of inappropriate staff practice will be a matter for the trust or foundation trust as the employing authority.

General Practitioners

Alec Shelbrooke: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps his Department is taking to ensure that information sourced by GPs is reliable and safe to pass to patients. [193439]

Dr Poulter: It is the responsibility of individual general practitioners (GPs), using their professional clinical judgment, to ensure that the information that they give to patients is reliable and safe.

With regard to clinical information given to patients, medical revalidation, which commenced in December 2012, requires all doctors with a licence to practice medicine in the United Kingdom to provide evidence through their annual appraisals of how they have kept their knowledge and skills up to date, including the latest techniques, technologies and research.

GPs have to demonstrate that they are actively maintaining their skills through continual professional development and are aware of new clinical guidelines which are regularly published by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence and disseminated to GPs.

Health Education: Food

Luciana Berger: To ask the Secretary of State for Health pursuant to the answer to Lord Beecham of 20 March 2014, *Official Report*, House of Lords, column 269, how much the Government has spent on (a) Healthy Start, (b) Change4Life and (c) the School Fruit and Vegetable Scheme in each year since 2010. [193496]

Jane Ellison: Total Government expenditure on these schemes in each of the last three complete financial years is set out in the following table:

	<i>£ million</i>		
	<i>2010-11</i>	<i>2011-12</i>	<i>2012-13</i>
Healthy Start (United Kingdom)	105.3	105.2	104.9
Change4Life (England)	10	10.3	14
School Fruit and Vegetable Scheme (England)	40.5	41.3	38.3

Health Services: Greater Manchester

Sir Andrew Stunell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment he has made of the prevalence of gaming of 18 and 52 week waiting list thresholds by NHS secondary care providers in Greater Manchester. [193266]

Jane Ellison: No such assessment has been made.

The Department is not aware of any 'gaming' of the 18 and 52 week referral to treatment targets by national health service secondary care providers in Greater Manchester. 'Gaming' or manipulating NHS performance data is totally unacceptable. Any evidence of such practice would be investigated by the relevant NHS body as a priority and action taken.

Hospitals: Fairtrade Initiative

Mr Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what further steps he is taking to encourage the use of Fairtrade goods in catering in hospitals; and if he will make a statement. [193993]

Dr Poulter: Through the NHS Standard Contract, hospitals must have regard to Government Buying Standards for Food and Catering Services (Food GBS) which includes a requirement that at least 50% of tea and coffee is fairly traded. Data collected as part of the 2013 Patient Led Assessment of the Care Environment process indicates 50% of all hospitals report that they are fully compliant with Food GBS, with a further 25% actively working towards compliance.

In addition, financial incentives are now available to providers who adopt food standards. These incentives are part of the exemplar Commissioning for Quality and Innovation process and are negotiated locally.

The Department has established a Hospital Food Standards Panel, under the chairmanship of Dianne Jeffrey, chairman of Age UK. The panel is examining existing food standards including those relating to local and sustainable procurement referencing Fairtrade. The panel will report in autumn 2014.

Learning Disability

Chris Heaton-Harris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many people with learning disabilities received annual health checks in each year since 2009. [193343]

Norman Lamb: The numbers of people who received a check under the Clinical Directed Enhanced Services learning disabilities health check scheme are as follows:

<i>Number of people who received a check</i>	
2008-09	27,011
2009-10	58,919
2010-11 ¹	73,068
2011-12 ¹	86,134
2012-13	92,329

¹ Revised.

Note:

Following the publication of the 2010-11 figures by the National Health Service Omnibus survey to primary care trusts (PCTs) a small number of PCTs reported that they had returned incorrect figures and asked to be allowed to revise these. In each of the last two collections (May 2012 for 2011-12 figures and May 2013 for 2012-13 figures) PCTs were allowed to submit revised numbers for people eligible and receiving health checks in the previous year. Where indicated, numbers shown are the revised figures.

Chris Heaton-Harris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what steps his Department is taking to ensure all people with learning difficulties receive annual health checks; [193354]

(2) what targets his Department has set for the number of people with learning difficulties who will receive annual health checks in (a) 2014 and (b) 2015. [193355]

Norman Lamb: The learning disabilities health check scheme was introduced into the general practitioner (GP) contract in 2010-11. Take-up of the scheme by GP practices has steadily increased, and 83% of practices now offer this service to people with learning disabilities who are on their registered patient list. We have agreed with the GP Committee of the British Medical Association, to increase the qualifying cohort for health checks to include all patients from the age of 14.

We are very much committed to building on this progress, so that all people with moderate or severe learning disabilities have access to health checks. We consider that this is best done by continuing to extend take-up among the 17% of practices that are not yet providing the service. NHS England will work with system providers to develop a standard template that will address the priorities stated above. This template will enable GP practices to deliver a high standard of care to all patients

As part of the Enhanced Service Specification for those practices signed up to the learning disabilities health check scheme, it is a requirement that all eligible patients will be offered an annual health check. Work will continue with those practices who have not yet signed up to the scheme.

There are no targets set for annual health checks.

Medical Equipment

Stephen McPartland: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many GP practices in England have access to spirometry equipment; and what proportion of that equipment is quality-assured diagnostic level spirometry. [193222]

Dr Poulter: It is for individual general practitioner practices to determine what equipment is necessary in order to provide national health service primary medical services to their patients to meet the terms of their contract with NHS England.

Medical Records: Databases

Barbara Keeley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health pursuant to the answer of 20 March 2014, *Official Report*, columns 724-5W, on medical records: databases, if he will list the holders of a commercial re-use licence granted by the Health and Social Care Information Centre (HSCIC); and for each such licence for what purpose the use of HSCIC data was approved. [193405]

Dr Poulter: The Health and Social Care Information Centre (HSCIC) is committed to openness and transparency around the use of health data. Both the report, covering data approved, and released by HSCIC post 31 March 2013 and the audit, covering other data releases back to 2005 by NHS Information Centre, will include the purpose of the data release. The report will be published on 3 April 2014 and will be maintained thereafter. The audit will be available to report to the HSCIC Board at the end of April 2014. In parallel, the HSCIC is working on identifying which agreements cover reuse.

Medical Treatments

Mr O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Health which treatments have been appraised through a technology appraisal by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence or its predecessor bodies; in which indication each treatment was appraised; on which date each appraisal was (a) initiated and (b) concluded; what the estimated eligible patient population for the treatment in each appraised indication was; whether the end-of-life criteria were applied in each final appraisal determination; whether the additional healthcare costs associated with prolonged survival were captured in each final appraisal determination; what the (i) lowest, (ii) highest and (iii) base case estimate of the cost-per-quality adjusted life year of the treatment in each appraised indication was; and what the recommendation resulting from each appraisal was.

[193294]

Norman Lamb: Details of National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) technology appraisal decisions published between 2000 to end February 2014 have been placed in the Library.

NICE has advised that information on additional health care costs associated with prolonged survival and the lowest, highest and base case estimates of the cost per quality adjusted life year (QALY) of each appraised indication is not held.

NICE does hold the most plausible cost per QALY for each technology appraisal, the estimated eligible patient population for each appraised indication, details of appraisals where end-of-life criteria were applied in each final appraisal determination and the dates each appraisal was initiated and concluded. However, this information could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Medicine: Research

Rebecca Harris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment he has made of the effect of the draft European General Data Protection Regulation on medical research.

[193436]

Dr Poulter: For medical research the proposed Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs Committee (LIBE) text which the European Parliament has voted to take forward will have a detrimental effect on conducting medical research in the EU including in the United Kingdom.

The overall impact to research of the proposed LIBE proposals would make accessing sensitive personal information difficult, as consent from an individual citizen is required if identifiable, pseudonymised or linked data were needed, noting most research is rarely on one data set. Therefore, conducting research in the EU, using data, would become difficult to conduct.

Department of Health officials are working with Ministry of Justice officials to resist any changes that would have a negative impact on medical research.

Meningitis

Luciana Berger: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what estimate his Department has made of the timeframe within which it will be able to negotiate a cost-effective price for the meningitis B vaccine. [193692]

Jane Ellison: The Department and Public Health England will start negotiations with Novartis, which produces the only licensed meningitis B vaccine, as soon as possible.

The first step in these negotiations will be to determine whether we can get the vaccine at a cost-effective price, as the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation is recommending. This will be a matter for negotiation with the manufacturers.

As negotiations are yet to commence, we are at present unable to give a clear time scale within which these will be concluded.

If successful, the programme will be implemented as rapidly as possible while ensuring we can establish a robust vaccination programme with a reliable supply of vaccine.

Mental Health Services

Luciana Berger: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment his Department has made of the proportion of local authorities in England which have rescinded agreements made with NHS mental health trusts under section 75 of the National Health Services Act 2006 in each year since 2010. [193631]

Norman Lamb: No such assessment has been made.

Luciana Berger: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment his Department has made of the proportion and number of people in England who have been medicated for psychiatric disorders in each of the last five years. [193660]

Norman Lamb: No assessment has been made of the proportion and number of people in England who have been medicated for psychiatric disorders.

Necrotising Fasciitis

Jim Shannon: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many cases of necrotising fasciitis have been recorded in each of the last five years. [193541]

Jane Ellison: Necrotising Fasciitis (NF) is a rare disease caused by a number of different bacteria. We have no dedicated surveillance systems for NF and as such do not have any accurate data on numbers of cases diagnosed each year. Public Health England does have past estimates of numbers of NF cases due to group A streptococci, bacteria associated with particularly severe infection, but not in the last five years.

NHS: Expenditure

Rachel Reeves: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how much was spent on nationally commissioned NHS services (a) at each hospital trust and (b) for each medical specialty in (i) 2011-12, (ii) 2010-11, (iii) 2009-10, (iv) 2008-09, (v) 2007-08, (vi) 2006-07, (vii) 2005-06 and (viii) 2004-05; [193226]

(2) how much has been spent on nationally-commissioned NHS services (a) at each hospital trust and (b) for each medical specialty in 2012-13. [193228]

Jane Ellison: This information is not collected in the format requested.

HS England advises that it does not currently hold data on spend across the country on specialised services at hospital trust or medical specialty level. NHS England is in the process of developing a single, standard mechanism for counting, coding and analysing specialised services activity and finance data.

NHS: Re-employment

Helen Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many NHS staff in (a) Warrington, (b) the North West and (c) England who have been made redundant since 2010 have since been re-employed by the NHS on (i) a permanent basis, (ii) on a fixed-term contract and (iii) as consultants. [193814]

Dr Poulter: In the context of a national health service workforce of almost 1.3 million, the number of NHS staff to have been made redundant since May 2010 and subsequently re-employed by an NHS organisation is relatively small, estimated to be in the specific geographical region as shown in the following table.

	Permanent	Fixed-term contract	Total
Warrington	5	5	10
North-west	340	200	540
England	2,630	1,420	4,050

Notes:

- These estimates are derived from unvalidated data from the electronic staff record (ESR) data warehouse, and so only cover redundancies from, and re-employment to, those organisations that use ESR.
- It is not possible to use ESR records to identify consultants as they are not directly employed by the NHS.
- The ESR is the human resources and payroll system that covers most NHS employees. ESR was fully rolled out across the NHS in April 2008. The ESR data used in this reply is not centrally validated and its reliability is subject to local coding practice. Redundancies are identified by staff records with a reason for leaving coded as either voluntary or compulsory redundancy.
- Only those individuals with a leaving date of 1 May 2010 or later and a hire, return, date of 31 December 2013 or earlier have been included in the total. The figure includes those who are recorded as having been re-employed with a substantive, either permanent or fixed-term, contract. It is not possible to identify consultants not directly employed by the NHS using ESR records.
- The following organisations which use ESR have been identified within each geographical area:
 "Warrington": Warrington Primary Care Trust, Warrington Clinical Commissioning Group and the Warrington and Halton NHS Foundation Trust.
 "North-west": all organisations listed on ESR as belonging to the North West Local Education and Training Board regions. This includes a range of CCGs, PCTs, Trusts, Foundation Trusts and the North West Ambulance Trust.
- In a small number of cases, staff are recorded as being made redundant more than once. In such cases, only the latest redundancy is counted. Where staff have more than one start date subsequent to redundancy, only the earliest date is counted. Some staff initially re-employed on a fixed-term contract basis who subsequently are further employed on a permanent basis will only be counted on the fixed-term contract basis, and vice versa.

NHS: Reorganisation

Andrew Gwynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Health pursuant to the statement of 18 July 2013, *Official Report*, columns 125-6WS, on NHS modernisation (costs and benefits), if he will publish a detailed breakdown of the (a) gross savings over the transition period and (b) long-term annual savings. [193748]

Jane Ellison: Gross reductions in administration costs over the period 2010-11 to 2012-13 are set out as follows. These are calculated on a basis consistent with the impact assessment for the Health and Social Care

Bill (published in September 2011) ie the figures set aside any administrative spending on implementing the reforms.

	£ million
2010-11	240
2011-12	1,341
2012-13	1,587
Total	3,168

Figures for 2013-14 will be available when the Department's annual report and accounts are published. Consistent with the written ministerial statement given by the Secretary of State for Health, my right hon. Friend the Member for South West Surrey (Mr Hunt), on 18 July 2013, *Official Report*, columns 125-26WS, on the costs and benefits of NHS Modernisation, the cumulative savings arising from the reforms over this Parliament are still expected to be at least £5.5 billion in real terms.

On a basis consistent with the impact assessment, the long term annual savings arising from the reforms are still expected to be £1.5 billion. Because the set of bodies that existed in 2010-11 is different from the set that will exist in 2014-15 it is not possible to set out how the budgets of individual bodies have changed over this period.

NHS: Staff

Julie Hilling: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many managers and administrators were employed in the NHS in the (a) latest period for which figures are available and (b) 12 months prior to that period. [193509]

Dr Poulter: The Health and Social Care Information Centre Provisional Monthly Workforce Statistics show the number of managers and administrators employed by the national health service in England. The latest available statistics are for December 2013.

The numbers of administrative staff (clerical and administrative staff) and managers as at December 2012 and December 2013 are shown in the following table. Included in these figures are administrative staff who support clinicians, such as medical secretaries, call handlers and receptionists. Such staff have patient contact as part of their duties.

NHS hospital and community health services provisional monthly statistics: Clerical and administrative staff and managers and senior managers in England by main staff group as at 31 December each specified year.

	Full-time equivalent	
	December 2012	December 2013
<i>Clerical and administrative</i>		
Support to doctors and nursing staff	87,455	87,970
Support to ST&T staff	10,104	10,131
Support to ambulance staff	3,954	4,556
Central functions	94,743	93,949
Hotel, property and estates	6,170	6,372
Managers and senior managers	35,535	34,862

	Full-time equivalent	
	Total	
	December 2012	December 2013
<i>Of which:</i>		
Senior manager	10,585	10,375
Manager	24,950	24,486
Senior managers, managers, clerical and admin staff	237,960	237,842

Notes:

1. Clerical and administrative staff work in the 'Support to doctors and nursing staff', 'Support to ST&T staff' and 'Support to ambulance staff' staff groups. These are staff who have some patient contact as part of their duties, such as receptionists, medical secretaries or call handlers, for example. Clerical and administrative staff who work in the categories 'Central functions' and 'Hotel, property and estates' are thought to have no patient contact.
2. Full-time equivalent figures are rounded to the nearest whole number.
3. ST&T-Scientific, Therapeutic and Technical.

