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PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)

HOUSE OF LORDS
OFFICIAL REPORT

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Abbreviation	Party/Group
CB	Cross Bench
Con	Conservative
Con Ind	Conservative Independent
DUP	Democratic Unionist Party
GP	Green Party
Ind Lab	Independent Labour
Ind LD	Independent Liberal Democrat
Ind SD	Independent Social Democrat
Lab	Labour
Lab Ind	Labour Independent
LD	Liberal Democrat
LD Ind	Liberal Democrat Independent
Non-afl	Non-affiliated
PC	Plaid Cymru
UKIP	UK Independence Party
UUP	Ulster Unionist Party

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House of Lords

Thursday, 6 November 2014.

11 am

Prayers—read by the Lord Bishop of Norwich.

Introduction: Baroness Brady

11.06 am

Karren Rita Brady CBE, having been created Baroness Brady, of Knightsbridge in the City of Westminster, was introduced and took the oath, supported by Lord Sugar and Lord Feldman of Elstree, and signed an undertaking to abide by the Code of Conduct.

Introduction: Lord Callanan

11.12 am

Martin John Callanan, Esquire, having been created Baron Callanan, of Low Fell in the County of Tyne and Wear, was introduced and took the oath, supported by Lord Inglewood and Lord Bates, and signed an undertaking to abide by the Code of Conduct.

National Minimum Wage Question

11.18 am

Asked by **Baroness Hollis of Heigham**

To ask Her Majesty's Government, in the light of the fall in value in real terms of the National Minimum Wage since 2010, what assessment they have made of any additional cost to the Exchequer in tax credits and other benefits.

Lord Newby (LD): My Lords, in the evidence that it submitted to the Low Pay Commission in January this year, the Treasury looked at the impact of increasing the national minimum wage to £7. It estimated that overall net borrowing would be reduced by between £30 million and £70 million. The figure is relatively low because there would be an increase in social security spending as a result of fewer jobs, higher prices and lower corporation tax receipts.

Baroness Hollis of Heigham (Lab): My Lords, last year HMRC failed to collect more than £250 million as a result of the failure to keep pace with the minimum wage. Work is no longer the route out of poverty; the majority of those in poverty are now in work. This is living wage week and the living wage is, rightly, voluntary, but it would save HMRC more than £3 billion a year in reduced benefits and increased tax revenues and, above all, it would make work pay. DWP pays the living wage but HMRC, with 25,000 fewer staff, does not. Why not?

Lord Newby: My Lords, the Government support the living wage and encourage all employers who are able to do so to pay it. Her Majesty's Treasury's pay rates ensure that all its employees, including apprentices, are paid above the living wage and other departments are following suit, including DECC.

Baroness Wheatcroft (Con): My Lords, the minimum wage is only a floor. Many companies are now choosing to pay the living wage and, indeed, ensuring that their suppliers pay it. Can my noble friend give us some numbers on that?

Lord Newby: My Lords, the number of companies that were accredited for paying the living wage in 2013 was 432. I believe that the number has more than doubled during the course of this year.

Baroness Farrington of Ribbleton (Lab): My Lords, will the Minister identify those people in government departments who do not pay either the living wage or take into account what people need? Will he please comment on the large number of people working in the care sector who get the minimum wage but do not actually receive it because they are not paid for the time taken in travelling between clients? How on earth can the Government announce that the route out of poverty is work in these circumstances?

Lord Newby: My Lords, as I said, a number of departments already pay the living wage. It is fair to say that there is a move across the rest of government in that direction, which is not yet complete. It is for individual departments to take those decisions. As far as care workers are concerned, HMRC, which is responsible for enforcing the minimum wage, has done a significant amount of work on this and is increasing its enforcement activities in the care sector and elsewhere. I take the point that the noble Baroness makes. In 2012-13, HMRC identified £3.9 million in arrears of wages for 26,000 workers who were not getting their full whack on the minimum wage.

Lord Stoneham of Droxford (LD): My Lords, there is a sensitive relationship between raising the minimum wage and employment levels. Does my noble friend agree that it is only now, with rising employment and economic growth, that we can afford to give priority to raising the real level of the minimum wage, together with simplifying benefits and raising tax thresholds as a way of helping the low paid?

Lord Newby: My Lords, I completely agree with my noble friend; the increase in the tax threshold has made a major impact on living standards. That is why real household disposable income, which is the key figure looking at living standards, increased by some 2.2% in quarter 2 2014, and why the OBR forecast that earnings will rise faster than inflation from the second half of this year for every year to 2018.

Lord Campbell-Savours (Lab): My Lords, when the Labour Government introduced the national minimum wage in 1997, we were told that unemployment would

[LORD CAMPBELL-SAVOURS]
go up. In fact employment went up. Why does the Minister think that employment went up when we introduced the national minimum wage?

Lord Newby: My Lords, there are a number of reasons. One was that it was introduced at a time when the economy was growing, which made it easier for people to pay higher wages. That is why I am so pleased that the economy is growing so strongly now, which means that wages are rising again.

Lord Flight (Con): My Lords, have the Government looked at the possibility of varying the minimum wage to reflect the cost of living in different parts of the country?

Lord Newby: My Lords, this has been looked at on a number of occasions and has always been rejected.

Lord Tunnicliffe (Lab): My Lords, the thing that always strikes me about this debate is the theoretical level that it is held at. Very few of us could contemplate living on the minimum wage—I feel almost ashamed of my personal affluence when comparing it with the idea of living on £6 an hour—yet more than 5 million workers do so. The minimum wage is a good thing; it brings affluence to individuals, it improves the economy and it has not had any significant impact on employment. Will the Government join the Labour Party in our pledge to set an ambitious target to significantly increase the minimum wage to 58% of median average earnings, putting it on course to reach £8 before the end of the next Parliament?

Lord Newby: My Lords, the minimum wage may well reach £8 by the end of the next Parliament just through being uprated by inflation, so that is not a very ambitious target. The minimum wage is a very important floor but, for example, when I recently visited a textile factory in Leicester where the entire workforce consisted of Asian women, the managing director said to me when I asked him what the Government should do to support him: “Do not significantly increase the minimum wage, because if you do I will have to import products from eastern Europe and lay off all my workers”. Is that something that the Labour Party wants?

Berlin Wall

Question

11.25 am

Asked by **Baroness Royall of Blaisdon**

To ask Her Majesty’s Government whether they have any plans to mark the 25th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall on 9 November 2014.

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Baroness Anelay of St Johns) (Con): My Lords, on the anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall, plans are in place for the Prime Minister to send a message to the German people. Commemorations will have a civic and social focus, reflecting the manner in which the wall came down. There will be UK participation in

these events. Commemorative messages will be placed along the route of the wall, including one from the Mayor of London.

Baroness Royall of Blaisdon (Lab): My Lords, it is difficult to believe that until a short 25 years ago our continent and peoples were divided. I am sure that the noble Baroness would agree that it is thanks to the European Union that peace, stability and prosperity have been consolidated in countries that used to live on both sides of the wall. Would she further agree that, for all its imperfections, the European Union is where our present and our future lie, and that in a world full of challenges and danger it is foolish to make foes of our most valuable friends? Does she look forward, as I do, to celebrating the 30th anniversary in 2020 as part of that same union?

Baroness Anelay of St Johns: My Lords, of course I celebrate and commemorate the fall of the Berlin Wall. It demonstrated a remarkably peaceful revolution and change. I felt that I was part of that as I was active in the politics of the time, working with some of the German political parties. Peace takes more than one country and more than one organisation. We reflect upon the work done by our country over the years, not just in conjunction with the countries across Europe but with NATO and our allies around the Commonwealth: with all of them we should strive to maintain peace.

Lord Forsyth of Drumlean (Con): My Lords, does my noble friend not agree that it is thanks to the efforts of Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher in facing down CND and deploying cruise missiles that the peoples of eastern Europe were freed from the yoke of communism?

Baroness Anelay of St Johns: My noble friend is right.

Lord Anderson of Swansea (Lab): My Lords, is it not a remarkable fact that an East German woman is now the Chancellor of a united Germany? She is a remarkable leader—the main leader in Europe. Surely we should now do our best not to alienate this remarkable woman and go to the point of no return in our relations with the European Union that she has warned us against.

Baroness Anelay of St Johns: My Lords, the Prime Minister has a very good working relationship with the Chancellor.

Noble Lords: Oh!

Baroness Anelay of St Johns: Noble Lords may laugh, but I do not laugh at the Chancellor at all; I would not consider doing so. I understand that there is much agreement over some of the issues recently discussed. For example, in Germany at the moment the Bundestag itself is currently considering proposals to tighten access to benefits with regard to the free movement of workers across Europe, because Germany

is considering whether to ban re-entry for migrants abusing welfare. Chancellor Merkel has clearly made the point that we must not have abuse of the system. She has joined us in calling for reform in the way that the EU works.

Lord Dykes (LD): My Lords, I declare my interest as an officer of the British-German Association. I thank the Minister for those details of the commemoration and support that we are giving. Does she not agree, though, that the picture is larger? Germany as a democratic country has become an example to us all in Europe, after the war as well as after the fall of the Berlin Wall, and I am very glad to hear that the Government are sending messages. Does she agree that this example gives us a basis on which all countries in the EU should work peacefully together, because it is a model country?

Baroness Anelay of St Johns: My Lords, I agree with what my noble friend says. Our bilateral relationship with Germany is a strong one. Since 2000 the number of ministerial and senior official visits has trebled and our trade links are strong. Trade can be the base of peace and prosperity in our relationships with other countries and he is right to propose that we should use our relationship with Germany as a model and an example of working well with other countries.

Lord West of Spithead (Lab): My Lords, does the Minister not agree that part of the reason for the collapse of the Soviet Union—and we found this out afterwards from their intelligence documents—was the military strength that we managed to maintain in the West? Does she agree that we are in great danger now of cutting back on that strength when there are real risks to our security around the world, including in the Ukraine et cetera?

Baroness Anelay of St Johns: My Lords, as always I pay tribute to our Armed Forces and all those who work in supporting them. Also, as we sit here with memories of two world wars, we recall the support work done by women in factories throughout the conflicts. Our Armed Forces are absolutely crucial in everything we do with regard to negotiations and the maintenance of peace, but so also is the work done in civic society more generally, and that makes us a strong nation.

Baroness Secombe (Con): Having been on camera with other noble Lords scrabbling for fragments of that dreadful wall, does my noble friend agree that the demise of that wall was a triumph for freedom and for the German people? Further, should we associate ourselves with them as they mark this outstanding, momentous day in their nation's history?

Baroness Anelay of St Johns: My Lords, I entirely agree. I should add that the 25th anniversary is a civic commemoration. In Germany, every 10 years is considered more important, so the 30th anniversary—to which the noble Baroness, Lady Royall, referred—will be more of a state occasion. I entirely agree with my noble friend.

Lord Deben (Con): Does my noble friend accept that there is now no conflict between our membership of NATO and our membership of the European Union and that together these guarantee the freedom and future of Europe? Does she accept that Britain ought to be a full, active and determined member of both, and that at the moment we are not speaking up enough about the benefits of our membership of the European Union?

Baroness Anelay of St Johns: My Lords, the Prime Minister is the first to speak up about the benefits that can be obtained from a European Union that is reformed, and he has support around the European Union to achieve those reforms. We are, of course, strong supporters of NATO—and remain so—but also of the United Nations and all the work that it does.

Unmanned Aerial Vehicles

Question

11.33 am

Asked by **Lord Clinton-Davis**

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they have any plans to introduce tighter rules governing larger unmanned aerial vehicles and also to introduce legislation to enhance security measures against such aircraft at ground level.

Lord Popat (Con): My Lords, as with all aircraft, larger remotely piloted aircraft systems will be permitted to operate in UK airspace only if it is considered that it is safe for them to do so. The Government are working closely with our European partners to put in place the necessary legal and regulatory framework to enable the full and safe integration of remotely piloted aircraft into the total aviation system, and thus share the same airspace as manned aviation.

Lord Clinton-Davis (Lab): I declare my interest as the life president of BALPA. What discussions have taken place between the Government and the pilots' union about the expansion of drone use? Have not BALPA and others expressed serious concerns about the adequacy of plans to ensure security, especially when drones are on the ground and also when they might be in the hands of terrorists? Will the Government address the anxieties before long?

Lord Popat: My Lords, of course the Government will address them. The same argument always comes out when a new form of transport is developed—as it did with trains, cars and aeroplanes. It comes down to two questions. First, do the benefits of the new industry, economic and otherwise, outweigh the possible negatives as regards safety, security and privacy? Secondly, are we confident that we are regulating enough to ensure safety but not regulating too much so that we harm the new industry, which is very lucrative?

Baroness O'Cathain (Con): My Lords, as the noble Lord, Lord Clinton-Davis, knows, the European Union Select Committee is currently doing a study on the situation as regards drones. Only yesterday and the day before we took evidence on this in Brussels from

[BARONESS O'CATHAIN]

various people; and we have already taken evidence from the CAA and BALPA. The noble Lord is right to say that the situation is fast developing. I am sorry—I am not asking a question on that, I just want to put this in context. What is being done at the moment is to safeguard Britain's position on safety regulation and pilot involvement, and I think that it is slightly too early to make any statement.

Lord Popat: I agree with my noble friend and pay tribute to the good work she does in chairing that important committee. I believe that its report is due in January. Once we get that report—which will address things such as safety, control, security, insurance and so—we should be able to analyse and establish what further regulation or control we need to bring in to make this industry safer.

Baroness Lane-Fox of Soho (CB): My Lords, I would hate to suggest for one minute that the United States is in any way more technologically advanced than your Lordships' Chamber, but both the Supreme Court and the CAA have been wrestling with these challenges. Can I draw the Minister's attention to Nevada, where they have done some dramatic deregulation of drones, but also to the most recent and first case ever to be brought to the courts on the use of drones in the US? May I also suggest that the ambiguity and complexity of the challenges facing the US could give enormous lessons to us and allow us to become a world leader in our use of regulation?

Lord Popat: I agree with the noble Baroness. We are at the forefront of this technology and are probably number one in the world. However, we need to make sure that we do not kill the industry by bringing in too much legislation. It is important that this technology makes a good contribution to our GDP and there is long-term potential for trading in it. I am sure that, given time, it will continue to thrive.

Lord Rosser (Lab): In response to a Question in this House, the Government stated that unmanned aircraft were closely regulated by the Civil Aviation Authority but that more needed to be done to make the rules clear. How many non-military unmanned aerial vehicles are there which can be flown legally in our airspace, and which key rules or regulations relating to unmanned aerial vehicles do the Government consider are not clear or understood?

Lord Popat: My Lords, I do not have the figures on those unmanned aircraft, but what is important is that we treat them exactly the same as manned aircraft, and they are closely monitored by the Civil Aviation Authority. With regard to small unmanned aircraft, there is a lesser extent of monitoring, which is what we are looking at very closely through our European Union Committee. We hope that we will have an outcome in January so that we can see what action we need to take to ensure the safety and security of unmanned aircraft.

Baroness Humphreys (LD): My Lords, the privately owned West Wales Airport in Aberporth, Ceredigion, has been involved in the development and testing of UAVs since their origins in the Cold War years. However,

as the use of UAVs increases in the future, what plans do the Government have to ensure that further facilities exist to contribute to safe and reliable operations?

Lord Popat: My Lords, with any new mode of transport we look very carefully at safety. I am satisfied that sufficient legislation is in place to deal with the use of unmanned aircraft in criminal activity. I am also assured by the department that UK industry is developing technology to prevent the use of any equipment that is not safe or that could be used for purposes that could be criminal. However, we expect those who use these to be responsible and reasonable people.

Lord West of Spithead (Lab): My Lords, the convention on conventional weapons committee of the UN meets in Geneva next week. Are the Government now, at long last, going to produce a clear policy statement on lethal autonomous weapons systems, which are types of UAVs, and a definition of the meaningful human involvement in the firing chain?

Lord Popat: My Lords, as I said earlier, we have got to wait for the report that is due in January. We hope that we will have some meaningful information so that we can decide what action to take on this.

Lord Broers (CB): My Lords, the Minister will have noticed that the French arrested three people in connection with the drones flying over their nuclear plants. Have we had similar instances, and what are our regulations with respect to these very small drones?

Lord Popat: My Lords, we have Air Navigation Order 2009, which prevents a person, "causing or permitting an aircraft to endanger the safety of any person or property", and prohibits the flying of small unmanned aircraft closer than 150 metres to built-up areas.

European Union: Reform *Question*

11.41 am

Asked by Lord Dykes

To ask Her Majesty's Government what progress is being made in European Council discussions on reform of the European Union treaties.

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Baroness Anelay of St Johns) (Con): My Lords, the UK regularly discusses EU reform with counterparts both in the European Council and bilaterally. We have already made progress. The June European Council conclusions clearly set out a strong commitment to reforming the EU and it needs to address the UK's concerns. We will continue to work with our European partners to achieve these reforms, many of which can be made right now.

Lord Dykes (LD): I thank my noble friend for that Answer. In the mean time, can I tempt her to endorse the very wise advice of our new British Commissioner, Jonathan Hill, that everybody should calm down and avoid hysteria about the rather technical nature of the budget dues dispute, because our membership of the EU is surely the essential requirement and target, and is much more important than appeasing UKIP and other Europhobes?

Baroness Anelay of St Johns: My Lords, the policy of this Government is to argue for the interests of this country. My noble friend is right to point to the very detailed nature of the investigation that must now take place of the demand, out of the blue, for an extra £1.7 billion. My right honourable friend the Prime Minister has made clear that Her Majesty's Treasury will now assess the data in exhaustive detail to check how the statistics were arrived at and the methodology that was used. After all, it is British taxpayers' money and therefore it needs to be examined in detail and discussed properly by Finance Ministers. That will happen tomorrow.

Lord Tomlinson (Lab): Does the Minister agree that there is a greater likelihood of Great Britain getting some of the demands that it is making for reform if it talks to the people to whom we always refer as "our partners" as if they were partners, rather than haranguing them, banging the table and treating them as if they were some form of colonial servant from days gone by?

Baroness Anelay of St Johns: Well, the noble Lord has certainly been in a different place and listening to different things than I have.

Lord Howell of Guildford (Con): Does my noble friend accept that this EU issue is not really a bilateral matter between the United Kingdom and Brussels and the rest of the European Community but an issue of the reform of Europe as a whole, which millions of Europeans are actively waiting for and are seeking now? That is bound to lead eventually to a replacement of the flawed Lisbon treaty and to a new basis from which the European Union can fit into the 21st century.

Baroness Anelay of St Johns: My Lords, the Government are looking at what reforms can be made now. Clearly, we are a long way off from looking at treaty change, but there is much that we can do now. Our call for change has been echoed by many across Europe. My noble friend is right to talk about our negotiations there, including with the new Presidents of the Council and Commission. Indeed, when the Italian Prime Minister was in London last month, he called for change in Europe and cuts to bureaucracy. We agree with the Dutch when they call for "European where necessary, national where possible".

Lord Pearson of Rannoch (UKIP): My Lords, assuming that the Government have at last seen through the propaganda that the EU has brought peace and prosperity and is useful for trade, geopolitics and so on, why cannot they also see that the EU is wholly unreformable

and that the only sensible thing to do is to get out of it and help to close it down? What is the point of the European Union?

Baroness Anelay of St Johns: My Lords, I am sorry that the noble Lord still fails to see the benefits that we have achieved by our membership of the EU, but also the achievements that we need to have through reform to make sure that we can continue to be a successful member. That is where we want to be. We want to see the EU reformed with us as a strong member of it, and other countries recognise that it needs reform. As to leaving it—not now.

Lord Teverson (LD): My Lords, in relation to freedom of movement negotiations, have the Government made any calculation about what effect this might have on the 2 million British citizens who live in the rest of the European Union? If they were repatriated, what would happen to social services and the National Health Service infrastructure in this country?

Baroness Anelay of St Johns: That is the kind of question that members of UKIP should think about before they go campaigning.

Lord Bach (Lab): My Lords, can the Minister tell us of any member state that supports a treaty change to limit the principle of free movement, as has been advocated by the Prime Minister? In connection with that, what is the Government's response to the report that came out yesterday that found that migrants from Europe between 2000 and 2011 made a net contribution of £20 billion to this country?

Baroness Anelay of St Johns: My Lords, all academic studies are of interest, but one has to balance them against each other. Clearly, yesterday's report points to some of the advantages that have accrued in the short term from new migrants who work hard here and who come here and work and do not use benefits. As other academics have said in the past 24 hours, one also has to look at the pattern of claim—at social services use and access to the health service as well as, later on, benefits in old age. So this is a snapshot of a short period. With regard to the broader issue of reform, we have strong support for reforming the EU as it currently stands. That is where our work is going to be.

Lord Borwick (Con): On the vexed subject of the extra £1.7 billion bill, could we ask the EU for a certificate from its auditors that it is the right sum? Given its inability to get its accounts approved for the last very many years, would that be beyond it?

Baroness Anelay of St Johns: What an interesting thought, my Lords.

Baroness Ludford (LD): My Lords, would the Minister give an assurance that, in pursuing reform of the EU and EU treaties, the Government will pursue what is in the coalition agreement of 2010, which is to end the travelling circus to Strasbourg, which costs about £150 million a year? That reform would really resonate with the people of this country. Is the Minister aware that there is now a considerable cohort of Members of

[BARONESS LUDFORD]

this House who have personal experience and can tell her in great detail about the inconvenience of it, as well as the cost, which is the most important thing to taxpayers?

Baroness Anelay of St Johns: My Lords, it is a pleasure to see my noble friend back in her place, although losing her seat in Europe was not perhaps the best way in which to achieve it. But her expertise is welcome here, and she makes an extremely important point. Negotiations must proceed to ensure that the EU spends our money wisely.

Business of the House

Timing of Debates

11.48 am

Moved by Baroness Stowell of Beeston

That the debate on the motion in the name of Baroness King of Bow set down for today shall be limited to 3 hours and that in the name of Lord Whitty to 2 hours.

Motion agreed.

Women: Homelessness, Domestic Violence and Social Exclusion

Motion to Take Note

11.49 am

Moved by Baroness King of Bow

That this House takes note of women facing homelessness, domestic violence and social exclusion.

Baroness King of Bow (Lab): My Lords, last week, economists at the respected World Economic Forum kicked the UK out of the world's top 20 countries for gender equality. Its report, *The Global Gender Gap*, measures something more intriguing than wealth. It measures the gap between men's and women's life chances. In other words, it measures how much opportunity in a country is governed by gender. You will not be surprised to hear that Saudi Arabia did not make the top 20 either. In 2014, the UK was ranked 18th for gender equality. Last week, we fell calamitously to 26th, ranked below Nicaragua, Rwanda, Bulgaria and Burundi. By the way, Saudi Arabia ranks 130th out of 142, with Yemen coming in last.

What has changed for Britain? Perhaps most dramatically since 2010, women have borne the brunt of swingeing budget cuts. At the outset let me say this: my argument today is not with the Government's cuts to public services per se. That is my argument every other day of the week. Today, let us momentarily cast aside the ideological security blanket of British politics—the knee-jerk response of parliamentarians for decades—which is that we on these Labour Benches want to spend more on public services to help the most vulnerable and those on the Conservative Benches want to spend less. Those on the Lib Dem Benches come and go; a bit of public spending here, a bit of slash and burn there.

Putting all that to one side, a key element of today's debate revolves around not simply the cuts themselves, but the nature of the cuts. The nature of the cuts damages not only women and children, but our country's basic decency and, equally alarmingly, its economic sustainability. Gender lays bare the nonsense of the Bullingdon boys famous "all in it together" claim.

According to the gender gap report, average wages for women in the UK fell by £2,700 in a year to £15,400, while the average salary for men was unchanged at £24,800. But may be the World Economic Forum is packed with radicalised feminists, so let us forget them, and turn to a source we trust: the House of Commons Library. House of Commons Library figures show that the cumulative impact of George Osborne's spending choices since 2010 have hit women a staggering four times harder than men. From housing to work-related benefits, child benefit, tax credits and increased childcare costs, in every area, women have been hit harder than men.

The Government have meticulously and systematically removed the safety net for women. Nowhere is this clearer than in the support available to help victims of domestic violence. Nowhere is this more shamefully demonstrated than in the Government's legal aid legislation, which removes legal aid eligibility for many women fleeing violent partners.

On top of that, since the Government came to power, according to a report authored by a professor from UNESCO, quoted by the House of Commons Library, 31% of funding for the domestic violence and sexual abuse sector from local authorities has been cut. Before the Minister intervenes to say that she does not recognise that figure—as did the Minister responding to a debate on domestic violence last week in another place—let us be clear what that figure relates to. A freedom of information request asked all local authorities about cuts to their services helping victims of domestic violence and sexual abuse. Sixty-five local authorities replied. The average cuts to those services, in those local authorities, amounted to 31%. The fact is we do not know what the figures are for all local authorities combined, or, if we do, I would be most grateful if the Minister could let us know when she responds.

What we do know for sure is that Women's Aid, that most excellent organisation, has lost 17% of its refuges since 2010. I pay tribute to Women's Aid for the extraordinary work it does. The 2013 Women's Aid annual survey of around 200 domestic violence services showed that those services supported more than 115,000 women and children in refuge and outreach services in 2012 to 2013.

In order better to protect women and children survivors of domestic violence, and enable them to reach specialist services, the national network of refuges must be protected. We need to develop a new model of national funding. More than 30 refuges across the country have closed in the past four years due to lack of funding—down from 187 in 2010 to 155 today. The most vulnerable women are forced to walk a tightrope between coercion and violence from their partners on the one hand and indifference—and, now, abandonment—from the state on the other. The commissioning process for these services, and in particular the way they are put out to tender, is of huge concern.

Women and children are being turned away in their hour of need. It often takes women years to get to the point where they can ask for help in leaving the perpetrator of the violence they are experiencing at home, but we slam the door in their face. We put them back on the tightrope between Kafkaesque bureaucracy and psychotic misogyny. If that sounds like a bit of an exaggeration, I shall give some examples passed on to me by Women's Aid.

Mandy experienced 18 years of domestic violence at the hands of her partner, including severe physical abuse, rape and humiliation in front of her children. Every element of her life was controlled by him: he made her leave her job when she was promoted. She tried to escape on numerous occasions but he tracked her down. He hacked into her medical files, broke into her property, and repeatedly attacked and threatened the whole family until she went back. Her eldest son witnessed a particularly horrific attack, when Mandy nearly died. He was so traumatised when his father was let out of prison that he committed suicide rather than live in constant fear of his father coming back to get them. Mandy thinks that without the specialist refuges that she was able to go to—services that understood the level of danger they were in—she would not be alive now. Those refuges provided not only a roof over her head for her and her other children but the specialist knowledge to help protect her from a dangerous perpetrator of violence. It is that specialist knowledge that is being lost.

I also want to mention Sarah and her baby daughter. They were found a space in a B&B but the room below was occupied by a young man just released from prison for committing a violent offence, and the garden was regularly used as a meeting place by drug dealers. After being accosted on the stairs by other residents, she was too frightened to use the communal kitchen to heat her daughter's milk or her own food. She was given one hour's counselling a week at a local cafe by the service that provides outreach support for domestic violence in her area. Her specialist support worker knows that she needs a refuge place and that her insecure living accommodation makes it likely that she will return to the perpetrator—the man who raped her immediately on her return from hospital the day she gave birth to her daughter.

When I talk about women teetering on the tightrope between Kafkaesque bureaucracy on the one hand and psychotic misogyny on the other, I am not exaggerating. As you can see from these examples, it is not just women who walk the tightrope; we push children on to it too. We know that the safety net has gone; we know that they will fall; we know that their emotional development will be smashed to pieces—that they themselves might be smashed to pieces—and that, if they survive, they are at risk of replicating abuse and neglect towards the next generation. What we know most of all is that we will pay, when it is far too late, to pick up the pieces with an extortionate price tag attached.

The cost, not to mention the human misery, makes me think of a St Mungo's centre in south London which houses 29 women. Of those, at any one point about half will have been looked-after children in the same borough, so they had come to the attention of

social services many years before. Last year, 10 of those women had, between them, 30 children who are all now being looked after by children's services. The cost of this diabolically short-termist approach is truly extraordinary. We take those women's babies away from them and give them to middle class women like me. I shall come back to that another time but, for goodness' sake, we must end this heart-breaking cycle. We must teach our children social and emotional skills. We must recognise that child protection systems fail to help. Mothers are treated only until their children are removed and then they are forgotten—until it is time for the next child to be removed.

There are examples of good work going on across the country but the fact remains that specialist refuges for women are closing their doors and turning people away every day due to government spending cuts. On a typical day in the UK, 155 women and 103 children are turned away. When I say "a typical day", that was the census day. Birmingham City Council is an example of how multidisciplinary work with a variety of stakeholders—police, women's aid charities, city steering groups and schools—can have a positive impact if they work together to get things done. It has even appointed a victims' champion, Jess Phillips, who has put domestic violence at the heart of its agenda. Jess is currently campaigning for compulsory relationship and consent education in schools. It is so important to reach young people to prevent future victims. Why will the Government not make this compulsory? Does the Minister agree that educating young people about domestic violence is one of the best ways to prevent it continuing in future?

Social exclusion is often, although not exclusively, linked to poverty. I draw the attention of the House to a report by the Young Women's Trust, called *Totally Wasted? The Crisis of Young Women's Worklessness*. The findings about young women not in education, employment or training—the so-called NEETs—make sobering reading. The report reveals a pattern of social exclusion of which many of us might not be aware. I, for one, was not aware that NEETs are more likely to be female. Between April and June this year, 56% of them were women. In total, almost 18% of young women are NEETs compared to 13.5% of young men. That means there were almost 100,000 more young women NEETs than young men. But what is really depressing is that the impact of being a NEET is greater and more lasting for young women. When we combine the impact of being unemployed younger in life with the gender gap, this means that a woman who has spent time unemployed at a young age will expect to earn, on average, £12,500 less in her mid-30s than a man who has spent no time unemployed. Basically, in Britain today, young women's opportunities are limited by gender. That is why we are slipping down the league table.

Homeless women are more likely to have experienced a violent partner so there is a clear link between homelessness and domestic violence. I thank Rape Crisis for its excellent briefing, passed on to me by Polly Billington who is working on these issues in Thurrock. It is extraordinary and sobering to recognise that 61% of homeless girls report child sexual abuse and violence as a reason for leaving the home. Today I am asking the Government to match Labour's commitment—already

[BARONESS KING OF BOW]

costed and promised by Ed Miliband and Yvette Cooper in our first Queen's Speech following a Labour victory—to find the immediate funding needed to save refuges that are about to close. We are slipping down the league table of nations, jettisoning decency as we go, normalising violence, entrenching the increased sexualisation of women and girls, emotionally disfiguring our boys, and ignoring the need for proper sex and relationship education—another Labour pledge—in schools. Research now conclusively proves that gender equality is good for the economy. Well, of course it is. How can you succeed if you abandon half the workforce?

Obviously, I never expected gender equality from the Bullingdon boys. I realise that is a bit of a stereotype as well so I will end it there. But I also did not expect them actually to accelerate gender inequality so rapidly. I could not imagine them speeding away from Iceland, at the top of the gender equality index, motoring in the direction of Yemen at the bottom, like a crazed pair of Jeremy Clarkson loons, delighted by any opportunity to add insult to injury.

I realise that the Minister will have to paint a very good picture. She will tell us about all the plans and look at the civil servants' briefs which say how much good work is going on. Good work is going on, but women's and children's lives are at risk right here; right now; today. Will the Minister ask the Chancellor to meet with her, me and Women's Aid? I have many other questions I could put to her but I would rather ask whether she could use her influence to arrange that meeting so that both sides of the House can work together to ensure that we take note of the women and children who are suffering so much at the moment. I know we will have a great debate and I look forward to hearing the two maiden speeches. It is a subject that we must tackle together.

12.05 pm

Baroness Newlove (Con): My Lords, I thank the noble Baroness for giving us the opportunity to debate these important issues which she articulated so well. I also thank the Library for its useful briefing, and I am looking forward very much to hearing the maiden speeches of the noble Baroness, Lady Rebuck, and the noble Lord, Lord Farmer. The speakers' list is not too long—I was number 52 on the list when I made my maiden speech—so I hope that they will get their message out on who they are.

In my role as Victims' Commissioner for England and Wales, I am sorry to say that I have met many women who have suffered almost unimaginable abuse at the hands of their partners and have then faced homelessness as a result. Sadly, only last week, I met a very brave, intelligent woman who shared with me the trauma of what it feels like to be in an abusive behaviour relationship. She told me that her abusive partner suspended her by belts outside the windows of their home because he knew she was scared of heights. He constantly beat her up and afterwards submerged her in a bath of ice cold water as this would bring her around sharply from the savage beating she had just received, only for him then to drag and throw her back into the bedroom. The last attack happened when he taped her mouth shut with duct tape and then taped

her arms and legs around wood, which she said is done so that bones do not break. He went on to use a fork and penetrated her body with foreign objects. She lived in fear of this man and was too terrified to leave or tell anyone about it. When she did, sadly nothing happened, and she went back to him. This lady was a virtual prisoner in her own home—so isolated and unsupported. When she did leave him he would find her, and because of the fear of terror and shame to her family, she had no choice but to go back to him.

We will hear excellent speeches today, many of which will be about statistics relating to the prevalence of domestic abuse. We know that it involves many different forms of physical and emotional cruelty, so it is good that we are in a position to have more information at our fingertips than we used to have. But why do we gather this evidence and in so doing become so desensitised by the same facts and figures?

People who are so frightened, injured and traumatised are, most of the time, incapable of doing anything other than just making it through from one day to the next. When the entire focus in your life is simply trying to avoid further injury or even death, you are unlikely to want to read leaflets, make phone calls or go on the internet to see what you can do to make yourself safe from harm. I am not criticising any of these initiatives as they all have an important part to play but we must not be so ready to dismiss the impact on victims. I know that it is so very lonely, so heartbreaking, so debilitating, and so emotional and raw, and it is that very emotional impact that we must take into account when developing ways of responding to domestic violence and other horrendous acts of crime and abuse.