Source:

Health and Social Care Information Centre Provisional Monthly Workforce Statistics

Obesity: Children

Andrew Percy: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what proportion of children in (a) Brigg and Goole constituency, (b) Yorkshire and Humber and (c) England were classed as overweight in each year since 1997. [193621]

Jane Ellison: The proportion of children overweight in (a) Brigg and Goole constituency, (b) Yorkshire and Humber and (c) England as measured by the National Child Measurement Programme (NCMP) 2006-07 to 2012-13 is shown in the following table. There are no local level child obesity data prior to 2006-07 in the NCMP. There are data for England as a whole from the Health Survey for England from 1995.

Prevalence of overweight (including obese) among children aged four to five (reception) and 10 to 11 (year 6) years

	Percentage							
	England		Yorkshire and the Humber		East Riding of Yorkshire		North Lincolnshire	
	Reception	Year 6	Reception	Year 6	Reception	Year 6	Reception	Year 6
2006-07	22.9	31.7	22.7	31.3	22.4	29.5	22.2	31.7
2007-08	22.6	32.6	22.8	33.1	24.7	31.6	24.4	32.2
2008-09	22.8	32.6	22.7	32.6	25.5	31.3	19.2	31.7
2009-10	23.1	33.4	22.1	33.1	24.8	33.6	18.5	32.4
2010-11	22.6	33.4	22.1	33.2	24.2	31.8	24.2	32.0
2011-12	22.6	33.9	22.1	33.7	23.9	33.2	23.7	35.9
2012-13	22.2	33.3	21.9	33.2	20.8	32.7	24.9	33.4

Organs: Donors

Andrew Percy: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many people were added to the organ donor register in Brigg and Goole constituency in each of the last five years. [193907]

Jane Ellison: The information requested is shown in the following table.

Number of people added to the NHS organ donor register in Brigg and Goole constituency in each of the calendar year from 2009 to 2013

	Number
2009	1,207
2010	1,371
2011	1,202
2012	1,161
2013	1,439
Total	6,380

Source:

NHS Blood and Transplant.

Pathology

Andrew Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment he has made of trends in the incidence of quality failures in NHS hospital histopathology laboratories over the last five years. [193694]

Dr Poulter: The Department has not made any recent assessment of trends in the incidence of quality failures in national health service hospital histopathology laboratories over the last five years.

NHS England advises it is not aware of any specific work that has been undertaken nationally in this area. However, in late 2012 Professor Sir Bruce Keogh, the then NHS Medical Director, and now NHS England's Medical Director, commissioned an independent review into pathology quality assurance. The outcome of the review was published in January 2014¹.

The review proposes ways in which the system could be strengthened, including that NHS England should look at how it might provide regular reports to the NHS on trends and errors in pathology.

¹ <http://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/path-qa-review.pdf>

Psoriasis

Mrs Gillan: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how his Department will incentivise the NHS to meet the National Institute for Care Excellence quality standard on psoriasis; [193431]

(2) what discussions his Department has had with NHS England on the implementation of the National Institute for Care Excellence quality standard on psoriasis; [193432]

(3) what assessment he has made of the implementation across the NHS in England of the National Institute for Care Excellence quality standard on psoriasis. [193433]

Norman Lamb: No discussions have taken place between the Department and NHS England regarding the implementation of the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) quality standard on psoriasis.

Quality standards are important in setting out to patients, the public, commissioners and providers what a high quality service should look like in a particular area of care. NHS England continues to champion their use with both commissioners and providers.

No assessment has been made of the implementation of the quality standard on psoriasis. While national health service organisations must have regard to NICE quality standards in planning and delivering services, the quality standards do not provide a comprehensive service specification and are not mandatory.

Radiotherapy

Tessa Munt: To ask the Secretary of State for Health pursuant to the answer of 29 January 2013, *Official Report*, column 718W, what the additional funding for radiotherapy was spent on in each year since April 2011; and if he will publish NHS England's expenditure plans for the additional £42 million allocated for improving radiotherapy services in 2014-15. [193376]

Jane Ellison: "Improving Outcomes: A Strategy for Cancer", published on 12 January 2011, set out our commitment to expand radiotherapy services by investing over £150 million in additional funding up to 2014-15 through recurrent revenue allocations to primary care trusts and was not ring-fenced for specific purposes.

With regard to the additional £42 million allocated for improving radiotherapy services in 2014-15, NHS England will be developing plans for improving radiotherapy, referencing the recently published "Vision for Radiotherapy" document produced in conjunction with Cancer Research UK, and will share these in due course.

Respiratory Syncytial Virus

Richard Harrington: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) vaccinations were administered in England in the last 12 months; what guidance his Department has issued on whether babies born prematurely or at risk of bronchiolitis should be given the RSV vaccination; and what assessment his Department has made of the potential benefits of administering the RSV vaccination to all babies born between November and February. [193698]

Jane Ellison: Data on the number of respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) immunisations given in the last 12 months is not available centrally.

Guidance on the RSV immunisation and on its use, is detailed in the publication, *Immunisation against Infectious Diseases*, also referred to as the 'Green Book'. This is available via the Public Health England area of the Gov.uk website, or

www.gov.uk/government/collections/immunisation-against-infectious-disease-the-green-book

This guidance is informed by advice from the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation, (JCVI), an independent Departmental expert committee and a statutory body constituted for the purpose of advising the Secretary of State on the provision of vaccination and immunisation services.

RSV is the organism responsible for the majority of cases of bronchiolitis. There is no licensed vaccine available for RSV. However, preventative treatment for RSV is available by passive immunisation with protective antibodies to protect at risk infants over the winter months. Unlike vaccines such as MMR and whooping cough that are routinely given to all children, passive immunity provides only short-term protection and is only appropriate for at-risk pre-term infants for whom RSV infection is likely to cause serious illness or death.

RSV passive immunisation is usually delivered in a secondary care setting during the RSV season. It is only recommended for young infants born prematurely and children under the age of two years who have predisposing conditions such as chronic lung disease, congenital heart disease or children who are immunodeficient, for whom RSV infection is likely to cause serious illness or death.

There is research under way to develop a vaccine for RSV. When a licensed vaccine becomes available, it will be considered by the JCVI.

Skin Cancer

Geoffrey Clifton-Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether NHS England has begun the process of considering the recommendation of the Cancer Drugs Fund Panel's decision in January 2014 that ipilimumab should be commissioned directly by NHS England through baseline commissioning as a first-line treatment for advanced melanoma. [193437]

Norman Lamb: NHS England has advised that the Chemotherapy Clinical Reference Group is in the process of considering the recommendation from the Cancer Drugs Fund panel that ipilimumab (Yervoy) should be considered for baseline commissioning as a first-line treatment for advanced melanoma.

Transplant Surgery: Lung Diseases

Stephen McPartland: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many (a) partial and (b) whole lung transplants have been performed in the last five years; and which conditions patients had that made them eligible for a lung transplant. [193221]

Jane Ellison: The information requested is in the following table.

Number of lung transplants by primary cardiothoracic disease and transplant type in the United Kingdom, 1 January 2009 to 31 December 2013

Primary cardiothoracic disease	Transplant type			Total
	Single	Double lung	Partial lung	
Other Heart Disease	0	1	0	1
Primary Pulmonary Hypertension	0	25	0	25
Cystic Fibrosis	0	235	1	236
Fibrosing Lung Disease	91	70	0	161
Inhalation	1	0	0	1
Alpha-1-Antitrypsin deficiency	1	62	0	63
Sarcoid	8	9	0	17
Emphysema	20	225	0	245
Bronchiectasis	0	31	0	31
Immediate Graft	0	1	0	1
Non-specific graft failure	1	3	0	4
Bronchiolitis obliterans	0	12	0	12

Number of lung transplants by primary cardiothoracic disease and transplant type in the United Kingdom, 1 January 2009 to 31 December 2013

Primary cardiothoracic disease	Transplant type			Total
	Single	Double lung	Partial lung	
Other Congenital Heart/Lung Disease	0	4	0	4
Other	25	43	0	68
Unknown	0	1	0	1
Not reported	2	1	0	3
Total	149	723	1	873

Source:
NHSBT

Selection and allocation of organs are based on a balance of equity, need and benefit. At present, NHS Blood and Transplant allocates donated deceased lungs to designated transplant centres on a zonal basis, and the centre is responsible for selecting the patient. The transplant surgeon will assess both the donor lungs and potential recipients to find the best match.

Vaccination

Luciana Berger: To ask the Secretary of State for Health pursuant to the Answer of 24 February 2014, Official Report, column 202W, on vaccination, which (a) Minister and (b) senior civil servant in his Department is directly responsible for vaccination and vaccination policy. [193637]

Jane Ellison: I am, as the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Public Health, the Minister with responsibility for vaccination and vaccination policy.

The Director General of Public Health, Doctor Felicity Harvey, is the senior civil servant responsible for vaccination policy in the Department.

Delivery of vaccination programmes is a shared responsibility between Public Health England and NHS England.

Public Health England is responsible for national functions such as procuring, storing and distributing vaccines; developing and providing national implementation and communication strategies; and providing public health advice to NHS England and the Department.

NHS England is accountable for the provision of routine immunisation programmes as part of the agreement with the Secretary of State, under section 7A of the National Health Service Act 2006, about public health functions to be exercised by NHS England on his behalf.

WORK AND PENSIONS

EU Migrants: Benefits

18. **David Rutley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what changes he plans to make to the ability of EU migrants to access benefits. [903387]

Esther McVey: We have introduced a range of measures to tighten up our EEA migration rules to ensure our welfare system is not taken advantage of.

Since December 2013 migrants have had to take a stronger, more robust habitual residence test if they want to claim income-related benefits.

From 1 January 2014, EEA job seekers must have been living in the UK for three months before they can claim income-based jobseeker's allowance.

If they satisfy HRT a new statutory presumption will mean that EEA jobseekers and retained workers will then only be able to claim jobseeker's allowance for six months. After six months, only those who have compelling evidence that they have a genuine prospect of finding work will be able to continue claiming.

Since 1 March 2014 the minimum earnings threshold is helping to determine whether an EEA national's previous or current work can be treated as genuine and effective in deciding whether they have a right to reside in the UK as a worker or a self employed person.

From 1 April 2014 new EEA jobseekers will be unable to access housing benefits even if they are in receipt of jobseeker's allowance.

Personal Independence Payment

19. **Mrs Glendon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many claimants have received the personal independence payment since April 2013. [903388]

Mike Penning: PIP is a brand new benefit that is replacing the broken DLA system, we published early management information on 11 February 2014. Between April and December 2013, around 22,000 new claimants had been given an award of PIP.

Tom Greatrex: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many personal independence payment applications have been processed in each month since April 2013. [193589]

Mike Penning: Personal independence payment started from April 2013 and although limited data has started to feed through, we need to wait until the Department has quality assured, meaningful figures for publication. The Department is working to guidelines set by the UK Statistics Authority to ensure we are able to publish statistics that meet high quality standards at the earliest opportunity. We intend to publish official statistics on personal independence payment from spring 2014.

An ad-hoc release of PIP information was published on Tuesday 11 February 2014.

www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/277986/adHoc-pip-statistics-feb14.pdf

Innovation Fund: Separated Families

20. **Tim Loughton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what assessment he has made of the performance of the innovation fund to support separated families. [903389]

Steve Webb: We are funding 17 projects to help and support separated families in various parts of the country and piloting a range of approaches. The schemes conclude by April 2015 after which we will publish a full, independent evaluation.

Welfare Payments

21. **Mr Watts:** To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions if he will publish an assessment of the likely effect of the change to pensions announced in the 2014 Budget on the budget for welfare payments over the next ten years. [903390]

Steve Webb: The impact on welfare spending will depend on how people choose to use their savings; the choices people make may increase or decrease the likelihood of them being eligible for means tested benefits at some point in their retirement. However we are talking about people who have saved for their future and therefore we would expect the numbers choosing to rely solely on welfare benefits to be small.

The introduction of the single-tier pension also means that the majority of people will have a state pension income above the basic means test.

The details of the policy and the guidance offer are being developed and we are consulting on this.

Benefit Assessment Rulings

23. **Natascha Engel:** To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what charges are incurred by those appealing against a benefit assessment ruling. [903392]

Mike Penning: This is a matter for the Ministry of Justice.

They have no plans to introduce fees to bring an appeal to the First-tier Tribunal (social security and child support).

Annuities

Stella Creasy: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions if he will make an assessment of the potential effects of the provisions of the Consumer Rights Bill on the affordability of pensions annuities; and if he will make a statement. [193159]

Jenny Willott: I have been asked to reply on behalf of the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills.

Where financial services, such as pensions' annuities, are provided by a trader to a consumer under a contract then Chapter 4 (the Services Chapter) of the Consumer Rights Bill will apply. However, where there are other enactments which apply, for example those which are specific to financial services, the Chapter makes clear that those take precedence (in clause 53). Consumers will therefore still be protected by such sector specific enactments, as they are now. In the event of a problem, consumers may be entitled to redress through the Financial Ombudsman Service.

The March 2014 Budget set out the Government's commitment to improving the pensions market. The reforms announced to the annuities market will further help to make those products more competitive and improve affordability for consumers.

Atos Healthcare: Beverley

Mr Graham Stuart: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what estimate he has made of average waiting times for Atos (a) personal independence payments and (b) work assessments in Beverley and Holderness constituency; and what steps he is taking to achieve a reduction in waiting times for such assessments. [193525]

Mike Penning: It is not possible to provide data on waiting times for personal independence payment and employment and support allowance claimants in the Beverley and Holderness constituency. Information for this specific geographical area is not routinely reported to DWP by Atos Healthcare.

We announced in a written ministerial statement on 27 March our plans to achieve a reduction in waiting times and next steps. Atos Healthcare will be withdrawing from delivery of Work Capability Assessments in Great Britain before the end of the current contract.

Child Benefit

Stephen Timms: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what assessment he has made of whether the unavailability of child benefit for 18-year-olds in receipt of jobseeker's allowance is discouraging the take-up of traineeships. [193897]

Esther McVey: Legislation prevents 18-year-olds who claim JSA claiming child benefit (if eligible) and vice versa. 18-year-olds claiming JSA can benefit from a traineeship. We are working to ensure that all young people who could benefit from a traineeship are able to do so.

Children: Maintenance

Ian Austin: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (1) what powers the Child Support Agency has to investigate the weekly expenses of parents who are paying child maintenance; [193306]

(2) what his Department's policy is on whether receiving parents should be responsible for estimating the weekly expenses of the paying parent in the calculation of child maintenance entitlement. [193357]

Steve Webb: Section 14 of the Child Support Act 1991 and the Child Support Information Regulations 2008 provide the Child Support Agency and Child Maintenance Service with wide powers to obtain information from parents and third parties for the purpose of making decisions relating to child maintenance, including those decisions which relate to establishing the child maintenance of a Paying Parent.

The Receiving Parent is not responsible for estimating the weekly expenses of a Paying Parent. The Child Maintenance Service, which administers the 2012 Scheme, is built to make best use of taxable income information that is regularly and reliably available from HMRC. However, in the 1993 and 2003 schemes, administered by the Child Support Agency, the Receiving Parent can sometimes be asked to provide evidence of expenditure in order to support an application for a variation on the grounds of "lifestyle inconsistent with declared income".

Employment Schemes: Learning Disability

Chris Heaton-Harris: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what steps he is taking to increase the number of people with learning disabilities in both part-time and full-time employment. [193310]

Mike Penning: We do not target our employment support exclusively at individuals with particular impairments. Instead, through a range of programmes, we aim to identify and meet the needs of the individual, including the needs of people with learning disabilities.

The Work programme is the biggest single Welfare to Work programme, which provides personalised back-to-work support for unemployed people, including disabled people. For those that have more complex needs, we have a range of specialist disability employment programmes, including Access to Work, Work Choice and Residential Training Colleges, all of which support people with learning difficulties to take up and remain in employment. In particular, Access to Work can provide funding towards tailored support for people with learning difficulties such as specialist aids, equipment and support workers.

Jobcentre Plus Disability Employment Advisers provide support and advice for disabled people who need help finding and retaining employment and refer individuals to specialist programmes, where appropriate.

Employment Schemes: Young People

Jesse Norman: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what steps he is taking to support young people into work. [903384]

Esther McVey: The Government's approach is working. For the 21st consecutive month we have seen the youth claimant count reduce. The Youth Contract is successfully providing young people with the support they require, building on support already available via Jobcentres and the Work Programme. Opportunities available to young people include Work Experience, Sector-based Work Academies, traineeships and intensive work searches.

Housing Benefit

John Woodcock: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions if he will amend the point at which housing benefit payments are halted or reduced when a claimant finds work to better take account of salaries that are paid in arrears. [193619]

Steve Webb: Provisions dealing with this issue already exist within the housing benefit regulations. A claimant who has been receiving a qualifying benefit¹ for 26 weeks or more will continue to receive housing benefit for four weeks after they start work. Further details can be found at:

www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/236973/hbgm-c5-extended-payments.pdf

¹ The qualifying benefits are: Income support, income-based jobseeker's allowance, employment and support allowance, incapacity benefit or severe disablement allowance.

Helen Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many refugees are not classed as supported exempt accommodation for the purposes of housing benefit. [193783]

Steve Webb: The information requested is not available. Designation as supported exempt accommodation is relevant only to claims by individuals for Housing Benefit and is not intrinsic to the definition or purpose of a refugee or other supported housing.

Mr Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what assessment he has made of the potential effect on the number of tenant evictions resulting from the decision to pay housing benefit direct to claimants rather than landlords. [193827]

Steve Webb: The Government does not expect an increase in the number of evictions in relation to the direct payments of housing benefit.

Most tenants in the private rented sector are already used to receiving their housing payments directly, and managing their own finances.

For other tenants, including many in the social rented sector, this will represent more of a change. We are working with the advice sector to ensure that claimants are able to access budgeting support services to help them to manage their money successfully. Money advice will be offered at a national and local level, and include a mix of online, telephone and face to face services.

A minority of claimants may require alternative payment arrangements. This might include paying rent direct to the landlord, making payments more frequently than monthly, or splitting the payment for a couple.

Jobseeker's Allowance: Disqualification

Tom Greatrex: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many people in receipt of jobseeker's allowance were sanctioned for failing to complete their job search evidence form on 25 December 2013. [193590]

Esther McVey: Claimants are expected to do all that is reasonable within full time working hours in any week to look for work and this is not restricted to specific days.

Claimants with sincerely held religious beliefs can restrict their availability during religious festivals and holidays.

Public Expenditure

Graham Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (1) what change there has been in his Department's data entry spending in the last year; and what the reasons are for any such change; [193628]

(2) what the cost to his Department was of data entry used under universal credit in each quarter since 2010; [193661]

(3) how many staff his Department has employed in data entry roles relating to universal credit in (a) England, (b) the North West and (c) Lancashire in each quarter since 2010. [193699]

Mike Penning: There are no dedicated data entry roles and accordingly no cost to the Department can be reliably estimated.

Social Security Benefits

Stephen Gilbert: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many households in temporary accommodation were subject to the benefit cap between 1 April 2013 and 31 January 2014. [193731]

Esther McVey: The information requested is not available.

Stephen Gilbert: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many households in receipt of (a) income support, (b) jobseeker's allowance and (c) employment and support allowance were subject to the benefit cap between 1 April 2013 and 31 January 2014. [193732]

Esther McVey: The information requested is not readily available and can be provided only at a disproportionate cost.

Stephen Gilbert: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many single parents with a child under the age of five years old were subject to the benefit cap between 1 April 2013 and 31 January 2014. [193733]

Esther McVey: The information requested is not readily available and can be provided only at a disproportionate cost.

Stephen Gilbert: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many people who were temporarily exempt from the benefit cap due to their housing benefit being reduced were in temporary accommodation between April 2013 and January 2014. [193740]

Esther McVey: The information requested is not available. People whose housing benefit entitlement is reduced such that their overall benefit falls below the cap threshold are not subject to the cap.

Stephen Gilbert: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many additional households in temporary accommodation became subject to the benefit cap on flow in each month between May 2013 and January 2014. [193746]

Esther McVey: The information requested is not available.

Social Security Benefits: Disqualification

Mr Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many benefit claimants have been sanctioned for (a) four weeks, (b) three months and (c) three years (i) nationally and (ii) in Oldham in the last year. [193750]

Esther McVey: The information requested is not readily available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

State Retirement Pensions

Gregg McClymont: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what the upper limit will be of the amount of state pension top-up people can buy. [193915]

Steve Webb: As announced in the Budget 2014, the maximum amount of additional state pension that individuals can obtain under the state pension top-up scheme (class 3A) will be £25 per week. We intend to make details available shortly of the contribution rates by age for each £1 per week of additional pension.

Gregg McClymont: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (1) what estimate he has made of the cost to the public purse of the top-up of state pensions for each of the next 20 financial years; [193916]

(2) what assessment he made of the effect of the option for people to top up their state pension on state pensions expenditure. [193926]

Steve Webb: Estimates were made of both the future AME expenditure and the revenue from contributions in 2015-16 and 2016-17 which would determine future state pension expenditure levels. Estimates made by the Department were certified by the Office for Budget Responsibility. Figures for the medium term impacts in cash terms were published on page 46 in Budget 2014: policy costings available at:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/295067/PU1638_policy_costings_bud_2014_with_correction_slip.pdf

Further information on the long-term Exchequer impact in 2013-14 price terms is included in the following table. As noted in the policy costings document, there is uncertainty about levels of take-up of this policy. If take-up was higher than assumed both AME and Revenue would increase and if take-up was lower than assumed then both would decrease.

	AME	Revenue
2014-15	0	0
2015-16	-15	+415
2016-17	-50	+410
2017-18	-65	0
2018-19	-65	0
2019-20	-60	0
2020-21	-60	0
2021-22	-55	0
2022-23	-55	0
2023-24	-55	0
2024-25	-50	0
2025-26	-45	0
2026-27	-45	0
2027-28	-40	0
2028-29	-40	0
2029-30	-35	0
2030-31	-35	0
2031-32	-30	0
2032-33	-30	0
2033-34	-25	0

Note:

Figures are in £ million, 2013-14 price terms, rounded to nearest £5 million.

Trade Unions

Jonathan Ashworth: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions whether his Department is (a) undertaking or (b) plans to undertake a review of the check-off union subscription provision. [194050]

Mike Penning: DWP is undertaking a review of check-off, along with other Departments. We have not reached a conclusion on this matter, but it is under active consideration.

Universal Credit

Stephen Timms: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions for what reasons he has not yet placed the business case for universal credit in the public domain. [193588]

Esther McVey: In line with standard practice, as the universal credit business case includes details of a sensitive nature the Department will not be putting the business case into the public domain.

Graham Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what assessment he has made of the overall cost to his Department of data entry associated with universal credit. [193629]

Mike Penning: There are no dedicated data entry roles and accordingly no cost to the Department can be reliably estimated.

Vacancies: Internet

Mr Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions pursuant to the answer of 25 March 2014, *Official Report*, column 233W, on vacancies: internet, what additional checks and safeguards for jobseekers have been introduced in each year since the launch of Universal Jobmatch. [193824]

Esther McVey: Since Universal Jobmatch was launched in November 2012, we have introduced additional checks on all new vacancies placed by new employer accounts.

Work Programme

Stephen Timms: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions pursuant to the answer of 18 March 2014, *Official Report*, column 547W, on the Work Programme, if he will place in the Library the draft findings of the Work Programme evaluation received by his Department in August 2013. [193596]

Esther McVey: The evaluation of the Work Programme is still on-going, and the Department will publish findings once it is completed.

Mr Sanders: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what recent assessment he has made of the capability of the Work programme to provide adequate support to jobseekers with long-term medical conditions. [193765]

Esther McVey: The Department has commissioned an independent evaluation of the Work programme, and will publish findings once the evaluation is complete.

Stephen Timms: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what measures he has in place to establish the extent to which work programme providers have assisted participants to improve their literacy and numeracy skills. [193894]

Esther McVey: The Work Programme is designed to be flexible and tailored to each individual, with some participants requiring more support than others which may include assistance in improving their literacy and numeracy skills. The Department has a robust performance management regime which includes assurance of service delivery at individual participant level.

Youth Services

Stephen Timms: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what assessment he has made of the work of his Department's youth hubs. [193584]

Esther McVey: Youth hubs have been set up in some locations under our Freedoms and Flexibilities policy where local managers judge they would be an effective way of supporting young people. There has been positive feedback on them but evaluation is a matter for local managers.

BUSINESS, INNOVATION AND SKILLS

All Party Groups

Chris Ruane: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills what his Department's policy is on allowing officials to appear before all-party parliamentary groups. [193380]

Jenny Willott: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by the Minister for the Cabinet Office and Paymaster General, the right hon. Member for Horsham (Mr Maude), on 26 March 2014, *Official Report*, column 300W.

Apprentices: Essex

Robert Halfon: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills how many workplaces in (a) Harlow constituency and (b) Essex employed an apprentice in each of the last five year. [193751]

Matthew Hancock: Table 1 shows the number of workplaces (site level) in Harlow parliamentary constituency and Essex local education authority that employed apprentices from 2010/11 to 2012/13. Information for earlier years is not readily available.

Table 1: Workplaces that employed apprentices by geography, 2010/11 to 2012/13

	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13
Harlow Parliamentary Constituency	300	300	400

Table 1: Workplaces that employed apprentices by geography, 2010/11 to 2012/13

	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13
Essex Local Education Authority	4,300	5,100	5,800

Notes:

1. The figures are a count of the number of individual workplaces (site level).
2. Figures are rounded to the nearest 100.
3. Geographic information is based on the delivery location of the apprenticeship. Note that some workplaces deliver apprenticeships in more than one location.

Source:

Individualised Learner Record

Assets: Russia

Nicholas Soames: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills what estimate he has made of the value of UK non-financial assets held in Russia. [193418]

Michael Fallon: The information is not held in the format requested and I regret that it cannot be provided in the timescale of this answer.

The Office of National Statistics publishes data on Foreign Direct Investment from the UK, including into Russia, broken down by sector but not by asset type. This can be found here:

<http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/fdi/foreign-direct-investment/2012-ma4/stb-fdi-ma4-2012.html>

Nicholas Soames: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills what estimate he has made of the value of Russian non-financial assets held in the UK. [193419]

Michael Fallon: The information is not held in the format requested and I regret that it cannot be provided in the timescale of this answer.

The Office of National Statistics publishes data on Foreign Direct Investment in the UK, including from Russia, broken down by sector but not by asset type. This can be found here:

<http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/fdi/foreign-direct-investment/2012-ma4/stb-fdi-ma4-2012.html>

Beer: Competition

Alistair Burt: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills when he intends to publish a response to the consultation on pub companies and tenants. [193855]

Jenny Willott: The Government received over 1,100 written responses to the consultation on pub companies and their tenants and over 7,000 responses to the online survey conducted in parallel. We are considering the evidence carefully, to ensure that intervention is both proportionate and targeted, and we intend to publish a Government Response to the consultation as soon as we can.

Business Premises: Inspections

Mike Weatherley: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills (1) what discussions he has had about the 48-hour notice period that Trading Standards must give when attending retail premises in relation to inspections; and if he will make a statement; [192535]

(2) what representations he has received about the 48-hour notice period that Trading Standards must give when attending retail premises in relation to inspections; and if he will make a statement. [192536]

Jenny Willott: The Consumer Rights Bill introduces a requirement for consumer law enforcers, such as Trading Standards, to give notice before carrying out routine inspections of private commercial premises without a warrant. This requirement is subject to a number of exemptions, such as where giving notice would defeat the purpose of the visit or where there is a reasonable suspicion of a breach. The Department received a number of representations and had a number of discussions on this issue with businesses, enforcement bodies and consumer groups following the Consultation on Consumer Law Enforcement Powers, also following the Government's response to the consultation and during pre-legislative scrutiny of the draft Consumer Rights Bill ahead of the Bill's introduction to Parliament.

The Government have carefully considered the views of all these stakeholders and are confident that the powers and added safeguards, together with the exemptions to giving notice strike the right balance between protecting civil liberties, reducing the burdens on businesses, particularly small businesses, and enabling effective enforcement.

Business: Billing

Toby Perkins: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills what recent assessment he has made of the average amount owed to small firms in late payment. [193632]

Matthew Hancock: Research undertaken by Bacs in 2013 put the national level of late payment at £30.2 billion, with small businesses on average owed £31,000.

Toby Perkins: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills (1) which FTSE350 companies that he wrote to in November 2012 asking them to sign up to the Prompt Payment Code have failed to do so; [193658]

(2) which FTSE350 companies his Department has named and shamed for non-adherence to the Prompt Payment Code; and when each such action was taken. [193659]

Matthew Hancock: A list of the FTSE 350 companies that had not signed up to the Prompt Payment Code was published on the Prompt Payment Code website on 4 March 2013:

<http://ppc.promptpaymentcode.org.uk/ppc/news.a4d>

Since then, a further 274 businesses have signed up to the Prompt Payment Code including a number of FTSE 350 companies. A full list of signatories to the Prompt Payment Code is publicly available on the Prompt Payment Code website:

http://ppc.promptpaymentcode.org.uk/ppc/signatory_paged.a4d

Business: Government Assistance

Adam Afriyie: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills what steps he is taking to ensure that student entrepreneurs can access support and guidance when setting up their first businesses. [193283]

Matthew Hancock: The home for Government services and information online is:

www.gov.uk.

One tool widely available is the “Finance Finder”, a searchable database of publicly-backed sources of finance. The website:

www.greatbusiness.gov.uk

not only provides support and advice for businesses trying to grow, but for entrepreneurs just starting out. The National Careers Service can help individuals explore the opportunities for self-employment and direct them to specialist resources such as the Business Support Helpline. The helpline is available to provide a quick response on queries about starting a business, or a personalised and in-depth advice service for more complex needs.

For those looking for initial finance and advice there is the Start-Up Loans Programme which has already committed over £80 million of funding. Enterprise Societies and the Entrepreneurs and Education Programme for further education colleges and universities also provide advice on the skills to start a business and how to secure funding.

Business: Greenhouse Gas Emissions

Lisa Nandy: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills what his policy is on maintaining the requirement for quoted companies to report on their greenhouse gas emissions. [193215]

Jenny Willott: This requirement was part of the reforms to narrative reporting made by this Government that came into force in October 2013. I have no plans to amend this requirement at this time.

Children: Day Care

Stella Creasy: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills if he will make an assessment of the potential effects of the provisions of the Consumer Rights Bill on access to, quality of and cost of child care provision; and if he will make a statement; [193158]

Jenny Willott: Where child care services are provided by a trader (eg a nursery school) to a consumer (eg a parent) under a contract, then Chapter 4 (the Services Chapter) of the Consumer Rights Bill will apply.

This chapter requires that these traders provide services with reasonable care and skill and in line with certain information given about the service. If that is not the case, the chapter sets out remedies which the consumer is entitled to, such as a repeat performance or, failing that, a reduction in price. Consumers may also be entitled to damages under the common law and the Bill makes this clear. Where there are other enactments which apply, this chapter makes clear that those take precedence (clause 53), which ensures that current standards still apply where they are set out in existing enactments.