I do not pretend to have all the answers but, from meeting many victims, I know that it is a complex and emotional issue which cannot be resolved by a one-size-fits-all model. Domestic abuse needs to be identified and acted on by all agencies and organisations, not just the criminal justice system. For example, some victims may feel comfortable seeking assistance from the health services which is why it is essential to have independent domestic violence advocates based in healthcare settings. Others will seek assistance from local authorities and housing associations to try to avoid homelessness or social exclusion.

These victims may not feel able to disclose exactly what is going on or how bad things are; there needs to be training for front-desk staff in housing associations or councils so that they learn to recognise the tell-tale signs of abuse and how to gain the victim's confidence, and to respond empathically and effectively. It is vital that the Government consider how support can be provided across the board so that victims can be kept safe from further harm. A report to the police should not be the only way in which a victim can be helped to feel safe, supported or less isolated.

Victims of domestic violence can be socially excluded by the perpetrator, but also by agencies and the community from which they seek support. I know that those who have suffered years of abuse can also have problems with alcohol and drugs. The lady about whom I have just spoken also told me that she became an alcoholic

to numb the pain from the abuse that she received. When she sought help she was placed in a rehab centre with seven men.

Victims' behaviour can sometimes challenge the agencies that are trying to help them. It is important that all those working or volunteering in the field of domestic abuse are properly trained and supported. They need to understand how such abuse has impacted on the victim, how it can affect their behaviour and how best to engage with them at their level.

I welcome the many initiatives that the Government are taking to tackle domestic abuse, with domestic violence protection orders and the very important Clare's law. These send out strong messages and may help keep women safe; but when considering the relative bluntness of our legislation we must forget neither the emotional impact of domestic abuse nor how much power perpetrators have over their victims. Preventing revictimisation, either by the same perpetrator or by another, also has to be a priority if we are to help break cycles of abuse. This requires acknowledging the psychological as well as the financial dependence of some victims on their abusers, which is often strategically fostered by those abusers.

If we seek a simple solution to a complex problem we will fail to help more women to come forward. For example, at a recent event I was asked if I thought that police should prosecute all incidents of domestic abuse, regardless of what that victim wanted to do. To me this was the wrong question. The question should not be which is best, coercion or abandonment, but how we can make our services and the criminal justice system more supportive so that victims choose to continue with criminal proceedings.

We must not forget to help the families of those who are killed by their partners. In many such cases there will be children or dependants. Victims are human beings—they are not case files. They need help and support, and recognition of the trauma that they go through each day.

12.13 pm

Baroness Tyler of Enfield (LD): My Lords, I thank the noble Baroness, Lady King, for having secured this vital debate, focusing on one of our most socially excluded groups, which demands our attention. The complex and interrelated needs of women who are homeless are frequently rooted in early traumatic experiences, which all too often lead into chaotic adult lives, characterised by instability, insecurity and despair. I declare an interest as chair of the Making Every Adult Matter coalition of charities, helping adults with multiple needs.

Helping women to escape and recover from homelessness and rediscover hope in their lives often needs to be about responding to the traumatic experiences of abuse, violence and separation from a child, as well as dealing with feelings of stigma and shame. In our recent debate on social justice I spoke about a visit that I made earlier this year to a women's hostel run by St Mungo's Broadway in north London, where homeless women are supported with a range of needs, including health, substance abuse, employment and family relationships. I want to keep stressing the importance of this type of women-only support and space that

help women feel safer and in a better position to start their recovery from homelessness, a theme that has already emerged in today's debate. To be clear, this does not have to mean investing significant amounts of money in new women-only accommodation services, but ensuring that mixed services are so designed that they still enable women to access support in a single-sex environment, such as a separate area or perhaps floor of a mixed hostel. It is not rocket science.

There are notable differences between the experiences of homeless women and homeless men. Today we are focusing on the former. It is in homeless women's experience of domestic violence and mental ill-health that we can start to see some of their particular vulnerabilities. I hope I may be permitted a few statistics. The 2014 St Mungo's client needs survey is illuminating about the causes and consequences of female homelessness. It included responses from 530 women, of whom 31% said domestic violence contributed to their homelessness, compared to 10% of men; 51% have experience of family violence, compared to 15% of men; and 41% have experienced violence from a partner, compared to 6% of men.

As other noble Lords have said, domestic violence is without doubt a major contributing factor to women's homelessness. So I ask my noble friend the Minister for an update on the Government's thinking about practical steps that can be taken to ensure that local homelessness services give women a choice between women-only or mixed services.

We have already heard that homelessness is more than just a housing issue. I am sure others will speak about that and the lack of affordable housing, which is a real problem, but I would like to turn our attention briefly to homeless health. Sleeping on the streets or in unstable accommodation can be both the cause and consequence of health problems for many homeless women. Multiple physical and mental health problems, alongside substance use, are common. Many homeless people experience long-term and chronic conditions. Infectious diseases such as tuberculosis, hepatitis C and HIV disproportionately affect women who are homeless, and homelessness can make those conditions extremely hard to manage.

I was recently made aware of Fiona's story. She is a woman who has received help from the hostel I mentioned earlier. Fiona is not her real name, but the story is hers. Fiona suffered from bipolar disorder and paranoid schizophrenia from a very young age. Her mental health deteriorated while she was sleeping rough and sofa-surfing for a number of years. Her issues with drug and alcohol use hit rock bottom; she developed cirrhosis of the liver and pancreatitis, and now suffers from epileptic fits.

Fiona explained that even simple things that most of us take for granted become health risks when you are homeless. She said, "You can't just brush your teeth when you're on the road". Her feet also suffered from wearing poor-quality shoes and from constant walking. However, when Fiona first became homeless, she found it difficult to access the healthcare she needed because she did not know who to turn to. She struggled to access a GP because she had no fixed address and had substance use issues. As she put it, "They didn't

[BARONESS TYLER OF ENFIELD]

want to know me. They wouldn't touch me. It really knocked my confidence. It was quite a while until I managed to walk into another doctor's surgery and ask for help because I thought they were going to turn me away".

I do not believe I am being melodramatic when I say that ultimately homelessness kills. The average age of death for men who are homeless is 47; for women it is just 43. I think that is scandalous. However, as the Faculty for Homeless and Inclusion Health notes:

"When homeless people die they do not commonly die as a result of exposure or other direct effects of homelessness, they die of treatable medical problems, HIV, liver and other gastro-intestinal disease, respiratory disease, acute and chronic consequences of drug and alcohol dependence".

It is not unreasonable to think that with increased access to healthcare for homeless people, many of these deaths could be avoided.

If we turn back to the recent St Mungo's client needs survey that I mentioned, there is a notable difference between the experiences of mental ill-health of homeless men and women. Separate research by the Salvation Army found that 53% of homeless women have attempted suicide at least once, compared to 34% of homeless men. Despite the Government's very welcome investment in the Improving Access to Psychological Therapies programme, which I strongly support, people who are homeless consistently miss out on mental health care as the services available are often not suitable for those with complex needs.

We know from Fiona's story that substance use and mental health issues are often closely linked, with drugs or alcohol used to block out mental health issues but exacerbating them at the same time. It is not uncommon to find that both problems are rooted in the same trauma.

Despite their close relationship, experience of both mental health and drug and alcohol problems often prevent people from getting the help they need, since both services can only deal with one issue and refuse to treat people with both.

I very much welcome this debate and I look forward to hearing the Minister outline the Government's plans to ensure more joined-up commissioning of services and other steps to get help to homeless women at the right time.

12.20 pm

The Lord Bishop of Leicester: My Lords, as this debate progresses the seriousness and critical nature of this subject is dawning on all of us. I share with other noble Lords a gratitude to the noble Baroness, Lady King, for bringing it to our attention with such eloquence and passion. We all look forward to the maiden speeches of the noble Baroness, Lady Rebuck, and the noble Lord, Lord Farmer, this morning.

Although there are profound links between the three subjects before us, I intend to concentrate on the issue of women facing domestic violence. I do so with considerable caution, even trepidation, because of the horrific stories that have already been brought to our attention, but also as a man who represents a hierarchical position in a patriarchal ecclesiastical institution.

Nevertheless, I dare to speak, for three reasons. First, because of the extremely disturbing statistics which others have referred to: an estimated 7% of all women experience domestic violence, according to the 2011-12 figures, equivalent to some 1.2 million victims. There were 88,000 domestic violence cases referred to the Crown Prosecution Service that year, of which more than 64% reached a decision to charge, leading to more than 52,000 convictions. Even more disturbing are the 2013 figures, which indicate that on average 155 women and 103 children were turned away from refuges every day, at the most dangerous and vulnerable moment for them. They were then, of course, faced with returning to an abusive partner.

Secondly, I touch on this subject because of the attention given to it recently at the General Synod and the growing partnership between the Mission and Public Affairs Division of the Church of England and the Christian anti-domestic violence alliance, Restored. Thirdly, my own pastoral experience, and that of many of our clergy, reveals the prevalence of this issue and the need for the churches, but also, of course, the mosques, temples, gurdwaras and synagogues, to be active partners in the allocation of resources as important, even vital, arenas in which attitudes and actions towards domestic violence can be challenged and changed. Charities such as Restored are working to scale up the voluntary efforts of the faith communities, but there is a clear need for a more co-ordinated effort from both national and local government to actively seek out faith communities and help fund these organisations to scale up their work.

The Mission and Public Affairs Division submission to the Home Office consultation on domestic violence in August 2014 made the point—as have other speakers—that strengthening the law in this area can only do so much if it is not supported by effective and appropriate implementation by the police, judiciary and others. This requires a number of important practical initiatives. Priority needs to be given to making domestic abuse awareness training a mandatory part of the police and Crown Prosecution Service training, so that there is at least a basic level of awareness and understanding of the underlying causes of abuse, and of power and control. There needs to be an increase in the provision of support and advice through the continued funding and training of independent domestic violence advocates. This needs to go alongside improvements in current response times between arrest, charge and cases being brought to court, because delays in this process can allow the perpetrator time to regain power and control over the victim.

As others have said, we need much greater public awareness of domestic abuse, its causes and consequences, and wider recognition of the signs of abuse and appropriate responses. Abuse thrives in an environment of shame, stigma and silence. The Government have a vital role in sponsoring effective campaigns to raise awareness of what domestic violence is and how to respond to it.

Further, there has been growing concern at the rise in sexting, mobile porn sharing and sexual harassment among young adults. It is essential that we equip young people to have healthy relationships to ensure a stable

foundation for the future. That must include relationship and sex education within the school system that teaches about informed consent to sex, domestic abuse and its signs and indicators, and the healthy uses of power.

Church of England schools educate about 1 million children at any one time. As part of their statutory inspection, all Church of England schools must demonstrate the development of personal relationships that build self-esteem and values based on mutual respect. That highlights the church's commitment to changing the culture in which negative perceptions of relationships and respect within them have developed.

Further, we need increased, ring-fenced and specifically allocated central funding provision for refugees and domestic violence work locally to reverse the trend of refuge closures, as others have said. Funding of specialist services and the provision of an adequate number of refuge spaces available for women and children escaping dangerous threats is vital and fundamental.

All of us share a concern about the disturbing picture of suffering, vulnerability and violence which the statistics reveal. The churches rightly have a particular concern for the vulnerable and oppressed, as well as acknowledging the need for perpetrators to be rehabilitated and reintegrated into more balanced social relationships. It would therefore be helpful if the Minister could inform the House about progress in implementing the Government's violence against women strategy, and especially the national rollout of the domestic violence protection order pilot. What are the Government doing actively to challenge the cultural stereotypes that can perpetuate violence against women, as required under Article 5 of the 1979 UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women?

As we know, this debate touches on an often unseen, very widespread and massively damaging feature of part of our contemporary culture. I very much hope that our debate today will go some way to help us to address it more effectively.

12.28 pm

Baroness Rebuck (Lab) (Maiden Speech): My Lords, it is a great honour to make my maiden speech as a Member of this House. I am particularly pleased to follow such an important contribution from the right reverend Prelate the Bishop of Leicester.

I express my thanks to all your Lordships on each side of the House for the warm welcome that you have given me, and to the staff of the House, whose consideration and courtesy have surpassed their legendary reputation. I am particularly grateful to my supporters, my noble friends Lady McDonagh, of Mitcham and Morden, and Lord Hollick, of Notting Hill, for their wise counsel and words of encouragement.

I stand here today deeply moved because it was 10 years ago, in November 2004, that my husband, Lord Gould of Brookwood, gave his maiden speech. In fact, today's date is particularly poignant because it was exactly three years ago that he finally lost his fight against cancer. He would have been thrilled to see me here among so many of his friends on these Benches, and he would have reminded me what an honour it is to have the opportunity of contributing to the debates and legislation that shape our nation.

I personally look forward to championing the causes that I have seen inspire individuals and transform lives throughout my 40 years in the publishing industry: the liberating power of literacy and reading for pleasure; the vibrancy and social impact of the arts; and the dynamism of our creative industries.

For 22 years, as chief executive of a publishing group of which I declare I am now the UK chair, I have been proud of how my industry has led the way on gender diversity, promoting women to the top ranks at a time when the only way into the executive suite in many sectors would have been with a tray of tea and biscuits. However, as we have heard from my noble friend Lady King of Bow, only last week the World Economic Forum report showed that the UK has slipped out of the top 20 countries for gender equality, dropping from 18th to 26th. Today's important and extraordinarily moving debate highlights how far we still have to go in confronting the systemic problems that blight the lives of too many women.

Ensuring that women from different social backgrounds are given opportunities for self-development is critical in tackling social exclusion. For me, books are a symbol of freedom and transformation. They opened my mind and changed my life and I want others to share in that opportunity. My mother, the eldest of five, had to leave school at 13 so that she could help support her family. My paternal grandfather came to the UK alone, aged 15, to escape persecution in Lithuania. From selling suits off a wheelbarrow—he was a tailor—he became a successful businessman, but he never learned to read or write. There were no books on our shelves at home except for a leather-bound edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, but, despite that, each Saturday my mother would take my brother and me to the local library to borrow books. It was the highlight of my week. Books unlocked my imagination and aspiration, and I became the first person in my family to go to university.

Through my years as a publisher, I have always believed that businesses should consider their wider purpose and social impact. It is shocking to me that 5.1 million adults in England can be described as functionally illiterate, struggling to understand a letter home from their son or daughter's school and unable to read a bus or train timetable. Overall, 14.8 million adults have literacy skills below a GCSE grade C.

There is a range of valuable studies by the National Literacy Trust, of which I declare I am a trustee, that demonstrate the particular role that poor literacy plays in exacerbating women's social exclusion. Women with low literacy skills are more likely than men to live in non-working households. Some 13% of women with non-functional literacy have experienced homelessness, compared to 7% of men. Lower literacy means that women are more likely to move in with a partner while still a teenager and to have a first child at a young age, and are five times more likely to be depressed. Such women are also less likely to be politically engaged, to vote or to participate in their community. The literate woman, by contrast, is a potentially empowered woman.

I became determined to do something to help those with low literacy. In 1998, I launched the World Book Day charity, on behalf of the book industry, to ensure

[BARONESS REBUCK]

that children celebrated reading for pleasure at least once a year. For many women, having a child is a spur to improve their literacy, as they want to read to them and help them with their school work. This is why, in 2006, I launched the Quick Reads charity for emergent adult readers. Quick Reads books are written by well known authors in such a way as to be accessible to those with entry-level literacy skills, reducing the fear of reading for the less confident. As one woman said, “I felt as though I had climbed a mountain. I was very proud, because it was the first proper book I’d read”.

It is not just books that demonstrate the role of the arts as a powerful vehicle for encouraging aspiration and liberating potential. For example, in Camden, my home borough, two 20 year-olds founded Youth Sauce, with a mission to deliver change through the creative arts. Their “Somerset Tales” was an evening of spoken-word poetry addressing the grim realities of youth homelessness, assault and violence told through fairy tales. Another event, HerStory, was for 16 to 24 year-old women not in work, education or training, to enable them to tell their stories and discover their beliefs while honing their literacy skills. MC Angel worked with these young women. She herself grew up in a home torn apart by alcoholism, drugs and violence. From a homeless hostel at age 15, she studied community theatre; now a gifted performing poet and rapper, she also works for the charity First Story to open up creative writing for kids from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Many women from Youth Sauce subsequently joined their local library and then started reading for pleasure, unlocking that unique, immersive experience that touches the core of our humanity by opening up undreamt-of worlds and building empathy. Yet reading for pleasure is only one aspect of our rich creative industries in the UK. We lead the world in literature, film, theatre, dance and art. Here I must declare two further interests as I am chair-elect of the Royal College of Art and chair of the Cheltenham Literature Festival.

The noble Lord, Lord Smith of Finsbury, established the first creative industries taskforce in 1997. I was privileged to be a member of it and we mapped for the first time the economic impact of the arts in Britain. What we must focus on now, however, is the social impact of the arts. I hope that current academic studies such as the Warwick commission will begin to marshal the enormous amount of data from arts organisations, charities and our schools about the transformative potential of the arts and that this, in turn, will inform all future policy. I have seen the arts change the lives of excluded children at inner London schools and through charities such as Kids Company, offering hope and a vision for a future that is often lacking in young lives. We should strive to ensure that everybody, especially the most marginalised and excluded women in our society, can have access to what Philip Pullman describes as the “rich, consoling, inspiring, liberating” experience of reading.

I thank your Lordships for the opportunity to speak in this important debate. I am sure that the power of books has touched everyone in this Chamber. I want to make sure that everyone in our society, especially the most vulnerable, also has that opportunity.

12.36 pm

The Earl of Listowel (CB): My Lords, it is a singular honour to welcome such a distinguished businesswoman to your Lordships’ Benches and to follow such a poignant, courteous and effective maiden speech. It was particularly moving to hear the life story of the noble Baroness, Lady Rebuck, and to see what an example she is to others through her own life of what can be achieved, if one can achieve literacy and education.

The noble Baroness also brought home the importance of family learning and mentioned briefly mothers reading with their children. I draw her attention to the work of the noble Baroness, Lady Howarth, who was chair of the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education report last year into family learning. The NIACE report highlights that helping women who had difficulty at school to learn once their children start going to school has a tremendous impact on their children’s education. We recognise that in the developing world, the education of girls is the key to future development. We fail to recognise adequately that educating women is the key to ensuring that our children do far better in school.

As I say, it is a great honour to welcome such a distinguished businesswoman to the House. The noble Baroness broke the glass ceiling in 1991 by becoming chair and chief executive of Random House UK. As recently as last year, she was assessed as being one of the 10 most influential women in Britain by “Woman’s Hour”. While at Random House she initiated a programme providing volunteer reading help, which is now entitled Beanstalk, where she has provided reading mentors to local primary schools so that children in primary schools with difficulties—perhaps family difficulties as well as reading difficulties—have the benefit of an ongoing relationship with a highly educated person who works at Random House. This is very much welcomed by the charity in question. I am sure that I express the sentiment of all your Lordships in welcoming the noble Baroness and her maiden speech, and in hoping that we may hear from her on many future occasions.

I, too, thank the noble Baroness, Lady King, for this important debate. I would like to speak about the importance of perinatal mental health care, particularly for socially excluded women. I would also like to talk about the issues for women living in temporary accommodation. I draw noble Lords’ attention to the very important report published just recently by the London School of Economics entitled *The Costs of Perinatal Mental Health Problems*—the cost to the nation of perinatal depression, perinatal anxiety, and perinatal psychosis. The shocking figure that this report from the LSE gives us is that failing to meet these health problems costs the nation £8.1 billion per annum. Simply failing to meet these problems costs the nation £10,000 for every childbirth. Nearly three-quarters of the cost arises from the failure of the children to thrive. It is the failure in that early attachment between the mother and child which causes such cost to the nation.

I would like to pay tribute to the Government for the investment they have made in health visitors in recent years. A few years ago it was an ageing profession

with huge caseloads because there was such a shortage of health visitors. The Government have made a huge investment in this area. I am very pleased as well to learn of the development of the Institute of Health Visiting, which demonstrates the status of health visiting. Of course, health visitors play a crucial role in the matter of perinatal mental health. I ask the Minister whether the failure to provide any of these crucial specialist perinatal health services in many areas across the country is recognised by the Government and whether they have a plan to address the provision of these vital services. Maybe the Minister would write to me on this particular issue.

In passing, I would like to draw attention to the experience of women in custody. It is very good news that the number of women in custody has been reducing—in significant part because of the impact of the influential report of the noble Baroness, Lady Corston, of several years ago which highlighted the value of women's centres as an alternative to custody. But there is considerable uncertainty about the future funding of such women's centres. I would be grateful if the Minister could say, or write to me about, what plans there are to support these centres and keep them going, with particular regard to the perinatal health of women in custody. Also, there are high rates of teenage pregnancy in young women and girls in care and leaving care, so we need to be sure that they have the right expert care around the birth of their children so that we do not repeat the cycle of failure that so many have experienced before.

Moving on to housing, Shelter has recently highlighted the increasing numbers of children in temporary accommodation from about the mid-70,000s three years ago to upwards of 90,000 today. It is encouraging that Governments have reduced the figures overall in recent years, but this is a worrying development. I had the privilege on several occasions of meeting mothers in family temporary accommodation, through the Barnardo's project working in this area run by John Reacroft. What struck me most was the isolation that so many of these mothers experience, and the many moves that they experience. I ask the Minister: will the Government try harder to replace the social housing that is sold? We need to have good, solid bases for these mothers in order that they can make secure attachments with their children and in order that their children can thrive. Information about providing that much needed social housing would be very helpful.

Also, in terms of tackling the isolation of such mothers, is any thought given, for instance, to providing travel passes for mothers in family temporary accommodation so that they can see their family, their community and their friends more easily? What about free mobile top-ups for such mothers so that they can call and connect with other members of their family and community?

It has been a huge honour to follow the maiden speech of our new Member. I look forward to the Minister's response.

12.44 pm

Baroness O'Cathain (Con): My Lords, I decided to take part in this debate because the subject interests me hugely. The debate is that this House takes note of

women facing homelessness, domestic violence and social exclusion. However, the opening speech from the noble Baroness, Lady King, did not actually help me to consider this in a very positive manner. I will return to the speech that I have prepared, but I want to make a few comments because I expect that the noble Baroness would expect me to do so.

The point is that domestic violence and social exclusion are issues that affect each one of us. No party has the sole prerogative to think that they are the only ones who can solve these problems; I am sure that the noble Baroness would agree with me on that. Maybe they think that they have all the ideas, but surely the point of having an idea is to try to communicate it to everyone in order to gain a consensus whereby national funds, which are not the prerogative of any one party, should be spent on national problems. Perhaps I have spent too much time in your Lordships' House and its committees, where inevitably party political comments and views are taken less into consideration than the overall consideration of making legislation that is right for everyone in the country, which is properly costed and funded, and on which agreement can be reached and positive outcomes recommended to the Government. I hope that we will now leave that aside and come to areas where we can make positive comments. Indeed, a lot of the debate has had such comments; it was just the opening speech that I found rather difficult. Hurling vicious words at parties across the Chamber is not really our way to behave.

When looking at this Motion dealing with homelessness, domestic violence and some social exclusion, I decided that we wanted to get beyond what the immediate impact of it is on the people involved—which, of course, is women—and move on to how it is transposed down the family. The long-term effect on young children who witness domestic violence is just horrific. A report called *Beyond Violence: Breaking Cycles of Domestic Violence*, which has been produced by the Centre for Social Justice, corroborated the experience that I have been told about and witnessed over the years. It is supported by detailed evidence and statistics, and I will draw on some of this rather than risk being accused of exaggerating an abhorrent situation. The report states inter alia that the way in which we are tackling domestic violence is failing to break abusive cycles in families. It says:

“The impact on children of being a witness of domestic abuse tends to be underplayed but they are at risk of developing poor mental and physical health, failing at school and becoming a victim or perpetrator themselves, even if they are able to achieve safety”.

This sentence encapsulates exactly the experience that I have been close to while a teenager and a young adult. Some of my friends had appalling experiences. However, I think that these are fewer now because we are more open with each other, there is more investigative journalism and TV and radio have increased programmes on social exclusion, homelessness and indeed domestic violence.

We are much more aware of the social problems and I dare say, coming from these Benches, I still think that we are a much nicer society than we were, say, 20 or 30 years ago. I see that a friend of mine who is a noble Baroness on another Bench is saying no, but

[BARONESS O’CATHAIN]

that is something that we can debate. When, for example, the European Union Select Committee produced a report on youth unemployment earlier this year, there was a description of visits made by the committee to two areas of high youth unemployment and the sterling efforts being made by a charity in one area and the local council in another. I would like to tell the noble Baroness, Lady King, that it was Birmingham Council, a body that she also quoted as one to be admired and congratulated.

These two, the charity and Birmingham Council, had independently set up groups to try to counter youth unemployment. They were two quite different programmes, but we got the opportunity to talk to the people—young men and women, teenagers and young adults—on a one-to-one basis and participate in conversations with them. It was chilling, the descriptions of home backgrounds which had led them to a situation where they were not able to get a job. The overall breakdown of trust and the inclination to bear some part of the blame for the abuse witnessed, along with expressions of defeat, could have mentally maimed these young people so seriously that they would have just given up. But both organisations, the Prince’s Trust charity and Birmingham Council, have got these very positive programmes going. This is something that we as a nation should try to encourage. We recommended that in our report and it is something that we need to do, particularly drilling back still further, not just to when they leave school and are unemployed but even deeper to hear about areas of domestic violence.

I ask my noble friend the Minister whether the police cover as part of their training the need to decide whether there is really deep-seated domestic violence in a domestic situation so that they should then take note of the children involved. It is possible that those children could be convinced that the world is not always as they have experienced at home, and that they would acquire skills and actually become employed.

Is enough emphasis being placed on the collateral damage done to young people who have witnessed domestic violence? Are there plans to make refuges available to teenagers and young adults, not just to women? There are situations where they are so damaged within the home environment that it is probably better to remove them and then try to rebuild their lives. Are there plans for more involvement at a local level? So much of our legislation is based on the idea that one size fits all—but it does not. I think that local authorities and local communities should get involved.

12.52 pm

Lord Graham of Edmonton (Lab): My Lords, it is a joy and a pleasure to take part in this debate, and to join in the chorus of compliments that are being paid to my noble friend Lady King. She managed to compress a speech of 30 minutes’ length into 15, which I think is something of a record—but every minute that I heard, I said to myself, “Hear, hear”. If I was to be asked for my solutions to the problems that she raised, I would simply say, “Give me the sheet and I will sign it”, because her speech was compelling and full of conviction.

My case is to say to the Government Benches that it is all very well having conviction, but what we want is compassion. To add to the cases that have been made and drawn to our attention, I have got my own store of knowledge based upon what is now 40 years’ experience between the Commons and the Lords. I was born on Tyneside, the eldest of five children, and my dad was on the dole for 10 years. Having passed my 11-plus, I failed to go to the school because my dad was unemployed, so finally I had to wait until the Open University came along to get my bachelor’s degree and then my master of arts, which made me very proud.

It reminded me of the way in which I believe our housing policy is in a mess. By “our”, I mean that of the House and the Government and the country. I place no blame upon any one individual or one party, but when you look at some of the illustrations of how it has worked out, it could make you weep.

In 1979, councils had 6,568,000 council houses under their control, and people had the ambition to get on to a council house list. Having been the leader of Enfield Council, and operating down there for many years, I know that that was fair and right. However, you now find that by 2012, those 6,568,000 had been reduced to 2,096,000, many of them sold under the right to buy. The right to buy was used on 1,500,000 houses, which hitherto had been available to the community to be given to those who, in the community’s view, through the councils, were worthy of that assistance.

Looking back to where this started. I do not particularly laud the right to buy. When I used to go round the Hyde estate on Haselbury Road in Edmonton I would knock on the door and say, “Can I expect your support?”. “Well”, the current tenant would say, “not really, because if I vote Conservative, I’m going to be able to buy my house. After I’ve bought my house, I’ll continue to vote Labour, but in order to get the house I’ve got to get a Conservative Government in”. They did, and as a consequence people would come to me and say, “My son and daughter want to get married and go on the housing list, but the houses that normally might have been available to them are gone because they’ve been sold”. Houses were valued at £7,000 in Edmonton in 1979, but you now pay nearly £200,000 for a detached, three-bedroom house in good order—because you can say about most councils that they kept the property in good order.

On the other hand, that is the way it is. I want to know, if the Minister has the time—and I appreciate the pressure she will be under—what the Government are trying to do to replace and allocate funds to organisations that can keep housing in the control of people like the councils. I know that there are housing associations and co-operatives, and they all do a very good job. The consequences for housing started to go down then, and I am sorry to say that the policies that were started in 1979 were of course continued by a Labour Government when we were in power. Something needs to be done in that direction.

The other points I want to make are on the scandal that exists in a number of places. I have here a newspaper article that is headed:

“Council plans crackdown on ‘wild west’ landlords”.

A man is named here, who owns many properties in Pentonville Road and Caledonian Road. One of the properties mentioned was a hostel that was bought, then subdivided and let to 19 separate families. They are being housed in conditions that you and I would not dream of allocating to anybody, and yet that scheme is available. In another newspaper cutting a man is quoted as saying that if you have more than two children, are on a zero-hours contract, if granny moves in or if you are on housing benefit, you will be evicted from his properties—which under the law he is entitled to do. We have got a situation in which the Government are aware of all the facts that I have given noble Lords. I want to know, not only that the Government are aware—I believe that they are—but what they are trying to do to obviate that kind of situation.

The value of this debate is to underline the real situation: not statistics, not blarney, not cover-ups, not ignorance, but reality. I have spoken on housing, but I have not got time to speak on the other matters. My noble friend Lady King has given us an opportunity to vent our spleen about some of the bad situations in which other people live. All noble Lords in this Chamber have a decent home to live in. All of us have struggled, and we are where we are now. But the people on whose behalf we are pleading are women who are afflicted unnecessarily, not only by the nature of their partners, but the lack of direct attention by the Government. I hope very much that when the Minister replies—in what I know will be a long speech, because she has a lot to say and we will listen to her with attention—she will give some comfort to my noble friend Lady King for the excellent job she has done in putting this Motion before the House.

1.01 pm

Lord Farmer (Con) (Maiden Speech): My Lords, making my maiden speech today in your Lordship's House, I stand here feeling very humble, being among those for whose wisdom and intellect I have nothing but the greatest respect; humble, but also feeling very welcomed and encouraged by one and all who legislate and work here. I am very grateful for the kindness and friendliness given to me and would mention in particular my introducers, my noble friends Lady O'Cathain and Lord Leigh of Hurley, and also my noble friend Lord Hodgson.

On entering your Lordship's House, it seems to be a common experience to be confused and disoriented as to what is where. I was no exception to this, but thought that with the firm compass points of the Victoria Tower in the west and Big Ben in the east, I would soon master the confusion. However, it deepened when, to my surprise, a map of the building stated that the west end was actually the north end. Subsequent scrutiny of maps showed that Old Father Thames was flowing from south-south-west to north-north-east past this wonderful building, instead of west to east as he should have done. This forced me to revise my opinion and to accept that west was actually north.

I realised that perhaps this venerable building was gently introducing me to the important role that is played here of scrutinising, examining and revising legislation before making one's mind up. That leads me to the important debate today on women facing

homelessness, domestic violence and social exclusion. I congratulate the noble Baroness, Lady King of Bow, on initiating it—and will explain why I, a hedge fund manager, Tory treasurer and donor, should wish to participate.

I will give three brief facts of my career. I started work at 18 as an £8 per week difference account clerk in a London Metal Exchange member firm; I became a Christian when I was 35; and in the last 10 years I have been an active supporter of the Centre for Social Justice, especially of their policies which support families.

However, the background that I would emphasise to your Lordships is my sister's and my childhood. We were born at the end of the war, and both our parents were alcoholic. My father died from this when I was four, and violence was a part of that backdrop. We were soon bankrupt and, with a mother still struggling with drink, my sister and I experienced the poverty, neglect and shame that are such potent drivers of social exclusion. I benefited from attending the boarding house of Wantage state grammar school, and in this context I welcome the Prime Minister's determination to help more looked-after children gain places at today's state boarding facilities. A good education is invaluable for social mobility; hence I am a sponsor and governor of ARK All Saints Academy in Camberwell.

My sister was not so fortunate; she left school at 14 and, in her subsequent years, struggled with broken relationships, alcoholism and depression. I am telling your Lordships this not only to explain why my heart and head would wish to be involved in today's deliberations, but also to come back to that House role of scrutiny and opinion revision when we consider one another.

Be that all as it may, domestic violence is one of the great unspoken-of tragedies in society today. It stretches across all social divides and disproportionately affects women and children, particularly in our most disadvantaged communities. Research from the Centre for Social Justice highlights how the mental scars caused therefrom can lead to post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, anxiety and crippling addictions: devastation not only to physical health, but also to self-esteem.

Last week I met with Sister Linda Dearlove—it is a tremendously appropriate name—from the Women at the Well charity in the King's Cross area of London. Many of the women that she helps grew up with abuse and, as adults, have moved from one violent relationship to another. The majority are involved in prostitution or what might be referred to more accurately as survival sex. They need drugs, alcohol, and a bed for the night if they are homeless. When someone hits them, or worse, they assume that it is their fault. They consider their lives to be of so little worth that they often struggle to see the point of having the daily hot meal provided by the charity. When they start to deal with their addictions, the mental health difficulties that the drugs and alcohol had been soothing, albeit inadequately, start to emerge. It is the legacy, in many cases, of deeply troubled childhoods.