In the case of child care vouchers offered under an employer-supported child care scheme, the contract for provision of child care is between the parent (consumer) and the child care provider (the trader), therefore child care provided using the voucher scheme is covered by this chapter of the Consumer Rights Bill.

We expect that, overall, consumers will benefit from the proposed reforms to the services regime. We estimate quantified benefits of £33 million per annum, of which £9 million is from the reduced risk of consumer detriment. In addition to these quantified benefits there are a range of economic benefits that have not been quantified. The reforms would deliver market-wide changes through promoting confident consumers, experimenting with new products or services and switching suppliers, which in turn should drive innovation, greater competitiveness and deliver new opportunities for economic growth.

The Government is also committed to improving the accessibility, affordability and quality of child care. To that end we are encouraging schools to offer more nursery provision, making it easier for people to take up childminding by introducing childminder agencies, and have introduced a new entitlement to funded early education for the least advantaged two-year-olds.

Companies: Registration

Mr Godsiff: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills what recent progress has been made on the public register of beneficial ownership of companies operating in the UK. [193297]

Jenny Willott: The Department for Business, Innovation and Skills published the “Transparency and Trust” discussion paper in July 2013. In it, we sought views on a range of questions relating to implementation of the central registry of UK company beneficial ownership information, which will be publicly accessible. We are carefully considering the responses received to the discussion paper and continuing to engage with a wide range of interested parties. We will publish a formal Government response shortly. It remains our intention to legislate as soon as parliamentary time permits.

Electronics Industry Citizenship Coalition

Mr Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills if he will take steps to encourage businesses to implement and abide by the code of the Electronics Industry Citizenship Coalition; and if he will make a statement. [193991]

Michael Fallon: The Electronics Industry Citizenship Coalition (EICC) is a non-profit association incorporated in the United States and enrolment is voluntary. The Government does not have any plans to encourage business to implement and abide by the EICC code.

The UK Government supports corporate responsibility, for example encouraging greater levels of employer supported volunteering, promoting well-being within the workplace and promoting human rights due diligence within business. There are also a number of UK-based organisations providing advice on how business can adopt responsible business practices, such as Business in the Community (www.bitc.org.uk), the Institute for Business Ethics (www.ibe.org.uk) and Trading for Good (www.tradingforgood.co.uk) which is aimed at the SME sector. BIS invited views on corporate responsibility during 2013 and the response to this will be published shortly.

Foreign Investment in UK

Chris Ruane: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills pursuant to the answer of 9 September 2013, *Official Report*, column 643W, on foreign investments in UK, what the value of foreign direct investment was in each region of the UK in each year since 1984. [193413]

Michael Fallon: UK Trade & Investment has collected data on foreign direct investment (FDI) projects landing in each region of the United Kingdom since 1984. The value of each project is reported in terms of new jobs created or safeguarded, and capital expenditure. This value is estimated by the foreign company.

Tables showing the official record of FDI projects landing in each region of the UK, from the financial years 1984/85 to 2012/13, will be placed in the Libraries of the House.

Foreign Investment in UK: North East

Mr Nicholas Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of inward investment initiatives by the seven local authorities in the North East of England; how much has been spent on those initiatives in the last financial year; and what their outcomes have been. [192922]

Michael Fallon: Spending which LEPs or local authorities undertake on foreign direct investment initiatives is independent of Government and is not centrally-funded.

In each LEP area inward investment success is measured according to numbers of projects won and jobs created or safeguarded. In the financial year from 1 April 2012 to 31 March 2013 results were as follows for the North Eastern LEP area:

	<i>Number</i>
Project successes	26
New or safeguarded jobs	2,203

Higher Education

Hugh Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills how much the (a) overall resource for undergraduate teaching, (b) Higher Education Funding Council for England grant for teaching and (c) estimated and actual fee income from students was at (i) the University of York, (ii) the University of York St. John and (iii) all universities in England in each year since 2004-05. [192895]

Mr Willetts: Statistics on the resource available for undergraduate teaching at the University of York, York St John University, and all higher education institutions in England between 2004/05 and 2012/13 have been provided by the Higher Education Funding Council and are included in the table which will be placed in the Libraries of the House. Estimates of fee income are not available for individual institutions and, as a result, have been omitted from the answer. The Overall Resource for undergraduate teaching is the sum of undergraduate fee income and undergraduate teaching grant.

Mr Byrne: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills if he will limit the number of (a) alternative learning providers and (b) students studying at alternative learning providers over the next 10 years. [193607]

Mr Willetts: The Government's policy is to offer students more choice by increasing the range and type of study opportunities that are available to them. Encouraging new alternative providers into the market place is one of the ways that we will achieve that. It is too early to forecast the impact of the higher education reforms on the overall number of alternative providers. Some may choose to exit the market, others will enter it.

We have already announced that student number controls will apply to alternative providers in 2014/15. We will announce our policy for future years in due course. However, we will retain controls on those providers which we regard as representing the greatest risk to students or the public purse.

Higher Education: Admissions

Chris Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills what steps he plans to take to ensure that universities admit more students from disadvantaged backgrounds whose qualifications meet university admissions requirements. [193475]

Mr Willetts: Higher education (HE) institutions are independent, autonomous bodies and they are responsible for all decisions on student admissions. Government has no legal power to intervene.

The Chancellor's autumn statement in 2013 announced that for 2014/15, we will make an additional 30,000 places available at publicly-funded higher education institutions, and remove student number controls from 2015/16. This will support wider access to higher education, with a clear trend in recent years that overall growth in student numbers has seen an increase in the proportion of students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

We have established a new framework with increased responsibility placed on universities to widen access. As part of this the independent Office for Fair Access (OFFA) agreed 162 Access Agreements for 2014/15, with plans for universities to spend more than £680 million on outreach and other activities to widen access, rising to over £700 million by 2017/18.

BIS Ministers asked the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) and OFFA to develop a shared strategy for promoting access which maximizes the impact of all the spending by Government, HEFCE and institutions. An interim report was published in March 2013, and we intend to publish the full report shortly.

Higher Education: Islwyn

Chris Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills how many people in each (a) age group and (b) parental income group resident in Islwyn constituency entered higher education in each of the last 10 years for which figures are available. [193476]

Mr Willetts: Higher education in Wales is a devolved matter. This information should be requested from the Welsh Government, or directly from the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA), the body responsible for collecting and publishing data on students at UK higher education institutions (HEIs). Full UK statistics, including data relating to age and disadvantage measures (although not strictly income-based), are available on request from HESA and further information can be found at:

<http://www.hesa.ac.uk/>

Higher Education: Private Sector

Chris Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills what change he expects in the number of private providers of higher education in England and Wales in the next five years; and if he will make a statement. [193477]

Mr Willetts: The Government's policy is to offer students more choice by increasing the range and type of study opportunities that are available to them. Encouraging new alternative providers into the market place is one of the ways that we will achieve that. It is too early to forecast the impact of the higher education reforms on the overall number of alternative providers. Some may choose to exit the market, others will enter it.

Higher Education: Scholarships

Daniel Kawczynski: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills what steps he is taking to make the UK a priority destination for the King Abdullah university scholarship programme. [193434]

Mr Willetts: Saudi Arabia is a UK priority country for higher education engagement and the King Abdullah Scholarship Programme (KASP) is an important part of this.

Promotion of the UK as a study destination for the King Abdullah Scholarship Program (KASP) was a key aim during my visit to Saudi Arabia in late 2011, where I met the Minister of Higher Education. Following this visit a taskforce was established comprising BIS and representatives from the UK higher education sector to liaise with the Saudi Arabia Cultural Bureau in London (SACB) to increase the UK's attractiveness.

The taskforce has since met twice a year and its next meeting is in May 2014. In addition we have worked with the higher education sector to support inward visits of senior government officials from Saudi Arabia, including the Deputy Higher Education Minister, to showcase the quality of the UK's educational offer. There have also been outward visits by UK institutions to meet with the Director General of the King Abdullah Scholarship Programme.

In January 2014, Her Majesty's ambassador to Saudi Arabia, John Jenkins, met with Saudi Arabia's Minister of Higher Education and in February, I attended the UK-Saudi ministerial meeting on a joint Technical Cooperation Agreement, which included higher education areas of interest. Outcomes from both meetings were positive.

BIS is now working on establishing an overarching government to government agreement on science and higher education cooperation with Saudi Arabia. We expect that this will provide further opportunities to promote the UK as priority destination for KASP students.

Higher Education: Student Numbers

Jake Berry: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills how many students were in higher education in Rossendale and Darwen constituency in 2013. [193570]

Mr Willetts: The Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) collects and publishes data on students at UK higher education institutions (HEIs). In the academic year 2012/13 there were 3,430 enrolments at UK HEIs who were domiciled in Rossendale and Darwin constituency prior to their course.

Information for the 2013/14 academic year will become available from the Higher Education Statistics Agency in January 2015.

INEOS

John Mann: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills what discussions he has had with INEOS on its refusal to recognise a trade union at the Grangemouth refinery. [193317]

Jenny Willott: The Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills, my right hon. Friend the Member for Twickenham (Vince Cable), has not had any discussions with INEOS in relation to recognition of trade unions at Grangemouth.

BIS officials have had discussions with INEOS about Grangemouth. INEOS have informed them that Unite remains the recognised union on site.

Intellectual Property

Jim Dowd: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills what consideration he has given to amending the Unfair Contract Terms Act 1977 to remove section 1(c) of schedule 1 on intellectual property contracts. [193238]

Jenny Willott: My noble Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills (Viscount Younger of Leckie) with responsibility for Intellectual Property has received representations on a proposal to amend the Consumer Rights Bill to bring business-to-business intellectual property contracts within the scope of the Unfair Contract Terms Act 1977.

It was concluded that there was insufficient evidence to justify this amendment. In addition, the Consumer Rights Bill was not thought to be the most appropriate vehicle to make any such change, as it deals primarily with business-to-consumer contracts.

Jim Dowd: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills what representations he has received in favour of the inclusion of intellectual property contracts in the Consumer Rights Bill. [193239]

Jenny Willott: The Consumer Rights Bill was subject to consultation in 2012 and then invited comments again after the publication of a draft Bill in 2013. Neither of those exercises produced support for extending Part 2 of the Bill (Unfair Terms) to business-to-business intellectual property contracts, or for amending the Unfair Contract Terms Act 1977 to cover such contracts.

On 16 July 2013 my noble Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills (Viscount Younger of Leckie) with responsibility for Intellectual Property met with the Creators Rights Alliance who raised this issue in that meeting and in an exchange of letters which followed. In March 2014 he exchanged letters with the National Union of Journalists on the same issue.

Adam Afriye: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills what steps the Intellectual Property Office has taken to promote existing protected but underused intellectual property to companies that may be interested in taking it up. [193267]

Mr Willetts: Intellectual property (IP) is privately owned and it is a commercial decision for any rights holder as to whether they wish to license or surrender their rights. It is therefore not open to the Government to make it available to others to use.

However, the Intellectual Property Office (IPO) promotes better use of IP assets through advice and guidance on how businesses can manage their IP more effectively and make the most of opportunities such as licensing of IP that they are not currently using. The IP Audits Plus programme, for example, provides bespoke advice to high growth businesses on how to use intellectual property to benefit their business. The IPO has also provided funding for a number of initiatives designed to promote access to underused IP, for example the Easy Access IP initiative which makes unused university IP freely available to potential investors through simple one page licensing agreements.

Manufacturing Industries

Mr Gregory Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills what steps he is taking to assist the manufacturing sector and promote an export-led recovery in the economy. [193741]

Michael Fallon: The Government is helping and advising UK manufacturers to grow in a number of ways. The Government-led Manufacturing Advisory Service provides tailor-made practical support from industry experts on all aspects of manufacturing

www.mymas.org/services

The 'GREAT' campaign

www.greatbusiness.gov.uk

or

www.gov.uk

provides eligible businesses with expert support, information and guidance in areas such as funding, staffing and expanding a business.

As part of Budget 2014, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, my right hon. Friend the Member for Tatton (Mr Osborne), announced that energy intensive industries will benefit from a £7 billion package to help them cut their energy

bills. As well as this, the annual investment allowance will increase to £500,000 until 31 December 2015. This is designed to stimulate business investment in the economy by providing an extended time-limited incentive for businesses to invest in plant or machinery.

AMSCI (the Advanced Manufacturing Supply Chain Initiative) is a £245 million funding competition designed to improve the global competitiveness and resilience of UK advanced manufacturing supply chains. We now have four active national rounds alongside a regional scheme. The Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills, the right hon. Member for Twickenham (Vince Cable), has confirmed that there will be future rounds.

We have put in place high quality partnerships for each of the 11 key sectors at the heart of the industrial strategy. Early successes include the Aerospace Technology Institute and the Advanced Propulsion Centre. Seven "Catapult" innovation and technology centres have been launched with over £200 million of government investment. The High Value Manufacturing Catapult in particular is the catalyst for the future growth and success of manufacturing in the UK.

Through our reforms to apprenticeships we are encouraging employers to offer more opportunities in engineering. Trailblazers, led by employers and professional bodies, will deliver new apprenticeships standards for a number of occupations across sectors including aerospace, automotive, electrotechnical and energy and utilities.

At the Davos World Economic Forum in January, the Prime Minister announced that UK Trade & Investment (UKTI) and the Manufacturing Advisory Service were joining forces to launch Reshore UK—a one-stop service to help companies bring production back to UK. Reshore UK is up and running, offering for example a matching and location service supported by continuous advice from a named member of staff.

UKTI also provide expert trade advice support to UK-based companies wishing to grow their business overseas. In 2012/13 UKTI supported 31,880 businesses, 90% of which were SMEs and this support helped generate additional sales of some £50.9 billion.

The UK's exports have grown from £270 billion in 2000 to more than £500 billion in 2013, an 87% increase in this period. During a series of 'Export Week' events taking place around the UK from 7-11 April, trade experts will offer seminars, workshops and market briefings to provide practical advice on expanding worldwide.

New Businesses: Government Assistance

Katy Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills when he was first made aware that individuals were being awarded start up loans without business plans, cash flow forecasts and credit checks being required. [192934]

Matthew Hancock: The Government was made aware of an accusation by an individual via BBC local radio on 27 November 2013 that the level of scrutiny provided by one partner was insufficient for proving the viability of a loan proposition. The Start-Up Loans Company responded to this accusation at the time.

It is for the Start-Up Loans Company to work with its partners to ensure that a proper assessment has been made of the viability and affordability of any proposition, in whatever form that assessment might take to provide the necessary level of assurance to make a decision.

The decision to introduce mandatory credit checking from 1 October 2013 reflects this commitment to ensuring that the business has the best chance of succeeding and the individual taking on the loan is able to survive on the income it generates.

Start-Up Loans is designed to support those ordinarily unable to access finance from a high street bank. As such, it is inevitable that many will have adverse data in their credit histories. The key test remains the viability of the business proposal and the ability of the applicant to make it work. On that basis, the Start-Up Loans Company does not permit an adverse credit check to be the sole reason for declining a loan.

Pay: Kilmarnock

Cathy Jamieson: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills what estimate he has made of the number of people in Kilmarnock and Loudoun constituency who are paid at least (a) the minimum wage and (b) the amount defined by the Living Wage Foundation as a living wage. [193706]

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 Caron Walker, dated March 2014:

On behalf of the 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 Business, Innovation and Skills, what estimate he has made of the number of people in Kilmarnock and Loudoun constituency who are paid at least (a) the minimum wage and (b) the amount defined by the Living Wage Foundation as a living wage. (193706)

The Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE), carried out in April each year, is the most comprehensive source of earnings information in the United Kingdom. Hourly levels of earnings are estimated from ASHE, and are provided for employees on adult rates of pay, whose earnings for the survey pay period were not affected by absence. Estimates with respect to the national minimum wage are not available below Regions for reasons of quality. With regard to the Living Wage, although it is not possible to estimate the number of people with earnings above this threshold, it is possible to estimate the corresponding proportion of employee jobs. Figures relate to employee jobs, which are defined as those held by employees and not the self-employed.

In April 2013, the latest period for which results are available, the Living Wage rates suggested by the Living Wage Foundation were £8.55 for employees who worked in London and £7.45 for employees who did not work in London. At this time, the proportion of jobs in Kilmarnock and Loudoun constituency with hourly earnings excluding overtime of at least £7.45 was 78.8%**.

Guide to quality:

The Coefficient of Variation (CV) indicates the quality of a figure, the smaller the CV value the higher the quality. The true value is likely to lie within +/- twice the CV—for example, for an average of 200 with a CV of 5%, we would expect the population average to be within the range 180 to 220.

Key

* CV >5% and <= 10%

**CV >10% and <= 20%

Personal Injury: Insurance

Andy Sawford: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills pursuant to the answers to topical question T1 of 23 January 2014, *Official Report*, column 434, if he will request the Employment Agency Standards Inspectorate to pass to the Gangmasters Licensing Authority the details it holds on the personal accident insurance schemes operated by those employment agencies referred to in the answers. [193465]

Jenny Willott: The Employment Agency Standards (EAS) inspectorate investigation has now been concluded. All of the agencies, who were named in the complaint, co-operated fully with the EAS investigators.

EAS is satisfied that enough information was given to the work-seekers to allow them to decide if the personal insurance product was suitable for them and that work-seekers were not forced to join the scheme in order to be found work by the agencies.

One of the agencies named in the House on 23 January 2014 had never, in fact, offered or sold personal accident insurance. Another was fully compliant.

Minor technical breaches of the regulations were found in some of the agencies' paperwork. These breaches related to minor gaps in the provision of information to the work-seekers in relation to setting out entitlement to refunds. These agencies were sent warning letters which set out the breaches and the corrective action they must take to address them. They have all demonstrated compliance, or have confirmed that they are in the process of making changes in order to comply.

A formal information sharing gateway already exists between the Gangmasters Licensing Authority and EAS. Where there are issues or concerns raised with EAS, which are also of interest to the Gangmasters Licensing Authority, the Gangmasters Licensing Authority can approach EAS through well established channels and relevant information will be shared.

Railways: Manufacturing Industries

Jake Berry: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills what recent steps his Department has taken to support the rail manufacturing industry. [193532]

Michael Fallon: The Government has provided specific support for the rail sector as follows:

two funding calls by the Technology Strategy Board related to innovation in rail, joint funding totalling £3.5 million from this Department and the Department of Transport to the National Skills Academy for Railway Engineering (NSARE) to establish the Traction and Rolling Stock Training Academy; and

support under round 3 of the Regional Growth Fund to transform the Siemens facility at Hebburn into a site specialising in the manufacture of rolling stock components.

Companies in the rail manufacturing sector can access help and advice to grow their business through 'GREAT':

www.greatbusiness.gov.uk

or

www.gov.uk

Eligible businesses can gain support in areas such as running, funding, staffing and expanding a business.

The Government-funded Manufacturing Advisory Service provides practical support on all aspects of manufacturing, including direct access to manufacturing experts with a proven track record:

www.mymas.org/services

There is also support available from UK Trade and Investment (UKTI) for those companies wishing to grow through international trade.

In addition, we have established the Rail Supply Group, which will bring together Government (this Department and the Department for Transport) and industry to maximise the economic potential of the UK rail sector. Terence Watson, the UK President of Alstom, will be the industry co-chair of the group. He is currently working closely with industry and Government stakeholders to consider the membership, operation and initial priorities of the group.

The group will deliver significant benefits including:

providing us with a better understanding of the capability of UK suppliers to inform our rail investment plans and identify where Government support or intervention is required;

building the capability of UK suppliers so that they are more likely to win work both here and abroad;

reducing the risk of UK suppliers facing "feast and famine" in their order books and providing early warning of potential problems;

improving how Government and industry promote UK capability overseas; and

addressing an emerging skills gap as older workers retire and rail systems become more complex.

Ultimately, a more innovative and capable UK supply chain that has a clearer understanding of Government policies and investment plans should result in lower industry costs and a better, more reliable railway.

Students: Fees and Charges

Stella Creasy: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills what meetings officials in his Department have had with representatives of (a) students and (b) higher education providers and universities on the implications of the Consumer Rights Bill for fee-paying students; and what the Civil Service grades of officials present were. [193792]

Mr Willetts: There have been no meetings with student representatives, higher education providers and universities on the implications of the Consumer Rights Bill. BIS consulted widely on consumer law reform in 2008 and 2012, and published a draft Bill for pre-legislative scrutiny in 2013. BIS has also completed full impact assessments for the provisions in the Bill.

Students: Loans

Mr Byrne: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills what the resource, accounting and budgeting charge is for student loans issued (a) to those on the new funding regime, (b) in 2013-14 and (c) in 2012-13. [193225]

Mr Willetts: We estimate that the resource accounting and budgeting charge for loans issued to those who began study on the new funding regime is around 45%, for both 2012/13 and 2013/14.

Mr Byrne: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills what revisions have been made to the fair value of student loans issued under the previous funding regime. [193230]

Mr Willetts: Loans are valued at amortised cost, net of expected impairments, in the BIS accounts. Loans already issued and held on the BIS balance sheet will be revalued as at 31 March 2014, they will be subject to independent audit and published this summer. While this process is underway it would be premature to put a valuation on the loan book.

Mr Byrne: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills what recent estimate he has made of the (a) face and (b) fair value of existing student loans. [193231]

Mr Willetts: As at 31 March 2013, the face value of student loans was around £45 billion and the carrying value was £31 billion.

Loans are valued at amortised cost, net of expected impairments, in the BIS accounts. Loans already issued and held on the BIS balance sheet will be revalued as at 31 March 2014, they will be subject to independent audit and published this summer. While this process is underway it would be premature to put a valuation on the loan book.

Mr Byrne: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills what the resource, accounting and budgeting charge is for student loans issued (a) those who started study before September 2012, (b) in 2013-14 and (c) in 2012-13. [193232]

Mr Willetts: We estimate that the resource accounting and budgeting charge for loans issued to those who began study before September 2012 is between 40-45%, for both 2012/13 and 2013/14.

Mr Byrne: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills whether additional funding allocated to the higher RAB charge will come out of non-ringfenced DEL. [193344]

Mr Willetts: RAB charges are managed in accordance with the consolidated budgeting guidance. This Department and HM Treasury have agreed a target RAB and stock charge for post browne loans in each financial year. If either charge increases above the target level (set at 36% for 2013-14) it will be split between BIS resource DEL and BIS resource AME budgets according to the new framework agreement. This target forms part of a framework to incentivise the Department to manage the long-term costs of the system.

Mr Byrne: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills whether his Department's total resource DEL has been increased as a result of the higher RAB charge for student loans. [193349]

Mr Willetts: Student loan repayments are managed annually under Government budgeting rules and any changes, for whatever reason, in forecast repayments, are considered as part of the parliamentary supply process.

Additional supply was agreed between this Department and HM Treasury, and approved by Parliament as part of the 2013-14 supplementary estimates process.

Mr Byrne: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills what the cost to the public purse is of the higher RAB charge for student loans. [193350]

Mr Willetts: By 2015-16, once almost all higher education students are on the 2012 system, the cash outlay on student loans to full-time undergraduates is likely to be around £12 billion per year. Each percentage point increase in the RAB charge therefore equates to an expected increase in annual resource costs of around £120 million.

Mr Byrne: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills (1) what the RAB charge for loans issued to those on the new funding regime is for student loans issued in (a) 2013-14 and (b) 2012-13; [193352]

(2) what the RAB charge is for student loans issued to those who started university before September 2012 for loans issued in (a) 2013-14 and (b) 2012-13. [193368]

Mr Willetts: I refer the right hon. Member to the answers I am giving today in reply to his parliamentary questions 193232 and 193225.

Mr Byrne: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills what recent change there has been to the fair value of previously issued student loans; and what the current (a) face value and (b) fair value of existing student loans is. [193608]

Mr Willetts: In accordance with accounting standards, student loans are valued at amortised cost net of expected impairments in the BIS accounts, not fair value. The last audited face value of loans issued and held on the BIS balance sheet as at 31 March 2013 was £46 billion (a) and the carrying value was £31 billion (b). This will be revalued as at 31 March 2014 and published this summer.

Taxation: Environment Protection

Catherine McKinnell: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills how many energy-intensive industries have received compensation for the carbon price floor and EU Emissions Trading System to date; and what the total monetary value of this compensation was. [193581]

Michael Fallon: In total 53 companies have received compensation for the indirect costs of the EU Emissions Trading System and we have paid £30 million to date. No compensation has been paid for the indirect costs of the Carbon Price Floor as we are awaiting the final decision from the Commission on our state aid case which I remain hopeful we will receive shortly.

Cathy Jamieson: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills what assessment he has made of the number of energy intensive businesses in

(a) the UK and (b) Scotland which will benefit from compensation for higher prices resulting from the renewables obligation and small scale feed-in tariffs. [193678]

Michael Fallon: The details of these schemes, including which products and sectors would be eligible is still to be decided. This will be informed by the revised environmental and energy aid guidelines which the European Commission will be publishing later this spring.

Trade Unions

Jonathan Ashworth: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills whether his Department is (a) undertaking or (b) plans to undertake a review of the check-off union subscription provision. [194032]

Jenny Willott: I am not undertaking a review of the Department's check-off arrangements and have no plans to undertake a review.

Unfair Practices

Jim Dowd: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills what consideration he has given to amending the Consumer Rights Bill to provide greater protection for creators against unfair contracts. [193249]

Jenny Willott: My noble Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills (Viscount Younger of Leckie) with responsibility for intellectual property has received representations on a proposal to amend the Consumer Rights Bill so that part 2 (Unfair Terms) applies to business-to-business intellectual property contracts, or alternatively to use the Bill to bring such contracts within the scope of the Unfair Contract Terms Act 1977.

It was concluded that there was insufficient evidence to justify this amendment. The Consumer Rights Bill was not thought to be an appropriate vehicle to make this change, as the Bill deals primarily with business-to-consumer contracts. However, where creators fit the definition of "consumer" within the Bill they will benefit from the provisions in part 2 (Unfair Terms) including, where applicable, the fairness test.

Vocational Training

Jake Berry: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills how many traineeships have been taken up in each parliamentary constituency since their introduction. [193519]

Matthew Hancock: Provisional information on the number of traineeship starts in 2013/14 is published online:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/fe-data-library-other-statistics-and-research>

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/298351/traineeship-data-note-march14.pdf

Working Hours

Lucy Powell: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills what proportion of employees in his Department of each (a) civil service pay grade and (b) gender work (i) reduced hours, (ii) flexi-time, (iii) from home, (iv) a compressed working week, (v) job share, (vi) term-time only and (vii) part-time. [193955]

Jenny Willott: The following table (A) details the proportion of staff by grade and the proportion by grade working part time and full time. The following table (B) details the proportion of staff by gender and the proportion working part time and full time. The Department does not currently centrally hold details of the other categories of working pattern requested. There would be disproportionate cost to collect the data.

Table A

Grade level	Staff by grade	Percentage	
		Full time	Part time
AA Level	0.50	100.00	0.00
AO Level	5.03	85.47	14.53
EO Level	12.16	89.90	10.10
HEO Level	23.99	91.84	8.16
SEO Level	13.94	91.19	8.81
G7 Level	25.63	88.03	11.97
G6 Level	10.46	84.08	15.92
G5 Level	6.05	86.47	13.53
G3 Level	1.87	90.63	9.38
G2 Level	0.32	90.91	9.09
G1 Level	0.06	100.00	0.00
Grand total	100.00	89.10	10.90

Table B

Gender	Total staff	Percentage	
		Full time	Part time
Female	47.08	79.95	20.05
Male	52.92	97.24	2.76
	100.00	89.10	10.90

JUSTICE

All Party Groups

Chris Ruane: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice what his Department's policy is on allowing officials to appear before all-party parliamentary groups. [193562]

Simon Hughes: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by the Minister for the Cabinet Office and Paymaster General, the right hon. Member for Horsham (Mr Maude) on 26 March 2014, *Official Report*, column 300W.

Assets: Russia

Nicholas Soames: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice (1) if he will seek an estimate from the (a) Bailiwick of Jersey and (b) Bailiwick of Guernsey of the value of Russian (a) financial and (b) non-financial assets held in each such territory; [193345]

(2) if he take steps to extend the requirement to apply sanctions set out in Council Regulation (EU) 269/2014 to the (a) Bailiwick of Jersey and (b) Bailiwick of Guernsey. [193346]

Mr Vara: The Crown Dependencies are not part of the UK but are self-governing dependencies of the Crown. This means they have their own directly elected legislative assemblies, administrative, fiscal and legal systems and their own courts of law. It is therefore not for the UK to extend the application of the sanctions set out in the Council Regulation (EU) 269/2014. Equivalent measures have been implemented by the Crown Dependencies, who have kept Her Majesty's Government updated about their activities in this area.

Her Majesty's Government does not routinely request information on the value of particular assets held in the Crown Dependencies.

The UK and the Crown Dependencies recognise the importance of working together to promote the application of high international standards and implementing sanctions and asset freezing measures.

Courts: Nottinghamshire

John Mann: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice for what reasons Worksop Courthouse is planned to close. [193281]

Mr Vara: There are no plans to close the courthouse at Worksop. A consultation is currently under way on potential changes to listing arrangements at Worksop magistrates court. The consultation commenced on 19 March 2014 and closes on 30 April 2014 and all responses will be taken into account before any decision is made.

Crime: Nature Conservation

Mr Simon Burns: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice how many people in England have been (a) charged with and (b) convicted of offences concerning the illegal wildlife trade in each of the last five years. [192854]

Jeremy Wright: The number of defendants proceeded against and found guilty of triable either way offences under the Control of Trade in Endangered Species Regulation 1997, together with Intentionally obstruct an authorised person acting in accordance with the powers conferred by Regulation, under Section 9(6) of the regulations, in England and Wales from 2011 to 2012 can be viewed in the table. Please note data for the triable either way offences prior to 2011, together with a large quantity of other offences to this day are kept on paper records which would require manual inspection. This would be at disproportionate cost.

Court Proceedings data for what can be provided by separate identification for 2013 are planned for publication in May 2014.

Charging data is not held by the Ministry of Justice

Defendants proceeded against at magistrates courts and found guilty and sentenced at all courts of offences under the Control of Trade in Endangered Species Regulations, England and Wales, 2011 to 2012^{1, 2, 3}

Outcome	2011	2012
Proceeded against	6	9

Defendants proceeded against at magistrates courts and found guilty and sentenced at all courts of offences under the Control of Trade in Endangered Species Regulations, England and Wales, 2011 to 2012^{1, 2, 3}

Outcome	2011	2012
Found guilty	7	1

¹ The figures given in the table relate to persons for whom these offences were the principal offences for which they were dealt with. When a defendant has been found guilty of two or more offences it is the offence for which the heaviest penalty is imposed. Where the same disposal is imposed for two or more offences, the offence selected is the offence for which the statutory maximum penalty is the most severe.

² Every effort is made to ensure that the figures presented are accurate and complete. However, it is important to note that these data have been extracted from large administrative data systems generated by the courts and police forces. As a consequence, care should be taken to ensure data collection processes and their inevitable limitations are taken into account when those data are used.