It is the slow and careful restoration of the person that grass-roots charities such as Women at the Well, and others of which I am sure your Lordships are aware, excel at. It is vital that government policy recognises the worth of these organisations, the restorative

[LORD FARMER]

relationships they provide and the length of time required to help people rebuild their lives—as, indeed, my sister has done. We need such pools of kindness all over the country. Obviously, women in this position have to be helped to find safety, and refuges have an important role to play, but effective policy in this area has to be multifaceted. Domestic abuse victims will need support that helps them avoid being re-victimised. This requires them to develop new beliefs about themselves, as well as life skills.

For example, given their experiences, many mothers will find it almost impossible to create the loving family environment they long to give their own children—and the next generation will, all too often, repeat the cycle. Where this is the case, we have to ensure that women who have been the victims of domestic abuse are supported in the very difficult job of parenting. Again, this Government are doing well in that area through their Troubled Families programme, which aims to help over 500,000 families turn their lives around. Domestic violence is an issue in the vast majority of cases.

I will end by saying that it is my intention to contribute to the work of this House, and especially in these vital areas of social policy. As I hope I have already made clear, I will consider it an honour so to do.

1.09 pm

Baroness Jenkin of Kennington (Con): My Lords, it is a pleasure to follow the noble Lord, Lord Farmer, who has spoken so movingly and personally in his maiden speech. This place is full of people who have come from all kinds of surprising backgrounds, and I know that those in the Chamber today will have been glad of the opportunity to get to know a bit more about his. We thank him for sharing his background with us. I know that what gets the noble Lord out of bed in the morning is not business or finance but his family, his faith and education. I also know that he asked the rector of the church that he attends whether he should give up finance and go into the church, but that the response was that business and finance need Christians and those from other faiths who care about society and can give back generously. That is what the noble Lord does in his philanthropic work, including, as mentioned in his speech, sponsorship of one of the very successful ARK academies. Let us remember that the Good Samaritan would not have been able help his neighbour without the resources to so. We look forward to many further contributions from the noble Lord.

I had intended to speak to Amendment 49 of the Serious Crime Bill, moved by the noble Lord, Lord Wigley, and debated last Tuesday, but was unable to stay, so I am grateful to the noble Baroness, Lady King, for giving us the opportunity to discuss this matter again. I am also grateful to the Paladin National Stalking Advocacy Service and to the Sara Charlton Charitable Foundation for their briefing, as well as to the Centre for Social Justice for its report, already mentioned, *Beyond Violence: Breaking Cycles of Domestic Abuse*, all of which have done much to help me prepare for this debate.

I wish to challenge the myth that domestic violence is only physical. Psychological violence and coercive control is often a predominant feature in domestic

violence. Underlying much domestic violence is a desire for power and control and often physical and sexual violence occurs when the other controlling tactics are not working. Another myth is that domestic violence stops once the relationship ends. As we have heard already, coercive and controlling behaviour does not always end on separation. In fact, separation is a high-risk time, as the behaviour is likely to escalate, often resulting in stalking and, in some cases, homicide.

Do we really need more legislation? Surely domestic violence is a crime? No, it is not. The laws used to prosecute domestic violence, including assault, burglary, property, breach of a restraining order, rape, kidnap and murder, do not describe its essence. Patterns of power and control are missed. It misses the fact that domestic violence is about fear, coercive control and continuing acts. The totality of the behaviour and the non-physical manifestations of power and control that define an abusive relationship do real harm to victims and are currently not recognised in criminal law.

I very much welcome the Government's change to the definition and their plans to change the law. If the victim's plight is not recognised adequately in law, she—in this case—will be the one under pressure to leave, possibly becoming homeless in the process, whereas, if the law recognises the crime of coercive control and the way in which it can socially exclude women by robbing them of all confidence, if not their freedom, the perpetrator will often instead be the one who is forced to leave. So in what ways could the law be strengthened? The Home Office's updated definition of domestic abuse provides an excellent starting point for defining the crime of coercive control. It should be a course of conduct crime in which the crime is recognised in a pattern of behaviours versus single incidents, and these are behaviours with the clear purposes outlined in the definition. Women know that by leaving their partner they face the very real threat of homelessness. Proportionate legal redress leading instead to the removal of the partner from the family home would make this less likely.

For the law to fulfil its primary function of achieving justice and to retain respect from the society it regulates, it must adapt to evolving societal understandings of wrongdoing. Forty years ago there was little recognition of the wrongdoing involved in domestic abuse. We now understand that physical violations are just as harmful if not more so when perpetrated by family members than by others. The law now needs to evolve to reflect a second major new understanding—that all too often the worst violations, harms and malicious intentions in domestic abuse are in strategic patterns of control and subjugation.

I wish to briefly comment on the role played by police and crime commissioners, especially those for whom domestic abuse is a priority. Here I pay tribute to Vera Baird, who is the lead PCC in this area, and to Nick Alston, the PCC in my home county of Essex, where it is the only crime type as a key area for focus in the police and crime plan. This is unsurprising when there are more than 80 emergency calls every single day for Essex police to attend a domestic abuse incident, compared with around 20 house burglaries or attempted burglaries each day. Every one of these incidents has

the potential to lead to very serious consequences. The Essex police force has rightly been criticised for failing to protect victims of this abuse between 2008 and 2011, and over the last two years one person every two months has been killed in domestic incidents.

Protecting the victims of domestic abuse requires strong partnership working between the police and other agencies. At a time when resources are constrained across the public sector, we need imagination, bravery and openness from all the relevant agencies to ensure that, when services shrink, they shrink together, remaining firmly linked, rather than shrinking apart. The new multiagency safeguarding hubs are working well in many areas, and I am delighted that we now have one fully operational in Thurrock, in Essex. Every one of the agencies involved in tackling domestic abuse, whether social care, the police, probation, health, education and housing, should take a risk on information sharing. Data protection should be there to protect people and to keep them safe. There must be safeguards—but surely we should dare to share to protect women and children.

This is about culture change as well as procedures and processes; it needs leadership and sharing of best practice. I believe that PCCs can play a crucial role. In Essex, Nick Alston is challenging and supporting Essex police as they continue to improve their provision of support for victims as they more aggressively target perpetrators. He is also chairing a county-wide strategy board that brings the leaders of all the key organisations together to deliver the step-change that we need to reduce this awful hidden harm that pervades our communities.

1.17 pm

Lord Paddick (LD): My Lords, I start by congratulating the noble Baroness, Lady Rebuck, and my noble friend Lord Farmer on their excellent maiden speeches. I also thank the noble Baroness, Lady King of Bow, for the opportunity to debate these issues.

As the right reverend Prelate the Bishop of Leicester has already said, the issues of homelessness, domestic violence and social exclusion of women are linked. In particular, it is male violence against women that lies behind many of these problems. For example, as my noble friend Lady Tyler of Enfield said, the homeless charity, St Mungo's, reports that half of its female clients have experienced domestic violence compared with only 5% of its male clients. Research already referred to by the noble Earl, Lord Listowel, shows that between 50% and 80% of women in prison have experienced domestic or sexual violence. Two-thirds of domestic violence survivors say that their problematic substance misuse began following domestic violence. The evidence is compelling, not only that women are disproportionately victims of domestic violence and abuse, almost always but not exclusively perpetrated by men, but that violence and abuse lies behind much of the homelessness and social exclusion faced by women.

In July, the Government published the latest research and evidence of what works in the prevention of violence against women and girls. It talks about “discriminatory social norms” in relation to violence against women.

This paper was published by the Department for International Development and was focused on countries overseas. It is time that we woke up to the fact that there are discriminatory social norms in the UK that result in violence against women. Much of male violence against women is the result of inequality between men and women, a culture of male privilege and male dominance, and a sense of entitlement, supported by sexism. The issues are compounded by underreporting of domestic and sexual violence. I was the victim of same-sex domestic violence; I was a police officer at the time and I did not report it. I was able to throw him out eventually, but imagine the position of many female survivors of domestic violence who are reliant on their abusers, not only financially, but for their accommodation. They are even less likely to report such matters.

In addition, there are issues surrounding the response of the police when domestic violence is reported. A recent report by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary said that the police often fail to see domestic abuse, particularly in its non-violent form, as a serious crime. There is nothing more serious than feeling unsafe in your own home. Because of the massive underreporting of these offences, there is inadequate funding to address both the aftermath, in terms of care of survivors, and inadequate funding for prevention, in tackling the underlying discriminatory social norms.

While I welcome the Government's expansion of the definition of domestic violence to include any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive behaviour, it is neither a statutory definition, nor is there a specific criminal offence of domestic violence. I fully support the comments of my noble friend Lady Jenkin of Kennington in that respect.

We have seen the Government recently support new laws, for example, extending child cruelty to include behaviour that causes emotional harm, in cases where the Government had previously said that existing laws were sufficient. We heard similar arguments deployed this week against the Government in the debate on the Social Action, Responsibility and Heroism Bill. Many noble Lords argued that the legislation was unnecessary as it was covered by existing laws, but the Government defended the Bill, because, among other reasons, it sent a clear message.

We need to send a clear message to the perpetrators of domestic violence, and to the police and the Crown Prosecution Service, that the essence of domestic violence is controlling behaviour and coercive control, by making such behaviour a specific criminal offence. Why does public-spirited activity deserve the protection of specific legislation while domestic abuse, mainly perpetrated by men against women, does not? We need a change of culture in this country towards women, the rules of gender and patriarchy. It may not be as much of an issue as it is in some overseas countries, but it is an issue in the UK none the less, and it is about time we admitted it.

We can start with compulsory personal, social and health education that teaches respect for women and with proper funding for women's organisations that make-up 7% of all registered charities but receive only 1.2% of central government funding. While localism is to be welcomed, with no ring-fence and the Government not prepared to influence local commissioning, too

[LORD PADDICK]

many local authorities have gone for the cheapest option when it comes to refuges for the survivors of domestic violence, run by generic providers giving a poorer service and less support.

Local, community-based organisations are trying to deal with the underlying issues of violence against women and girls. Meanwhile many local authority refuges no longer accept children, provide no out-of-hours support, and will only accommodate survivors from within their own local authority area, when the last thing a survivor wants is to remain in the local area where there is a chance she will encounter her abuser. Much needs to be done and that requires a change of attitude in society and across the political spectrum. I do not know whether this is what a feminist looks like, but it is what a Liberal Democrat looks like.

1.23 pm

Baroness Armstrong of Hill Top (Lab): My Lords, I, too, welcome the debate initiated by my noble friend Lady King. I also welcome the contributions in their maiden speeches from my noble friend Lady Rebuck and the noble Lord, Lord Farmer. They both brought very different, but very particular contributions, which we can all learn from and think about.

I come to this debate with a long history of being involved in this sort of work. I was involved in setting up of one of the first women's refuges in Sunderland—I do not like to tell you that it was over 40 years ago. I have worked professionally and politically around these issues and now chair an organisation based on Tyneside that has centres around the country, including many of the women's centres that were set up following the Corston report on alternatives for women in the criminal justice system. The charity, now called Changing Lives, has a range of activities. It was initially set up in Newcastle around homelessness, but I am pleased that it has now recognised that you cannot understand homelessness without taking account of a much wider range of issues that affect the person or family who eventually becomes homeless.

The majority of our client group are women, but that is because we have expanded into providing women's centres. We also do a lot of work with people with addictions and have an absolutely remarkable project—at the moment only in Newcastle but other areas are now looking at it—where women, once they have been through the 12 steps programme and are clear of drugs and drink, get the opportunity to go into a residential setting with their children. They may have lost a child or children to care or be in danger of doing so. This is a real opportunity, with very good parenting work, to enable women to get through an addiction and to look after their children effectively themselves. The local authority without any prompting was able to tell Louise Casey on a recent visit to Newcastle how much money it had saved by this method, rather than by taking children into care.

We know that many women with the poorest outcomes have themselves been victims of childhood and domestic abuse of some sort. Almost all the service users that we have worked with, male and female, would say that they have had experience of abuse in childhood or at

some stage of their lives. That is really shocking. If noble Lords read the reports from Louise Casey around troubled families—much of that work, although it is never acknowledged, grew out of work that I was doing as Minister for Social Exclusion and that we did in the respect programme in the previous Government—they will find evidence of the acceptance that violence is simply part of daily life and something that has to be put up with. The case studies are deeply shocking because those are exactly the norms that we should not be living with and accepting in our society.

When I tried to include domestic violence in the public service agreement target in the last Government around dealing with the most vulnerable and disadvantaged people in society, I found that we could not include domestic violence because we did not have sufficiently robust figures. That fits in with the arguments from the Benches opposite that we have to have domestic violence recorded as a separate crime. I support that.

The impact of childhood abuse dominates adult lives and increases the likelihood of engaging in destructive adult relationships. We find that many of the women we work with have children who end up being cared for by other family members, the local authority or somebody else because they have not been able to deal with parenting. That is why we established the programme I have talked about. However, the guilt, shame and stigma associated with their perceived failure as mothers are a further huge burden on them that exacerbates their drug or alcohol abuse, which unfortunately is sometimes used as a solution for blocking out their feelings of guilt and so on.

The experience in the charity that I chair is that the effect of domestic abuse on the lives of our service users simply cannot be underestimated. There are wide-ranging implications for women on top of the emotional and physical abuse. They are often labelled as chaotic and unco-operative and their attendance at appointments is low, but they are trying to hold together a home. If the abuser is around, they do not want to leave the children and then they lose out, given the way that we administer our support and services. That is why I keep saying that too many of the people whom I know and work with are sanctioned in the welfare system, and this is a huge issue for them.

There are many more things that I would say if there were time, but what I will say is that we need to understand that many women become homeless because of all these other problems that they have experienced. Those who might have ended up on the street often do not do so because they choose sex work as a means of keeping somewhere to live. We drive women into more abuse and abusive relationships because we do not support them at the right time. I want to press the Government to work with those in the charitable sector who provide ways forward, but know that this has to be done in a much more holistic way and much earlier so that the problems do not cost us, or the women, as much down the line.

1.32 pm

Baroness Bakewell of Hardington Mandeville (LD): My Lords, I, too, thank the noble Baroness, Lady King of Bow, for securing this debate. I congratulate

the noble Baroness, Lady Rebuck, on a masterly maiden speech, and the noble Lord, Lord Farmer, on a moving and very pertinent maiden speech. I am sure that we will hear much more from them both in the future.

As has already been said, this is an important topic and one which blights the lives of many women. Homelessness, domestic violence and social exclusion are all inextricably linked, with domestic violence being at the heart of many problems. This is not a problem confined to the city and urban regions; it goes countrywide, and even in the most idyllic villages women can suffer domestic abuse. It is often harder for women who are isolated in rural settings to get support and help. The shame attached to being the victim of abuse prevents them reaching out for help and support. The average number of times that a woman will suffer domestic violence incidents before she reports them is 32. This means that some will suffer many more instances before they bring themselves to admit that they are a victim and get help.

Those working in adult social care now routinely check for domestic abuse and report the isolation experienced by people who are physically disabled, are older or have a sensory impairment. Living in rural areas is a very real problem. This makes those who are additionally affected by domestic abuse a significant problem.

As we know and have heard, perpetrators are skilled in making the victims feel that they are to blame for what has happened to them. Victims feel that they must have done something to bring the abuse on themselves and that they must hide their inadequacies from their neighbours, friends and families. They shut themselves away until the physical signs have lessened.

In the spring of this year, Somerset County Council commissioned a review of its community-based services for domestic abuse. The national charity Co-ordinated Action Against Domestic Abuse completed this review for the council in June. Somerset, like many other local authorities with shrinking budgets, is reviewing its commissioning priorities. Specialist domestic abuse services are due for review and Somerset wishes to use the information gathered to inform its services. Since government money for this area of work is no longer ring-fenced, there is a natural nervousness that other services will take priority and that this vital service for the most vulnerable in our society will suffer as refuges close and support is withdrawn.

The CAADA research assessed the likely prevalence of domestic abuse and estimated need in Somerset. The number of female victims experiencing all levels of domestic abuse was estimated at 8,000. Of these, 2,000 were assessed as high to medium risk, and 40% of this group were assessed as needing a multi-agency risk assessment conference—or MARAC, as it is known. During the 12 months to December 2013, the number of cases going through a MARAC was 527. Thirty-three per cent of these cases were repeat referrals and 30% had been referred via routes other than the police. The number of police incidents at all risk levels during the same period was 6,281, and the estimated total number of children living in households with any risk level of domestic abuse was 6,000 to 6,500. That is an awful lot of children in Somerset who are living daily with the threat of domestic violence.

The women most likely to suffer domestic violence are in the 21 to 30 age bracket, with 36% in Somerset in this group. This is the group most likely to have young children. Of all victims, whatever their age, 63% have children, and the severity of abuse is ranked as 62% high risk and 27% medium risk.

Domestic violence is abhorrent and has a devastating effect on those who suffer. As has been said, women lose confidence, become demoralised and live in fear. This in turn paves the way for mental health problems and ultimately, in many cases, homelessness. I am proud that my party has led the way on ensuring that those who need access to mental health care will now get that help, and get it when they need it. It is key to ensuring that lives are turned around and that victims are in a position to take control of their lives.

Domestic violence is often self-perpetuating, as we have heard. A child who has been brought up witnessing their mother being subjected to physical abuse on a regular basis will often grow up to be an abuser themselves or to suffer abuse. This is what they have been used to and so they think it is normal. Their childhood has been tainted, they have lived in fear and they have often had to flee their homes at short notice in order to avoid further harm.

Some years ago when entering the Underground, I came across a woman and a child sleeping on cardboard alongside a man who was regularly there. Women do not sleep rough with their children unless they are truly desperate. Mercifully, the couple I saw were there only for the one night and I sincerely hope that they found safety.

We must do all we can to stop the abuse, prevent the appalling social isolation suffered by victims and prevent the homelessness which occurs as a result of women being forced to leave the family home. This is a terrible blight on our society. I look forward to hearing the Minister's response to the debate.

1.39 pm

Lord Sheikh (Con): My Lords, I, too, thank the noble Baroness, Lady King, for securing this debate.

I have spoken several times in your Lordships' House on these issues. It is of course dreadful that women in our communities and in our society face homelessness, domestic violence and social exclusion. We will all have witnessed the effect these can have on women and those around them. What is most unfortunate is that these issues do not happen in isolation. One can lead to the other and some women suffer all three. These cases are nothing short of tragedies. So many women's lives are ruined by these issues and their great potential wasted. It also has a huge effect on their families.

There are many more incidents of abuse which are not reported and, as a society, we must not allow this to continue. For a number of victims, the act of reporting domestic violence is an emotive and traumatic experience which can divide families and friends and result in social exclusion. The manner in which the police in England and Wales respond to domestic violence was condemned earlier this year in a report by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary which described the matter as "alarming and unacceptable".

[LORD SHEIKH]

Research suggests that a number of adults who witness domestic violence as children are perpetrators of violence against their partners. Domestic violence against women often takes place in households where children are present. In some cases, these children are also victims of abuse. There should be an increase in support services for children who have witnessed abuse and for those who are victims of domestic violence.

We must do all we can to support women in seeking protection. That is why I am pleased that the Government have decided to continue to provide legal aid in private family law cases where domestic violence is a feature. I also welcome the fact that they have widened the definition of domestic violence to include both verbal and physical abuse. Domestic abuse is not just physical. It can also mean appalling emotional attacks and controlling behaviour. This can particularly be a factor in forced marriages which are an issue in certain communities. Eighty per cent of cases of forced marriage involve girls. There have been positive steps on this in recent years. I have been involved in tackling the issue of forced marriages relating to people emanating from south Asia. It is important that we continue to address them through education and by encouraging the involvement of leaders and members of the communities in which these practices are taking place.

I strongly encourage the Government to look at strengthening the law to introduce a single offence to remove any possible ambiguity regarding harassment in relationships. We must also make sure that women are made aware of those men who are a threat to them before they themselves become victims of domestic abuse. I agree with the principle that those who serve time in prison should be rehabilitated and go on to live normal lives, but we must also protect women from those who may still be dangerous. I welcome the Government's decision to introduce Clare's Law, allowing police to disclose to individuals details of their partners' abusive pasts. Not all those who commit acts of domestic abuse will still be dangerous but women should be able to make informed decisions about their relationship.

Although our economy is improving, I know that a number of people are still feeling the effect of the recession. It is thought that the economic climate could have the effect of increasing acts of domestic violence in households that are struggling to make ends meet. The economic impact on victims is also felt through loss of earnings and prolonged periods of unemployment, particularly for women. It is therefore essential that victims of domestic violence are given practical support that includes counselling, emergency accommodation, support during court proceedings, and help in obtaining protection orders. I ask my noble friend the Minister to comment on this in her closing remarks.

There are a number of charities doing excellent work to support victims of domestic abuse. However, I would like to draw attention to one in particular, Co-ordinated Action Against Domestic Abuse. CAADA is a charity that receives funding from Her Majesty's Government. I wholeheartedly support the Government's proposal to introduce a new criminal offence of domestic abuse to include emotional and psychological harm. Coercive and controlling behaviour is at the heart of domestic violence. It is vital that victims should be

able correctly to identify the behaviour they are experiencing as abuse. Criminalising such behaviour may help the relevant authorities to look for patterns of continually abusive behaviour rather than isolated incidents. This demonstrates that the Government are committed to addressing this issue which is a strain on the lives of victims and their dependants.

We will not see an end to domestic violence until we modify attitudes. One of the most effective ways to do this is by empowering the next generation of young men and women with the knowledge to make a lasting difference and effect changes in their attitudes towards their partners while helping the victims. Victims must have confidence that they will receive the protection and justice they deserve from the relevant authorities.

1.46 pm

Baroness Healy of Primrose Hill (Lab): My Lords, I too thank my noble friend Lady King of Bow for introducing this important debate on the plight of women facing homelessness, domestic violence and social exclusion and congratulate the two noble Lords on their excellent and moving maiden speeches.

Government and society have a duty to help women who find themselves in these intolerable conditions, not only for their good but for that of their children and the communities in which they live. This debate is especially timely as the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Women in the Penal System, chaired by my noble friend Lady Corston, is about to launch a new inquiry into the unnecessary criminalisation of women. In this country today there are 3,917 women in prison: 4.6% of the prison population of nearly 86,000. This new inquiry will build on the work of the Howard League for Penal Reform which shows that the vast majority of women involved in the criminal justice system do not need to be there. Women are still criminalised too quickly and better ways to prevent this must be found. The inquiry will look at the role of many agencies which should intervene at a much earlier stage.

The areas discussed today all play a role in the ultimate unnecessary criminalisation of vulnerable women. This new inquiry will look at what these other agencies, both statutory and voluntary, are doing to protect women at risk. Evidence will be sought from central and local government, as well as the criminal justice system. There is a growing consensus that most of the solutions to women's offending lie outside prison walls in treatment for addictions and mental health problems; protection from domestic violence and coercive relationships; secure housing; debt management; education; skills development and employment. Community services, especially those provided by women's centres, enable women to take control of their lives, care for their children and address the causes of their offending.

The Prison Reform Trust, in its excellent report, *Brighter Futures*, recommends that:

"Central government should fund a national network of women's centres, projects and services as these are critical to improved outcomes for women in contact with the criminal justice system".

However, as this debate shows, it is also imperative to deal with the circumstances that propel too many women into the criminal justice system. When we look at their lives it becomes clear that many are victims before ever offending. More than half report having

experienced emotional, physical or sexual abuse as a child, while a similar proportion have been victims of domestic violence. The Women and Girls at Risk coalition, a new network of charities and grant-making organisations, has recently published a literature and evidence review which makes disturbing reading. Girls are at greater risk of most kinds of abuse, including severe maltreatment by a parent during childhood and child sexual abuse. The sexual abuse of girls is more likely to be perpetrated by family members, to begin at an earlier age and to occur repeatedly. Girls and women in disadvantaged circumstances are at greater risk of some kinds of abuse. Poor women are more likely to experience more extreme domestic violence and sexual and physical abuse as both children and adults. It is a vicious cycle whereby women who become homeless, misuse drugs and who are involved in criminality are highly likely to experience further violence.

It is widely acknowledged that early disadvantage is highly significant in later outcomes. The early years must be a major focus for intervention; yet we have seen too many Sure Start centres close. There is strong evidence that the key risk factors in early life are poverty, poor maternal health and education, poor attachment, poor parenting and an impoverished home-learning environment. The seed is sown early on and too many girls between the ages of 12 and 14 reach a breaking point if they have already experienced childhood abuse and neglect, domestic violence, parental mental health problems and substance use and family breakdown. They in turn are more likely to become sexually active, begin to use alcohol and drugs, run away from home and be suspended from school.

The peak age for offending behaviour for girls is 15. Eighty per cent of girls who offend will have criminal careers lasting fewer than 12 months, but if those two in 10 first-offending girls who are at risk of ongoing involvement in crime could be identified and helped at this stage, it could change their lives for the better without recourse to care homes. Thirty one per cent of women in prison have spent time in local authority care. Young women who have been in the care system may be at particular risk when they go out into the world. They often have no ongoing support, are estranged from their families and find themselves homeless. The charity Crisis has found that 28% of homeless women formed an unwanted sexual partnership and 20% have engaged in sex work. This increases the risk of dependency on criminals who exploit them by forcing them into prostitution and drug dealing. Forty eight per cent of women in prison committed their offence to support the drug use of someone else.

Providing safe shelter for vulnerable women must be given greater resources. Women's Aid found that, on a typical day in 2013, 155 women were turned away from a refuge because there was no space for them. Across England there is a shortfall of 1,727 beds in specialist domestic violence refuges. Women's Aid is calling on the Government to commit to preserving the national network of specialist refuges. St Mungo's points out that many hostels and day centres for homeless people predominantly work with and are designed for men, so women are not catered for. I hope that the Government will take note of St Mungo's report, *Rebuilding Shattered Lives* which calls on them

to ensure that the Troubled Families programme addresses the needs of girls who are at risk of homelessness in adulthood by identifying girls who need support.

All the evidence points to the continued need to ensure that there is a system of integrated, holistic women-centred services for these women at risk. Women's centres must continue to be funded after March next year. The alternative is the continuing imprisonment of women for non-violent crimes which destroys their lives and the lives of their children.

1.53 pm

Baroness Uddin (Non-Aff): My Lords, it is a privilege to thank my noble friend for her compelling call to unite on this very important matter. We have walked a very long journey into this House and I commend her efforts on the issues of homelessness and violence against women. She draws attention to the tragic and continuous cycle of misery in which too many women and their families are trapped in the stigma of homelessness, which then further reinforces social isolation.

I have spoken to a number of organisations, such as the Jagonari Centre, Southall Black Sisters, and Women's Aid, which all reinforce what has already been said this morning about the alarming rate of drastic cuts that are impacting the services to support the women who are caught up in violence.

I take this opportunity to congratulate my noble friend Lady Rebuck on her passion for literacy and education; I look forward to hearing from her. I also extend my warmest congratulations to the noble Lord, Lord Farmer. I was deeply touched by his speech and his courage in sharing his personal experience, for which I thank him. It greatly reinvigorates the discussion.

The experience of the women's organisations is much reiterated by the St Mungo's report, which says that almost half its homeless clients were the victims of domestic violence. Many of them will become homeless to escape their abusers, often leaving vulnerable women cut off from other familiar social support structures, resulting in further exclusion. We all know that addressing domestic violence and abuse would significantly reduce homelessness.

I particularly welcomed the contribution of the right reverend Prelate the Bishop of Leicester. His contribution, and that of the church in dealing with domestic violence, is much noted, particularly in Tower Hamlets and Newham where I have experience of working. I began that work at the age of 21—I am not ashamed to say that I am now 55—so it was almost 30 years ago. I worked with women and child sexual abuse victims when it was very difficult within the social services. Women were very scared to take part and risk being targeted by perpetrators. I have seen all too clearly the victims and survivors of brutal violence and child sexual abuse, and I am saddened and dismayed that so little seems to have changed in the experience of those who are abused. We know only too well that abusers can still be protected. Women and children are still scared to report abuse. Institutions with legal and moral responsibility to protect still continue to fail thousands of women and children across our country. There are thousands of ongoing investigations, as reported only this morning by LBC. I agree with the

[BARONESS UDDIN]

noble Baroness, Lady Newlove, that given the numbers, we may have become desensitised to the tragic consequences of violence against women.

While we have more and tougher laws, and greater public awareness and recognition of this problem, de facto changes in our culture and society would not appear to have kept pace with de jure changes to reporting and their experience of the criminal justice system. Therefore, as suggested by the Deputy Prime Minister this morning, I support the Government in considering mandatory reporting. That would go a long way to ensuring that we at least understand the numbers and the level of the problem.

There is a current fiasco about sexual abuse and domestic violence perpetrated against women allegedly by those in high office—from the corridors of power to the studios of the BBC, to the hospitals and institutions set up to care for the young and frail. Having worked as a social worker, I fail to understand how we came to assume that those who are in trusted and in positions of authority would be peculiarly exempt from these crimes when we have long known that abuse and violence are the very pernicious expressions of power and control. The infamous abuse of patients at Winterbourne View care home epitomised the vulnerability of those with learning difficulties at the hands of trusted institutions and eroded public faith in our care system, breaking down the notion that violence against disabled people occurs only at home.

I am pleased that the Care Act was recently passed to put the notion of well-being at the heart of our care system, although I was disappointed that the Government did not amend the eligibility criteria for social care to include “risk of abuse” even if the guidance was strengthened. I hope that this change, for which I have lobbied alongside the National Autistic Society, will be made, bearing mind the fact that those with a disability or learning difficulties are even more vulnerable.

Just as homelessness, social exclusion and domestic violence are all connected and often converge in individual instances of human misfortune, disability, race and gender also combine to affect people’s susceptibility to such problems. Last year, a little under twice as many women as men were reported to have been victims of domestic abuse. The figures are worse for those with disabilities. In general, women with disabilities are twice as likely to experience violence and abuse as those without disability. Studies also reveal that women with disabilities are less likely to seek help when they are victims of violence.

The picture gets worse. Women’s Aid produced a report highlighting the link between disability and domestic violence among women. It showed that disabled women are likely to experience abuse over a longer period and suffer severer injuries than non-disabled women, and that in general they may be limited in their capacity to escape abuse and less likely to seek help. When they do seek help, services are often inappropriate to their particular needs. It is essential, therefore, that domestic violence services have access to disability-awareness training and information so that they understand and adjust to the complex needs of those in question.

As the Government seek to restore trust in our care system following the abuses exposed at Mid Staffordshire Hospital and Winterbourne View, they must take into consideration the emotional hardship of those in care who are sent to facilities hundreds of miles from home. I have heard doctors say that in hospital patients with friends and relatives, particularly those of a pushier, articulate variety who visit regularly, tend to secure the best quality of care. Their visitors will notice dehydration or a lack of cleanliness and will ensure something is done. That is not right. Responsibility of care cannot be dispensed on the basis that certain families are more watchful while others are more trusting.

I have already taken too much time and have too much to say. I urge the Government and the Minister in particular to ensure that those with disabilities are at the heart of our response when we come to tackle domestic violence.

2.02 pm

Lord Wasserman (Con): My Lords, I congratulate the noble Baroness, Lady King of Bow, on securing time for this debate on this very important, if rather depressing, subject. I also congratulate the two maiden speakers on brilliant and moving contributions. If anyone queries the diversity of background of Members of your Lordships’ House, I shall refer them to the *Official Report* of today’s proceedings and to those maiden speeches in particular.

I should declare two interests, which, although they are set out clearly in the register of Members’ interests, I feel that I must mention explicitly. They are directly related to what I want to say.

First, I have a relationship with a private company, 3M, to which I am a strategic adviser. This company pioneered the technology that I intend to discuss. Although I discovered the technology independently, on a visit to New York, long before I was approached by 3M to advise it, the company is nevertheless a key player in this field and I have a commercial relationship with it.

Secondly, I want to mention that I am the founding chairman of a not-for-profit company called the Public Safety Forum. The forum is relevant to our debate today because its mission is to encourage the use of science and technology to make the police more effective and our communities safer. I propose to discuss the use of technology to make the victims of domestic violence safer.

In her introduction to the Government’s action plan, *A Call to End Violence against Women and Girls*, published in March, my right honourable friend the Home Secretary states:

“Supporting victims must be at the heart of our approach. ... I want to ensure that the police and other agencies have the right tools in place to protect victims”.

That is precisely what the technology that I have in mind will do. It will give the police and other agencies a powerful tool to protect victims. In doing so, it will enable victims of domestic violence to go about their ordinary, everyday lives without being in constant fear that they may be the victims of sudden and unforeseen attack.

What is this technology and how does it work? Known as a domestic violence proximity notification system, the technology provides victims with early alerts that their potential attacker is in the vicinity, whether the victims are at home, at work, with friends or on the move. It does this by fitting the potential attacker, to whom I shall refer to as the offender—which I prefer to “perpetrator”—with a securely attached radio frequency or RF ankle tag and by giving him a GPS tracking unit, which he must carry with him whenever he leaves his home location.

If the offender tries to tamper with the ankle tag or leave home without the GPS tracking device linked to it, an alert will be generated at the 24/7 monitoring centre associated with this scheme. Once the offender is provided with this kit, his location is then continuously tracked by the monitoring centre using GPS. His RF ankle bracelet provides an additional layer of protection when GPS location information is unavailable—when the offender is underground, for example—or if a cellular connection is not possible, such as in areas of poor cellular reception.

Whenever the offender fitted with equipment attempts to enter a predefined restricted zone, within 500 metres of the victim’s home or workplace, for example, or wherever the victim happens to be at the time, the technology generates an alert. This is transmitted to the victim who is given a portable GPS alarm unit that she carries with her at all times. The portable alarm unit generates an audible and visual signal to alert her that the offender is within the restricted zone—that is, nearby. The victim’s device also has an in-built panic-button feature.

In the demonstration that I saw in New York, the 24/7 monitoring unit played a key role. When the alarm was triggered, the specialists in the unit alerted the offender that he was entering a restricted zone and advised him to leave it. They also informed the victim that the offender was within the restricted zone and, in the event of the offender ignoring the advice and not leaving the zone, the centre notified the police to respond to the potential attack.