³ The number of offenders sentenced can differ from those found guilty as it may be the case that a defendant found guilty in a particular year, and committed for sentence at the Crown court, may be sentenced in the following year.

Source:

Justice Statistics Analytical Services—Ministry of Justice.

Dangerous Driving: Sentencing

David Simpson: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice if the Department will review the length of sentencing given to those who kill by dangerous driving and speeding. [191321]

Jeremy Wright: Severe maximum penalties, of 14 years imprisonment, are available for those who cause death through dangerous driving or under the influence of drink or drugs and statistics show that the overwhelming majority of those convicted for these offences receive lengthy custodial sentences. The maximum penalty for causing death by careless driving is five years imprisonment and for causing death by disqualified, unlicensed or uninsured driving is two years imprisonment. We are keeping the law in this area under review. If any changes are needed, we will bring forward proposals.

Guidance to the judiciary is produced independently of Government, by the Sentencing Council. This is in line with the principle that, while the Government decides what maximum penalties should be, the courts are responsible for deciding what sentence to impose within those limits.

The sentencing guideline on causing death by driving was published by the Sentencing Guidelines Council in 2008. It covers the offences of causing death by dangerous driving and causing death by careless driving as well as causing death by dangerous driving while under the influence of drink or drugs and causing death by driving unlicensed, disqualified or uninsured. Last year, the Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice, my right hon. Friend the Member for Epsom and Ewell (Chris Grayling), wrote to the Sentencing Council (as it now is) to ask them to review the death by driving guideline and they have agreed to include this in their programme of work.

Domestic Violence

Mark Reckless: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice what his policy is on the implementation of the so-called Eve's Law. [188752]

Damian Green: The Government takes the issue of domestic violence very seriously and is committed to ensuring greater protection for victims of all forms of violence.

The issue raised by the Eve's Law campaign is complex and cuts across a number of justice jurisdictions, and into many areas of a victim's interaction with the state and other agencies.

Having considered the issues raised by the campaign, this Department is not persuaded that primary legislation is the necessary and appropriate way forward. However, we are committed to taking action to improve the protection of personal information of victims and will identify opportunities in the cross-Government programmes that are tackling the priority issues of domestic and sexual abuse.

I refer my hon. Friend to my response to questions raised in the House by the hon. Member for Barnsley Central (Dan Jarvis), regarding the Eve's Law campaign, on 17 December 2013, *Official Report*, column 607, and 14 January 2014, *Official Report*, column 480W.

Electronic Tagging

Dan Jarvis: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice when he plans to introduce GPS technology for the electronic monitoring of offenders. [191384]

Jeremy Wright: The new contracts will introduce state-of-the-art satellite tagging that will allow us to keep a closer watch over offenders in the community. We are working to take this forward as quickly as possible, with a view to beginning roll out by the end of the year.

Essex Probation

Mr Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice if he will place in the Library a copy of the response to each request to Essex Probation under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 which was agreed to and answered in (a) full and (b) part since November 2013; and if he will make a statement. [192993]

Jeremy Wright: When Essex Probation Trust has provided us with the requested information, I will arrange for it to be placed in the Library.

Mr Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice what discussions (a) Ministers and (b) officials in his Department have had with Essex Probation Service since November 2013; what issues were raised in each such discussion; what steps his Department took following each such discussion; and if he will make a statement. [193162]

Jeremy Wright: There have been no discussions between Ministers and Essex Probation Trust since November 2013. Ministry of Justice officials are in frequent contact with the trust.

Mr Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice what the salary was of the (a) Chief Executive and (b) Chairman of the Essex Probation Trust in (i) 2013 and (ii) 2014; and if he will make a statement. [193163]

Jeremy Wright: The information requested is as follows:

	2012-13	2013-14
Chief Executive	85,000 to 90,000	85,000 to 90,000
Chair	15,000 to 20,000	15,000 to 20,000

Mr Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice what recent representations he has received from Essex Probation Trust on the retention of the current board; and if he will make a statement. [193164]

Jeremy Wright: From 1 June 2014, responsibility for probation provision in Essex will become the responsibility of the national probation service and the Community Rehabilitation Company (CRC) for Essex. The national probation service will form part of the National Offender Management Service (NOMS) and will be accountable to the Secretary of State, via the chief executive of NOMS. The chief executive of the CRC was appointed on 2 December 2013. We are in the process of selecting the other CRC board members and these appointments will be announced in due course.

Mr Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice whether any employees of Essex Probation have been (a) prosecuted and (b) convicted of a criminal offence in the last six months; and if he will make a statement. [193182]

Jeremy Wright: No employee of Essex Probation Trust was convicted of a criminal offence in the last six months. Information on prosecutions that do not result in conviction is not collated.

Mr Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice (1) how much Essex Probation (a) budgeted for and (b) spent on refreshments in (i) 2013 and (ii) 2014 to date; [193185]

(2) how much Essex Probation (a) budgeted for and (b) spent on away days in (i) 2013 and (ii) 2014 to date; [193186]

(3) how much (a) Essex Probation Trust Board and (b) Essex Probation (i) budgeted for and (ii) spent on away days in (A) 2013 and (B) 2014 to date; [193188]

(4) how much Essex Probation (a) budgeted for and (b) spent on bonuses for members of the Essex Probation Trust Board in (i) 2013 and (ii) 2014 to date; [193189]

(5) how much Essex Probation Trust Board (a) budgeted for and (b) spent on refreshments in (i) 2013 and (ii) 2014 to date; [193190]

(6) what amount has been budgeted for (a) involuntary and (b) voluntary exit schemes for members of (i) Essex Probation and (ii) Essex Probation Trust Board in each of the next 12 months; and if he will make a statement; [193191]

(7) how many people employed by Essex Probation Trust were eligible for performance and special bonuses at each grade in each of the last three years; how many people received each type of bonus at each grade in each such year; and what the average and maximum payment was for each type of bonus at each grade; [193198]

(8) how many members of Essex Probation Trust Board were eligible for performance and special bonuses in each of the last three years; how many board members

received each type of bonus in each such year; what the average and maximum payment was for each type of bonus; and if he will make a statement. [193200]

Jeremy Wright: The information requested could not be obtained within the timescale. I will write to the hon. Member in due course.

Mr Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice how much Essex Probation (a) budgeted for and (b) spent on security in (i) 2013 and (ii) 2014 to date. [193187]

Jeremy Wright: The information requested is not collected centrally and could not be obtained within the timescale. I will write to the hon. Member in due course.

Mr Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice what decisions his Department has made on retaining the Current Chief Executive of Essex Probation Trust; and if he will make a statement. [193197]

Jeremy Wright: From 1 June 2014, responsibility for probation provision in Essex will become the responsibility of the national probation service and the Community Rehabilitation Company (CRC) for Essex.

The chief executive of the CRC for Essex has been appointed, following a competition. The appointment was announced on 2 December 2013.

Legal Profession: Pay

David T. C. Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice what calculations were used to calculate the mean fee income for full-time criminal barristers published by his Department on 2 January 2014; and for what reasons VAT was included in the estimate of barristers' earnings. [193702]

Mr Vara: Figures provided in the statistical publication released on the 2 January 2014 are available at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/legal-aid-statistics-barrister-fee-income-from-public-sources-201213>

and show that when including all 4,931 criminal barristers' payments, the mean average payment for 2012-13 was £72,010. This includes those barristers that may have provided legal assistance in only a small number of instances within this time period, and payments from both the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) and Legal Aid Agency (LAA). The release also contains information on the data and methodology used.

The statistics provided in the publication and supporting documents included VAT and other additional costs due to the structure of the data obtained from the administrative systems within LAA, and also those provided by the CPS were aggregated figures that already included VAT. The basis of the calculations were set out in the publication.

Matrimonial Property

Jim Shannon: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice what his policy is on the introduction of legally binding pre-nuptial agreements. [193537]

Simon Hughes: The Law Commission published its report on Matrimonial Property, Needs and Agreements on 27 February 2014.

The report focuses on clarifying the law in the areas of financial “need” and nuptial agreements and makes three broad recommendations:

1. that written guidance is produced on financial need;
2. that the feasibility is assessed of producing numerical guidance to help couples to calculate the likely financial outcome of divorce or dissolution; and
3. that pre-nuptial agreements are made statutorily binding.

The Government is grateful to the Law Commission for their hard work on this complex area of law.

The Government is giving the report careful consideration. An interim response will be published by August 2014 and a full response by February 2015. These are the timescales established in protocol between the Law Commission and Government.

Personal Records: Databases

Dan Jarvis: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice (1) what categories of personal information will be held on each database managed by his Department or its executive agencies expected to become operational in the next five years; what estimate he has made of the number of individuals’ details each such database will hold when fully operational; and if he will make a statement; [192727]

(2) what categories of personal information are contained on each relevant database managed by his Department and its executive agencies; on what date each category of information was first collected; and if he will make a statement; [192728]

(3) what databases managed by his Department or its executive agencies and which will contain personal information are (a) under construction and (b) expected to go live in the next five years; and if he will make a statement. [192729]

Simon Hughes: I can confirm that the Ministry of Justice and its executive agencies including Her Majesty’s Courts and Tribunal Service (HMCTS), the National Offender Management Service (NOMS), the Office of the Public Guardian (OPG) and the Legal Aid Agency (LAA), currently have no plans to introduce any new HR-related centralised, multi-user database systems.

In order to ascertain the individual categories of personal information across all existing, relevant centralised HR-related databases, we would be required to either allocate specialist business resources to identify the requirements and produce the data, or commission it directly from third party IT suppliers. All this would be at a disproportionate cost.

Pornography

Dan Jarvis: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice what meetings his Department has had with (a) Ministers and (b) officials at the Department for Culture, Media and Sport to discuss proposals in the Criminal Justice and Courts Bill on extreme pornography. [192825]

Damian Green: The Government is extending the extreme pornography offence to capture pornographic images depicting rape and other non-consensual penetrative sexual activity.

Officials in the Ministry of Justice and the Department for Culture, Media and Sport have liaised closely on this matter.

Prisoners’ Home Leave

Philip Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice (1) how many offenders who were recalled to prison from home detention curfew have been subsequently released back onto home detention curfew since 3 December 2012; [191214]

(2) how many offenders have been recalled to prison and given a fixed term recall since 3 December 2012 whilst (a) on home detention curfew and (b) serving a sentence for a violent or sexual offence as listed in schedule 15 to the Criminal Justice Act 2003. [191216]

Jeremy Wright: The information required to answer these questions is due for publication on 24 April 2014. I will write to my hon. Friend as soon as it is available. A copy will be placed in the House Library.

Prisoners: Foreign Nationals

Mr Hollobone: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice pursuant to the answers of 5 February 2014, *Official Report*, column 293W and 28 February 2014, *Official Report*, column 548W, on prisoners: foreign nationals, which three countries have the next largest number of foreign nationals in UK prisons; and what steps he is taking to return those offenders to secure detention in their own countries. [192744]

Jeremy Wright: Data on the nationality of Foreign National Offenders (FNOs) held in custody is published in the quarterly offender management statistics.

Table 1.6:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/276084/prison-population-tables-q3-2013.xls

The countries with the 7th, 8th and 9th largest populations of FNOs in UK prisons on 31 December 2013 are:

- 7 Nigeria—(469)
- 8 Somalia—(430)
- 9 India—(426)

We signed a Prisoner Transfer Arrangement (PTA) with Nigeria in January and we expect to see transfers before the end of the year.

We do not have any prisoner transfer arrangements with Somalia at present, and security concerns and the requirement for prison reform may provide challenges in the short-term. We have a voluntary PTA with India and are planning to work to try and make this more effective.

The Prisoner Transfer process is just one mechanism for removing Foreign National Offenders (FNOs). The number of FNOs deported under the Early Removal Scheme (ERS) has increased under this Government. In 2013, we removed nearly 2,000 FNOs under ERS and

under the Tariff Expired Removal Scheme (TERS), which we introduced in May 2012, we have removed 234 FNOs to date.

Probation

Sadiq Khan: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice in which instances Probation Trust staff have been co-located with other public or private organisations in (a) Probation Trust premises and (b) other organisation premises; and what the annual cost to the Probation Trust is of sub-letting space shared with another organisation for the purpose of staff co-location.

[193387]

Jeremy Wright: This information is not recorded centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Sadiq Khan: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice who the current bidders for the Transforming Rehabilitation prime provider contracts are in each of the 21 geographic areas; and which bidders for these contracts have indicated but then withdrawn an interest.

[193390]

Jeremy Wright: We have a robust and diverse market. In mid December 2013, the bidders who passed the first stage of the competition to win the regional rehabilitation contracts were announced. The list includes a mix of private and voluntary sector partnerships with more than 50 organisations represented—from charities experienced in tackling a range of issues affecting offenders, to small and large British businesses and experienced multinationals. All of these Tier one bidders have experience in working with offenders or across the wider Criminal Justice System. Approximately one third of the bidders included a potential mutual organisation within their consortium. A list of the bidders who have been successful at this stage can be found at:

<https://www.justice.gov.uk/transforming-rehabilitation/competition>

The process to award Community Rehabilitation Company contracts is ongoing and the details of which bidders are interested in bidding for each Contract Package Area (CPA) is commercially sensitive information, which it would not be right to make public at this stage as this would affect the bidding process for the overall competition. Additionally, for similar commercial reasons it is not general practice to release information on those organisations which have withdrawn from the competition.

As requested by the authority, all bidders updated their CPA preferences on 22 January. The current lot preferences are an initial indication of the bidders for each region. This is not finalised and we will be conducting another refresh of lot preferences before final bids are submitted.

Sentencing: Wales

Mr Hanson: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice how many people were sentenced in the North Wales Police Force area to immediate custody for (a) less than six months and (b) six months or longer in each of the last six years, broken down by sex; and for which offences they were sentenced.

[193272]

Jeremy Wright: Since 2010 the proportion of individuals receiving immediate custodial sentences in England and Wales and the length of those sentences has increased. Severe penalties are available for serious offences.

The number of defendants sentenced to immediate custody at all courts by offence type, gender and sentence lengths in North Wales police force area from 2007 to 2012 (latest available) can be viewed in the table.

Please note that court proceedings statistics for the year 2013 are planned to be published by the Ministry of Justice in May 2014.

Offenders sentenced to immediate custody at all courts, by offence type, gender and sentence lengths in North Wales Police force area, 2007-12^{1,2}

Gender	Year	Offence type	Sentenced	Total immediate custody	Of which:	
					Less than six months	Six months and over
Male	2007	Violence against the person	578	190	28	162
		Sexual offences	56	32	4	28
		Burglary	248	94	32	62
		Robbery	37	30	1	29
		Theft and Handling stolen goods	813	120	95	25
		Fraud and forgery	156	36	11	25
		Criminal damage	274	30	15	15
		Drug offences	387	90	16	74
		Other (excluding motoring offences)	525	121	34	87
		Motoring offences	65	18	3	15
		Summary non motoring offences	3,567	158	151	7
		Summary motoring offences	8,854	82	79	3
		Totals	15,560	1,001	469	532
			2008	Violence against the person	557	218
Sexual offences	81			48	5	43
Burglary	287			122	32	90
Robbery	26			26	0	26

Offenders sentenced to immediate custody at all courts, by offence type, gender and sentence lengths in North Wales Police force area, 2007-12^{1,2}

<i>Gender</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Offence type</i>	<i>Sentenced</i>	<i>Of which:</i>		
				<i>Total immediate custody</i>	<i>Less than six months</i>	<i>Six months and over</i>
		Theft and Handling stolen goods	1,003	150	127	23
		Fraud and forgery	151	50	21	29
		Criminal damage	322	35	27	8
		Drug offences	455	73	9	64
		Other (excluding motoring offences)	530	132	53	79
		Motoring offences	58	23	3	20
		Summary non motoring offences	3,413	190	178	12
		Summary motoring offences	7,694	65	63	2
		Totals	14,577	1,132	571	561
	2009	Violence against the person	540	210	43	167
		Sexual offences	55	31	3	28
		Burglary	252	127	33	94
		Robbery	39	37	0	37
		Theft and Handling stolen goods	1,090	205	159	46
		Fraud and forgery	162	54	23	31
		Criminal damage	185	21	10	11
		Drug offences	482	152	19	133
		Other (excluding motoring offences)	645	199	98	101
		Motoring offences	68	27	5	22
		Summary non motoring offences	4,055	265	252	13
		Summary motoring offences	6,856	50	49	1
		Totals	14,429	1,378	694	684
	2010	Violence against the person	587	200	35	165
		Sexual offences	75	44	5	39
		Burglary	278	113	34	79
		Robbery	29	24	0	24
		Theft and Handling stolen goods	1,299	196	177	19
		Fraud and forgery	182	40	20	20
		Criminal damage	222	20	11	9
		Drug offences	555	116	16	100
		Other (excluding motoring offences)	694	207	101	106
		Motoring offences	56	9	0	9
		Summary non motoring offences	3,572	205	200	5
		Summary motoring offences	6,442	37	37	0
		Totals	13,991	1,211	636	575
	2011	Violence against the person	494	192	51	141
		Sexual offences	59	37	4	33
		Burglary	288	150	50	100
		Robbery	39	37	0	37
		Theft and Handling stolen goods	1,178	230	193	37
		Fraud and forgery	170	51	19	32
		Criminal damage	187	27	13	14
		Drug offences	511	113	19	94
		Other (excluding motoring offences)	494	124	69	55
		Motoring offences	51	16	1	15
		Summary non motoring offences	3,069	221	214	7
		Summary motoring offences	4,665	26	26	0
		Totals	11,205	1,224	659	565

Offenders sentenced to immediate custody at all courts, by offence type, gender and sentence lengths in North Wales Police force area, 2007-12^{1,2}

Gender	Year	Offence type	Sentenced	Total immediate custody	Of which:	
					Less than six months	Six months and over
	2012	Violence against the person	474	212	49	163
		Sexual offences	81	57	4	53
		Burglary	283	145	44	101
		Robbery	56	55	0	55
		Theft and Handling stolen goods	1,126	224	183	41
		Fraud and forgery	123	37	16	21
		Criminal damage	123	18	11	7
		Drug offences	420	116	11	105
		Other (excluding motoring offences)	473	148	52	96
		Motoring offences	56	19	4	15
		Summary non motoring offences	2,810	222	215	7
		Summary motoring offences	3,929	44	43	1
		Totals	9,954	1,297	632	665
		Female	2007	Violence against the person	84	16
Sexual offences	3			2	0	2
Burglary	16			5	2	3
Robbery	3			1	0	1
Theft and Handling stolen goods	206			18	16	2
Fraud and forgery	62			1	0	1
Criminal damage	45			1	1	0
Drug offences	48			7	2	5
Other (excluding motoring offences)	67			8	4	4
Motoring offences	4			2	0	2
Summary non motoring offences	1,734			15	15	0
Summary motoring offences	1,688			0	0	0
Totals	3,960			76	47	29
	2008			Violence against the person	67	10
		Sexual offences	0	0	0	0
		Burglary	28	9	1	8
		Robbery	2	2	0	2
		Theft and Handling stolen goods	229	23	22	1
		Fraud and forgery	67	9	7	2
		Criminal damage	53	5	1	4
		Drug offences	58	4	2	2
		Other (excluding motoring offences)	68	8	7	1
		Motoring offences	3	0	0	0
		Summary non motoring offences	1,728	14	12	2
		Summary motoring offences	1,689	0	0	0
		Totals	3,992	84	54	30
			2009	Violence against the person	77	13
Sexual offences	0			0	0	0
Burglary	15			7	2	5
Robbery	2			1	0	1
Theft and Handling stolen goods	292			23	17	6
Fraud and forgery	66			12	6	6
Criminal damage	16			3	0	3
Drug offences	57			13	2	11
Other (excluding motoring offences)	92			13	11	2
Motoring offences	5			0	0	0

Offenders sentenced to immediate custody at all courts, by offence type, gender and sentence lengths in North Wales Police force area, 2007-12^{1,2}

<i>Gender</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Offence type</i>	<i>Sentenced</i>	<i>Of which:</i>		
				<i>Total immediate custody</i>	<i>Less than six months</i>	<i>Six months and over</i>
		Summary non motoring offences	2,178	13	13	-
		Summary motoring offences	1,805	3	3	-
		Totals	4,605	101	56	45
	2010	Violence against the person	100	10	1	9
		Sexual offences	1	0	0	0
		Burglary	11	6	0	6
		Robbery	4	4	0	4
		Theft and Handling stolen goods	267	15	14	1
		Fraud and forgery	57	5	3	2
		Criminal damage	29	0	0	0
		Drug offences	57	6	0	6
		Other (excluding motoring offences)	99	15	10	5
		Motoring offences	0	0	0	0
		Summary non motoring offences	1,930	13	12	1
		Summary motoring offences	1,713	0	0	0
		Totals	4,268	74	40	34
	2011	Violence against the person	93	13	1	12
		Sexual offences	0	0	0	0
		Burglary	18	3	0	3
		Robbery	2	1	0	1
		Theft and Handling stolen goods	316	13	13	-
		Fraud and forgery	76	9	1	8
		Criminal damage	24	2	1	1
		Drug offences	42	5	0	5
		Other (excluding motoring offences)	88	17	9	8
		Motoring offences	3	1	0	1
		Summary non motoring offences	1,664	9	9	0
		Summary motoring offences	1,283	1	1	0
		Totals	3,609	74	35	39
	2012	Violence against the person	70	14	3	11
		Sexual offences	0	0	0	0
		Burglary	15	6	0	6
		Robbery	2	1	0	1
		Theft and Handling stolen goods	301	34	27	7
		Fraud and forgery	54	10	2	8
		Criminal damage	17	1	0	1
		Drug offences	43	8	0	8
		Other (excluding motoring offences)	49	13	6	7
		Motoring offences	7	0	0	0
		Summary non motoring offences	1,605	10	10	-
		Summary motoring offences	1,070	0	0	0
		Totals	3,233	97	48	49

¹ The figures given in the table on court proceedings relate to persons for whom these offences were the principal offences for which they were dealt with. When a defendant has been found guilty of two or more offences it is the offence for which the heaviest penalty is imposed. Where the same disposal is imposed for two or more offences, the offence selected is the offence for which the statutory maximum penalty is the most severe.

² Every effort is made to ensure that the figures presented are accurate and complete. However, it is important to note that these data have been extracted from large administrative data systems generated by the courts and police forces. As a consequence, care should be taken to ensure data collection processes and their inevitable limitations are taken into account when those data are used.

Source:

Justice Statistics Analytical Services—Ministry of Justice

Television: Licensing

Mr Gregory Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice how many people in Northern Ireland per 10,000 of the population were prosecuted for non-payment of the television licence fee in each of the last three years. [193401]

Mr Vara: My Department's Court Proceedings database holds information on criminal justice statistics only in England and Wales. Criminal Justice Statistics in Northern Ireland are a matter for the Department of Justice in Northern Ireland, which the hon. Member will need to contact directly.

The offence of using a TV receiver without a valid licence carries a maximum penalty of a fine not exceeding level 3 on the standard scale (£1,000). Failure to pay such a fine can lead, following enforcement action and as a last resort, to committal to prison for fine default for a maximum of 28 days.

Mr Leech: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice how many of the people imprisoned in 2012 for non-payment of fines relating to television licence evasion had other unpaid fines for other offences; and how many outstanding fines on average such people had. [194244]

Mr Vara: It is not possible to identify from Her Majesty's Courts and Tribunals systems the original offences of people sent to prison for non payment of fines or how many other fines they may have had. This information could be provided only at disproportionate cost as identifying this would require a manual search of all closed and live fine accounts.

Terrorism: Northern Ireland

Lady Hermon: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice when he first became aware of the so-called comfort letters issued to on-the-runs; and if he will make a statement. [192838]

Jeremy Wright: The Government has announced an independent inquiry led by Lady Justice Hallett which will set out the facts in relation to the operation and extent of the 'on the runs' scheme. This issue is a matter for the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

Young Offenders

Dan Jarvis: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice what resources his Department has provided to youth offending teams to support families in order to prevent youth offending since May 2010. [192833]

Jeremy Wright: The YJB distributes an annual grant to the 158 Youth Offending Teams (YOTs) in England and Wales (£92 million in 2014-15). YOTs decide locally how to use this funding, and the YJB is therefore unable to determine the proportion of this funding spent specifically on supporting families to prevent youth offending:

Funding for the purposes of preventing youth offending is also provided to Local Authority Children's Services, via the Department for Education's Early Intervention

Grant; and to Police and Crime Commissioners via the Home Office's Community Safety Grant. In addition, the Ministry of Justice has provided £25 million over three years towards the Troubled Families Programme, and is helping to shape the next phase of the expanded Programme.

Youth Custody

Dan Jarvis: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice which secure children's homes Ministers of his Department have visited since May 2010; and what the date of each such visit was. [191387]

Jeremy Wright: Ministers from the Department have made two visits to secure children's homes since May 2010; my hon. Friend the Member for Reigate (Crispin Blunt), to Vinney Green secure children's home on 3 August 2010, and the Minister without Portfolio, my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Rushcliffe (Mr Clarke), to Clayfields house secure children's home on 14 October 2011. I am also scheduled to visit Clayfields house on 10 April 2014.

Sadiq Khan: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice what was the (a) capacity and (b) population of each (A) secure training centre, (B) young offender institution and (C) secure children's home on 1 March (i) 2010, (ii) 2011, (iii) 2012, (iv) 2013 and (v) 2014. [192197]

Jeremy Wright: Overall crime and proven offending by young people has fallen in recent years. Fewer young people have entered the criminal justice system, and as a result fewer young people have ended up in custody. This has allowed excess capacity in the youth secure estate to be decommissioned.

The following table shows the (a) capacity and (b) population of each secure children's home, secure training centre and under-18 young offender institution at the end of February in 2010, 2011, 2012, and 2013 and at the end of January in 2014 (this is the latest available published data for 2014). This relates to either the last Friday of the month in question, or the first Friday of the following month, depending on which is closest to final day of the month. Data for the end of February therefore offers the closest available published data to 1 March.

The "capacity" figure relates to the number of beds available, allowing for any "out of commission" beds due to, for example, damage to rooms or contractual changes.

This information comes from the Youth Justice Board's Secure Accommodation Clearing House System (SACHS) database and eAsset database. The January 2014 database is provisional. The final 2013-14 figures will be finalised in 2013-14 Youth Justice Statistics to be published in January 2015.

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 and can be subject to change over time.

Table 1: Capacity and population of each secure children's home, secure training centre and young offender institution at the end of February for 2010, 2011, 2012 and 2013 and at the end of January 2014

Sector	Establishment	February 2010		February 2011		February 2012	
		Capacity	Population	Capacity	Population	Capacity	Population
Secure children's homes (under 18)	Aldine House	4	3	4	4	4	4
	Atkinson Unit	3	3	0	0	0	0
	Aycliffe	30	19	30	13	30	28
	Barton Moss	20	20	20	18	20	20
	Clayfields	12	9	15	15	15	15
	East Moor	34	30	34	27	25	24
	Hillside	15	15	17	17	17	17
	Kyloe House	3	2	0	0	0	0
	Lincolnshire	9	9	10	10	10	9
	Red Bank	28	25	29	25	29	24
	Swanwick Lodge	12	12	12	12	13	13
	Vinney Green	21	18	21	21	21	21
	Secure Children's Homes total	191	165	192	162	184	175
Secure training centres (under 18)	Hassockfield	58	51	58	42	58	52
	Medway	76	71	76	71	76	70
	Oakhill	80	74	80	76	80	70
	Rainsbrook	87	71	87	82	87	84
	Secure Training Centres total	301	267	301	271	301	276
Young offender institutions (including 18)	Ashfield	400	236	360	342	360	287
	Castington	167	106	0	0	0	0
	Cookham Wood	98	99	100	93	131	125
	Downview	16	9	16	11	16	13
	Eastwood Park	16	14	16	11	16	13
	Feltham	236	224	238	231	240	205
	Foston Hall	16	9	0	0	0	0
	Hindley	415	346	417	319	417	289
	Huntercombe	360	194	0	0	0	0
	New Hall	26	14	26	8	9	6
	Parc	64	63	63	49	64	53
	Stoke Heath	144	132	202	53	0	0
	Warren Hill	201	158	127	121	177	133
	Werrington	160	133	153	141	142	136
	Wetherby	407	284	382	355	371	346
	Young Offender Institutions total	2,726	2,021	2,100	1,734	1,943	1,606
	Total	3,218	2,453	2,593	2,167	2,428	2,057

Sector	Establishment	February 2013		January 2014	
		Capacity	Population	Capacity	Population
Secure children's homes (under 18)	Aldine House	4	1	4	4
	Atkinson Unit	0	0	0	0
	Aycliffe	24	13	24	17
	Barton Moss	18	17	16	12
	Clayfields	14	10	14	14
	East Moor	25	19	25	24

Sector	Establishment	February 2013		January 2014	
		Capacity	Population	Capacity	Population
	Hillside	17	14	17	11
	Kyloe House	0	0	0	0
	Lincolnshire	10	6	10	10
	Red Bank	21	11	21	16
	Swanwick Lodge	12	12	10	9
	Vinney Green	21	17	21	21
	Secure Children's Homes total	166	120	162	138
Secure training centres (under 18)	Hassockfield	58	34	58	43
	Medway	76	71	68	62
	Oakhill	80	69	80	80
	Rainsbrook	81	66	87	81
	Secure Training Centres total	295	240	293	266
Young offender institutions (including 18)	Ashfield	360	103	0	0
	Castington	0	0	0	0
	Cookham Wood	125	97	126	120
	Downview	16	5	0	0
	Eastwood Park	14	7	0	0
	Feltham	240	165	240	226
	Foston Hall	0	0	0	0
	Hindley	431	180	248	161
	Huntercombe	0	0	0	0
	New Hall	9	2	0	0
	Parc	64	36	64	47
	Stoke Heath	0	0	0	0
	Warren Hill	181	115	0	0
	Werrington	155	131	160	118
	Wetherby	392	223	259	214
	Young Offender Institutions total	1,987	1,064	1,097	886
	Total	2,448	1,424	1,552	1,290

Youth Justice Board

Dan Jarvis: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice what proportion of the Youth Justice Board's budget has been spent on research in each year since 2010. [191980]

Jeremy Wright: The statutory functions of the Youth Justice Board (YJB) include that of identifying and promoting good practice to prevent and reduce youth crime. In undertaking this function, the YJB works closely with local services, research bodies and academic institutions.

The following table shows the YJB's central expenditure on research for each full financial year since 2009-10 alongside the proportion of that expenditure against the YJB's overall expenditure for the year.