It all sounds too good to be true, but there is nothing very new about this technology. It is in fact in use in our criminal justice system. The Ministry of Justice currently uses similar GPS tracking technology as part of its electronic monitoring of offenders programme. GPS tracking of offenders round the clock is one of the options that the magistrate is free to impose. The new Ministry of Justice GPS tags can also be fitted to prisoners who are given temporary release from prison to make sure that they are abiding by the terms of their release.

In July this year, my right honourable friend the Lord Chancellor, introducing the technology, said:

“Monitoring the movements of dangerous and repeat offenders will be vital in cutting crime, creating a safer society with fewer victims and ultimately offering greater protection and reassurance to the public”.

This sounds good, but I am sure that many of your Lordships will be wondering whether this is appropriate to domestic violence.

In Spain this technology has been in use for domestic violence purposes since 2009. There are currently 700 couples in the scheme, which is used under bail

and prison release conditions. Since the scheme’s introduction I understand that the incidence of domestic violence between couples in it has dropped significantly and there has not been a single case of domestic-related homicide.

I am delighted to say that two outstanding police and crime commissioners, Vera Baird in Northumbria and John Dwyer in Cheshire, are keen to trial this technology in this country and to do so under the supervision of independent experts whose findings would be made publicly available.

Unfortunately, the present rules make such trials difficult, if not impossible, as this equipment cannot be fitted to domestic violence offenders without their agreement. To enable these trials to proceed and to produce sound lessons for the rest of the country, the Home Secretary needs to amend the present rules so that this tracking equipment can be used in cases of domestic violence, perhaps in association with domestic violence protection orders.

As noble Lords know, from April 2015 support services for victims will be transferred to local police and crime commissioners, who will be looking for every means to keep women and girls in their communities safe. This technology appears to be a cost-effective, reliable and secure way of doing so. The sooner we test it, the better.

Finally, I urge the Minister to persuade my right honourable friend the Home Secretary to do whatever is necessary to permit those trials to go forward as a matter of urgency. As the Home Secretary herself has said, she is committed to giving the police the right tools to protect victims. This technology would appear to fit that bill perfectly.

2.10 pm

Baroness Greider (LD): My Lords, I, too, thank the noble Baroness, Lady King of Bow, for initiating this debate. I congratulate the noble Baroness, Lady Rebeck, and the noble Lord, Lord Farmer, on their moving and inspirational speeches. We look forward to many more. I also take this opportunity to congratulate my noble friend Lady Garden of Froggnal on her return to the government Benches. It will not surprise her to hear me, as a woman on these Benches, say the more the merrier—more please.

The noble Baroness, Lady King, has managed to take three complex areas of social policy and combine them in one impressive debate. They are complex in part because the reasons behind the homelessness of women are sometimes hard to detect and far too often hidden away. They are complex indeed, but at the heart of this debate is a very simple truth, which is that there is a terrible cost when a woman has no home, no escape from violence and no apparent way back from social exclusion, as was so movingly described by the noble Baroness, Lady Newlove. It is likely that the cost is not just to her but to the children she may have with her, and to us as a nation as they grow up.

What is striking from all the information provided is how a child growing up in such circumstances is in real danger of getting into a similar cycle of being excluded from the system. Indeed, anyone who has seen someone grow up under the shadow of domestic

[BARONESS GRENDER]

violence will know that those scars run very deep. That is why the Troubled Families project led by Louise Casey has such significance, trying to capture and work with those children and families, ensuring that families learn those small steps—getting up and being clean, fed and off to school or work each day—which are all part of re-engaging with society. The Government's introduction of the project and welcome extension of the scheme to an additional 400,000 of the most problematic families will, I believe, be looked back on one day as a turning point for those who are currently in a world that is almost unrecognisable. The recent news that 70,000 families' lives have already been turned around is something that we should watch and review with interest.

I noted what the noble Baroness, Lady King, said right at the beginning about ideology. I believe that sometimes ideology overwhelms practical steps in this area. If we had moved away from ideology, perhaps today's debate would be very different—if while selling homes under right to buy Baroness Thatcher had also built one or two at the same time and, likewise, Tony Blair after her. Lack of supply and the alternatives on offer mean that women are often hidden, reluctant to access mainstream homelessness services such as hostels, often because of concerns about safety, violence and sexual exploitation by other service users.

It is not much of a surprise that the Salvation Army, one of the biggest providers of services to homeless and vulnerable people, says that women will go to great lengths to stay away from the usual services, resorting instead to what was described by my noble friend Lady Tyler as sofa-surfing. In one case study, the person spent two years on different friends' sofas, which is not unusual, particularly among homeless women. After all, how safe would any of us feel in some of the temporary accommodation currently on offer in these circumstances? That is why I am pleased that my own party's policy is about getting to that target of a major programme of housebuilding, increasing the rate of construction until we reach at least 300,000 houses a year, using untapped sources of finance and giving more freedom to social landlords, local authorities and local communities.

Homeless Link, which represents 500 organisations supporting single homeless people, has reported that nearly a third of people in hostels are ready to move on but, as we all know—having been around this debate many times—there is nowhere suitable to go. I remember in the mid-1990s lobbying on behalf of Shelter for a major housebuilding programme and seeing the eyes of many leading politicians glaze over—including the then shadow Chancellor but with the honourable exception of the noble Baroness, Lady Armstrong. But we all know that supply lies at the heart of the solution of some of these complex issues. While I understand that some people on this side of the House would not welcome a robust and heated debate on any of these issues, I wish the noble Baroness, Lady King, all the luck in the world in her meeting with the Chancellor of the Exchequer—I will hold her handbag if she wishes.

I just want to raise one small policy point that illustrates the issue of ideology versus practicality. I think it is ideologically led that the current Justice

Secretary, Chris Grayling, has put on the table plans to double the fee to file a petition for divorce, charging £750 and making a profit for the state above costs of £30 million. I am absolutely delighted that Simon Hughes in the same department has opposed this. As we all know, women are by far the highest number of applicants for divorce, and among those, inevitably and tragically, there are women who must escape from a violent partner. No one should place top-dollar prices on that woman's chance to get out of the relationship and no one should turn it into significant profit for the state.

I will close by praising the work of Ann Fowler House in Liverpool, run by the Salvation Army, which works in precisely the area that some noble Lords have described of separate service, working one on one with women who are victims of domestic violence to build skills and support self-esteem. We have heard so many really tragic stories that I thought it would be good to tell one that has a better ending. Joanne came to Ann Fowler House after suffering domestic violence. It was discovered that she had a skill of hairdressing. She has now qualified as a hairdresser. She returns once a week and has very quickly found herself somewhere to live. I thought it would be good to end on a nice note. I hope that this debate, and the debate that the noble Baroness has initiated, leads to more stories like Joanne's. I thank the noble Baroness for raising it.

2.18 pm

Baroness Thornton (Lab): My Lords, what an excellent debate and what excellent contributions we have heard from all sides of the House. I, too, welcome the noble Baroness, Lady Garden, to her place on the Bench as a government Whip. Clearly the coalition could not manage without her—quite right, too. I extend my congratulations to my noble friend Lady King on securing this important debate. We have had two brilliant maiden speeches. My noble friend Lady Rebuck's speech was a model of its kind and we look forward to further great contributions from her. I have bad news for the noble Lord, Lord Farmer—I am still finding staircases and corridors after 16 years. It takes a long time to find your way around. Perhaps it is like Hogwarts and they move. I enjoyed the noble Lord's maiden speech very much indeed.

My noble friend Lady King powerfully set the scene in relation to domestic violence, recognising the work of Women's Aid and the wider issues of homelessness and social exclusion. We know that domestic violence cuts across class, ethnicity and background: it is an issue for all of us. This debate has shown how important it is to recognise the impact of domestic abuse on people's life chances, their education, housing and indeed happiness. It is clear that domestic and sexual violence is little short of a national scandal and we need to do more.

Statistics have been shared during this debate, and however we look at things the scale of reported incidents is staggering. Women reported more than 12 million incidents of domestic abuse last year. At least 750,000 children in the UK witness violence in their home every year, and two women are killed by their partner or an ex every week. In some areas, one in five 999 calls is about domestic violence. It is a huge drain on our economy as well as a blight on society. Domestic abuse alone costs the UK almost £17 billion per year. My

noble friend Lady Armstrong illustrated how well some of the programmes can work and how cost effective they can be. I want to congratulate my honourable friend Seema Malhotra for her work as a shadow Minister, preventing violence against women and girls. Her appointment is a symbol of how important the Labour Party regards this issue.

As many noble Lords have said, there is real and growing concern about the provision for those fleeing domestic violence, and this is what I shall concentrate on first. Women's Aid has raised the adequacy of commissioning local domestic violence services. This was mentioned by my noble friend Lady Healy. Women's Aid says that its member organisations are experiencing several problematic commissioning practices. Between April and September 2014 concerns about commissioning processes were raised in 16 areas of the country. Twelve specialist domestic violence services across England lost the services they were providing, through the competitive tendering commissioning process. Several local authorities issued tenders that included local connection rules, meaning that 70% to 80% of refuge spaces in their services must be reserved for women and children with a local connection. One local authority has put its domestic violence services out to tender and has included specific provision for male survivors. However, that is included in the totality of the funding, rather than being an increase in the funding, which means that providing those important services effectively reduces capacity for women survivors and their children. The alarming trend we see for local authorities to impose local rules on refuges effectively dismantles the national network of refuges, and that is very important.

The following is an example of this trend. A 24-hour domestic violence helpline support worker took a late-night call from a housing officer from an emergency duty team. He was trying to find refuge accommodation for a 19 year-old woman with twin babies. The only refuge space available for her across England was in a refuge subject to a local connection rule. The available space matched all the woman's and children's needs but she was unable to take the place as she had no local connection. So the woman was instead placed in emergency accommodation in the area she was trying to flee from, which was significantly less safe, and the specialist refuge was left with empty beds, as they were unable to accept her. That is a totally unacceptable situation.

I refer to other examples. Services are being squeezed throughout the country. A few months ago I raised the situation in Cheshire West and Chester at Question Time, after the Conservative council voted to stop funding a number of women's refuge centres across the region. They have now pulled funding to the centres in Chester, which has had to close, and in Northwich, which faces a very uncertain future, leaving just one for the entire region, in Ellesmere Port. The number of beds available to women has been reduced from 17 to 12 and furthermore they have capped at 20% the number of women and children from outside Cheshire West who are able to seek refuge there. The remaining council service in Ellesmere Port is working with the housing sector to provide secure premises but these do not offer the same level of support as a refuge.

This is the reality of this Government's approach to vulnerable women, and it is not an isolated incident. The same has happened in Gloucestershire. As a result of funding no longer being ring-fenced, the facilities in Cheltenham, Gloucester and the Forest of Dean have had to close their doors. Only the refuge in Stroud remains open. It has to service the needs of vulnerable women across the entire county. Although the contract has been awarded to new providers who offer some outreach support, they no longer provide the specialist refuge or accommodation-based services. The refuge in Stroud is, not surprisingly, struggling. This, again, is the reality of the Government's approach to vulnerable women. South Essex Rape and Incest Crisis Centre has in the first four months of this financial year taken as many referrals as in the whole of last year, and there is a five-month waiting list for access to specialist sexual violence counselling services.

Hertfordshire is another place where the pressures on vulnerable women and those trying to help them are increasing: they feel that the system is working against them. An example is the woman testifying against an ex-partner who was told that she might have to appear in court on her son's first day at school, or face contempt of court and arrest herself. In many cases these women have to turn to the voluntary sector to get by. Does the Minister really believe that this is acceptable?

In Plymouth, a combination of government policies has left vulnerable women at even more risk. Services are being pushed to breaking point and in places where domestic abuse incidents have increased—such as Plymouth—it is even more difficult. In the year 2012-13 there were 6,092 domestic abuse incidents recorded in Plymouth, up 5% on the previous year. We know, however, that this figure masks the real truth, as on average a woman is assaulted 35 times before she reports it to the police.

Funding cuts are just one of the problems. The coalition's bedroom tax is also having serious consequences on vulnerable women. "Safe rooms", where domestic violence victims can take refuge, are considered as spare rooms, so that many women cannot afford to stay in their homes and are left without access to this vital sanctuary.

There are three important areas the Government need to address. First is prevention, in which I would include, as a top priority, sex and relationship education, as mentioned by the right reverend Prelate. Consider the challenges faced by our young people today. They are under a lot of pressure to conform, whether through their access to online pornography or through gang culture in some areas. Having compulsory sex and relationship education is about giving those young people the resilience to stand up and make sure their voices are heard.

We need to pay tribute to the work of Women's Aid, the End Violence Against Women Coalition, Rape Crisis and others. They do incredible work, but they are under increasing pressure. In my party, my right honourable friend Yvette Cooper has committed a new £3 million annual fund for refuges, to support victims of domestic violence, because we want to see the continuation of a national network of refuges. What are the Government proposing to do?

[BARONESS THORNTON]

Finally, we need to improve access to justice, to ensure that there is a joined-up justice system that works fast, gets things right and is cost effective and easy to access. We believe that we need a new commissioner for domestic and sexual violence who would sit in the heart of government to ensure that victims' voices are heard. We believe that police training needs to be updated and refreshed.

This has been an incredibly important debate. We cannot rest while domestic abuse happens every day in homes across the UK.

2.28 pm

Baroness Garden of Frognal (LD): My Lords, I am most grateful to the noble Baroness, Lady King, for initiating the debate on this important subject and for introducing it with her customary passion and expertise. I also thank noble Lords for their kind words on my return to the fray. I join, too, in the congratulations to my noble friend Lord Farmer and to the noble Baroness, Lady Rebuck, on their maiden speeches. My noble friend Lord Farmer confessed himself confused by "west" being "north", but he has overcome many more challenging hurdles than that in his moving story of survival. He has a great deal to offer to this debate and to this House. His experience and subsequent achievements will, I am sure, benefit us all.

In welcoming the noble Baroness, Lady Rebuck, I identify with her words. My husband and hers were both introduced on that list in 2004, a list distinguished by both of them. They are both very much missed. I hope she will find that this House offers many opportunities to contribute and to help to make the world a better place. She has a wonderful record already in that regard. The thoughtful and eloquent words of both our new Members have greatly added to the debate and we look forward to hearing from them both on many occasions.

Many issues raised by noble Lords today are ones of which we are well aware. Generally speaking, women are more likely to be poorer and less likely to control their own destiny. This is as true internationally as it is in this country. There are many challenges and we continue to work to break down those barriers, creating a culture shift that empowers women. Under this Government, there are more women employed in the UK than ever before, with 14.4 million now in employment. Since the coalition Government came to power, that is 711,000 more women in jobs since May 2010.

We know that caring responsibilities disproportionately fall to women. That is why we are introducing a system of shared parental leave from next year and reducing the cost of childcare. We are addressing the gender pay gap and increasing flexible working. Those policies are giving women the help that they need to give them the financial independence which they have so often lacked in the past.

As we know, women can be more vulnerable and disproportionately affected by homelessness related to domestic violence. Statistics show that more than half of people who receive homelessness assistance are women. The homelessness legislation in England provides one of the strongest safety nets in the world for

families with children and vulnerable people who become homeless through no fault of their own. Local authorities already adapt their services to meet the needs of homeless women.

Women do not simply become homeless: there are clear reasons why it happens. Domestic abuse can mean that a woman needs to flee her home to protect herself and her children, or a mental health issue may mean that dealing with finances may become overwhelming, leading to the build up of rent arrears. Rather than waiting for a crisis to happen, one of the strengths of today's homelessness services is that local housing authorities are reaching out to those in need to help them avoid one in the first place. In 2013-14, homelessness prevention work helped to stop homelessness crises happening for more than 200,000 households. That is supported by an investment of £6.5 billion to help households to maintain their tenancies and live independently through housing-related support services.

The type of support provided is wide-ranging and will be tailored to the specific needs of that person. Support could include help to develop life skills, such as understanding a tenancy agreement, or how to pay bills. It could include support services for those fleeing or at risk of domestic violence, adaptations to improve mobility and avoid falls, or support to find appropriate training, or to access education or employment opportunities. Interventions such as family mediation, debt advice, resolving rent arrears or even sanctuary schemes provided by specialist domestic violence services all help to prevent problems escalating out of control. More often than not, it is the local authority working hand in hand with the voluntary and community sector to provide effective support services that vulnerable women really need to get their lives back on track and make a fulfilling contribution to society. I also recognise that, tragically, last year, 77 women lost their lives at the hands of a current or former male partner. That is the lowest number of intimate partner homicides since 1998, but there is precious little comfort in that. Any more than zero is too many.

Domestic violence and abuse is an insidious and terrible crime, and it rightly has the attention of both Houses. Only last week, a debate took place in Westminster Hall to highlight its horrors. I know that the noble Lord, Lord Wigley, spoke eloquently during the Report stage of the Serious Crime Bill about criminalising coercive behaviour. My noble friend Lady Jenkin referred to that in her speech.

Noble Lords will know that the Home Office has recently concluded a consultation on whether the law on domestic abuse needs to be strengthened. We will publish our response to the consultation shortly. We heard a powerful contribution from the noble Baroness, Lady Armstrong, on that. Domestic abuse cuts across all social boundaries and cultures, disempowering women financially, emotionally and practically. The Government are determined to do all they can to tackle it.

Alongside the £40 million of funding for specialist local domestic and sexual violence support services, we have rolled out Clare's Law and domestic violence protection orders, and placed domestic homicide reviews on a statutory footing to make sure that lessons are

learnt from individual tragedies. My noble friend Lady Bakewell spoke about the implications in her area of Somerset.

However, introducing new laws can only go so far to break the cycle of abuse which victims suffer. The Government are clear that changing hearts and minds is also required to send a clear message that domestic abuse is never acceptable. It is never too young for children to learn how to respect others and how to grow in self-respect. The right reverend Prelate, my noble friends Lord Paddick and Lord Sheikh, and the noble Baronesses, Lady King and Lady Thornton, all referred to the important role that schools can play in raising young people's awareness of issues within the PSHE curriculum. I pay tribute to the teaching profession for all it does to encourage positive behaviour in young people. I also draw attention to the pupil premium, which is being used very effectively to help those pupils who are at the greatest disadvantage. The Home Office has also run two successful campaigns aimed at teenagers to help to prevent them from becoming victims or perpetrators of domestic abuse.

The police were referred to by my noble friends Lord Sheikh and Lord Paddick, the right reverend Prelate, and my noble friends Lady O'Cathain and Lady Jenkin. Following Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary's report on the police response to domestic abuse, which highlighted significant failings, the Home Secretary chairs a national oversight group to drive an improvement in the police approach. Following a letter from her to chief constables, action plans to address these failings are now being quality assured by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary in partnership with the voluntary and community sector. The Government expect police and crime commissioners to use those action plans to hold their chief constables to account.

We have not stopped there. My noble friend Lord Sheikh mentioned forcing someone to marry against their will. We have now made that a criminal offence. I am proud to say that the UK is leading the fight to stamp out that harmful practice in the UK and overseas. On violence against women, the message from the coalition Government is crystal clear: forced marriage, domestic abuse and other types of abuse are totally unacceptable and will not be tolerated.

I will try to pick up as many of the questions as I can in the time available. The noble Baroness, Lady King, asked: how do the Government know what is the level of domestic violence services? Decisions on funding are best taken by local authorities, and the Government do not collect information on funding for local services. The noble Baroness asked me to ask the Chancellor to meet Women's Aid. I will certainly pass on her request and would welcome being part of the meeting, with or without the Chancellor—but I guess that the presence of the Chancellor is her main purpose.

The noble Baroness also mentioned average earnings. In fact, average full-time earnings for men are £556 per week, up 1.8%; for women, they are £489, up 2.2%. So the gap is narrowing, but it is obviously still not close enough.

I pay tribute to my noble friend Lady Newlove for her courage and work in such areas. I welcome her many suggestions and will look closely at *Hansard* to see which of those we can apply and take up. I also noted her comment that simple solutions are not what is required for complex problems.

I acknowledge the invaluable work of the churches and faith communities. I assure the right reverend Prelate that we always pay heed to what we hear from them about their work as they often have first-hand knowledge of such cases and are the front line of defence. He probably knows that, earlier this year, 200 faith leaders signed a pledge to eradicate female genital mutilation in faith communities. That is a potent gesture and a sign of the work that is being done.

My noble friend Lady Tyler spoke about local homelessness services offering a choice between mixed or single-sex services. They are required to take account of the needs of victims and we hope that they would always consider the preferences of the victims as to where they felt safe. She also movingly mentioned the health of homeless people, with the simple thing of not being able to brush your teeth or wash your hands if you are homeless. We are looking at how to improve access to primary care services and hospital discharge arrangements for the homeless, but there is much work still to do on that score.

Several noble Lords mentioned issues about the police, some of which I have touched on. The right reverend Prelate mentioned the mandatory training of police. Training on domestic violence is already a mandatory element in police training, but we will look at this again with the review that is going on. It is too early to have figures on the domestic violence protection orders that he mentioned, but early indications are that they are working well. It is something that we will need to monitor.

I pay tribute to the noble Earl, Lord Listowel, for the work that he does, particularly with looked-after and vulnerable children. It is much valued and appreciated. He raised the issue of maternal and perinatal mental health. The Department of Health is working closely with partners to ensure that trained, specialist, perinatal mental health staff are available in every birthing unit from 2017. There is a lot of work going on in this area, too, but awareness has certainly been raised that this is an issue. It is important that these issues are brought to our attention because it is only in that way that measures can be taken to improve things. As the noble Earl also mentioned, a focus on maternal mental health is important, not only for mothers but for children too.

The noble Earl and the noble Lord, Lord Graham, talked about social housing, as did my noble friend Lady Grender. Since 2010 almost 200,000 affordable homes have been built in England and a further £23 billion will help us build another 165,000 affordable homes between 2015 and 2018. That is the fastest rate for at least 20 years. We have a lot of catching up to do in this respect. On the right to buy, for the first time, every additional council home sold under the right to buy will be replaced with a new, affordable home. Related to this is my honourable friend Sarah Teather's Private Member's Bill to tackle retaliatory evictions.

[BARONESS GARDEN OF FROGNAL]

My noble friend Lady Jenkin referred to particular cases of domestic abuse work in Essex. We welcome the excellent work of Essex County Council in transforming domestic abuse services across the county. It is rebuilding services to meet the needs of victims for refuge, outreach, support for children and so on. I pay tribute to the noble Baroness, Lady Armstrong, for her long record in this field. She asked about supporting women with children in care. Housing for Women's programme to reunite female ex-offenders leaving prison with their children who have been in care has an economic value as well—it saves the taxpayer money but it also helps to reduce reoffending rates to 3% and, of course, reunites families. Programmes such as these are vital in improving people's futures.

On homelessness and domestic violence, which was touched on by my noble friend Lady O'Cathain, the right reverend Prelate and the noble Baronesses, Lady Healy and Lady King, we fund the National Domestic Violence Helpline and UKRefugesOnline so that those looking to find a safe place and the appropriate support can do so quickly. I say to the noble Baroness, Lady Thornton, and to my noble friend Lady Bakewell that funding for refuges has never been ring-fenced, and that when the Supporting People ring-fence was removed in 2009, spending on support for victims of domestic abuse actually rose. I say to my noble friend Lady O'Cathain that refuges have discretion over who they admit.

My noble friend Lord Sheikh asked about legal aid. We have retained legal aid in key areas impacting on women; in particular, for injunctions to protect victims from domestic abuse and for family cases such as child contact or division of assets after separation where domestic violence is a feature. We continue to provide civil legal aid for the victims of domestic violence to apply for protective injunctions, such as non-molestation orders. I thank the noble Baroness, Lady Healy, for raising the issue of women in prison, which is another whole field of debate in association with these issues. The Government will respond to the St Mungo's *Rebuilding Shattered Lives* report shortly and set out our work in support of vulnerable women. Once again, this is an issue that needs to be kept high on the agenda as there is so much that could be done regarding women sent to prison and the negative effects that this has on society as well as on them.

The noble Baroness, Lady Uddin, mentioned those with social and learning disabilities and their additional needs. That, too, is something that we shall need to keep an eye on in order to make sure that they do not suffer additional disadvantage because of their inability in one way or another. My noble friend Lord Wasserman mentioned the tagging of domestic violence offenders. I have just been part of the Digital Skills Committee and our eyes have been opened to an amazing range of the wonders of technology. I cannot remember whether we have had this impact of digital technology brought to our attention, but the Government are certainly aware of the huge potential of technology to help protect victims of domestic abuse. We are exploring, with industry, how tagging can be used to protect victims of domestic abuse, but I accept my noble friend's point that it may need legislation in order to be totally effective.

My noble friend Lady Grender raised concerns about the rising cost of divorce. She is quite right that we would not wish to see people trapped in unhappy marriages because of the rise in the cost of a divorce. The noble Baroness, Lady Thornton, raised a number of issues on prevention and access. I think that, along with other noble Lords, I may need to respond to her in writing.

This has been a very rich, informative and insightful debate. I am conscious that I have not answered all the questions that noble Lords have raised and so I will write to them. I hope that I have offered some reassurance that this Government are totally committed to helping women who face homelessness, domestic abuse and social exclusion. I have outlined some of the significant steps that the coalition Government have taken to transform the opportunities and services available for vulnerable women, supported by the dedication and hard work of local authorities and the voluntary and community sector. This is targeted help that is designed to prevent homelessness and domestic violence happening in the first place by identifying the complex needs that many women have at the point of crisis and helping them to get their lives back on track and make a full contribution to society.

I repeat my congratulations to our two new Peers on their outstanding maiden speeches. I thank the noble Baroness, Lady King, for bringing this debate to our attention and all noble Lords for their participation. It has been insightful and important and I hope that it will help to move some of these issues forward.

2.47 pm

Baroness King of Bow: My Lords, this genuinely has been an extraordinary debate. I know that everyone always gets up at this point and says that, but I am genuinely moved when I hear politicians at their best; not least because everyone else usually only reads about us at our worst. Having said that, I cannot, in the two minutes available to me, mention all the important contributions that were made. Let me just say that the high quality of debate was exemplified by the two brilliant maiden speeches. These were from my noble friend Lady Rebuck, whom I have admired for many years, and from someone I hope will be my friend—the noble Lord, Lord Farmer. That has scared him. I hope that the noble Lord, a self-confessed hedge fund manager, will take a compliment from me, a self-confessed champagne socialist. The insight and understanding he brought to the debate were breathtaking.

The noble Baroness, Lady O'Cathain, was less impressed with me and was very disappointed by my opening remarks. I must say, with all the kindness in my heart, I, too, am very disappointed that the very clever people currently running the Treasury are either unaware or do not care that their actions disproportionately harm women. Of course, I take the noble Baroness's point that no party holds a monopoly on policy solutions. That is exactly why I shelved many of the questions I had for the Minister and asked her, instead, whether she will use all her powers of persuasion to get a meeting with the Chancellor. If George Osborne actually knew, in a little detail, how much harm these cuts cost, if he had heard this debate, he would make

cuts elsewhere. The Treasury must understand that supporting women is not a passing PC fad, it is fundamental to the future of our country.

Motion agreed.

Ebola

Question for Short Debate

2.49 pm

*Asked by **Baroness Kinnock of Holyhead***

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the international response to ebola.

Baroness Kinnock of Holyhead (Lab): My Lords, at the outset I must pay tribute to the considerable contribution that the United Kingdom and its NGOs, health workers and service personnel are making in efforts to respond to the Ebola crisis. Despite those and other great efforts, as the world now knows, Ebola continues to destroy lives, livelihoods and communities. It impairs national economies and is severely damaging what are already very fragile basic services. It is reversing years of development efforts with devastating effects and there is a danger that this epidemic could undo years of efforts to stabilise the west African region and lead to new tensions between neighbouring countries.

Against that background, does the Minister agree with Kofi Annan, who has said that:

“If the crisis had hit some other region it ... would have been handled very differently”?

He went on to say:

“When you look at the evolution of the crisis, the international community really woke up when the disease got to America and Europe”.

That judgment is echoed by Dr Chan, the director-general of the WHO, who has emphasised,

“the dangers of the world's growing social and economic inequalities”.

She said:

“The rich get the best care. The poor are left to die”.

Hearing that, does the Minister agree that Ebola is tragically highlighting the basic reality that Governments and commerce must give higher priority to investment in the prevention of disease in developing countries? Should donors not be spending much more on global health, including overcoming malaria, TB and HIV, when those plagues are fundamental causes of underdevelopment and when more has to be spent on treatment simply because too little is still being invested in prevention?

We surely need to deal now with the reality that the world has simply not prepared itself for an effective response to any severe, sustained and contagious health emergency. The progress which is claimed by some to be taking place is, to say the least, uncertain. Experts grimly tell us that we are not close to reducing mortality or stopping Ebola's transmission, which will not happen for some time. On just one day this month, 2 November, 61 new cases were reported across Sierra Leone, bringing the nationwide toll to 4,059 cases. According to Save the Children, five people are being infected every single hour in Sierra Leone.

However, Ebola emerged 40 years ago, so why after four decades of huge scientific advance is there no vaccine and no cure? Could it be because Ebola has no R&D incentive for a profit-driven global pharmaceutical industry? Professor Peter Piot, the director of the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine, who is of course the scientist who first identified Ebola, has said that it would not have been difficult to contain the outbreak if those on the ground had acted quickly. He has also said, however, that tragically:

“Something that is easy to control got completely out of hand”,

as isolation, care and tracing and monitoring contacts, which have worked before, will not prevent the spread now. He went on to say:

“It may be that we have to wait for a vaccine to stop the epidemic”.

The awful truth is that no one knows the real death toll in Sierra Leone. We do know, however, that there is the most terrible suffering and misery. I will give just one all-too-typical instance. A woman with a nine year-old child and a six year-old child lost her husband to the disease. Naturally, she had nursed him. Now she is dead and both children have Ebola. They are orphans and victims. But hugging loved ones should not be a death sentence. Obviously, as in every culture, the women of west Africa are the carers of their families. They are consequently the front-line health workers who are most exposed to and affected by Ebola. In fact, in Liberia, 75% of those infected with or killed by Ebola are women.

Even before this crisis Sierra Leone had one of the world's highest maternal mortality rates. Now, because of the collapse of healthcare and the fear of contracting Ebola in hospital, many more women are dying in childbirth because they are afraid to go to hospital. Donors, including the UK, clearly need to take account of the higher risk that women and girls face of getting Ebola. In addition, priority should be given to sexual and reproductive healthcare, and it is vital that there is a proper response to the increased vulnerability of women and girls to violence during the Ebola crisis. Can the Minister tell the House whether efforts are being made to ensure that women are engaged at national and community level in shaping responses to this crisis?

After years of devastating civil wars, already fragile basic services are now desolated. In Sierra Leone, nearly 40% of the population do not have access to clean water and sanitation is worse than rudimentary. As a result, maintaining the level of hygiene needed to prevent the further spread of a virus which is transmitted through contact with body fluids is extremely difficult, and clearly the lack of basic services is putting at risk the lives of all those who care for Ebola patients. There is surely a need to make systematic and rapid efforts to ensure universal access to these basic services in all the hospitals, homes and schools. Without that, a future public health catastrophe is inevitable. In addition to addressing the response being made to inhibit the current epidemic, can the Minister clarify whether the Government are making a long-term response to the Ebola outbreak in west Africa that promotes the systemic changes required to deal with any future outbreaks?

[BARONESS KINNOCK OF HOLYHEAD]

The president of the World Bank has said that:

“We were tested by Ebola and we failed ... miserably in our response”.

He then asked:

“Why don’t we have a multibillion dollar fund of \$10bn, \$15bn or \$20bn ... so that once there is a global health emergency it can be drawn down on ... quickly?”.

He is surely right to ask that question, so what is the answer from our country and our Government? Are we going to try to win this battle or will we actually fight to win the war?

2.57 pm

Lord Fowler (Con): My Lords, I congratulate the noble Baroness on that quite excellent speech, with which I very much agree. Quite apart from the present effort to deal with the Ebola crisis, I will emphasise just two points on future policy.

The first is that the Ebola crisis again illustrates how deficient the health systems are in so many countries, not least in Africa. There is a lack of doctors and nurses; there is a lack of equipment and of modern buildings. Their health systems are under enormous pressure in what could be termed normal times, let alone abnormal times. Nothing is more urgent than that British aid policy should be directed here. That will also have the effect of tackling other scourges such as AIDS, which even today accounts for more than 1.5 million deaths a year, many of which are, of course, in Africa.

My second point is that if we are to help further, we need to look again at our policy of recruiting medical staff for the National Health Service from some of the poorest countries in the world. The latest figures that I have are that 21,000 National Health Service staff had their primary medical qualification in Africa, including almost 600 from Sierra Leone. This is in no way a criticism of them but we should examine our policy to see that we are not taking medical staff from countries which have trained them and whose need is much greater than our own here. Our aim should be to be self-sufficient and for us to provide more training in those countries which are undoubtedly in the greatest need around the world.

2.59 pm

Lord Giddens (Lab): My Lords, I congratulate my noble friend Lady Kinnock on having introduced this debate so ably. I confine myself to posing a number of questions to the Minister.

First, there are signs that the number of new cases of Ebola in west Africa is levelling off—especially in Liberia, less so in Sierra Leone. Do the Government have a view on this? If so, I hope they will bear in mind the words of a seasoned observer who said, “I’m terrified that the information will be misinterpreted”—in other words, that relaxation will follow. It absolutely must not.

Secondly, could the Minister comment on the secondary health crisis fast developing in west Africa, alluded to by the noble Lord, Lord Fowler? This is the result of already rudimentary medical resources being concentrated on Ebola. It involves a surge in cases of

untreated malaria as well as other serious health hazards. Large-scale resources need to be injected here—and very rapidly. Where will they come from? Are the UK Government contributing?

Thirdly, these problems add to the horrendous economic costs of the Ebola epidemic to already impoverished societies. The damage inflicted to date is estimated at \$32 billion in Liberia and Sierra Leone alone. How can we counter the very real danger that, if and when Ebola is contained in west Africa, the rich countries of the world will lose interest? What representations are the Government making to the World Bank and the IMF on this issue?

Fourthly and finally, the threat posed by Ebola to countries with advanced health systems is low. However, would the Government agree that a certain level of global risk remains? The key country in question is China, given its extensive involvements in west Africa. Some 9,000 people from areas where Ebola is concentrated have entered Guangdong alone since August. The standard of care in Chinese hospitals is quite low. Perhaps the noble Baroness would like to comment on that.

3.01 pm

Lord Chidgey (LD): My Lords, for almost a decade I was responsible for managing major infrastructure projects along the Guinea/Sierra Leone/Liberia border. Only 5% of Sierra Leone’s highways are paved and the rest of the network is gravel, generally poorly maintained. We are nearing the end of the rainy season, and in the interior some rivers will have flooded and roads and minor bridges will have been washed away, isolating many communities. In yesterday’s Disasters Emergency Committee briefing, it was clear that it had yet to reach the remote areas of Guinea.

Visiting American envoy Samantha Power has lambasted the international community for not supplying aid, doctors and health workers to an area where hundreds of thousands of people can rely on perhaps only a handful of clinicians for their health needs. As she boarded a plane for Guinea, she said:

“You have countries at the United Nations ... who are signing on to resolutions and praising the good work that the United States and the United Kingdom ... are doing, but they themselves haven’t taken the responsibility yet to send docs, to send beds, to send ... money”.

The international community,

“isn’t just losing the race to Ebola. We are getting lapped”.

Both the DEC and the UN admit that Ebola cases are doubling every three to four weeks, with the potential to reach 1.2 million. The WHO says that, unless the rate of infection reduces by 1 December, it will be overwhelmed by,

“an entirely unprecedented situation, for which we do not have a plan”.

At present, less than a quarter of the almost 5,000 planned Ebola treatment beds are operational, due fundamentally to a lack of foreign medical teams. Lack of bed space has become a huge issue.

What is desperately needed is the development of community health systems, which expand and grow from the bottom up in the communities and settlements in the interior. Dependency on outside intervention leaves the people hostage to fortune in terms of accessibility by road, particularly in the rainy season.

In this regard, what precisely are the special resources that NATO is able to bring? Does NATO have the thousands of clinicians and aid workers that might turn the tide? I somehow doubt it.

3.03 pm

The Earl of Listowel (CB): My Lords, I suggest that the current crisis indicates the great wisdom shown by the coalition Government in dedicating a higher proportion of GDP than any other developed nation towards international development. Their leadership is admirable and much to be commended. This is a time when our economy is growing and unemployment is much better than other nations, so it is not too costly to do.

I ask the Minister how much funding the Government are providing for UNICEF in dealing with these issues and whether more can be done. UNICEF highlights that one in five Ebola patients are children. At least 3,700 children have been orphaned by the disease and 8.5 million children and young people under the age of 20 live in affected areas. Many schools are closed and, in terms of the breakdown in the healthcare services, children do not receive vaccinations and necessary preventive care for common childhood illnesses. More and more children are dying of malaria, for instance, because the facilities are not available. Also, the fear of seeking treatment at medical facilities means that deaths from malaria, pneumonia and diarrhoea could well outstrip those from Ebola three or four times.

A very difficult child protection issue is becoming apparent, with the preliminary figure of at least 3,700 orphans—the real number may be much higher—who have lost one or both parents. In addition to facing the challenge of growing up without parents, they may face further stigma or discrimination from their communities or families. Children who lost relatives to the disease are often ostracised, even if they were tested negative—there are reports of children being treated in this way. Those who have been orphaned by Ebola are even more so, because of the nature of the challenges they face: they risk both infection and rejection. They risk infection because they have been exposed directly to the virus through their parents and they face rejection because others around them, whether relatives, friends or community members, may be too afraid to go anywhere near them.

UNICEF is doing very important work in this area. It has made an appeal for £120 million and has only achieved 35% so far. I look forward to what the Minister has to say.

3.05 pm

Viscount Ridley (Con): My Lords, I would like to begin by praising the Government's generous and effective response to this crisis. The opening of the Kerry Town clinic in the last day or two shows the dedication and efficiency of our troops at their best. I hope that the Minister will pass on our congratulations on that. Even more praise should go to healthcare workers from this country who have volunteered and are active in Sierra Leone at the moment.

I do not think that we should be so impressed with the World Health Organization. Despite its history of overreaction to swine flu in Mexico in 2009, on this

occasion it has been dangerously complacent for far too long. In March it contradicted *Médecins Sans Frontières* when it said that this crisis was getting out of control, saying that it was not. Only in June did it call a meeting of its global outbreak alert committee and it only declared an emergency in August. The danger is that if an international agency of this kind is not worried, then the rest of the world does not follow suit. It has a unique responsibility to get this kind of thing right. The world cannot be expected to respond appropriately if it is not getting those kinds of signals.

I can see why the World Health Organization thought that this problem was containable. The previous 33 epidemics of Ebola have all been relatively easily contained. What it overlooked, of course, was the desperate poverty and the aftermath of warfare in this particular region and that individuals in those countries were being left to bury their own dead, with particular risks to them, and to treat family members.

Poverty is the scourge we need to eradicate if we are to prevent such outbreaks in the future. It is no accident that this outbreak has happened in three of the very poorest countries in the world. I ask that my noble friend looks very hard at the World Health Organization and lessons that must be learned from this epidemic when the time is right. Were its priorities correct in this epidemic?

One final, different point is that this is a disease that is harboured largely by bats, as far we can tell. It is not the only one—rabies, Lyssavirus, Hendra virus, Nipah virus, Marburg virus and even SARS are harboured by bats. We need to draw on zoological expertise to try to understand why so many dangerous diseases are coming from bats.

3.08 pm

Baroness Hayman (CB): My Lords, I draw attention to my interests declared in the register. In particular, I am a trustee of the Disasters Emergency Committee, which currently has an Ebola appeal to which the British public has responded to the tune of over £30 million within a week. Also, my husband chairs Restless Development, which is supported by DfID in its work in sensitisation and education in Sierra Leone.

I have two points. The first, which comes from the 11 DEC agencies working in the field, is about the breadth of the needs in these countries. Of course treatment and quarantine centres are essential, but if we are to stop the spread by stopping transmission we need to facilitate safe burial, education, water and sanitation kits and food for people who are in quarantine and who will otherwise leave it to get their own food. The range of humanitarian needs is enormous and will continue to be so, because of those orphaned children, because of those children who have not been educated since April and have no prospect of schooling, because of the women who are dying in childbirth and who will be leaving more orphans, because of the people with malaria who are not getting treatment and because of the vaccination programmes that are not taking place. So the scale and range of needs is going to be really long term.

The second point is one to which the noble Baroness, Lady Kinnock, referred. The reason why we do not have a vaccine for Ebola is not because it is a uniquely

[BARONESS HAYMAN]

complex vaccine to develop. The reason why we do not have a vaccine for Ebola is the same as the reason why we do not have treatments and vaccines for other neglected tropical diseases: they are diseases of the poor, and we have a complete market failure in meeting them. We need to put more resources into developing vaccines and treatments, not only because of the humanitarian imperative but because we live in a global world and it is actually our best protection, as well as a humanitarian imperative, to use our expertise and resources to treat these diseases.

3.11 pm

Baroness Armstrong of Hill Top (Lab): My Lords, this is a very important debate, and I regret that we have only one hour. The Ebola crisis is already a medical and humanitarian disaster. Thousands of lives have been lost, and tens of thousands are at risk if we do not act more effectively now. It is particularly tragic because over a decade of progress in Sierra Leone, Liberia and Guinea is under threat. In recent years, for example, Sierra Leone had halved the number of women dying during childbirth, but we now know that that is in reverse.

I am a trustee of a charity, the Africa Governance Initiative, which has teams of people working on the Ebola crisis in Sierra Leone, Liberia and Guinea. They are working alongside Governments and the international community to put in place the systems—command centres, hotlines and so on—to manage the response. They went to those countries to help build government capacity on other issues and reduce poverty. They did not expect to be dispatching ambulances and managing body disposal, but they have done so anyway and I am very proud of every one of them.

The UK Government's commitments are welcome but I think they have been too slow, and we are not ensuring that there are sufficient doctors and health workers on the ground. There is a real imperative for us to do more on that. I am proud of another organisation that I am a trustee of, Voluntary Service Overseas, which this week—again, a bit late—has put out an appeal to all return volunteers who have a health qualification to volunteer to go and help with Ebola. However, even if every one of the 600 or so who have been asked were able to help, that would not be enough. There is a real imperative for us to get more people on the ground who are able to get on top of this crisis as quickly as possible.

If we do not get hold of Ebola, these very fragile states will become much more vulnerable and their ability to survive and look after their people will be lessened even further.

3.13 pm

Lord Crisp (CB): My Lords, the noble Baroness, Lady Kinnock, set out very cogently the big picture and the underlying issues. I want to pick up a small but important element in the international response. Let me say how good it is to see the UK leading the way but how disappointing it is to see that some other countries seem to have adopted a fortress mentality, which is short-sighted and contrary to both best practice and international agreements on tackling global epidemics.

I turn to my specific point. I declare an interest as chair of King's global health advisory board. King's has been working in Sierra Leone for two years and is one of the very few organisations that stayed in the country when Ebola broke out. Its team has played a central role in the multiagency effort in the country, and now has very considerable experience. Noble Lords may recall that the King's programme leader, Dr Oliver Johnson, was previously policy director for the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Global Health, a number of whose members are in the House at the moment.

The King's team had to work with what was available at the start of the epidemic. Its members created an isolation facility out of the rooms and equipment that they had to hand. As a result, they have developed an approach that engages local people alongside international workers and can be scaled up both quickly and cheaply. They have had 600 people through their unit, of which 300 have tested positive—that is one-quarter of all those infected in Freetown. There have, however, been no infections of local or international staff in the unit.

Such a scale-up would involve creating small local units for treating people with the minimum of facilities and staff. King's argues that, while the large, well equipped facilities such as the Kerry Town unit are very welcome, in the short run at least there is also a need for the immediate construction of small facilities that can be operational very quickly and reach into smaller communities. They also have the advantage of maintaining greater local control, rather than just being about international aid. What is Her Majesty's Government's view on this? Will they support the further development of these sorts of facilities? Moreover, I have learnt today that seconded NHS staff are going to be allowed to work only in the big units. Is that the case? Will they be allowed to work in these smaller units as well?

I add my praise to the praise that others have already given to the work of so many UK and other volunteers who have shown remarkable courage, as well as skill, in doing the wonderful work that they are doing.

3.16 pm

Baroness Williams of Crosby (LD): My Lords, I echo the comments of the noble Lord, Lord Crisp. The heroism of those who have volunteered from the NHS, and from all over the world, as health medics to work against Ebola is unbelievably impressive and should raise our sense of the possibilities of a human response of the kind that is needed for the desperate position laid out by the noble Baroness, Lady Kinnock.

I shall be quick. The first point is that the WHO has now named 15 countries that are on the edge of being likely to slip into Ebola epidemics unless there is preventive action as soon as possible. Those 15 countries are all in Africa, mostly in west Africa. There is also, although we have not mentioned this so far, an instance of an outbreak of Ebola separate from the west African outbreak in, of all countries, the Democratic Republic of Congo. Already, 88 deaths have been attributed to Ebola in that country and are not related to the west Africa epidemic, which is rather frightening—it means that we are now looking at the spotty emergence of the Ebola epidemic.

I want to make a rather larger point. I declare an interest as a member of the board of the Nuclear Threat Initiative in Washington, DC, which is currently supporting the one and only global surveillance of infectious diseases, in a unique international network. It is called CORDS and is doing some remarkable work. This last point is the most important one. In a Question to the Government last week, I raised the issue of whether any thought has been given to calling a special meeting of NATO. I mention NATO following a long conversation that I had with the chief assistant adviser to President Obama, Mr Weber of the Department of Defence, now at the Department of State. He made it clear that he thought the NATO countries should call upon NATO to hold a special summit meeting to consider what help it could give, because it is one of the very few organisations in the West that has the capacity for an immediate response in engineering, construction and medical terms.

I want to make it very clear that, as the noble Lord, Lord Crisp, said, we need the rapid engineering to put up field hospitals and immediate centres to deal with the epidemics in rural areas, where—as in, for example, Sierra Leone—the infection rate is now nine times what it was two weeks ago, according to reports from the WHO. We should seriously consider this possibility, recognising the scale and, even more, the immediacy of the crisis, given the 15 countries that are now seriously at risk.

3.19 pm

Lord Patel (CB): My Lords, I join other noble Lords in praising our volunteers who are currently working in west Africa, and also our Armed Forces who so rapidly constructed the first hospital in Sierra Leone. I congratulate our Government on their rapid response once it became obvious that this Ebola infection was out of control.

There is a lesson here. Infections will continue to come—that is the history of developing viruses in that area. Humans have been infected by four streams of Ebola virus so far, and there remains only one strain that has not yet infected humans but has already been found in pigs in the Philippines. If it goes from pigs to humans, it might become even worse. Marburg virus is just waiting on the sidelines.

What can we learn from that? To control infections we need good health systems and that has been the major failure. The current health systems in west Africa are not adequate and for all the investment we made in AIDS, we have not hitherto helped build good health systems. To control infection we also need to identify and care for patients. We are now beginning to grasp that by building hospital facilities but for Sierra Leone we will probably need 4,800 beds. Currently they have 236. Secondly, we need treatments such as vaccines or drugs. Vaccines are in development; the first is being trialled in Mali and two more—one developed in Canada and another in the US—will start trials soon, but it will be months before we know whether they are effective. There are drugs in development, and I hope that our Government, through Porton Down laboratories, are supporting trials of some of the drugs that are produced by our small biotech

companies. Drugs might not directly kill the virus, but they may stop the chain process of replication, so I hope our Government will support that.

I congratulate the Government on their initial effort. We have not yet begun to control this infection, and yesterday's news of Sierra Leone having 30 corpses appearing in one small area which was supposed to be free of Ebola proves the point.

3.21 pm

Lord Truscott (Non-Affl): My Lords, I, too, congratulate the noble Baroness, Lady Kinnock of Holyhead, on securing this short but important debate. The noble Baroness is of course an expert in the field of international development as I remember from the European Parliament. Your Lordships' House benefits greatly from the noble Baroness's knowledge and compassion.

I declare an interest as a shareholder and former director of African Minerals, the largest employer in Sierra Leone and the largest contributor to the country's GDP and budget. I am proud of the work that the company does in supporting medical facilities, schools and orphanages under the leadership of chairman Frank Timis. On a couple of trips to Sierra Leone I was greatly taken with the warmth, resilience and fortitude of the Sierra Leonean people who have been through so much in the bloody civil war. I had the privilege of meeting President Ernest Bai Koroma who is working hard to develop his country. Although the international response to the Ebola crisis was initially tardy, as the noble Baroness, Lady Kinnock, said, I would also like to praise Her Majesty's Government and our ever excellent Armed Forces in their recent major initiatives. As already mentioned the facilities at Kerry Town and elsewhere will make a major difference.

After Ebola, there will be a need to rebuild the economies of west Africa which are all primarily dependent on natural resources. Ivan Glasenberg, Glencore CEO, has warned of the danger of global mining giants deliberately undermining west African mining companies and thus depriving their Governments of vital revenues. One mining executive has said in response that charity begins at home, which in my view is socially irresponsible.

At the end of the day, Sierra Leone and the other countries of west Africa are grateful for charity, but what they really crave is the self-respect which comes from self-sufficiency and we should help them achieve that aim as they struggle to survive this terrible crisis.

3.23 pm

Lord Alton of Liverpool (CB): My Lords, in her powerful opening speech the noble Baroness, Lady Kinnock, referred to the tragic legacy of the number of orphans who will be left in these west African countries as a result of the Ebola epidemic. Last week I attended an international conference which highlighted the plight of the world's orphans. The number of orphans worldwide is already estimated to be around 150 million and, compounded by HIV/AIDS, we know that many of those are in Africa. If the WHO's estimate is correct that more than 1 million people in west Africa will die from Ebola, and that by Christmas there will be 10,000 Ebola orphans, the noble Baroness,

[LORD ALTON OF LIVERPOOL]

Lady Kinnock, is right to have made this a key question in her remarks. I hope that when the Minister comes to reply, she will tell us how we can develop a long-term plan for the care of those orphans.

I would like to ask the Minister a number of other questions, some of which I have raised previously with the Government. How have they responded to the motion on Ebola passed by the BMA last month, especially its call for the provision of more protective clothing and the training of staff? Is she in discussion with the BBC World Service to see how it can sustain and expand its excellent African initiative to disseminate public health information about the disease? Can the Minister also tell us—I have raised this point with her on the Floor of the House before—what response the Prime Minister received from the 27 European leaders to whom he wrote asking them to step up their donations after it was revealed that the Swedish furniture manufacturer, IKEA, had given a bigger donation than the Governments of Spain, Norway and Luxembourg combined? Can she say whether the first part of the 700-bed facility which we are constructing in Sierra Leone opened on schedule at the end of last month; and when the rest of the facility will be functional? Are they keeping under review the use of merchantmen and cruise ships as potential hospital ships capable of providing immediate beds and isolation? Is she truly satisfied that British personnel can be cared for adequately in west Africa rather than being flown home, should they contract the virus? Given its successful use in the case of the British nurse flown home after being infected with Ebola, are there sufficient supplies of ZMAP available to immediately treat others, or are those supplies exhausted?

Among all the things that can be said about Ebola, it represents a major setback to development. I hope the Government will reconsider their opposition to putting universal healthcare at the heart of global development, for without such provision the festering conditions in places such as Monrovia and Freetown are a perfect breeding ground for the further spread of epidemics of this kind.

3.26 pm

Lord Collins of Highbury (Lab): My Lords, I, too, thank my noble friend for initiating this vitally important debate, and like her I welcome the Government's response on the ground and their decision to provide more than £200 million for trials developing new treatments and vaccines for Ebola, working alongside a range of partners from both the public and private sector.

This crisis underscores the importance of investing in a strong system of research and development for global health. As the noble Lord, Lord Patel, said, the fundamental lesson is that we do not know what else is around the corner in terms of other viruses and infections. It is also possible that efforts to control the Ebola virus in those countries affected by the outbreak risk setting us back on the gains made against malaria as health systems have been pushed to breaking point and people avoid using them because they fear contracting Ebola. In 2012, malaria killed 7,000 people in these countries. As we have heard, most of them were children.

What steps are being taken to ensure that we are offering other health services alongside containing and eliminating the Ebola virus in west Africa?

The long-term impacts for these countries will be catastrophic. What are we doing to ensure that other local services such as education and local markets are not severely impacted? My party has called for universal health coverage and access to be placed at the centre of global development. The noble Baroness, in response to an earlier question of mine, said the United Kingdom supports the development of health systems in developing countries, but as we have heard, the United Kingdom—the home of the National Health Service—is still opposing making universal healthcare and access an explicit goal at the UN. Can the Minister explain why?

3.28 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for International Development (Baroness Northover)

(LD): My Lords, I too would like to thank the noble Baroness, Lady Kinnock, for securing this debate and for so ably and movingly introducing it. On behalf of DfID, I thank noble Lords for their tributes to the department in this crisis. As I said the other day, if anything shows the importance of aid, both morally and for our self-interest, it is this epidemic. We are all globally linked and noble Lords made that point extremely clearly. I assure the noble Lord, Lord Giddens, and the noble Baroness, Lady Kinnock, that we will be examining the lessons from this crisis. Because of that global linkage, it becomes extremely important that we draw out what we can learn from this.

My noble friend Lord Ridley and other noble Lords are right that the root of this—the cause of the spread of this epidemic—is poverty. Of course, we will need to work internationally to improve and strengthen our international organisations. However, as my noble friend Lord Chidgey says, we need other countries to respond as well, not only to this crisis but to that analysis, and to take forward the ability to respond internationally.

The noble Lord, Lord Giddens, is also right that we need to make huge efforts to contain this in case we should see, as we do not yet see, a levelling off of numbers; obviously, we hope that with the measures we put in place we may be able to detect that. However, if and when we see that, we should not lessen our efforts, otherwise the epidemic will spiral further. He and other noble Lords are right about the economic effect of Ebola. As regards Sierra Leone, the IMF estimates that its GDP growth is likely to be about 6% rather than the 11.3% it had estimated before this crisis. As other noble Lords—the noble Baroness, Lady Kinnock, my noble friend Fowler and others—have emphasised, the health systems we are facing here reflect the fragility of these states, which is why the epidemic has been able to take root.

We are certainly very fortunate in the United Kingdom to have the outstanding staff in DfID who are working both here in the UK and in Sierra Leone. I pay tribute to them as well as to the staff in the Ministry of Defence, the FCO, the Department of Health, from across the NHS and from NGOs who have volunteered their services in one of the most dangerous situations in the world. The audio diary that we hear on the “Today”

programme should bring it home to everyone how important, but also how incredibly challenging, their work is. The noble Baroness, Lady Armstrong, spoke of health workers, and the numbers are extraordinary. Some 852 NHS front-line staff and 130 staff via Public Health England have volunteered, which is clearly outstanding.

The Ebola epidemic in west Africa continues to grow. The latest figures from the WHO as of 31 October put total cases in the region at 13,567, with 4,951 deaths. We know that that number is an underrecording. The UK has now committed a total of £230 million to the response in Sierra Leone. As noble Lords know, we are focusing on that country while the United States focuses on Liberia and France on Guinea. That sum includes the commitment to aid-match the first £5 million of the appeal launched by the Disasters Emergency Committee. I, too, pay tribute to the DEC and to the public response to its appeal. We are now the second largest bilateral contributor in this epidemic. We have committed, among other things, to provide over 700 beds. I can assure the noble Lord, Lord Alton, that the first UK 92-bed treatment hospital opened yesterday in Kerry Town. That facility includes 12 beds that are set aside for health workers who are staffing the beds, which will increase to 20. As I said in a previous answer to the noble Lord, Lord Alton, it may well be best, on a case-by-case basis, to treat a case there in Sierra Leone rather than to expose that person, if very sick, to being transported home. The intention is to be able to provide the same level of care, whether it is here or there.

As the noble Baroness, Lady Hayman, noted, ensuring safe burials is key to turning around the epidemic. With the United Kingdom's support, International Red Cross burial teams in the western area, which accounts for approximately a third of Sierra Leone's population, are now burying 100% of reported bodies within 24 hours. That is a huge improvement over the situation just a few weeks ago.

We are also expanding laboratory capacity and have pledged £20 million to establish, equip and run at least three new laboratories. We are also providing isolation within communities through up to 200 community care centres, which are the most effective way to prevent further spread. The noble Lord, Lord Crisp, noted that that model is innovative and unique and he is correct. The purpose is to have safe, humane isolation as the key to reducing community transmission. The faster we can bring down those transmission rates, the sooner the health system can resume functioning. Noble Lords mentioned the challenges with other diseases, maternal care and so on, which are also being undermined by this epidemic.

Some of the CCCs are to be located within primary healthcare facilities, which will allow rapid separation of patients presenting with fever—suspected Ebola cases—from others, which will allow healthcare workers to continue to offer routine services such as antenatal care, routine immunisation and other essential health services. The noble Baroness, Lady Kinnock, in particular, flagged the concerns of pregnant women who are reluctant to come in for care. Of course, the centres also help to protect healthcare workers, which, again, is absolutely vital.

We are also supporting this with social mobilisation work. I too noted the very interesting report from the BBC World Service on what it is doing to encourage behaviour change. All that work is overseen by a command and control centre to coordinate the response.

Many noble Lords have mentioned the weakness of the health systems in Sierra Leone and elsewhere. Of course that is, as I said, part of the root of the problem. Clearly our current priority must be to help tackle this epidemic; but obviously, we will then wish to help Sierra Leone to return to the trajectory it was on before the crisis, which was moving from a fragile state after conflict to a middle-income economy. That, of course, will include the strengthening of its health system. I note what my noble friend Lord Fowler has said about health workers, and I know the efforts that have been made by the NHS to try not to draw upon staff from developing countries such as Sierra Leone.

We are engaging with partners to ensure that other countries in the region are prepared. We are ensuring that our bilateral programmes in high-risk countries actively support national emergency preparedness. It is of course encouraging to see that, in the first instance, Nigeria was able to contain the case that arrived in Lagos, and to see the way in which it ensured that although others were affected, the virus did not spread further. However, we are constantly vigilant, because other cases may develop.

The UK is also playing a leading role in galvanising international support—a number of noble Lords mentioned that. We are very glad that, last Friday, the UK signed an MOU with Norway to establish the deployment of up to 200 Norwegian health personnel in Sierra Leone. We also welcome the Government of Australia's commitment yesterday to manage and run a 100-bed treatment facility in Sierra Leone. The EU has pledged €1 billion towards that, and we will be meeting with all our partners to discuss bringing aid forward.

We are working closely with UN agencies, for example with UNICEF on social mobilisation, child protection and so on. A number of noble Lords—especially the noble Baroness, Lady Kinnock, and the noble Earl, Lord Listowel—emphasised the dire situation of children. We are working very closely with UNICEF to support the needs of vulnerable children, including those who have been orphaned by Ebola. We do not underestimate the challenges that they face.

Baroness Williams of Crosby: My Lords—

Baroness Northover: I am very short of time; I will be very happy to speak to my noble friend afterwards, and I will come on to her point about NATO. NATO is following closely the situation through its crisis management and civil contingency functions, and the allies are assessing whether and how NATO would add value at this stage of the response. However, I also note what my noble friend Lord Chidgey said with regard to what the military might or might not be able to contribute.

The noble Lord, Lord Patel, is right to emphasise the need both for treatments and for vaccines. I hope he will be reassured that we are prioritising both. It is immensely encouraging to see the work of the Lister

[BARONESS NORTHOVER]

Institute, for example, and the possibility of a vaccine. Clearly, it could be critical to this epidemic if that work was brought forward, but it will certainly be critical in stemming future epidemics. I note very much what the noble Lord says.

An unprecedented outbreak requires an unprecedented response. That is what we have committed to and we are encouraging the international community and all the international players in each country to play their part to ensure that this terrible epidemic is defeated. As noble Lords have said, poverty is at the root of what we are seeking to address here. That is why we have made the commitment to aid to the poorest countries, as the noble Earl, Lord Listowel, pointed out. That is what it is all about.

Low-income and Vulnerable Consumers

Motion to Take Note

3.40 pm

Moved by Lord Whitty

That this House takes note of the cumulative effects of Government economic, public spending and regulatory policies on low income and vulnerable consumers.

Lord Whitty (Lab): My Lords, the central statistics for this debate are these. For households in the lowest two deciles of income, since the financial crisis in 2008 the cost of their basket of essential goods has gone up by 28%, but their average income has gone up by 9%. Those central statistics underline my theme for today. The world financial crisis hit everybody, but I will be contending that the actions, or inactions, of this Government over the past five years of office have made the situation significantly worse and have placed the burden of the austerity programme on the poorest in the land. Even as we enter into a phase of recovery, that continues to be the case. As a result, they have deepened and exacerbated the polarisation of our society, to the detriment of our more vulnerable families and households. That is quite a charge sheet.

Most of what I say will be about the costs to these households, but I shall first say a few words on the income side and the state of the labour market. Employment is now growing, which is very welcome, but the nature of that employment is often very precarious. There is a growth in part-time employment, some of which is desirable, but quite a lot of people would like to work full-time, or, at least, significantly more hours. There is a growing number of people on zero-hours contracts, which is highly precarious work. There is a growth of what we used to call bogus self-employment: forced self-employment. At the bottom end of this dysfunctional labour market there are some really nasty practices indeed. Next week we will be debating the Modern Slavery Bill. The reality is that, in certain agricultural sectors and in parts of catering and construction, we are seeing trafficking of workers, which is undermining the conditions of everybody.

Meanwhile, the Government are continuing their attacks on the protection that workers have in the labour market—on trade union organisation, the individual rights of workers and their access to tribunals

and legal redress. That affects not just people at the bottom; it drags everybody down, in particular those who are just a little above them. Of course, the other source of income for these bottom two decile families is social security benefits. Those, too, have been largely frozen and, in some cases, cut. They have been the subject of huge and negative political propaganda. I read in the *Times* today that the Government are telling us that 25% of tax is spent on welfare, which conjures up views of the work-shy—when, in fact, the bulk of that goes on pensions and the increase is largely in payments to people at work whose wages are simply inadequate.

Both low-income households, dependent on low wages, and households dependent on benefit payments, have seen the real value of their income squeezed and their protection reduced. Who are these people? If you read the *Daily Mail* or listen to some government Ministers, you would assume that they are all in multigenerational, unemployed households; they are work-shy teenagers; they are benefit tourists from eastern Europe and beyond; or they are illegal immigrants. However, the reality is that there are large numbers of pensioner households in that group, and the vast majority of the rest have at least one person in work. Often the reality is that the main earner in those households is a woman, who is often in and out of work and is subject to very variable income. That of course relates back to the earlier debate today.

Those are the consequences of our so-called “flexible” labour market, in particular for households where the main earner is a woman. When we talk about the decline in real incomes for these people, the usual way in which statisticians calculate it is to set the income against the general consumer prices index. But for those households, the key issue is the price of essential goods and services. If we take a longer period from before the financial crisis to the end of last year, the CPI in general has gone up by 36% but the cost of water has gone up by 51%, housing by 61%, food by 61%, public transport by 111% and electricity and gas by 161%. Inevitably, that puts cost pressures on all these low-income households. The concentration of that pressure on the poorest is not inevitable. Government action and Government inaction have helped to aggravate or, indeed, cause it. I shall take just a few examples.

The first is that of energy. It is true that the Government have started, neatly, to statistically redefine fuel poverty. Whatever one thinks of that redefinition, the numbers are still going up in almost every part of the country, whether on the old definition or the new one. Gas and electricity prices for our poorest households are going through the roof. There was an item on the news today about heating oil. Many of our rural poor depend on heating oil; they are very dependent on it in Northern Ireland. Yet the cost of that, despite the fall in world prices of oil, is still going up. As for fuel poverty programmes, there has been a deliberate action by this Government to cut what was in England the Warm Front programme, so there is no direct taxpayer-funded improvement in the energy efficiency of their homes.

There is also, probably more importantly, a failure of the regulator, Ofgem, and of the codes by which the regulator operates, to gear tariffs to help those who

have relatively low use and are in relatively poor households. The ECO, which is supposed among other things to replace the Warm Front programme, actually does nothing of the kind. The warm homes discount is welcome and valuable, but it is a sticking plaster over inequitable overall tariffs. Some of the interventions by government over the head of the regulator have made matters much worse. The Prime Minister called for a simplification of tariffs, which we can all agree with, then called for four tariffs—but, in the process of drawing up those four tariffs for gas and electricity, Ofgem has ruled out and dropped a number of the pre-existing tariffs that were geared particularly towards pensioners and low-income families. The net effect of that is that the whole structure of tariffs, against the background of rapidly rising energy prices, is making the situation of the fuel poor worse. I declare an interest as the head of a charity that makes grants for research into fuel poverty.

Another area is transport. The working poor by and large require public transport to get to work or to seek work, but bus and train fares are soaring. For buses we need a whole new deal, as the Labour Party has set out recently. As for trains, we need to relook at regulation, and at whether fares, which can benefit those who can afford to book substantially ahead, for those who are in and out of work on different days of the week and do not know whether they will be working from one week to the next, are unregulated, in effect, in the present system, and do not meet their needs.

The other area is housing. Many in this House have heard me rant on about housing many times over the past few months, and I shall not repeat my continued analysis on this, but I will say a few words on it. I have always accepted that the Government did not inherit the greatest situation on housing; the crisis was already there. For nearly 30 years, we failed to build enough new housing. But this Government have made matters worse. They cut the affordable homes budget by 60%—that was almost their first action. The soaring prices in the overheated south-east and London are affecting all forms of tenure and all parts of the country to a greater or lesser extent. For the young—and by that I mean those under 40—on average or below incomes, house purchase is now out of the question. That of course puts huge pressure on the private rented market, where there is a soaring level in most of our urban areas, particularly in London, of private rented accommodation. The average private renter uses 50% of their income simply to pay rent and housing.

The Government have deliberately reduced the supply of social housing. Access to new tenures within social housing in most parts of the country is almost nil. For those who are in social housing, they have geared the level of social housing rents to reflect those within the private sector, or 80% of the private sector. So where rents are rising highest in the private sector, at a cost to private tenants, that is also being reflected in the social sector. The Government and Treasury rules prevent local authorities and, to a large extent, housing associations investing in new social housing. Worse than that, the Government are allowing developers to move in, in a number of areas where social housing does exist, both local authority and housing association owned, and to

replace what was social housing with luxury flats. You do not have to go very far from this building to see exactly that in operation.

Meanwhile, the pressure on the private rented sector has brought a number of landlords into the situation who do not act in the best interests of their tenants or in the best interests of the reputation of the private rented market—yet the Government have refused even to register private sector landlords, let alone to engage in any degree of rent control or setting the minimum level of tenure of lease. So we have families with children who are being brought up in inadequate conditions, who are seriously affected by insecurity and who are being bullied and often evicted by landlords. Of course, mothers in this situation may themselves want to go out to work or extend their hours of work—but then there is a real problem with childcare. Net childcare costs in this country are the highest in all OECD countries with the sole exception of Switzerland. That is a deplorable state of affairs.

So what do those families then do? If they seek credit to tide them over this period, the mainstream banks do not want to know. They will not advance credit to these people, who are then forced into the hands of payday lenders, pawnbrokers, doorstep sellers and worse. Until very recently—until the last few weeks, almost—the Government had failed to respond to the campaign to do something about this.