No new central research was commissioned in 2012-13 to enable the completion and publication of ongoing research projects. Figures relating to YJB's research

programme expenditure for 2013-14 will be published in the YJB's Annual Report and Accounts due for publication in July. This and previous reports can be found at:

<http://www.justice.gov.uk/publications/corporate-reports/yjb>

	Research programme (£000)	Proportion of spend on research programme against the YJB's total net expenditure (after interest) (percentage)
2009-10	666	0.13
2010-11	157	0.03
2011-12	204	0.05
2012-13	0	0.00

CHURCH COMMISSIONERS**Clergy: Retirement**

Mr Frank Field: To ask the right hon. Member for Banbury, representing the Church Commissioners, whether the Church Commissioners are considering changing the compulsory retirement age for clergy.

[194239]

Sir Tony Baldry: The retirement age of 70 for archbishops, bishops, deans, archdeacons, incumbent clergy and some other clerical office holders is provided for in the Ecclesiastical Offices (Age Limits) Measure 1975 and there are no plans for introducing amending legislation though the subject is kept under review.

There is already some flexibility. Extensions for up to two years beyond 70 are possible for incumbents where

the bishop believes there are sufficient pastoral reasons and for up to a year for archbishops and bishops. In addition parish clergy may under the common tenure arrangements move to a new status on reaching the retirement age and, with the agreement of the bishop, continue to minister for fixed term periods.

It was only in 2011 that capability requirements were introduced for the first time and these do not apply to the large number of clergy who were already in office and chose to retain the freehold rather than switch to common tenure. Reverting to the pre 1975 situation of no retirement ages or significantly increasing the present retirement age are unlikely to be options until the new capability requirements have proved themselves and apply to the great majority of clergy.

ORAL ANSWERS

Monday 31 March 2014

	<i>Col. No.</i>		<i>Col. No.</i>
WORK AND PENSIONS	575	WORK AND PENSIONS—continued	
Benefit Cap	582	Mesothelioma Compensation Fund	583
Child Poverty Target	588	Topical Questions	589
Crisis Loans (Homeless People)	585	Universal Credit	588
Defined Contribution Pension Schemes	575	Universal Credit (IT Specialists)	586
Employment Figures	576	Work Programme/Universal Jobmatch	584
Financial Inclusion/Family Budgets	579	Youth Unemployment	578
Long-term Unemployment	581		

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

Monday 31 March 2014

	<i>Col. No.</i>		<i>Col. No.</i>
BUSINESS, INNOVATION AND SKILLS	61WS	ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS	65WS
Companies House	61WS	Common Fisheries Policy	65WS
COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT ..	61WS	FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE	66WS
Architects Registration Board	61WS	UN Commission of Inquiry (Democratic People's Republic of Korea)	66WS
DEFENCE	62WS	UN Human Rights Council (Sri Lanka)	67WS
Defence Support Group	62WS	HOME DEPARTMENT	68WS
Nuclear Safety Committee/Nuclear Research Advisory Council	62WS	Alcohol Licensing	68WS
ELECTORAL COMMISSION COMMITTEE	70WS	Annual Assessment of Policing (England and Wales)	69WS
Individual Electoral Registration	70WS	European Police College (Relocation)	68WS
ENERGY AND CLIMATE CHANGE	63WS	JUSTICE	69WS
Nuclear Liabilities Financing Assurance Board	65WS	Court and Tribunal Reform	69WS
Radioactive Waste (Thermal Analysis Review)	63WS		

PETITIONS

Monday 31 March 2014

	<i>Col. No.</i>		<i>Col. No.</i>
COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT .	3P	HOME DEPARTMENT	4P
South Stoke Plateau (Bath and North East Somerset)	3P	The Right of Anton Kainga to Remain in the UK	4P

WRITTEN ANSWERS

Monday 31 March 2014

	<i>Col. No.</i>		<i>Col. No.</i>
ATTORNEY-GENERAL	415W	BUSINESS, INNOVATION AND SKILLS—continued	
All Party Groups	415W	Foreign Investment in UK: North East	513W
BUSINESS, INNOVATION AND SKILLS	508W	Higher Education	513W
All Party Groups	508W	Higher Education: Admissions	514W
Apprentices: Essex	508W	Higher Education: Islwyn	514W
Assets: Russia	509W	Higher Education: Private Sector	515W
Beer: Competition	509W	Higher Education: Scholarships	515W
Business: Billing	510W	Higher Education: Student Numbers	516W
Business: Government Assistance	510W	INEOS	516W
Business: Greenhouse Gas Emissions	511W	Intellectual Property	516W
Business Premises: Inspections	509W	Manufacturing Industries	517W
Children: Day Care	511W	New Businesses: Government Assistance	518W
Companies: Registration	512W	Pay: Kilmarnock	519W
Electronics Industry Citizenship Coalition	512W	Personal Injury: Insurance	520W
Foreign Investment in UK	513W	Railways: Manufacturing Industries	520W
		Students: Fees and Charges	521W

	<i>Col. No.</i>		<i>Col. No.</i>
BUSINESS, INNOVATION AND SKILLS—continued		DEFENCE—continued	
Students: Loans	521W	Unmanned Air Vehicles	448W
Taxation: Environment Protection	523W	DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER	415W
Trade Unions	524W	All Party Groups.....	415W
Unfair Practices	524W	EDUCATION	416W
Vocational Training.....	524W	Academies.....	416W
Working Hours	525W	All Party Groups.....	416W
CABINET OFFICE	454W	Children in Care.....	417W
Balance of Payments.....	454W	Foster Care	417W
Cancer	454W	Free School Meals.....	418W
Debts	455W	Free Schools: Lancashire	419W
Electoral Register.....	455W	GCSE: Brigg	420W
Government Departments: Internet.....	456W	Home Education: Lancashire.....	421W
Government Procurement Service.....	456W	Home Education: Yorkshire and the Humber.....	421W
Minimum Wage	457W	Mathematics: Teachers.....	421W
Ovarian Cancer: Brigg	457W	Nurseries.....	421W
Personal Savings	458W	Ofsted	422W
CHURCH COMMISSIONERS	547W	Primary Education: Computers	422W
Clergy: Retirement	547W	Primary Education: Surrey	423W
COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT ..	433W	Pupils: Bullying.....	423W
Affordable Housing: Lancashire	433W	Schools: Asbestos.....	424W
Betting Shops.....	434W	Schools: Finance	424W
Carbon Monoxide: Alarms	434W	ENERGY AND CLIMATE CHANGE	400W
Fire Services: Floods.....	434W	Electricity Generation	400W
Fire Services: Northamptonshire	434W	Energy.....	401W
Ground Rent.....	435W	Energy: Housing	401W
Ground Rent: Greater Manchester	435W	Environment Protection: Taxation	401W
Housing: Construction.....	435W	Fossil Fuels: Russia	402W
Local Government Finance: Warrington	436W	Fuel Oil: North West.....	403W
Multiple Occupation	436W	Fuel Oil: Yorkshire and the Humber.....	403W
New Towns	438W	Public Appointments	403W
New Towns: Ebbsfleet.....	438W	Solar Power.....	404W
Non-domestic Rates.....	439W	Working Hours	404W
Parking	439W	ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL	
Wind Power	439W	AFFAIRS	395W
CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT	462W	Anaerobic Digestion	395W
Arts.....	462W	Coastal Erosion	395W
Betting Shops.....	462W	Environment Agency	395W
Convention on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage.....	463W	Environment Protection: British Overseas Territories	397W
Cycling.....	463W	Fishing Vessels	397W
Direct Selling	463W	Flood Control.....	398W
Football	463W	Forests	398W
Gaming Machines.....	464W	Hunting Act 2004.....	398W
Public Libraries.....	464W	Pest Control	399W
Religious Broadcasting	464W	Pet Foods: China.....	399W
Special Olympics Great Britain	464W	Sheep: Theft	399W
Sports: Learning Disability	465W	Water Charges.....	400W
Tourism.....	465W	FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE	426W
DEFENCE	440W	All Party Groups.....	426W
All Party Groups.....	440W	Bahrain	426W
Armed Forces: Complaints	440W	China	428W
Armed Forces: Disciplinary Proceedings.....	443W	Egypt	429W
Armed Forces: Offenders	443W	Human Trafficking	429W
Armed Forces: Pensions.....	444W	Middle East	430W
Army: Disciplinary Proceedings.....	444W	Mozambique.....	430W
Defence Animal Centre.....	444W	Palestinians	430W
Dmitry Firtash.....	445W	Qatar.....	431W
Internet	445W	Russia	431W
Joint Strike Fighter Aircraft.....	445W	South Korea.....	431W
Military Aid: Floods.....	446W	South Sudan	432W
Military Bases	446W	Spain.....	432W
Public Expenditure.....	446W	St Petersburg International Economic Forum.....	433W
RAF Menwith Hill	447W	Ukraine.....	433W
Type 26 Frigates.....	447W	HEALTH	481W
Ukraine.....	447W	Botulinum Toxin	481W

	<i>Col. No.</i>		<i>Col. No.</i>
HEALTH—continued		JUSTICE—continued	
Brain: Injuries	482W	Essex Probation	528W
Cancer	482W	Legal Profession: Pay	530W
Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease	481W	Matrimonial Property	530W
Cystic Fibrosis	484W	Personal Records: Databases	531W
Dementia	484W	Pornography	531W
Dental Services: Cumbria	484W	Prisoners: Foreign Nationals	532W
Drugs	485W	Prisoners' Home Leave	532W
Drugs: Misuse	486W	Probation	533W
Eyes: Diseases	487W	Sentencing: Wales	534W
Foetal Death	487W	Television: Licensing	541W
General Practitioners	488W	Terrorism: Northern Ireland	541W
Health Education: Food	488W	Young Offenders	541W
Health Services: Greater Manchester	488W	Youth Custody	542W
Hospitals: Fairtrade Initiative	489W	Youth Justice Board	545W
Learning Disability	489W		
Medical Equipment	490W	LEADER OF THE HOUSE	448W
Medical Records: Databases	490W	Electronic Government: Petitions	448W
Medical Treatments	491W		
Medicine: Research	491W	NORTHERN IRELAND	415W
Meningitis	491W	Terrorism	415W
Mental Health Services	492W		
Necrotising Fasciitis	492W	TRANSPORT	405W
NHS: Expenditure	492W	All Party Groups	405W
NHS: Re-employment	493W	Driving: Young People	406W
NHS: Reorganisation	493W	Fines	406W
NHS: Staff	494W	Fisheries	405W
Obesity: Children	496W	High Speed 2 Railway Line	407W
Organs: Donors	495W	Railways	410W
Pathology	495W	Railways: Chester	410W
Psoriasis	496W	Railways: South West	410W
Radiotherapy	497W	Transport: Schools	411W
Respiratory Syncytial Virus	497W		
Skin Cancer	498W	TREASURY	466W
Transplant Surgery: Lung Diseases	498W	Annuities	466W
Vaccination	499W	Assets: Russia	466W
		Aviation	467W
HOME DEPARTMENT	411W	Aviation: Scotland	467W
All Party Groups	411W	Children: Day Care	467W
Asylum	411W	Children: Day Care	479W
Asylum: Pregnant Women	412W	Coinage	468W
Borders: Personal Records	412W	Credit Unions	469W
Deportation	412W	Currencies	469W
Entry Clearances	413W	Financial Services	470W
EU Justice and Home Affairs	413W	Gift Aid	470W
Illegal Immigrants: Employment	414W	Housing: Taxation	470W
Immigrants: Detainees	414W	Income Tax	470W
Unmanned Air Vehicles	414W	Insolvency: Civil Proceedings	471W
		Investment Trusts	472W
HOUSE OF COMMONS COMMISSION	415W	Mortgages	472W
Portcullis House	415W	Mortgages: Interest Rates	472W
		Pensions	473W
INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT	459W	Revenue and Customs	473W
Afghanistan	459W	Roads: Scotland	473W
Africa	459W	Stamp Duty Land Tax	474W
Developing Countries: Abortion	459W	Stock Market: Channel Islands	477W
Developing Countries: Forests	460W	Tax Allowances: Personal Pensions	477W
Developing Countries: Sanitation	460W	Tax Evasion	477W
Palestinians	460W	Tax Evasion: Travellers	478W
South Sudan	461W	Taxation: Environment Protection	479W
Special Olympics	461W	Taxation: Pensions	479W
West Africa	461W	Taxation: Rebates	480W
JUSTICE	525W	WALES	416W
All Party Groups	525W	All Party Groups	416W
Assets: Russia	525W	Business	416W
Courts: Nottinghamshire	526W		
Crime: Nature Conservation	526W	WOMEN AND EQUALITIES	448W
Dangerous Driving: Sentencing	527W	All Party Groups	448W
Domestic Violence	527W	Carers	448W
Electronic Tagging	528W	Females	449W

	<i>Col. No.</i>
WOMEN AND EQUALITIES—continued	
Females: Business	449W
Older Workers.....	449W
Public Expenditure.....	450W
UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women	452W
Vocational Guidance.....	453W
Women's Business Council.....	453W
WORK AND PENSIONS	499W
Annuities.....	501W
Atos Healthcare: Beverley.....	502W
Benefit Assessment Rulings.....	501W
Child Benefit	502W
Children: Maintenance	502W
Employment Schemes: Learning Disability.....	503W
Employment Schemes: Young People.....	503W

	<i>Col. No.</i>
WORK AND PENSIONS—continued	
EU Migrants: Benefits	499W
Housing Benefit	503W
Innovation Fund: Separated Families	500W
Jobseeker's Allowance: Disqualification.....	504W
Personal Independence Payment	500W
Public Expenditure.....	504W
Social Security Benefits	505W
Social Security Benefits: Disqualification.....	505W
State Retirement Pensions.....	506W
Trade Unions	507W
Universal Credit.....	507W
Vacancies: Internet.....	507W
Welfare Payments.....	501W
Work Programme.....	507W
Youth Services.....	508W

Members who wish to have the Daily Report of the Debates forwarded to them should give notice at the Vote Office.

No proofs of the Daily Reports can be supplied. Corrections which Members suggest for the Bound Volume should be clearly marked in the Daily Report, but not telephoned, and *the copy containing the Corrections must be received at the Editor's Room, House of Commons,*

**not later than
Monday 7 April 2014**

STRICT ADHERENCE TO THIS ARRANGEMENT GREATLY FACILITATES THE
PROMPT PUBLICATION OF THE VOLUMES

Members may obtain excerpts of their Speeches from the Official Report (within one month from the date of publication), on application to the Stationery Office, c/o the Editor of the Official Report, House of Commons, from whom the terms and conditions of reprinting may be ascertained. Application forms are available at the Vote Office.

PRICES AND SUBSCRIPTION RATES

DAILY PARTS

Single copies:

Commons, £5; Lords, £4.

Annual subscriptions:

Commons, £865; Lords, £600.

LORDS VOLUME INDEX obtainable on standing order only. Details available on request.

BOUND VOLUMES OF DEBATES are issued periodically during the session.

Single copies:

Commons, £105; Lords, £60 (£100 for a two-volume edition).

Standing orders will be accepted.

THE INDEX to each Bound Volume of House of Commons Debates is published separately at £9.00 and can be supplied to standing order.

All prices are inclusive of postage

CONTENTS

Monday 31 March 2014

Oral Answers to Questions [Col. 575] [see index inside back page]
Secretary of State for Work and Pensions

Yarl's Wood Immigration Centre (Detainee Death) [Col. 597]
Answer to urgent question—(James Brokenshire)

Recall of Members of Parliament [Col. 605]
Bill presented, and read the First time

Wales Bill [Col. 606]
Read a Second time

Petition [Col. 696]

Planning (Walsall South) [Col. 697]
Debate on motion for Adjournment

Written Statements [Col. 61WS]

Petitions [Col. 3P]
Observations

Written Answers to Questions [Col. 395W] [see index inside back page]