Meanwhile, in the rest of the market, there are other rip-off situations. There are scams on insurance, food and buying second-hand cars. There is a failure by the Government to ensure proper enforcement of existing regulations. In particular, they have allowed the decimation of the trading standards role in local authorities. I declare another interest as vice-president of the Trading Standards Institute. The workforce in trading standards has been cut by 50% over the last six years. That puts greater pressure on voluntary organisations, Citizens Advice and local authority-funded schemes, but the grants to those schemes from local authorities have also been squeezed.

The Minister may well say that this is the local authorities making their own choices. However, the Government have cut local authority spending at three times the rate that they have cut central government spending. They have targeted the poorer local authorities, so that Hackney has had a bigger cut than Westminster and Somerset has had a bigger cut than Surrey. Those authorities have had to cut back on discretionary areas, which include all the back-up services and advice for consumers and other hard-hit households.

By a threefold knock-on, the services that were there to help people out of poverty have begun to disappear—and in many parts of the country they have disappeared. For example, there is only half a trading standards person in a large number of local authorities. The result has been greater indebtedness. We now have half of households in the lowest two deciles spending more than a quarter of their income simply paying the debt and the service on that debt. We have £4.8 billion-worth of debt from payday lenders. The pressure on these households leads to stress. As we said in the last but one debate, it leads to domestic violence, the breakdown of relationships, mental health problems and family

[LORD WHITTY]

break-up. There are now 2.4 million children living in families with huge debt problems. This is an appalling outcome. It is not inevitable. It occurs only if the Government allow it to occur. I believe it to be a disgrace that this Government have failed to take steps to mitigate the effects of these developments.

3.56 pm

Lord Haskel (Lab): My Lords, I do not know if the Minister goes to the World Economic Forum at Davos. In 2009, a speaker said:

“There is a disconnect between capitalism and people’s lives”.

That speaker was David Cameron, a year before he became Prime Minister. My noble friend’s debate today is a good opportunity to see whether the Government’s policies of the last four years have put this right. The disconnect to which the Prime Minister referred was rising social inequality and inequality of opportunity; and how the lives of some people, even those at work, were becoming more precarious and threadbare, while others benefited from economic progress, as my noble friend explained.

Have the Government’s policies made this better or worse for consumers? I will not burden your Lordships with more numbers, but various reports recently from well respected organisations tell us that, as the economy improves, so the number of people on low pay rises. Both in the public and private sector, for many pay has not even kept pace with inflation. The Populus survey reported in today’s *Financial Times* found that only one in seven feel the benefit of any recovery.

Part of this disconnect is that the Government encourage low pay by subsidising it through the welfare system. Why should the taxpayer subsidise firms that cannot pay their people enough to live on or cannot raise productivity so that consumers can earn more? As the Prime Minister said, there is a disconnect here.

When I first became interested in housing, 80% of the money went into construction and 20% into helping with rent. Under this Government, this has been reversed, as my noble friend described. In our current budget the opposite is true: 80% goes on rent and 20% on encouraging construction. Housing has become the low-pay subsidy for low productivity. By creating more and more low-paid consumers, not only are we making their lives more difficult, but the Government are creating difficulties for themselves—difficulties caused by the low tax revenue that they announced earlier this month.

The cumulative outcome for the consumer is the worst of both worlds: low productivity, which means low pay, and a housing shortage, which means high rents, with rises of up to 61%, as my noble friend Lord Whitty just told us. But at least business is starting to recognise this insanity, with 1,000 companies now paying the living wage.

The Government say that they are helping these consumers by taking low earners out of income tax, reducing the burden on hard-working families. However, before the income tax threshold is reached, national insurance becomes payable—the Minister knows this—so national insurance is the first burden on the low paid, and it is mainly the middle and upper-middle earners

who benefit from raising the income tax threshold. Raising the national insurance threshold would have been of more benefit to the low paid, especially as national insurance rates rise with inflation. However, this Government consider it more politically expedient to do it the wrong way round, so it is the low paid who suffer.

The same mismanagement affects business. Let us take the annual investment allowance. The noble Baroness, Lady Noakes, knows all about this. During the last years of the previous Administration, it was set at £50,000. The new Government soon increased it to £100,000. In 2012, it was cut to £25,000, but the following year it was increased to £250,000. Last year’s Budget raised it to £500,000, and the current plan is that it will return to £25,000 in 2016. Yes, there is more confusion. At the same time, the annual investment allowance has become restricted to investment in plant and machinery, and the allowance for industrial buildings was scrapped altogether.

Does the Minister agree with the conclusion of the Institute for Fiscal Studies in its paper *Tax Without Design*, published two months ago, that the cumulative effect of all this creates costs and uncertainty and that it distorts behaviour? At this time of great business difficulty, it may be one reason why we are seeing a reluctance to invest—which of course is perhaps the major contributor to low pay.

Another area of cumulative failure is what I would call putting out one fire but not preventing the next. A good example is the Government’s policy towards private companies providing public services. It is obvious that the business model is wrong. Tenders are often won by large companies that overpromise on quality and bid low on price. This effectively rules out smaller providers, so there is little competition. Two of the major providers have been shown to be dishonest and other inquiries are under way. We know that when things go wrong there is little redress and revoking contracts can be very costly.

To the consumer of a public service, public service ethos is essential, especially in sensitive areas such as probation work. Indeed, some services have such social pressures that you cannot leave them to the market. Consumers want to know how these companies make their profits, who their suppliers are and where the dividends go, but most of this is hidden from them. What is obvious is that the Government’s ability to manage outsourcing is weak. They have failed to make this market work both to the benefit of the contractors and to the benefit of the consumers of the services. This weakness is also apparent in the railway franchise system.

The Government’s continued dogmatic refusal to correct the business model means that we are now facing a crisis of public confidence in these services. Refusal to encourage public sector bids and reluctance to accept locally administered solutions mean that these services are not as good as they should be—and it is the vulnerable and those on low income who suffer most from this. The real truth is that we are all victims of these avoidable and unnecessary difficulties, brought about by the Government. Are we going to see any change?

4.05 pm

Baroness Noakes (Con): My Lords, it is a pleasure to follow the noble Lord, Lord Haskel, with whom I often debate. I often agree with him but I am going to be taking a rather different tack today: I disagree with much of what he has said. In particular, on the point he has just made about contracting out, although I agree that the Government have not been good contractors-out, I should remind the noble Lord that it was the party opposite which took the private finance initiative—the mega contracting-out—to the illogical extremes that have left such huge problems in parts of the National Health Service. That issue cannot be laid at the door of this Government.

I congratulate the noble Lord, Lord Whitty, on securing this debate. Of course, he portrayed a very gloomy picture of the effect of government policies on the poor and vulnerable. I am not going to pretend that life has been a bed of roses for those people in our society, but I am genuinely proud of this Government's economic record over the last four and a half years and that is why I have chosen to speak in this debate. I am absolutely convinced that, if the party opposite had remained in power, life would have been very much worse for the whole of our country and, in particular, for the very groups that the noble Lord, Lord Whitty, is so concerned about. I am going to focus my contribution on economic and public expenditure although I will, at the end, touch a little on regulatory policies.

Policies pursued by this Government have to be put in their proper context. In 1997, the party opposite inherited a booming economy. In 2010, we were bequeathed an economy on its knees. The deficit was at its highest level in peacetime history; government debt was over 60% and still rising. Under Labour, we had slipped down the international league tables of competitiveness; we had uncompetitive personal and corporate tax systems; and unemployment had increased by 20%. I could go on. We had a huge job ahead of us to restore the economy to health. Without a healthy economy, we cannot achieve all the other aims that the noble Lord desires.

My right honourable friend the Chancellor wisely ignored noisy calls from the party opposite for higher taxes, higher spending and higher borrowing. The consequences for economic growth, interest rates, the deficit and the debt of heeding those calls do not bear thinking about. Instead, my right honourable friend the Chancellor has pursued moderate policies which have targeted fiscal rebalancing at a carefully considered pace. In so doing, he has created the environment in which the economy can start to grow again, because growth is a precondition for everything else.

In line with international experience, the Government have concentrated 80% of their fiscal rebalancing on cutting expenditure. The truth about our expenditure policies is that expenditure has not been cut in cash terms: nor is this planned. We have protected key budgets, such as health. We have met the rising costs of welfare budgets, which act as a shock absorber when times get tough. Inevitably, that means other budgets have had some quite severe pruning. Overall, the public sector has seen employment reductions and

limited wage increases. However, these, too, were inevitable because employment costs are around half of current public expenditure. There were no realistic alternatives to get expenditure and the deficit under control.

Taxes have deliberately borne the smaller part of the plan to eliminate the deficit—and here my right honourable friend the Chancellor has crafted a careful combination of tax cuts and tax increases. All consumers have had to bear the increase in the VAT rate but very large numbers have benefited from our income tax changes. These were somewhat dismissed a moment ago, but 3 million people have been taken out of income tax altogether and 26 million people have seen lower tax bills as a result of those changes.

Another achievement has been to base tax policy on sound economic analysis rather than on political doctrine. Corporation tax rates have been cut, as has the 50% rate of income tax. Both were underpinned by rigorous analysis of the impact on tax yields, incentives and competitiveness. The Chancellor was right to make these cuts, and I hope that he will go further still.

The Labour Party has pledged to reintroduce the 50% rate which is the worst kind of gesture politics. According to Mr Alan Milburn, the amount it would raise would be “absolutely incidental”. I believe that it is worse than that—it would be a net negative for our economy. Our tax policies have been tough but they have been fair. Even though the top rate of tax has been cut, the top 1% of taxpayers are expected to pay over 27% of income tax this year. The Institute for Fiscal Studies has produced analysis showing that the top 20% of households paid 54% of all taxes last year and that, since 2010, the top 10% have borne the brunt of the tax changes.

It is true that all parts of the income distribution have shouldered some of the burden. The job of repairing the economy was too great to be borne only by those at the top end. It is also true that those at the bottom end of the income distribution—often those dependent on benefits—have done a little less well than those in the middle of the income distribution. But the alternative would have been that hard-working families on average incomes would have suffered more, and I hope that the Benches opposite would not have supported that.

It is a fallacy to think that we can help the poor simply by taxing the rich. If the rich take their assets, their income and their businesses elsewhere, everyone loses out. If the tax system fails to incentivise effort and innovation, we all suffer. Churchill was right to say that we cannot make the poor richer by making the rich poorer. We have to be realistic about where we are. Despite the tough action to date, on current plans the deficit will not be eliminated until 2017-18. Much remains to be done after the next election to restore our economy to full health. Until we get to that position we cannot start to build in a lot of discretionary, additional policies if they cost money.

The most important thing that any Government can do is to ensure that the economy has the right conditions for growth and wealth creation. With economic growth, jobs will be created and people will share in the wealth that is created. There are no short cuts to this. The economy in the first three years of this

[BARONESS NOAKES]

Government was fragile but we now have the fastest growing economy in the G7. We only have to look over the Channel to France, Italy and Spain to see what happens when tough economic decisions are avoided.

Since 2010, there have been 1.8 million more people in jobs, and three-quarters of those are full-time jobs. That is 1.8 million more people earning money for their families and also contributing to the growth of the economy. Getting more people into work is good for taking children out of poverty. Children in non-working households have something like an 80% chance of living in poverty. If one parent goes into a full-time job, that falls to around 30%. If the second parent also has a part-time job, it falls to below 10%. That is why we celebrate the fact that since 2010 there are 671,000 fewer households with no one of working age in employment.

I have concentrated my remarks on the Government's economic and public expenditure policies. I will now say a few things about regulatory policies. The most important thing for an economy is when competition flourishes in the context of a global environment without trade barriers. Competition in open markets is the best route to consumer benefit. Competition does not always work, for structural or other market reasons; and so the second most important thing is to have effective regulators and competition authorities. In large measure that is what we have in the UK. I listened carefully to the noble Lord, Lord Whitty, as he catalogued the things that did not work well, but I struggle to see what credible policies could have been followed by the Government without completely strangling markets.

I will refer to energy prices. I agree that they have not necessarily been working for consumers, but there are three things that I want to say about that. First, the right thing is to refer those markets to the Competition and Markets Authority, and that is happening. Secondly, the wrong approach would have been to impose a price freeze on the energy companies. As any student of prices and incomes policies will tell you, that is not a long-term solution. Thirdly—this is where I criticise the current and previous Governments—energy prices that hit businesses and consumers currently include a significant impact from the green subsidies that are imposed on the energy industry by government policy and the crazy targets in the Climate Change Act. At the top of my list for removing burdens on the economy, from the largest industrial consumer to the smallest vulnerable consumer, would be the repeal of that Act.

I do not want to end on a downbeat note about the Government's policies. This Government know that the best way to help the low paid and the vulnerable in our society is to create a prosperous economy. That is what the past four years have been about. I very much hope that next May the electorate will give us another five years to conclude the job.

4.17 pm

Baroness Crawley (Lab): My Lords, we are indeed grateful to my noble friend Lord Whitty, in National Consumer Week, for securing such a valuable and important debate. Although noble Lords opposite and

my noble friends on these Benches may come to very different conclusions about the cumulative effects of government policies on low-income and vulnerable consumers, after nearly five years of strict austerity it is vital that those policies are scrutinised and challenged frequently in your Lordships' House.

For “low-income and vulnerable consumers” read “hard-pressed families”. By far the greatest pressure facing families today is, as we know, economic. For many, we have seen living standards fall to their lowest for a decade. Real wages have plummeted and the price of living—especially in energy costs, housing and childcare—has soared. If all families were experiencing such pressure it would be bad enough, but the injustice is that it is families with children that have taken the hardest hit. The Institute for Fiscal Studies has shown us that families with children have been penalised economically three times harder than work-age households without children. The bankers land us in it and the children pay the price.

So far the Government have done next to nothing to mitigate the issue of falling real wages in the bottom half of income distribution, where a family's fight to reach the end of each month with bills paid and food on the table is most pronounced. The campaign for a living wage must be congratulated on having signed up, as we heard from the noble Lord opposite, 432 living wage employers, including 18 FTSE-100 companies. Indeed, that number may well have doubled in the past year.

However, much more needs to be done. The minimum wage has not kept up with inflation, and we call on the Government, even at this late stage, to intervene to do more. In its recent report, *Low Pay Britain 2014*, the Resolution Foundation states that one in five employees is currently on low pay. This can so easily result in toxic reliance on payday loans, as my noble friend Lord Whitty quite excellently illustrated, and other exploitative forms of credit. This is an issue which the Labour Party has taken a prominent lead in tackling and in encouraging regulators such as the FCA to take action.

The seventh report of the House of Commons Business, Innovation and Skills Select Committee, dated December 2013, states:

“In 2011-12, the payday loan market was worth between £2.0 and £2.2 billion, up from an estimated £900 million in 2008-09. This rapid expansion has been accompanied by a significant rise in the number of people experiencing serious debt problems as a result of using these products”.

All too often in homes all round the country there comes a crunch point—and often that point is reached many times—when the payday loan is reached for, not just to fund one-off emergency events such as a funeral, job loss or illness but to pay for everyday things such as utilities, food and housing, with little attention being paid to the miserable consequences of compound interest.

Many people are desperate and the Government need to wake up to that fact. However, lecturing people on the evils of legal payday loans will not put food on the table, and the danger is that the illegal moneylending merchants will become even more prominent. As president of the Trading Standards Institute, I am all too aware

of the misery brought to families by these despicable moneylending criminal gangs, many of them international, which prey on the vulnerable and those at the end of their tether. It is often the case that people in debt to illegal moneylenders become their slaves, face dreadful violence and, in the case of women, are forced into prostitution, and are rarely, if ever, free of that debt. Realising, of course, that no single action of government can lead to a resolution of these current very serious issues of debt, it would help in this case to track those illegal international moneylenders if the Government opted back in to the European arrest warrant. I wish the Prime Minister every success with his upcoming vote and with his UKIP-flirting faction.

It would also help to tackle those international gangs and our homegrown criminals who prey on vulnerable consumers if enforcers such as trading standards officers, who are responsible for enforcing 250 pieces of consumer legislation, did not have to face the double whammy of drastic local authority budget cuts, outlined by my noble friend, and a legislative handcuff in the form of proposals in the Consumer Rights Bill—which we have shared with the Minister over the past four weeks—that introduce 48-hour notice periods to be given to businesses before their premises can be routinely inspected. Individual trading standards services around the country have had their budgets slashed by up to 86% over the lifetime of this Parliament.

In a time of such economic pressure on consumers, the enforcement community is needed more than ever. On the doorstep and on the internet, consumer-facing crime is rising. Credit-brokering websites are ripping off consumers and draining their bank accounts after promising to find them cheap credit, only for the loans never to materialise. Rogues and scammers are particularly targeting elderly and vulnerable people on the doorstep, pressurising them to pay extortionate prices for unnecessary jobs or goods. We have read this week, National Consumer Week, of many cases of this kind, such as that of Elizabeth, the 89 year-old lady in north London, who was targeted by a serial conman appearing at her door and offering to do a minor repair. He told her that £15,000 was needed to repair a damp problem. Bank staff raised the alarm when Elizabeth came in to get the cash to give to the conman. I understand that he was jailed for 18 months this year.

Lord Hunt of Chesterton (Lab): Does my noble friend agree that that shows that it is a good idea to have banks?

Baroness Crawley: I agree absolutely with my noble friend.

Often today low-income consumers are forced to make purchasing decisions based almost entirely on cost, and by seeking cheaper options they are exposing themselves to cut-price, counterfeit and often dangerous products. One local authority receives a call every day from a new victim who has lost their life savings to scammers and rogue traders.

We all need to look out for our neighbours, we are told by the consumer campaign, National Consumer Week. Yes, we do need to look out for our neighbours, particularly if they are elderly and vulnerable, but I

also ask the Government, in the same spirit, to look out for the excellent trading standards enforcement services across the country, which do extraordinarily good work even when their numbers are verging on the unsustainable. Local authority cuts are no laughing matter and central government cannot keep washing their hands of responsibility.

In the analysis accompanying the Budget Statement of 2014, the Treasury concluded that, up to 2012, on average households in the bottom two deciles saw their incomes protected against the effects of inflation. The Labour Party begs to differ and has put forward a cost of living contract with hard-pressed families that will see gas and electricity bills frozen until 2017 and a reform of the energy market. The contract will see up to 200,000 homes built each year by 2020, and a ban on exploitative zero-hours contracts, as well as making work pay by strengthening the national minimum wage, and providing tax breaks to firms that boost pay through the living wage. Among other pledges, the cost of living contract will also help working families with 25 hours of free childcare for three and four year-olds.

It is right that I end my short contribution to this important debate where I started, and that is with children in families: the consumers of tomorrow. The Children's Society and the StepChange debt charity combined a survey of 2,000 families with children and in-depth interviews with 14 families in problem debt. They identified a number of impacts on the children in those families, such as bullying, worry, family argument, early exposure to loans and having to cut back on essentials such as food, clothing and heating for the children, in order to keep up repayments. Instead of Her Majesty's Government coming up with yet another new wheeze—in this case, that government departments must apply a family friendly test to all policies—let us instead listen to children in hardship themselves, who need immediate government action. We will then know what to do—or none of us should be in public life.

4.30 pm

The Lord Bishop of Norwich: My Lords, I am grateful to the noble Lord, Lord Whitty, for securing this debate, which I enter in no partisan spirit but hope to contribute some reflections from local experience in Norwich of those on low incomes in our city.

It was more than five years ago that I was first approached to become patron of the Norwich food bank, a relatively early one to be established. Its work informs a good deal of what I want to say. The necessity for it was identified before the previous general election as a result of the recession. Suddenly, people who thought themselves reasonably secure were worried. Those who were already insecure became highly vulnerable. That was all very noticeable within our church communities on the housing estates in Norwich, especially in the areas of greatest social deprivation.

Norfolk is often seen as relatively comfortable, but the reality for many is that it is not. I know that the need for a food bank in Norwich was recognised before the existence of the coalition Government and their policies. Indeed, the first food bank in this country was set up in 1999. Those who run food banks and

[THE LORD BISHOP OF NORWICH]

those who give to them represent all shades of political opinion. They do what they do out of human compassion and not to make a political point, but I recognise that political decisions have a major impact on their work. The use of food banks continues to grow rapidly and needs explanation.

According to the Government's figures, 30,000 people in greater Norwich are living on the edge of poverty. In the Campaign to End Child Poverty report published last year, Norwich is the authority with the highest percentage of children in poverty in the east of England. It is in the worst 5% of all authorities in the UK for child poverty. Norwich is also one of the areas in the country with the highest percentage of employees earning less than £7 an hour. That is why Living Wage Week is being so vigorously pursued in Norwich. Norwich City Council is a living wage employer, much to the council's credit, and I am glad to say that so too is the diocese of Norwich, through its board of finance. Where families have no financial security, a sudden crisis caused by bereavement, illness or redundancy can leave them unable to feed themselves. Such situations rapidly worsen; relationships break down; houses are repossessed; rent cannot be paid; and the cost of all that for society as a whole is not merely financial.

I sometimes think that our political discourse regards human beings only as economic units. That is a gross disservice to human dignity. Eighty local care agencies refer people to the Norwich food bank; no one can simply turn up. Last year, more than 9,000 people, 6,000 adults and more than 3,000 children—bearing out the point of the noble Baroness, Lady Crawley, about children—received three days-worth of food. That number is expected to have grown to at least 11,000 and probably 12,000 this year.

Dr Kingsley Purdam from Manchester University, the lead author of the report, *Hungry? Food Insecurity, Social Stigma and Embarrassment in the UK*, which was published last month, recently wrote:

“In political and media debates foodbank users have been variously described as being: ‘opportunists’, ‘not able to cook or budget’ and ‘living like animals’”.

When we stigmatise the poor, the unemployed and the vulnerable, we have succumbed to blaming them for their position. However, although some people stigmatise welfare claimants, many others show enormous human and social solidarity by volunteering to help them. A great deal of this has been spontaneous, but rapid growth of food banks is leading to a normalisation of food aid in our country. Are we content to see that in the United Kingdom? Will the volunteer support on which food banks rely hold up in the years to come, especially if the demands get ever greater? Though it is not true in our area, I know of food banks that are finding the need for ever more food to meet rising levels of demand very challenging. What would be the cost of the dislocation if this voluntary system broke down?

Around 30% of all visits to food banks are caused by benefit delays. The inefficiencies in our system contribute to the problem on a very large scale. For a family which lives day to day in its budgeting, a gap of several weeks' income, which is reported so often as to

be commonplace, can lead to a rapid deterioration in the quality and amount of food that that family eats. Dr Purdam's recent research quotes the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence, which has identified better nutrition as one of the key cost-saving initiatives for the NHS. Poor nutrition and malnutrition is costing us dear. A defence of the NHS budget is heard across the political spectrum, yet that budget may be increasing not least because of policies on welfare which simply displace problems from one government department and budget to another, aggravate them and make them more expensive for the taxpayer in the long run.

These policy debates must never lose sight of the people who have never heard of *Hansard*, let alone read it. A couple of examples from the research quoted earlier will suffice. A 40 year-old man said of his visit to a food bank:

“I was nervous coming here. I thought I'd done something wrong. When you're having to ask for food your ego takes a battering”.

Or think of the woman who said:

“I was willing to turn to prostitution if I did not get help from the food bank”.

I take pride in the compassion and generosity of so many people in this country who established such a widespread food aid network. I am glad that Christians in our churches are so responsive to need and that people of all faiths and none have joined the cause, but I am also depressed that this is necessary at all in what is still one of the richest countries in the world, with what we are told is a growing economy. Perhaps the Cinderella subject, which deserves much more attention, is nutrition itself. NICE is clear that better nutrition would save many millions, even billions, from the NHS budget if we took it seriously. I look forward to the Minister's reply.

4.37 pm

Lord Hunt of Chesterton: My Lords, I congratulate my noble friend Lord Whitty on introducing this debate and I am very pleased to follow the right reverend Prelate the Bishop of Norwich. I visit Norwich from time to time, as my daughter is a GP there, and she has told us stories that endorse what he said.

This debate is about issues that I am sure the electors will be considering very strongly next year. Following the global financial crisis in 2008 and the political and economic troubles in Europe, and with the looming problems of energy and the environment, the UK is in a period of great uncertainty, at least as great as other countries in the EU. The duty of Government and society during such periods should be to minimise the effects on the vulnerable and those on low incomes, who suffer most, both materially and in terms of their morale, their health and, often, the breakdown of social relations—the subject of a previous debate this afternoon. The noble Baroness, Lady Noakes, implied that all these issues are economic, but, as the right reverend Prelate suggested, that is perhaps a simplification.

Curiously during this period, although we normally think of this as all a matter for the Government, it has been quite interesting that the role of the Opposition has been quite strong. For example, on the freezing of

energy prices, it was quite remarkable how, after a speech from the Opposition, energy prices suddenly started to move downwards in a positive way.

Government actions in dealing with these issues are generally about changing governmental institutions. It is not just a question of moving deckchairs—a favourite sport in Whitehall—but changing institutions is very important, as is improving executive operations. I was head of the Met Office and was hired to change that institution and to try to get good forecasts, so I know these two aspects of government. As equally effective as legislation and executive operation by Government is the Government's use of finance, legislation, regulations and the Civil Service to influence non-governmental organisations and institutions, as we have been hearing. This is where there are quite large differences between the policies and actions of the parties—less so than 50 years ago, say, but still significant.

Since the 1970s, the Labour Party has broadly worked with the UK's existing governmental and non-governmental institutions, including private sector commercial organisations and trade unions. These principles are set out on the party card—I have not seen a Conservative Party card, but I do not think it has those on it. The Labour Party has also worked effectively and positively with other countries in the EU. The significant broad changes introduced by the Labour Party in government included Scottish and Welsh devolution, reform of the House of Lords and the hiving-off of Whitehall departments to more effective agencies. These were all broadly accepted by all parties.

By contrast, during this last five years the Conservative Party, which leads the coalition, has not been sure what institutional reforms it wants to introduce or whether it wants to be part of Europe. I did my homework for this speech and looked at what the last Conservative Party manifesto presented. On one page there is a gloomy Chinese-like picture, as if the sad figure was trying to say, "This is the role of big government". Two or three pages later on, the party put down a very nice statement, which I thought I would read to your Lordships—I do not often read from the Conservative Party manifesto. It said:

"We will make Britain the most family-friendly country in Europe ... We will support and improve Sure Start, and introduce a new universal health visiting service. We will give targeted help to disadvantaged and dysfunctional families".

That is not exactly how it has turned out in practice. Some of the words may be the same, but the actions have been rather different.

One of the sad things about the Conservative Party—finance is another aspect—has been the attitude of its leadership to some of the really important institutions and areas of this country. Twenty or 30 years ago, there were shocking campaigns to weaken some of the communities, particularly coal-mining communities, but even during the last five years we have had rather shocking campaigns criticising social groups and taking money away from things such as the citizens advice bureaux. The way in which this has been done—essentially, through a tax on certain regions of Britain and on types of people by reducing their benefits—is simply inconceivable in any other country in Europe. If you look at the extreme difficulties that they went through in Belgium, France and Germany as their coal-mining

areas went down, we never saw that ugly rhetoric from party leaders. We saw both social democratic and conservative leaders accepting and moving their Governments forward in those areas. Regrettably, that bitterness still continues in this country.

In the last period before the present Government, there was significant progress under the Blair and Brown Governments to improve social infrastructure in the poorest areas of the UK, particularly in schools and through focused welfare such as Sure Start—which appeared in the Conservative Party manifesto—and regional development plans. Regional development was, of course, cut back when the Conservatives appeared. One Member of the House of Lords—I will not name names—is now chairman of a certain local enterprise board. He has said that the amount of money he gets each year is enough to build two roundabouts, so there has not been a proper continuation of the regional development plans.

The subject of this debate is to review whether the present Government's policies have been effective. One of the facts which one has to recognise, although it was not recognised in the interesting speech of the noble Baroness, Lady Noakes, is that there was a global recession between 2008 and 2010 and that, in order to enable its impact to be minimised, the Government considerably increased social expenditure at that time. This has been analysed by many economists in recent months. The destabilising cut-back policies that we saw from the incoming Conservative Government and the accompanying rhetoric—quite unlike what you heard in the rest of Europe—has had very damaging effects upon families involved in public sector employment. Thousands of public sector employees were dismissed. Some of them had to do the work of course, so the work came back in self-employment but with fewer benefits and lower pensions.

An important point for many local communities is that people who were employed by public agencies and local government were allowed to participate in public sector activities—for example, working with the council and many other social units. Once people become self-employed with fewer funds, that kind of activity is often reduced.

Another feature that we might consider is whether this rigorous approach that we have seen in the last five years has led to a higher level of workforce, which is what is needed in modern technological industry. The answer seems to be no. The figures are that UK productivity is 20% lower than that of other countries such as France—the country endlessly attacked from the Benches opposite. By this business of pushing down on poorer people, we are not necessarily actually improving our total economy.

I have put down questions about government agencies being encouraged to employ and use contractors or companies that make best use of advanced technology and productivity, rather than just going for the cheapest price. I believe that there really has been some improvement, and I give some commendation to the Government. In many private companies and public organisations, staff are now being paid more, with a living wage. Last week, DECC reported it was now employing staff on a living wage. However, the government

[LORD HUNT OF CHESTERTON]

policy is still not clear. It could do more to ensure that these contracts improve UK standards, including technical standards, such as in housebuilding, where there are still considerable differences between this country and other countries on the continent.

Another feature of the topic of this debate is the question about the role of different levels of government—local, regional and central. Because most of the money comes from the centre, we still have the situation in Britain that local government relies on central government funding. Of course, fortunately, we still believe in local government, which is still a very important part of communications between individuals, communities and central government—many policies have to be implemented in this way.

This Government started with the term “the big society”—I have not heard about that from the other side today—but one of the roles that one imagines would be performed by the big society would be that you would have local government and local communities do the work and you would need to have methods of making sure that the money was spent properly. What did this Government do—a Government which believes in “money, money, money”? It removed the local government audit organisation. When things go wrong, you will have ad hoc interventions at a local level—which, of course, we have just seen in the case of Tower Hamlets. We had a perfectly good system of local audit. I was a city councillor and we spent a lot of our time thinking about exactly what the local Audit Commission would do; there was a similar situation with schools inspection.

I would like to end with a positive note about how the Conservative Party might improve. I looked up in Google today about the role of the Conservatives and trade unions. There used to be an organisation called the Conservative Trade Unionists, but then it disappeared. Wikipedia says, “We haven’t heard about this for 10 years. Could anybody volunteer to add to the Wikipedia description of Conservative Trade Unionists?” So there is an opportunity. The Lib Dems, however, do have an organisation of Lib Dem trade unionists, and I am very pleased about that. The only trouble is that they do not agree with the Conservatives about exactly what they should be doing. There is some row going on—you should read Wikipedia.

4.49 pm

Baroness Lister of Burtsett (Lab): My Lords, I welcome this debate, and I am grateful to my noble friend Lord Whitty for initiating it. I will start with a quotation from a recent book, *Austerity Bites*, by the journalist Mary O’Hara:

“If there was one word to capture the mood during the months that I travelled the country, it was ‘fear’. I talked to people afraid of cuts that had yet to be fully felt, of losing their home, of disability benefits being snatched away, of being unable to take care of their children or sick or elderly relatives, of essential local services being eliminated—and of their mental health deteriorating. The more the shockwaves of austerity were absorbed, the more initial fears about what might happen mutated into a daily dread about how to survive”.

That daily dread is not being felt by the privileged, who have enjoyed big pay rises and bonuses during this time of austerity, and many of whom have also enjoyed tax cuts.

I will focus my remarks on the effects of social security cuts in particular, which, to add insult to injury, have all too often been justified in terms that vilify the benefits system and those who have to rely on it. In addition to the specific cuts that I will talk about, the real value of a number of benefits received by people of working age is being steadily eroded, as my noble friend Lord Whitty explained. This has been justified by Ministers in the name of fairness as between those in and out of work, even though overall the cuts affect more people in work than out of it—the so-called hard-working families. The Chancellor has signalled a further £12 billion in cuts should the Conservatives form the next Government.

Research published this week by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation demonstrates how the real cut in living standards for consumers affected is greater because of the impact of differential inflation rates in recent years. This means that, in the words of researchers at the Institute for Fiscal Studies:

“Recent inflationary trends have disproportionately affected those in poverty”.

In other words, their living standards have been cut by even more than the cut in benefits implies. A companion JRF report points out that it is harder for low-income consumers to shop around or switch suppliers, partly because they often lack access to what it calls “enabling goods”, such as internet access, which advantage better-off consumers.

The best known of the benefit cuts is what the noble Lord, Lord Best, was the first to dub the “bedroom tax”. The UN Special Investigator on Housing has warned that it could constitute a violation of the human right to adequate housing. The justification—to free up larger accommodation in the social rented sector—is looking rather threadbare, with only 4.5% of affected tenants having downsized within the first six months, according to the Government’s own review. But, they say, this is a good start. I dread to think what a bad start would look like. The review also revealed that nearly three in five had cut back on what they deemed to be household essentials in order to meet the shortfall.

According to the New Policy Institute, about two-thirds of those hit by the bedroom tax have also had their council tax benefit cut following so-called localisation, with a 10% cut in funding imposed on those of working age and their families. The institute estimates that this year 2.34 million low-income families will pay on average £149 a year more in council tax than under the old council tax benefit scheme. Advice agencies are already reporting that council tax arrears have become their largest debt inquiry category.

In case these cuts were not sufficient to reduce the living standards of people on benefit, those deemed to be receiving too much money are now subject to a benefit cap. This means that in many cases families are paying the price for a long-term policy—pursued, I acknowledge, by successive Governments—of encouraging higher rents and subsidising them through housing benefit. Research by the Centre for Economic and Social Inclusion has shown that the cap is causing “uncertainty, distress and hardship” as families cut back on essentials, run up debts or fall back on discretionary or charitable support. Finding work has just not been a feasible solution for many of them.

The main losers are children, particularly in larger families, which means there is a disproportionate impact on some minority ethnic groups; according to initial government monitoring, 80% of those affected are women, including some carers.

Growing numbers of people claiming jobseeker's allowance and employment and support allowance are also being affected by an increasingly punitive benefits sanctions regime. The annual number of sanctions has almost doubled under the coalition. Food banks have identified sanctions as one of the main reasons for people needing their services. Worse still, there have been reports of people who have been sanctioned stealing food in order to survive.

Children have been among those worst hit by the benefit cuts, as already stated by my noble friend Lady Crawley. An impact assessment of tax benefit changes and cuts in public services carried out for the Office of the Children's Commissioner found that families with children have been disproportionately hit, particularly those on lower incomes. As a result, child poverty is expected to increase significantly over the next few years. This analysis led to the conclusion that the best interests of children are not being treated as a primary consideration in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The growing pressures on low-income families have also been linked by the president of the Association of Directors of Children's Services to a big increase in child referrals to local authorities. Similarly, in their foreword to the *State of the Nation 2014* report for the Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission, Alan Milburn and the noble Baroness, Lady Shephard, warned that:

"The impact of welfare cuts and entrenched low pay will bite between now and 2020. Poverty is set to rise, not fall. We"—

they—

"share the view of those experts who predict that 2020 will mark not the eradication of child poverty but the end of the first decade in recent history in which absolute child poverty increased".

We heard in the earlier debate today that women, too, have been among the main losers from cuts in benefits and services because they rely on them more heavily. As the main day-to-day managers of poverty, they suffer in particular as consumers, and their job will be made that much harder with the payment of universal credit monthly. According to a House of Commons Library analysis, women have borne nearly four-fifths of the impact of tax benefit changes. The Fawcett Society has warned that overall the impact of cuts spells,

"a tipping point for women's equality",

leading to,

"a society in which women's voice and choices are diminished, where women's access to employment, justice and safety are undermined and where women become more, rather than less, dependent on the state or their families for support".

They and their families are also becoming more reliant on charity in order to get by, as seen most starkly in the huge rise in the numbers turning to food banks, which was discussed movingly by the right reverend Prelate the Bishop of Norwich.

Let us stop and think what this reliance on food banks means. Let us think how we would feel if we had to rely on food banks. Professor Elizabeth Dowler, who co-authored the review of food aid for Defra, observed:

"Not having enough food is ... an issue of private shame. ... And it is an issue of private suffering. If you are not getting enough food, or the right kind of food, you absorb the misery yourself. The cost is embodied by you. It is your body that becomes unhealthy".

A letter to the *British Medical Journal* about a year ago warned that growing food insecurity could turn into a "public health emergency". Private shame made public becomes even harder to bear.

A similar tale is told by a more recent Joseph Rowntree study of social housing tenants, which found:

"Cutbacks in support make people on low incomes, in work and out, more vulnerable to debt, at risk of eviction and short of essentials, so they rely on food banks and other emergency support".

Unfortunately the abolition of the discretionary social fund and the transfer—not ring-fenced—to local authorities of the budget that used to pay for crisis loans and community care grants has reduced the emergency support available, with particular implications for survivors of domestic violence.

Another group disproportionately affected is disabled people. Just Fair has warned that the combined effect of a number of changes on disabled people is,

"very likely to compromise their enjoyment of the right to independent living".

Disability activists have led demands for a cumulative impact assessment of the cuts' effects. The Government say that that is too difficult to do—but while of course it would be difficult, a report for the Equality and Human Rights Commission has shown that it is "feasible and practicable", and its initial results confirm the disproportionate impact on low-income disabled people, as well as on women and children. I would very much welcome the Minister's response to that question of a cumulative impact assessment that is being called for increasingly widely.

No doubt the Government's response will be that such cuts were necessary in the face of the deficit—caused mainly, I note, by the financial crash. This is not the place to argue the rights and wrongs of deficit reduction, but it is the place to point out that by choosing to fund what I believe is about three-quarters of it through spending cuts and only a quarter through tax rises, the Government have ensured that those with the narrowest, not the widest shoulders bear most of the pain.

The policy of progressively raising personal tax allowances while at the same time cutting the real value of child benefit is no answer, despite the arguments of the noble Baroness, Lady Noakes. It is of no help to those in or out of work whose incomes are too low to pay tax, of whom over three-fifths are women, according to the Women's Budget Group. Moreover, as universal credit is introduced, even low-income taxpayers will receive only part of the gain enjoyed by others, because the rest will be clawed back through reductions in the credit. For a Government so keen on targeting, this is a wasteful and regressive use of resources—or, as the Joseph Rowntree Foundation put it,

"an incredibly expensive and inefficient way of helping low-income working households".

[BARONESS LISTER OF BURTERSETT]

The evidence of the harmful cumulative impact of cuts is mounting. People of working age on low incomes, particularly women and disabled people—in and out of work—are suffering. Children are suffering. Is this the kind of society in which we want to live?

5.02 pm

Baroness Hayter of Kentish Town (Lab): My Lords, I thank my noble friend Lord Whitty for introducing what has been a valuable debate and thank the right reverend Prelate the Bishop of Norwich for his warning of the normalisation of food aid in a rich society. We should also pay tribute to the noble Baroness, Lady Noakes, who, sadly, was the only non-Minister to speak from the government side. Needless to say, I very much disagree, along with my noble friend Lord Hunt, with her analysis and particularly with her hopes for the outcome of the next general election.

The essence of consumer policy is not just about putting things right after someone has been ripped off; it is about preventing such action in the first place. Yet, as my noble friend Lady Crawley has demonstrated, without robust trading standards to act on our behalf, consumers are left weak in the face of poor service or shoddy or dangerous goods. There is a proud tradition in the co-operative and Labour movements of fighting for consumer rights. We embedded the consumer voice in regulators, set up ombudsman schemes, established the National Consumer Council—sadly, now demolished by the Government—and we have championed the user voice across both public and private services. As our leader, Ed Miliband, has said:

“In every area, you have to call time on the surcharge culture. Making a fair profit is important, but it can’t be done in an underhand ... way ... This is about power in relation to ... services and how government can be on the consumer’s side ... It’s ... how you build a competitive economy ... It’s about the rules that government sets”.

However, it is not just our leader. I appreciated the quote from my noble friend Lord Haskel, who reminded us that the then leader of the Opposition, David Cameron, said that there is a, “disconnection between capitalism and people’s lives”.

We see it in housing, where the private market has failed, as rents and house prices drive working people out of the centre of London, putting pressure on transport as well as reducing take-home pay, as more money goes on travel, as well as taking the stuffing out of our communities. It is about water, where one in eight finds bills to be unaffordable. About a quarter of all households, and the majority of the poorest ones, spend more than 3% of their disposable income on water. During the passage of the Water Bill, my noble friend Lord Whitty sought to ensure a national affordability scheme to set targets and minimum standards for company social tariffs, but that was not accepted by the Government. It is not as though the water companies have struggled. Of their £2 billion profit last year, nearly all of it—£1.8 billion—was paid out as dividends.

Lord Hunt of Chesterton: How much of that went abroad?

Baroness Hayter of Kentish Town: It certainly did not go to domestic users.

It is about energy, where prices have soared, which has allowed profits from households to double in a year. Those profits comprise 8% of bills. Labour will break up big energy companies, introduce a simple new tariff and replace Ofgem with a tough new energy watchdog.

Travelling by rail to work is essential for many. In Birmingham, Bristol and York the average commuter travels 35 miles every morning; yet half of rail users do not think that they get value for money and commuters’ fares have jumped by an inflation-busting 20% since 2010.

Housing is another area. No one should have to live somewhere substandard, nor with such insecurity of tenure that they fear being chucked out before they can put down roots. Often they are chucked out simply for asking their landlord to do necessary repairs. However, many face such insecurity. There are more than 9 million people renting in the private sector now, including 1.3 million families with children. Yet this is a barely regulated market. These families want the same stability as any of our families would want: to get to know the community, so that their children can get to make and keep friends. However, many families are denied such stability. The bedroom tax, described by my noble friend Lady Lister, often makes them move, sometimes away from the areas close to mum, where they had a ready-made babysitter and a support network. We need longer tenancies and restrictions on rent increases to improve this volatile, unstable market.

It is a market in which letting agents are disadvantaging tenants. The average fee charged to tenants by letting agents is £355, with some having to pay more than £500. For those in a position to buy, estate agents’ fees can be equally unfair. Despite that, yesterday the Government resisted our amendment to the Consumer Rights Bill to prevent letting and estate agents charging both tenants and landlords, or buyers and sellers, for the same service. We will bring this back to the House on Report to stop this exploitation of our overheated housing market, which sucks money out of housing, as it goes neither to the homeowner nor to the landlord, but to people profiting from the desperation of people to find somewhere to live.

Without better regulation and without having someone on their side to champion their rights, consumers will never get a fair deal. Back in 1962, President Kennedy said:

“If consumers are offered inferior products, if prices are exorbitant ... if the consumer is unable to choose on an informed basis, then his dollar is wasted, his health and safety may be threatened, and the national interest suffers”.

Today we have new challenges. We sought yesterday to get the Government to take action on nuisance calls, but we failed. Yet we know that it is the vulnerable on whom the scammers prey, selling high-cost credit, false PPI claims and post-accident help, by nuisance calls or junk mail. Indeed, one campaign group estimates that victims send more than £10 billion to scammers every year. Increasingly, rip-offs are via copycat websites, ads for loans on gambling sites, or payday loans advertised before the watershed, all of which the Government have refused to act on; or there is illegal activity, such as scamming people’s bank accounts, which banks fail to publicise for commercial reasons, and the regulator seems hesitant to act on.

Meanwhile, there are those who operate within the law but take advantage of the vulnerable, such as the new rent-to-own shops, whereby people supposedly rent a household good, which they will finally own, having paid perhaps three times the price through their weekly payments. This ruse gets around regulation. They are not offering loans or hire purchase that would be covered by the FCA, as people are theoretically renting rather than buying the product. What then happens is a new business model; they add compulsory but useless insurance to the product, charging 60% to 90% APR and encouraging repayment by direct debit, which of course comes out of the bank the day after benefit goes in, giving preference over other payments. Those companies can repossess for a missed payment as the consumer has no protection.

We have seen banks fail to act ethically or in the interests of users. Yet the Government rejected our attempts to introduce a code of conduct for financial services, despite the record of misselling PPI, interest rate swaps and inappropriate mortgages, all the time managing to suck out huge bonuses. Today we welcome, as I think the noble Baroness, Lady Noakes, would, the announcement of a CMA investigation into personal current accounts and SME banking. We urge all haste to this.

Our political system faces a fundamental challenge. In our globalised world, many feel that they have no influence over their surroundings and that no one is standing up to the strong on their behalf. This feeds the rush towards parties offering apparent simple solutions—everything will be better if we leave the EU or the UK is broken up. That is something that we have to challenge but, as my noble friend Lord Whitty said, the Government have made all of this worse by placing the burden of austerity on the poor. Our vision is different. It is to protect the vulnerable and to remove the fear and shame, as my noble friend Lady Lister called it, of some groups in society. It is to spread the benefits of any growth to all workers and not just to the rich, including to the 30,000 in Norwich who live on the edge of poverty. It is to tackle the cost of living crisis and put families and consumers at the heart of policy.

The Government have resisted all our attempts to get the Consumer Rights Bill to deal with the issues raised today. We will try again; we will bring back those issues on Report; and, if we fail then, we will act from May of next year.

5.13 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (Baroness Neville-Rolfe) (Con): My Lords, first, I extend my gratitude to the noble Lord, Lord Whitty, for securing this wide-ranging debate and to all noble Lords who have given their very different perspectives—some cheerful and some rather gloomy. It has been a great opportunity to discuss how government can best support those on low incomes and vulnerable consumers. I have often agreed with the noble Lord on consumer and local government issues, but today his big picture is one that I just do not recognise. I could say the same about the noble Baroness, Lady Lister of Burtsett.

In this Government, we are all committed to helping those on low pay and protecting our most vulnerable consumers. We have taken action across government to tackle poverty, allow people to keep more of the money that they earn and give the most vulnerable a loud, clear voice. We have brought forward legislation when it is needed. As the noble Lord, Lord Whitty, said, the Modern Slavery Bill is about to come into our House. Later in the year, the Small Business, Enterprise and Employment Bill will come to this House and will deal with the operation of zero-hours contracts.

First, I would like to step back and look at fundamentals. I agree with my noble friend Lady Noakes. When the Prime Minister spoke at Davos in 2009, as the noble Lord, Lord Haskel, mentioned, he was looking at the problems in Britain then. Following that, the coalition arrived in Government in 2010 and found an economy and institutions reeling from the deepest recession for many years, of which one cause was a prolonged period of fiscal irresponsibility. “On its knees”, I think, were the words of my noble friend Lady Noakes. It left us with an inexorably rising deficit and cost 750,000 people their jobs. That was bad for everyone especially those on low incomes. To pick up the wording of the Motion, the “cumulative effects” have given us an awful legacy.

The key to being able to help low-income and vulnerable consumers is to deliver economic growth. The dire need to get the economy back in shape has been extremely challenging. The public sector has had to become slimmer, better organised and more efficient and many parts of it have responded very effectively to that challenge. Despite the challenges, the Government have reduced the fiscal deficit, while ensuring that the poorest and most vulnerable households are protected. The Government are the first to publish cumulative distribution analysis of their tax, welfare and public spending measures. This analysis shows that the richest 20% of households make the largest contribution to reducing the deficit, both in cash terms and as a percentage of their income. I am afraid it is extremely difficult to do the sort of analysis asked for by the noble Baroness, Lady Lister, on individual groups, such as the disabled.

More fundamentally, as Adam Smith pointed out, the best long-term protection for people as consumers, including the poorest, comes from the establishment of genuine competition among providers. We have encouraged this, thereby improving the economy and encouraging innovation. We have not sought to dictate prices—a policy some unwise politicians have recently suggested. This would be foolish and the effects catastrophic, especially on the poorest.

The noble Lord, Lord Haskel, mentioned that only one in seven has felt the benefit of the recovery. I would say that the economy is in a good place and quote the Office for Budget Responsibility forecast that real household disposable income will rise in every year to the end of the forecast period 2018-19. This is the best measure of living standards, as it includes employment levels and income.

Employment is one of the key areas that help people to look after themselves. The Government have done a great deal for job creation. More than 30 million

[BARONESS NEVILLE-ROLFE]

people are now in work—a record high. A greater proportion of women are in work than ever before. Since 2010, an additional 2.1 million private sector jobs have been created. Creating jobs and helping people to find sustainable employment is the best route out of poverty.

In view of what the noble Baroness, Lady Lister, said, I am pleased to say that 768,000 more women are employed since the last election. Employment gives individuals financial security and self-confidence, which in turn strengthens families and helps children in those families, as my noble friend Lady Noakes said, and ripples through communities. Our labour market reforms are designed to reconnect the unemployed with the labour market. They have proved successful. Youth unemployment fell a record 253,000 on the year. Long-term unemployment fell 194,000—the largest annual fall since 1998. The percentage of workless households is also lower than it was under the previous Government. Unemployment in the past year has fallen at the fastest rate ever recorded.

We have also been improving education and skills, which, in time, will have a good effect on productivity. Apprenticeships have been a central plank of my department's drive to open up new routes into work and to give people the skills and experience that they need to thrive. The Government are investing in real jobs for young people. By overhauling apprenticeships and vocational education, we are giving young people access to the tools they need to build a better future and we are giving employers the skilled workforce that they need to compete. We are on track to have 2 million apprenticeship starts this Parliament, and we have introduced national insurance breaks for employers hiring people under the age of 21. This is at the heart of our drive to equip people of all ages with the skills that employers need.

We are also helping people to start their own businesses, although many do this without any help. For our aspiring entrepreneurs, the start-up loans programme provides loans and ongoing business mentoring support. More than 2 million new businesses have been created since May 2010—more businesses, more jobs and more growth.

I commend my noble friend Lady Noakes for her interesting analysis of the situation on tax. I believe, as she does, that everyone loses out if taxes do not encourage wealth and innovation. The Government are committed to a fair tax and benefit system, where everyone contributes to reducing the deficit and those with the most make the largest contribution. We will make the UK much more competitive internationally by cutting corporation tax from 28% to 20% next year. For the individual, we will increase the tax-free personal allowance, which will rise to £10,500 by April 2015, taking 3 million people on the lowest incomes out of paying tax altogether. I am glad to say that 56% of these are women.

The noble Lord, Lord Haskel, talked about national insurance, mentioning that it is paid by the lower paid. Of course, our reforms to the personal allowance are more progressive than the Opposition's proposals on the 10p tax rate, which the IFS said have no plausible economic justification.

I now turn to inflation. We inherited a difficult situation but we have kept inflation low, which is vital to consumers of every age. It was 1.2% in September—the ninth successive month that it has been below the target. The latest data on inflation from the ONS show that the annual rate of food price inflation was minus 1.5% in September. That is the lowest it has been since June 2002. It helps poor families struggling in the way that the right reverend Prelate the Bishop of Norwich described. It is also great news for all consumers.

The success that I have described mainly comes from running the economy responsibly, but we have also taken some specific steps which have helped with inflation—for example, the abolition of the fuel duty escalator and freezing council tax for four years, as well as many other measures.

We are committed to improving living standards, particularly for the low paid, whenever we are able to do so. The living wage was mentioned by the noble Baroness, Lady Crawley. She knows that we support businesses that voluntarily choose to pay the living wage when it is affordable and does not cost jobs. We have supported the national minimum wage, and this year we were very pleased to accept the Low Pay Commission's recommendation of an increase above inflation. From October 2014, more than 1 million low-paid workers received up to £355 extra in their pay packets. The Government have been addressing the cost of living. They have cut tax for 26 million people, thereby reducing the income tax paid by a typical taxpayer by £705.

The noble Lord, Lord Whitty, mentioned fuel poverty. The fuel poverty gap fell from £1.07 billion in real terms in 2011 to just over £1 billion in 2012. Of course, fuel is a key expenditure for many. As a result of our measures, average pump prices are 13p per litre lower than under Labour's fuel duty plan, helping motorists but also helping those delivering goods to our factories and shops, and prices are still coming down.

Many people worry about the cost of local services. Action in the Budget enabled local authorities to freeze council tax, should they choose, for the fourth year running. Thanks to government support, council tax bills could, therefore, have fallen by up to 11% in real terms by 2015. The noble Baroness, Lady Crawley, and the noble Lord, Lord Whitty, mentioned the difficulties faced by families with children. However, this is an area in which the Government have taken decisive action. We have introduced free school meals for all infant school pupils and will introduce tax-free childcare which will save families up to £2,000 per child. We have also introduced family-friendly employment policies and approaches across government. Nearly all the items that the noble Lord, Lord Hunt, read to us from the Conservative manifesto have been tackled.

Lord Hunt of Chesterton: Will you be maintaining Sure Start?

Baroness Neville-Rolfe: Yes, indeed. Sure Start still exists and I have always been a big supporter of it.

The noble Lord, Lord Whitty, mentioned transport. For travellers, and those who have to commute to work, we are capping rail fare increases and reducing

the scope for above average increases. Regulated fares include, in cities, season tickets, day singles and returns. We have invested in transport in a way that the previous Government were not always able to do. Things like Crossrail are making a major difference to London. The previous Government started Crossrail and we hope to finish it. It is a great project with benefits far exceeding the cost.

All commentators agree that housing is an important factor in vulnerability. However, I do not agree with the analysis offered by the noble Lord, Lord Whitty. For those in rental accommodation, the Government have announced that, from April 2015, annual rent increases in the social housing sector will be limited to CPI plus 1%, for 10 years. This new policy is intended to help ensure that rents remain affordable, and existing tenants are protected from large rent increases, while ensuring that landlords have the income they need to invest in the maintenance and improvement of existing homes and services, and in the provision of more new, affordable homes. The noble Lord, Lord Whitty, suggested a national register of landlords. We do not support a national register of landlords. It would be a financial burden on all landlords and cost £330 million, at current prices, over 10 years. These costs would be passed on to tenants through higher rents, while it is not clear that a register would be effective. We are also supporting new, affordable homes. This is another area in which all sides of the House are very interested. We are investing £4.5 billion of capital funding and the number of affordable home starts has increased in recent times.

Pensioners must have a decent life and a secure income in retirement. That is why we have protected them; for example, by using a triple lock for uprating. The basic state pension is increased each year by the highest of the growth in average earnings or price increases, as measured by CPI, or 2.5%. As a result, someone on a full basic state pension can expect to receive £440 more a year in 2014-15 than if it had been uprated by earnings since the start of this Parliament. The percentage of pensioners in relative poverty is close to the lowest ever recorded. We have also protected many key benefits for older people: free eye tests; free NHS prescriptions; free bus passes; free television licences for those aged over 75; and winter fuel payments.

I turn to welfare. The Government have continued to provide strong welfare support. Social security spending was £209 billion in 2013-14, which is 31% of total managed expenditure. However, to protect the long-term sustainability of the public finances, it is vital that the Government bring this welfare spend down. We are proud to have grasped the nettle. The Government have introduced universal credit to make work pay and simplify the benefits system. This is a major reform that is being rolled out carefully. Our priority will remain safe and secure delivery testing and learning.

The right reverend Prelate mentioned inefficiencies in benefit payments. That is why we are addressing this through the introduction of universal credit, which I believe will make a very big and important difference for those in and out of work. It ensures that work pays, and more work pays, with a transition to and from work no longer putting household income at risk in the way it did in the past.

I have already mentioned the cap on rental increases in the social rented sector. We need to make the best use of the housing stock and use what we have fairly and properly. Through housing benefit, taxpayers would have been paying £500 million a year for 1.5 million spare bedrooms, while there are 250,000 households in overcrowded social housing in England alone. I make that comment to the noble Baroness, Lady Lister, who talked about that issue with some passion. A very important thing is going on there. We are also absolutely committed to supporting people to make the transition, especially for those who are vulnerable. That is why last year funding for discretionary housing payments was trebled and why pensioners, of course, are entirely exempt—back to my point about pensioners.

The noble Lord, Lord Whitty, and the right reverend Prelate talked about child poverty. The Government are committed to our goal of ending child poverty in the UK by 2020. That strategy reflects the reality of child poverty in the UK today, with worklessness and education absolutely key root causes. Doing things about those issues is essential to eliminating poverty.

The noble Lord, Lord Whitty, also talked about gas and heating oil. I believe that the best way to keep bills down is to help people to save energy in sure, fair tariffs that encourage competition. We are also reforming the retail market, making it simpler to understand, and ensuring that everyone is on the cheapest tariff that their supplier offers for their preferences. I will write to my noble friend Lady Noakes on the points she made about green energy as it is a bit late in the day to start a discussion on that.

I believe that the new Consumer Rights Bill makes many really important changes. It is a 10-year Bill and will bring most benefit to the most vulnerable. It also introduces important reforms on lettings, which will bring about a new transparency, which the noble Baroness, Lady Hayter, mentioned. It will enable more redress for consumers when they have suffered loss.

We have also protected the funding for Citizens Advice, and we have been big supporters of National Consumer Week, rightly mentioned by the noble Baroness, Lady Crawley, for the great work that was done on doorstep crime.

In concluding, I thank all those who do such great work across the economy to help with consumer law, preventing rip-offs and cracking down on rogues. We in the Government are on the side of the low-paid and the most vulnerable, helping them to climb the economic ladder. Labour trapped people in a broken benefits system. We needed our skills systems and colleges to get out of the great recession. Too many people are still poor and in trouble, but thanks to this coalition Government the economy is on the mend and we are better placed to help the vulnerable and improve the livelihood of those on low incomes.

5.35 pm

Lord Whitty: My Lords, I thank the Minister and everybody who has participated in the debate. I do not have time to re-endorse all the interventions from the right reverend Prelate and my colleagues here that underlined my point.

[LORD WHITTY]

I cannot agree with the Minister or with the noble Baroness, Lady Noakes. The tale that the noble Baroness tells would not be recognisable to the kinds of household that we have been talking about today. It is all very well blaming the previous Government, but that is a debating point within this House. I could debate it had I time. What this Government are doing now to ensure that matters do not get worse is the key issue.

I do not accept much of what the Minister has said. On the point of fuel poverty she said that the numbers are going down. However, DECC's latest report says that numbers are due to increase by 2.3 million and that the fuel poverty gap—the difference between what people can afford and what they must pay—is growing to £480 per annum. Those are DECC figures. It is the reality of life for a lot of low-income families.

I am bit disappointed by the Government's response. I do not expect them to get away from blaming the previous Labour Government, but they do need a more substantial defence of their position. As I understand it, it relies largely on the trickle-down effect on the one hand and some demonising of the poor on the other. As the right reverend Prelate said, we are blaming the poor for their own condition. That is not a policy. It is socially disruptive, politically dishonest and economically fairly illiterate. I am sorry to hear it repeated in the Chamber today.

In National Consumer Week, I recall one of my noble predecessors as chair of the National Consumer Council, Michael Young, and almost the first publication for that organisation, more than 40 years ago, called *Why the Poor Pay More*. They still do, 40 years on. In an entirely different context, Michael Young said that these things are not acts of God or forces of nature, but decisions. The Government took their priority decisions, as the noble Baroness, Lady Noakes, rightly said. They took them in a way that meant that the burden of the austerity programme fell on the narrowest and not the broadest shoulders. Historically, that will be seen as a very serious mistake. I hope that the Government recognise that and recognise Michael Young's words, just referred to, which related to the 1945 Labour manifesto. I hope that our new manifesto will be in equally ringing terms and begin to reverse the policy we have heard outlined today.

Motion agreed.

EU: Counting the Cost of Food Waste (EUC Report) *Question for Short Debate*

5.38 pm

Asked by Baroness Scott of Needham Market

To ask Her Majesty's Government what is their response to the Report of the European Union Committee on Counting the Cost of Food Waste: EU Food Waste Prevention (10th Report, Session 2013–14, HL Paper 154).

Baroness Scott of Needham Market (LD): My Lords, the scale of the food waste problem that emerged from our inquiry was truly staggering. Around 15 million tonnes of food are wasted in the United Kingdom every year and around 89 million tonnes across the EU. Those are probably conservative estimates of what is recognised as a data-poor area. Our inquiry did not cover food losses in the developing world; they are a rather different although equally pressing matter. Nor did we cover the trickier question of waste through overconsumption.

If one message comes from our report that I would like everyone, including the Government, to understand, it is that there must be a recognition that whatever the technical difficulties of defining and measuring food waste are, these should not distract us from the importance of taking urgent action to address a problem that is not only morally repugnant but unsustainable. It is becoming increasingly recognised that in the years ahead food security will be a very serious matter. Surely it makes sense to start by wasting less of what we already have.

As set out in our report, there are clearly some big issues to be tackled, not least the need to think about the supply chain as a whole rather than thinking about food waste prevention at each stage. Taking this approach helps to deal with the tendency we observed for individual participants in the food supply chain simply to pass the waste elsewhere so that their statistics look good at the expense of someone else's, but the problem is not addressed.

The picture that emerged was not entirely gloomy. Our evidence uncovered a raft of initiatives and efforts that are being undertaken. It was also clear from our consideration of EU policy that the United Kingdom has taken a lead in this area, due in no small part to the work of WRAP—the Waste and Resources Action Programme. Now, six months on from publication, I will not rehearse the conclusions and recommendations of our report. While they all remain salient, I would like to reflect on some of the developments since publication and then perhaps consider some next steps.

First, a recurring theme that emerged throughout our evidence sessions was that when people and organisations begin to think about food waste, they quickly start to reduce it. For that reason, I was delighted by the degree of media interest in our report and the subsequent debate that it sparked off. Particularly heartening was the response by some individuals, organisations and businesses as a result of that media coverage. Many of them have made contact with me and I have met with quite a few of them. I have spoken at conferences and seminars, including one organised by the Dutch embassy, and I have undertaken a visit to Birds Eye in Lowestoft to try to understand the role that freezing can play in reducing food waste. The week after next we are going to the restaurant chain Nando's, which is going to demonstrate how it will use technology to redistribute leftover food from its outlets.

Through that dialogue, I have learnt more about what is being developed. For instance, Tesco has taken its 25 most wasted products and taken a whole-supply-chain approach to see what target actions could be taken to reduce that waste; for example, with bananas,

it has reduced wastage at the farms by 6% and has changed practices at the warehouse and in store to reduce waste there. Consumers are being educated in how to store bananas and given recipes for what to do with overripe fruit.

Secondly, the excellent work of WRAP has continued. Its completion of a farm-to-fork assessment of the potato supply chain, in collaboration with Co-operative Food and Co-operative Farms, is an example of the kind of study it undertakes. It highlighted that a particularly wasteful point in the supply chain is the packhouse. Here it recommended a review of size specifications, as well as alternative options for those of “abnormal” size; for example, the development of a product range of small roasting potatoes could eliminate more than £250,000 of lost value, based on a sample of 50,000 tonnes.

During our inquiry, we were most concerned to hear about wastage on farms caused by overzealous specifications set by retailers, last-minute order cancellations and punitive clauses for undersupply. We look to the retail sector to address those issues with its suppliers. The role of the Groceries Code Adjudicator in setting fair terms of contract might well have a positive effect on food waste, but we wait to see.

Thirdly, our report considered the role of the EU. As many noble Lords will be aware, the European Commission published in July a wide-ranging series of proposed amendments to its waste legislation. These included an EU-wide aspirational food waste reduction target of 30% by 2025. The Commission says that it wants to use the baseline set in 2017, and we would be concerned about this because it would not recognise the very real progress that the UK has made before that date. Also included was a definition which excludes on-farm waste—another serious matter—and a requirement that member states develop national food waste prevention strategies. While this is welcome progress, it falls far short of the more holistic approach that we recommended in our report.

We had always understood that a communication on sustainable food had been drafted earlier in the year and was to be published at the same time as the waste review, but it has never seen the light of day. This debate takes place six days after the new Juncker Commission has taken office, under which responsibility for food waste has been transferred from the Directorate-General for the Environment to the Directorate-General for Health and Consumers. My fear is that this might signal a resistance in the Commission to the whole-supply-chain approach to food waste. So I would welcome the Minister’s observations on this change, and on whether he knows whether the communication on sustainable food is now likely to be published, with the new commission in place.

As I emphasised earlier, time is of the essence. One very practical area where it is possible to take action swiftly is food distribution. In that regard, I commend the work of charities such as FareShare, the Trussell Trust, Company Shop and FoodCycle. FareShare, for example, has reported a recent step change in the willingness of some supermarkets to donate food to them. FareShare is now providing enough food for more than 1 million meals per month in the areas

where it works. This, it estimates, is with just 2% of the food out there. These meals are provided in outlets run by voluntary organisations such as daycare centres. These organisations are struggling with reduced budgets, so the provision of cheaper food through FareShare is a lifeline for them.

There appears to be growing momentum. Food banking is controversial, but given that it is increasing we were interested in how more fresh food could be included. We heard in our evidence from the Netherlands that food redistribution which includes fresh produce is entirely possible. However, whether it is FareShare or food banks, you need infrastructure for storage and delivery and that takes money. So, in this regard, I am really interested in bringing some of the supply chain participants together to thrash out some of these issues, to see whether the barriers are perceived or real, and to come up with some solutions. It would be very helpful if the Government committed to working with us on how redistribution of fresh produce can be boosted.

Looking to the slightly longer term and beyond UK shores, food waste prevention has to be made a reality across the EU. Last week, I had the opportunity to raise the issue with members of other EU national parliaments. Many of them went on to refer to my remarks, so I detected a willingness—although there are no concrete proposals—to do more. Can the Government tell us what they are doing, or plan to do, to boost the prominence of this issue among ministerial colleagues?

There are three specific areas where national Governments and the Commission could make a difference. One is to ensure that where food is not consumed by humans, it is, where safe, consumed by animals. The second area is to ensure that regulations aimed at making packaging more easily recyclable do not have the effect of reducing shelf life, so that packaging waste turns into food waste. The third is to ensure that the whole question of date labelling is kept under review, to ensure that it reflects genuine risk.

I thank the Government, notably the responsible Minister, Dan Rogerson, for very helpful evidence, the comprehensive response to our report and the subsequent correspondence between us.

This is a wide-ranging topic, and I am proud to say that our members worked meticulously over the nine months of the inquiry, with invaluable input from our then clerk Aaron Speer, our policy analyst Alistair Dillon and our specialist adviser Dr Julian Parfitt. I have covered only a few aspects of our work today. Noble Lords will no doubt pick up on others and I look forward to a stimulating debate.

5.48 pm

Baroness Jenkin of Kennington (Con): My Lords, a number of noble Lords speaking in this debate may remember a meeting with WRAP earlier this year, when those present were invited to make a pledge about what more they personally were prepared to do to reduce food waste in their own lives. I thought about that—I racked my brains—and I genuinely could not think of anything more I could do apart from banging on and on about it. So, despite the temptation

[BARONESS JENKIN OF KENNINGTON]

to scratch today because I am expecting 22 people to supper tonight, I am here to bang on about it. I can only hope that the Member of Parliament for Harwich and North Essex has gone home to turn on the oven. In any case, with a hungry 23 year-old son living with us at home, I can assure noble Lords that there will be no food wasted from that meal.

While I was not a member of the committee, I have read much of the report, the evidence and the Government's response, and I very much welcome the raising of the profile of this issue both in the UK and across the EU. I particularly welcome the fact that Defra's research projects are looking at options for feeding catering waste to animals and that WRAP is developing guidance that will provide clarification on what foodstuffs can and cannot be used for animal feed. I very much hope that this will increase the food available for use as animal feed and urge my noble friend the Minister to keep a close eye on progress and his foot on the accelerator. It is surely utter madness that rainforests in far off lands are still being cut down to grow soy, not for their local population to eat, but for us to import to feed our pigs.

However, I want to focus my remarks today on the committee's recommendation about distributing good-quality surplus food to charities, which ensures that it goes to people in need, as outlined in our recommendation 7.

I am a member of the APPG on food poverty and hunger, co-chaired by the right reverend Prelate the Bishop of Truro and Frank Field, which has for the past several months been taking extensive evidence from some amazing organisations, individuals and church groups involved with food banks, food redistribution and other community projects. We have heard from leaders of exceptional projects, and I encourage Ministers and other noble Lords to visit, for example, the Oxford food bank, where food redistribution is at the heart of its model, and the Matthew Tree Project in Bristol, to see best practice which could so easily be replicated elsewhere. The report is currently in draft, but we hope to publish it by the end of the year.

I have been to Birkenhead and South Shields and, with other members of the group, I have visited the FareShare headquarters. I am pleased that the noble Baroness, Lady Scott, has already mentioned FareShare. If your Lordships have not already been to visit FareShare in Southwark, a mere 15 minutes away, I urge you to do so. You would be extremely welcome. Like me, it believes that no good food should be wasted. If food is still fit for purpose, it should go to feed people first. There is still concern that the financial incentives in place may preference energy recovery over redistribution for human consumption.

As the noble Baroness, Lady Scott, mentioned, a mere 2% of the food currently available supplies more than 1,700 charities across the United Kingdom, feeding more than 82,000 people every day. They could do so much more if steps were put in place to divert the hundreds of thousands of tonnes of food that is in-date and fit for human consumption.

I digress slightly, but when we were there and looking in the fridge at the food that was past-date, which they said that we could take at our own risk, there were bottles and bottles—crates of bottles—of water that was apparently past its use by date.

If the UK increased surplus food redistribution to a similar level to that of our European neighbours—only 25% of what is available—that would result in a £280 million saving to civil society, as well as 238 million meals provided and the equivalent CO₂ reduction of 200,000 cars removed from the roads. Despite all that, 75% of that in-date good food would still be going to waste.

Here, I pay tribute to several retailers which, as the noble Baroness said, since I first visited FareShare about three years ago, have massively stepped up to the plate and improved their practice. They include Asda, Sainsbury, Tesco, Kellogg, Nestlé and Planet Earth, as well as the fabulous Gleaning Network, which brings together volunteers, farmers and redistribution charities to save hundreds of tonnes of fresh fruit and vegetables that are wasted on UK farms every year due to retailers' policies or gluts. They are used in FareShare but currently not in the Trussell Trust food banks. Some of them have worked with FareShare for many years and others are more recent converts. I urge the supermarkets to join up their dots. Many of the smaller projects from which we have taken evidence find it difficult to source surplus food from local supermarkets when, at least at the centre, there is real interest in engaging properly.

There is no time for me to do anything but to mention Tristram Stuart and his Feedback project, but it is easy to find if your Lordships want to know more.

I finish by telling you about a project which I visited over the summer based in one of the most deprived wards in the UK. The Clacton hub of FoodCycle serves about 60 people every week, including homeless people, low-income families and people affected by mental health issues and addiction. They get a three-course meal made from food surplus sourced from local supermarkets. That does not just help those benefiting financially and provide them with a nutritious meal; there is also a social site. The fabulous Diane, the hub leader, who has worked with vulnerable people for more than 20 years, introduced my husband and I to the team cooking the food, who themselves are volunteers suffering from depression. That is the strength of this project and so many others that do great work. It helps those who are doing the helping; it gets them out of bed in the morning. They enjoy working together as a team and working out how to use whatever ingredients they are given that day. In so many communities in the UK, we have a need and we have the resource. Please, let us use common sense to put these two together.

5.55 pm

Lord Whitty (Lab): My Lords, I was a member of the Select Committee, serving under the very effective leadership of the noble Baroness, Lady Scott. It was a fascinating task and she very deftly explained both the main points of what we have covered and what has happened since. I shall try just to underline one or two points.

My first point is what a big deal this is. On some estimates, the amount of food waste in the industrialised countries exceeds the total first production of the whole continent of Africa. This is an incredible waste of human effort and environmental and economic cost. I say, “On some estimates”, because we very rapidly found that the estimates in this field are rather difficult, which limits the degree to which the EU can play as effective a role as it perhaps ought. We found that measurement of food waste at different stages of the chain and between different countries was pretty incompatible. Until that is resolved, the EU level probably has to be aspirational, exculpatory and a matter of learning from best practice. Best practice in this area largely rests in the United Kingdom and, to some extent, in the Netherlands.

The next point I will emphasise is the key role of the retailers in the supply chain. Clearly, the retailers have done a lot to cut their own waste at their stage in the process and they are taking it further and helping out on aspects such as food redistribution, but it is also true that they bear a heavy responsibility for what happens at both ends of the chain. Their contracting deals with farmers and small producers inevitably lead to some wastage at that level.

It is part of the general imbalance between the great supermarket chains and farmers and other small producers that leads to alterations in contracts, including premiums for particular, very highly specialised specifications for vegetables and other materials. The way that contracts are actually carved up leads to waste at that level. That is something that needs to be addressed, particularly in the same context as the grocery code and the role of the grocery code adjudicator. At the moment, the adjudicator’s responsibilities do not really include a responsibility for ensuring that the contracting arrangements between the retailer and the provider do not create unnecessary waste, and I think they probably should.

Retailers also have a responsibility to the consumer. They fulfil some of it; I have certainly learnt from the labels on consumer goods and food that I have bought in supermarkets and which I have started reading since we have been engaged in this. It has changed my habits somewhat, as to storage, packaging, how long I think I can keep fruit and what should and should not be in the fridge. If I, who have some responsibility in this area, do not know how to behave in relation to my consumer responsibilities, and need to be told by a retailer, the retailer needs to shout even louder to the vast majority of the population. They are taking on that role, but they need to do more of it. It is undermined, to some extent, by some of the ways they market themselves, particularly with what are called BOGOF deals—where you are tempted to buy more than you need and half of it goes off—and other forms of incentive. That is the downside of the positive role of retailers in this area and it one that they need seriously to address.

Another point I underline is the role of WRAP in this area. Universally within the supply chain, here and across Europe, there is great recognition of the role that WRAP has played. We were rather dismayed to hear that the resources available to WRAP had

been cut significantly and that there was some expectation that it would have to draw in its horns in this area. Can the Minister indicate what the latest development is on that front? The role of WRAP in the delivery of, for example, the Courtauld initiative with industry and in other initiatives that have taken place has been exemplary. It is one which needs to be retained and generalised across Europe.

We touched on another couple of things in terms of waste disposal for what is wasted. One of the problems with this was raised in debate on the Deregulation Bill yesterday. It is the differential approach to the labelling of waste between local authorities and the need for the public to understand therefore what should be put in what bin, and whether to have differential disposal of food waste because it can be used in different ways from other forms of waste. In some local authorities that is allowed and in some it is not, which seems completely barmy.

There was also some anxiety that in the waste hierarchy, which we considered would continue to be a useful tool, some of the incentives for moving food waste into waste for energy meant that other options such as animal feed, recycling and so forth appeared less attractive, even though they were higher up the waste hierarchy. While I am strongly in favour of anaerobic digestion, for example, and other forms of waste for energy, I think that area needs to be looked at because it distorts the way in which waste is disposed of.

My final point is about food redistribution, which the noble Baroness, Lady Jenkin, has just spoken about. Food banks are a feature of our life; we touched on them in the previous debate. Undoubtedly the shifting of waste food from the retail end—and increasingly, I hope, from the catering end because caterers as well as retailers need to take some responsibility in this area—into food banks is important. We saw in the Netherlands an example where fresh food was being used more substantially in that area. At the moment, if you go into supermarkets and see what is put into food banks, it is all food in tins and other packaging. In this country, there is in most cases a problem of providing fresh food. In the Netherlands, they seem to have cracked that; admittedly, we were in the middle of an intensive agricultural area. Nevertheless, for nutritional purposes as well as for food waste minimisation, food which was fresh and may have just passed its sell-by date could be diverted into food banks and other forms of food redistribution.

We learnt a lot from this exercise and a lot of things need to be followed through. I suppose that, at the end of the day, we did not think that the EU could help a lot in setting mandatory targets at this stage. However, we believe that the issue of food waste needs to be addressed by retailers here in particular and by the food chain as a whole, with support from the Government, in particular for WRAP, and by converting all of us into consumers who do not chuck quite so much away without consideration.

6.03 pm

Baroness Parminter (LD): My Lords, like the noble Lord, Lord Whitty, I am a member of the sub-committee and benefited from the very able chairmanship of my

[BARONESS PARMINTER]

noble friend Lady Scott on this, her first inquiry for the sub-committee. I am sure that the House will benefit from many more, particularly if she carries on choosing subjects for our inquiries which are so pressing and can reach out to the wider public as well. It is important that we speak not only on issues among ourselves but, on occasions, manage to reach a wider audience.

This is indeed an incredibly pressing problem, with 90 million tonnes of food in Europe being wasted every year and environmental resources being wasted as a result of that. Greenhouse gas emissions result, while resources—water, pesticides and other resources—are being wasted by being used for producing those food products.

The report, as other noble Lords have mentioned, identifies where action is necessary. It has identified that good practice is to be found principally in the UK, for which the Government can take a fair degree of credit. It has brought the issue to the public's attention.

I will focus on one issue that has not been mentioned so far by noble Lords: our recommendation that there was considerable room for improvement in the data reporting by the food and drink manufacturers, the retailers and the wider food service industry. Both the UK Government and the retailers are united in favouring a voluntary approach to reporting. We as a committee accept that the voluntary approach is the right one at this stage. Undoubtedly, however, it requires strong leadership, both from the Government and the umbrella groups in the industry—notably the British Retail Consortium.

The evidence from elsewhere in Europe shows the value of open data reporting at company level. In Norway we saw very clear evidence that the ForMat project—which is a collaborative effort between the retailers, the environmental organisations, the producers and indeed the Government—was a means to chart and minimise food waste. Part of the project is knowledge transfer and communication of the results, ideas and experiences, which has allowed this open data reporting to help drive down food waste by open data sharing: that is, sharing of individual company reports.

In October 2013, we had the first company in the UK to participate in open data reporting. That was Tesco. It may be thought surprising that Tesco was prepared to disclose its food waste when it had some slightly more tricky issues with auditing other accounts in more recent times. Nevertheless, it was an important and welcome initiative. It revealed that it was generating in half a year 30,000 tonnes of food waste. It used its own data and industry-wide figures produced, I think, through WRAP. It was frankly a revolutionary step change in market reporting. It was interesting to see in the *Financial Times* and other respected newspapers that the Tesco share price was monitored very carefully the next day to see if this had had an impact. It had not. Therefore, there was an assumption that other companies would follow suit and would publicly report their own individual food waste figures. Currently it is done privately as part of the very welcome Courtauld agreement with the support of WRAP.

Those initial hopes were dashed in January this year when the British Retail Consortium announced that the UK major supermarkets had signed up to report their total food wastage statistics, not their separate figures. I accept that all reporting of company food waste is important. It can help individual companies to identify hotspots and they can learn from that and drive down food waste. Indeed, when Tesco did that exercise, it found that 68% of the salad sold in bags was wasted. It then produced smaller bags of salad—so it can have value. But if we are seriously going to help companies save the £5 billion which they are wasting on food waste, we need to share data. We need to learn from best practice and use that peer pressure to address the problems in the industry.

Do the Government have plans to meet the British Retail Consortium and the major supermarkets after the publishing of that sectoral report in late January—in two months' time? If those plans are not in place, I suggest a round table including government Ministers, perhaps the chairman of our committee, and the major supermarkets in the BRC. They should be brought together in order to look at those collective figures and seek to move towards the publishing of separate food waste figures by major UK supermarkets.

Of course, it is not just supermarkets we need to worry about. It is all companies which are involved with either producing food, selling food, or indeed with employees consuming food. It is here that the Government's environmental reporting guidelines for companies should be a key plank in moving towards every company reporting its figures. From October, all major UK listed companies were obliged to report their greenhouse gas emissions in the directors' report. Other forms of social and environmental reporting are voluntary, but in a welcome move the Government encouraged companies to do so and produced those guidelines to help. They are very much in line with the EU's provisions on non-financial reporting for large companies, which were produced earlier this year and set out the provisions for environmental data reporting.

However, looking in some detail at the government guidelines, as I tend to do, I noticed that in the section on food waste—on page 49, for those noble Lords who want to have a quick look—food is not even mentioned as a separate category for which companies should report waste weight. Paper, glass, aluminium, plastics, aggregates and even hazardous waste are mentioned, but not food waste. Now I accept that the list is not exhaustive, but I thought that if the Government were serious, as they say they are, that companies should be looking to report their food waste figures voluntarily, their own environmental reporting guidelines would explicitly include food waste. Will the Minister confirm that the Government are seeking to encourage companies to report their food waste figures voluntarily? If so, perhaps they might revise their guidelines.

The report accepts that voluntary reporting is the right way forward for now but, given the scale of the challenge, urgent action is needed. It requires leadership from the Government and the British Retail Consortium to achieve a step change in open data reporting. The time is undoubtedly now—or perhaps future Governments in the not too distant future, or indeed the European

Commission, will be likely to see the merit, as they have done for greenhouse gas reporting, of making open data reporting an obligation for all large companies.

6.11 pm

Lord Cameron of Dillington (CB): My Lords, I declare an interest as a farmer. I must admit to being on the committee, and I thank the noble Baroness, Lady Scott, for her good work in this area, both in the run-up to our report and subsequent to it. I want to examine this subject from the point of view of one of the world's biggest problems: how are we going to feed the 9.5 billion people who will inhabit the planet by 2050? How are we going to feed that number when more and more people are eating meat, which consumes up to seven times more of our planet's resources than if we were eating bread or rice? How are we going to feed that number when our climate is changing and our water supplies are reducing?

Of course, although this is off the subject, the first thing to do is to have freely available family planning in every village on the planet so that women can be free to manage their own fertility. Turning to the problem of food, though, it is a pity that the focus of most scientists, politicians and of course farmers is just about producing more and more of it. I am glad to say that in the scientific world has been a slight change recently, in that scientists are now looking more seriously at the question of yields in terms of nutrition per hectare rather than simply yields per hectare, because there is a big difference. We will never solve the problem of sustainably feeding the world unless we also start tackling it from the demand side, and undoubtedly the most glaring aspect of the demand side is that black hole known as food waste.

We have seen some pretty frightening statistics in our study of this matter, and we have already heard some in today's debate. I shall highlight two. The Institute of Mechanical Engineers stated that as much as half the food produced in the world never reaches the human stomach, which is as much as 2 billion tonnes of food per annum going to waste. That could be the equivalent of £5 billion per annum being consigned to the tip—bad news indeed for the world economy.

Food waste is also disastrous for climate change. This is my second statistic: in the USA, 300 million barrels of oil per annum are used to produce food that is then thrown away. A barrel of oil is roughly 159 litres, which means that 47.6 billion litres per annum are burnt away into our atmosphere to produce food that is then thrown away. That is just in the United States and, as we know, consumer waste is undoubtedly a problem for the whole western world.

It should be noted, though, that in relation to the western world we in the UK are very much ahead of the curve, and we can be proud of that. WRAP reckons that the 15% reduction in food waste between 2007 and 2012 saved every UK household approximately £130 per annum. My message to Defra is that if you envisage a further drop in WRAP's budget, you are cutting off your nose to spite your face. Do not go there. WRAP says that over the last five years every £1 spent by the Government through WRAP has saved £500 in household waste. Think of the savings from that to local authority refuse disposal services alone.

This agenda is the very model of a public-private partnership that could save UK millions, if not billions, of pounds, and it is vital that it does not lose momentum. We were told during our report that the anti-smoking campaign was a 50-year journey, and although we must try to make this one a little faster, there is no doubt that public perceptions and awareness take time to change. But keeping up momentum is absolutely the key, and WRAP needs all the support and the money that it can get.

I know that this is an EU committee and this is an EU debate, but as I said at the beginning, this is a worldwide problem so I will direct my final thoughts to the developing world. Here, consumer waste is one-tenth of that of the developed world. They cannot afford to waste any food at all once it is in the home but post-harvest losses, both on the farm and during transport to market, can amount to 30% to 50%, depending on the crop involved. These extensive losses are mostly the result of lack of money for investment in proper storage facilities—rodents, bugs and bacteria abound. There is also no cold chain to market, although the Institution of Mechanical Engineers is looking at cheap ways of addressing that. The roads are rough, resulting in damaged and wasted fruit and veg on the way to market, and while trekking your animals to market may seem the cheapest way to get them there, it appears that weight losses of up to 30% frequently occur, which makes it a more expensive option.

A lot of the problem is knowledge, but the lack of any financial infrastructure also makes it impossible to invest to save. Equally, if you cannot read, it would be too dangerous to use chemicals to prevent the bugs attacking your stored maize. The alternative to having a large enough store which is sealed to keep out air is costly and beyond a smallholder's reach. However, with investment and research—a lot of which comes from the UK and Europe—breakthroughs are being made. Mobile phones now enable farmers in remote areas to sell their crops directly to markets hundreds of miles away, before they rot from multiple handlings. Large plastic bags which can take a tonne or more and which can be airtight sealed are a new way of preventing decay at a reasonable price. Even reverting from maize to old fashioned crops like finger millet, whose natural husks protect the grain, has proved beneficial for local nutrition. For further details I would recommend our all-party parliamentary group's recent booklet called *Missing Food* which I can provide for any interested Peer.

Aid and investment are enabling sub-Saharan African farmers, who often represent 85% of their country's population, to stand on their own feet. The World Bank says that in terms of alleviation of poverty, a 1% increase in agricultural GDP is worth five or six times more than a 1% rise in non-agricultural GDP. This is an important agenda and post-harvest losses are a crucial part of that agenda, so DfID must continue to do all it can to help.

6.18 pm

Baroness Byford (Con): My Lords, I declare that I was a member of the sub-committee but sadly had to miss some of it for family circumstances. I remind the House of my family's farming interest.

[BARONESS BYFORD]

I belong to a generation brought up after the privations of World War II to eat anything that was put in front of us. Anything that was left over or became inedible was put in the pig bin, fed to the chickens or left for the birds. The question has already been raised as to whether we could actually feed back some of the surplus food for animal feed. I realise there is a health issue of which the Minister will obviously be well aware—both for human health and also for animal health—but I believe that other countries across Europe are considering it and I would be grateful if he could respond to the question. The Government's response to our report included intentions to,

“improve the public's understanding of date marks”.

I am a little confused by that; again, perhaps we could be told how that will be achieved and when it will happen.

Food waste is abhorrent. The committee's work was thorough, detailed and a firm base from which we can proceed. I congratulate my noble friend Lady Scott of Needham Market and all those who helped us and who endeavoured to produce a very good report. I am delighted that the committee chairman has been invited to speak so much in the public domain, because one of the problems with our reports is that they very often remain here. They need to be taken out and spoken to.

The work being done by organisations such as WRAP, which was referred to by other noble Lords, is focused, innovative and laudable. However, perhaps the force of law might assist the implementation of programmes that arise from such work—although I hesitate to mention regulation. The last Government's attempt to reduce packaging waste was couched in terms of reducing the total weight of packaging. There were some notable successes, but it also increased the use of the plastic pouch instead of recyclable material such as aluminium cans.

The Government's response to our report quotes a 15% reduction since 2007 in food waste in the household sector. An item on the “Today” programme on Monday indicated that food waste is falling because household incomes are not growing as fast as prices, and people are buying less. Can the Minister indicate how much of the quoted 15% is due to reduced purchasing, and how much to local authorities allowing householders to put food waste in their compost bins? If he cannot—he may not be able to today—perhaps he might pursue that idea, which clearly has implications for food waste in general.

Another source of food waste relates to the way in which items are packaged for sale. If I buy two portions of fish in a tray, I may need to freeze both of them. The obvious course of action is to freeze them individually, but we have to make sure that in doing so we do not lose the dates which were originally on the packaging—not because the food will deteriorate but because you need to know how long it has been frozen. In their response the Government refer to the excellent work done on egg packaging and labelling. Might they consider encouraging better packaging of items sold in portions which are suitable for freezing?

My noble friend referred in particular in her opening address to the work that had been done on potatoes. I wanted to follow up on that, because Defra sponsored

it. The interesting things that I picked up from that were: on-farm loss was 3% harvester loss; storage saw a 1% to 5% weight loss; packhouse downgrade 20%; retail 2% unsold and a 5% markdown; and consumer 20% discards and 26% peelings. That gives all of us a great opportunity to play our part in making sure that we reduce waste.

The quantification of food waste and identification of its major causes and location along the food chain is important, but we all know that we should not wait before finally taking the step to help reduce food waste. Redirection to food banks from the original intention of a seed that is sown and grown for human consumption is one way. Noble Lords have referred to the fact that there is no definition, which was clearly a problem for the committee. However, from the evidence we heard, we rather assumed that anything that was sown and grown that was suitable for human consumption should first go to human consumption and only after that into food banks—and only after that becoming animal feed or going into energy production.

This is very difficult, but there are many ways in which we can help. The *Roadmap to a Resource Efficient Europe*, published in 2011, is to be recommended for its aspirational targets. Having a food waste target for 2025 is a good move. Any target encourages people actually to do something, which is what we are trying to do. We all share in our responsibilities there.

This is extremely important. I am very glad to follow my noble friend Lord Cameron, because I have a similar fear about our waste in producing food, and not just in this country. We can help other countries, too. If we were to save food that currently we are wasting, we would not necessarily have to increase the amount we are producing. If I could add to that, I would like our expertise in the way that we produce food—I know it goes on—to try to help some of those countries to be able to produce more themselves.

I was very taken with the recent publication by the NFU about the contribution that the Women's Land Army made 100 years ago. For those of you who do not know, when the war broke out a third of our male workforce was taken off the fields, obviously to take part in the war. Some 98,000 women, most of them from urban areas, had a chance to go and work on farms and produce the food that saved us from starving. Why do I mention this? It is because the NFU's publication had a leaflet, which I copied. It was headed “Food” and underneath that were five very simple messages. First, “Buy it with thought”; secondly, “Cook it with care”; thirdly, “Use less meat and wheat”; fourthly, “Serve just enough”; and fifthly, “Use what is left over”. Underneath, in big letters, it said “Don't waste it”. That, 100 years later, summarises what we have tried to do in our report, and I congratulate my noble friend on her leadership with this particular challenge that we have tackled.

6.26 pm

Baroness Miller of Chilthorne Domer (LD): My Lords, many noble Lords have spoken about all the rational reasons why it is important not to waste food. Certainly, food security is not a given: we are in a very frail food chain.

As other noble Lords have mentioned, when we waste food we are wasting energy, which is an especially important consideration at a time of climate change. But we are also wasting water when we waste food. In fact, enough water is used in the irrigation of food grown globally that is wasted—that is, water irrigating just wasted food—for the domestic needs of 9 billion people. I got that figure from the wonderful Tristram Stuart, and I find it really shocking.

Furthermore, when we waste food we are wasting land. Here in the UK good quality agricultural land is pretty limited. Some people do not think we even have enough to spare some to allow the small percentage that it would take of extra hedgerows, grass strips and small copses to turn our farmland from somewhere that is failing wildlife at the moment into somewhere that is rich in biodiversity. I thoroughly agreed with the noble Lord, Lord Cameron of Dillington, when he said that it is in fact the nutrition per hectare that is important. That is an interesting shift in thinking, which has started in the last two or three years.

Finally, when we waste food we also are wasting money. Those are all very sound reasons not to waste food.

I believe that this report hits such a spot because food is such a cultural thing. If we think of the word “company”—as in “I enjoy your company”—it comes from “cum pane” and means literally “with bread”, as in “I am breaking bread with you”. As I am sure the noble Baroness, Lady Jenkin of Kennington, will appreciate, with her big dinner tonight, when you invite good friends round, you invite them for a meal; you do not invite them round just to sit on a chair. Therefore, the importance of the issue reaches beyond the actual numbers; it is a very cultural thing that we are wasting food and a comment on society. That is why I am very pleased that this excellent, measured and hard-hitting report from Sub-Committee D has already contributed so much to the essential movement to limit and eradicate food waste. The press coverage that it got when it came out is a credit to my noble friend the chairman and to the quality of the report.

The conclusions and recommendations struck me as very sound, and I shall just mention a few. As the committee says in its report, I was horrified by how little effort or emphasis the Commission has put into this subject so far. The report spells that out very clearly. But equally, here in the UK, I was saddened, as paragraph 159 demonstrated, by how little has happened over the past 10 or 15 years with regard to domestic food waste reduction. Of course, I appreciate how difficult that is. The reason why I have taken that timescale is that I stood down as a councillor in 2005, and in the nine years since then little seems to have changed.

I was interested in the reply—this was in the briefing pack for this debate from the Library—to a Commons Question on 23 June this year, which shows the breakdown of separate food waste by local authority. It is really patchy; some are performing pretty well, but the performance of some is absolutely abysmal. In Lambeth, where I am a council tax payer, they managed to recycle only a few hundred tonnes, and even that has

halved over the three-year period. Yet some small rural districts are managing to recycle thousands of tonnes. When my noble friend the Minister replies, can he say why he thinks that there is such an uneven rate of success among local authorities? I know, and I agree, that normally Governments should be hands-off with local authorities, but this seems a particular case where encouragement and guidance really does not seem to have achieved much.

I am glad that the report’s final conclusion is that a voluntary approach is sound for now but that in five years’ time, if nothing has changed, it might need to be followed up by legislation. That was certainly underlined by my experience earlier in the week when I visited Brussels. My visit was the culmination of a report from the Industry and Parliament Trust, the Food Ethics Council and Warwick University, called *The Long and the Short of It*, which is about sustainable food supply chains. Among other things, we too found, as this committee’s report mentions in paragraph 212, that the DGs need to improve their co-ordination enormously. We were pleased to hear that at least the new Commission, even though it has been in place only for a short time, has already set up two horizontal working groups between environment and agriculture. Perhaps we can look forward to some more.

We also concluded that much of the investment, focus and drive for more sustainable food chains come largely from the private sector, and that it is the public sector that needs to catch up. However, for the debate today we received a briefing from the BRC that was helpful but struck me as slightly complacent. I would not like to think that the private sector was beginning to coast just because the public sector has a lot of catching up to do.

It is important to practise what you preach, and here in the House of Lords we are vigorously pursuing the reduction path. Other noble Lords have mentioned the importance of the hierarchy. There is currently a food waste audit under way that is to report by Christmas. Our catering manager believes, correctly, that you need to know where the various elements of waste are arising, whether in preparation, uneaten portions or food offered but not chosen, before you can go for further reduction. The audit will give our catering department the tools to make us among the most sustainable restaurant categories with regard to waste. Currently, our food waste, which used to go for incineration, goes to an AD plant. I agree with the noble Lord, Lord Whitty, that it is better for it to go to AD than nothing but that it is better for it not to be wasted in the first place.

6.34 pm

Lord Trees (CB): My Lords, I am delighted to be able to speak in this debate. I am a member of the committee now, but I was not at the time the report was produced. I feel very strongly about the subject. As someone who had a Yorkshire father and a Scottish mother, the idea of using precious resources sensibly, which we used to call thrift, is in my genes. The fact that I was not a member of the committee when it produced the report also allows me to praise it as a valuable and timely analysis of an important subject.

[LORD TREES]

With a rapidly expanding global population and evolving demands for a more varied diet, we cannot afford the profligacy of waste at the scale emphasised by the noble Baroness, Lady Scott, in her introduction. To reduce waste by, say, 10% is equivalent to increasing the production of food by 10%. I suggest that it would be a lot easier to do that. Reducing waste is, to use an appropriate metaphor, “the low hanging fruit” that will help to address the global food supply issues that the noble Lord, Lord Cameron, mentioned earlier.

As the introduction to our EU report says, in the EU, some 89 million tonnes of all food produced each year never reaches the human stomach. It is not surprising that other responsible bodies have also been concerned with this. I acknowledge the report by the Institution of Mechanical Engineers, referred to earlier by the noble Lord, Lord Cameron, entitled *Global Food, Waste not, Want not*, published in 2013. It identified three broad types of emerging societies: fully developed, post-industrial societies with stable or declining populations, such as in Europe; late-stage developing societies currently industrialising rapidly, such as China; and newly developing nations, at an early stage in industrialisation and high population growth, such as a number of states in Africa. The report also observed, interestingly, that there is a relationship between the socioeconomic status of a country and the proportion of food waste which occurs in different stages of the food supply chain. In short, as countries develop and better control losses in the primary production stages, a higher proportion of waste occurs further along the progress of food from farm to fork. Thus, in Europe, the highest proportion of food waste—as highlighted in our report—occurs in the household. Some 42% of all food waste occurs in the household. Not surprisingly, if we look at UK statistics, the proportion is, by coincidence, exactly the same—42%.

This is a shocking statistic and I want to concentrate on this aspect—waste in the home. What is particularly worrying, as has been alluded to earlier, is that the waste involves not just the tonnage of food discarded—some 7 million tonnes of food and drink in the UK each year. It is axiomatic that, because the food is wasted at the end of the supply chain, not only is the food per se wasted, but all the resources that went into processing, transporting, packaging, distributing and retailing are also wasted.

To look at it in another way, in the UK, where there is huge competition for land use in the finite space of these isles, if we eliminated the current level of all food waste, we could have available as much as another 2 million hectares of land for other vital purposes. This is 11.6% of the total utilised agricultural area currently in the UK. Incidentally, this is an area equivalent to—I have not made this up—the area of Wales.

So what can be done about this? The great opportunity about household waste is that fairly simple and cheap measures can help hugely. We do not need laws or regulation. Information, education and a few technical aids could help enormously, together with publicising the real economic benefits to the consumer. Collectively, these initiatives could provide the incentive for a modification in behaviour.

On the economics of this issue, in 2012 the average household with children could save almost £60 a month—equivalent to £700 a year—through efficient use of the food available in our shops and supermarkets. I appreciate that modern life is hectic and that families tend to eat together less and in a less planned way, but a key to avoiding food wastage in the household, I suggest, is planning meals and menu planning. There are other benefits in promoting family eating—for health and social cohesion as well as reducing waste.

I enjoy cooking and I do quite a lot of our household cooking when I am at home, although I do not think that I will be doing any tonight when I get home at about 11.30. It is quite relaxing, but the really irksome bit—as I am sure those of your Lordships who are responsible for putting food on the table agree—is the menu planning. The question is always, “What are we going to eat next week?”. So often, we buy food in the shops that we fancy and then we try to provide meals throughout the week with what is in the fridge. However, we all know that that can lead to a lot of waste.

I am not a techie but what I would love is an app that carries a database to which I can add all my favourite menus and all the attendant recipes. I could use it to choose menus for a week ahead. However, what I would really like the app to do is, at the press of a button, combine all the recipes and give me the shopping list of everything that I need for that week: the potatoes, the fresh cream and so on. In fact, I have discovered that the UK Waste and Resources Action Programme, or WRAP, which has been referred to a great deal during the debate, has developed just such an app called Love Food Hate Waste. I have only just learnt that through studying our report and preparing for this speech. It is a great and underused tool which, I suggest, deserves to be publicised and promoted widely.

In concluding, I should like to ask the Minister what other measures by way of public information, education and encouragement the Government have in progress to promote menu planning in our society. Such measures could provide a low-cost, easily deliverable means of achieving a substantial reduction in the appalling level of household food waste. Let us do all we can to help people to eat better, and to save time, save money and save waste.

6.42 pm

Lord Grantchester (Lab): I welcome the report that the noble Baroness, Lady Scott, has presented so eloquently to the House. It is very important. Food waste has many impacts throughout the food chain, with economic, environmental and social implications. Perhaps as much as a third of all food grown is wasted, from the field to the dinner plate. I declare my interest as a dairy farmer, with experience of the processing and manufacturing of ingredients as well as food retailing.

In the report, the noble Baroness, Lady Scott, challenged the Government on the hierarchy of waste, suggesting that human food waste be channelled into animal feed. This was echoed by the noble Baronesses, Lady Jenkin and Lady Byford. While I recognise the good intentions behind these remarks, the fact is that

the regulations covering such recycling arose out of lessons learnt from previous disasters. I urge the Government to proceed extremely carefully so that unnecessary risks with animal health are not taken.

The report identifies that waste is now a major public policy issue that must be addressed at the levels of primary production, processing, manufacturing and retailing, as well as within the household. The committee is to be congratulated on the clear focus of the report. There is so much content to discuss that it is difficult to do it justice in the time available.

The report is correct to point out that the challenge of agreeing adequate definitions in order to set parameters within which to monitor waste in itself highlights the issue and encourages response measures. The difficulties that impinge on the quality of available data at all levels underline that voluntary action is the best course and that waste monitoring and data collection must be effectively resourced across the EU.

The noble Baroness, Lady Parminter, is correct to point out that companies also have the responsibility to provide environmental reports with their company results. It is also imperative that the challenges posed by this report are answered with aspirational targets set at EU level to focus member states' attention and co-ordination.

The report detected no systematic attempt across the European Commission to assess the impact of its policies on food waste. It recommended the establishment of a cross-departmental working group on the issue. The Government did not give a very adequate response to these remarks. Has the Minister any initiative to report in this respect? As the new CAP measures are finally agreed, what are the Government doing to encourage the new European Commission to publish a five-year strategy on food waste prevention and to address many of the issues raised throughout the inquiry, to ensure that best practice identified in one member state can be translated into effective action elsewhere?

The Government's response to the report referred to the new rural development programme and how it could be used to accelerate research under the agricultural technologies strategy. However, can the Minister confirm whether increasing efficiency, which could well be interpreted in ways that could include waste reduction, is allowable under CAP farm support generally and will not be barred as constituting direct production support? There could well be an opportunity here to reduce losses and the disconnect up the food supply chain.

Within the UK, the Waste and Resources Action Programme—WRAP—has an invaluable role and has been identified by many speakers tonight. The noble Lord, Lord Cameron, highlighted that, within the UK, there is a high risk of a false economy if the cuts to WRAP funding to support waste prevention ultimately lead to resource inefficiency in terms of economic costs to businesses and households and environmental costs for greenhouse gas emissions, water and energy consumption. Although the Government's response highlighted the good work they are undertaking, in conjunction with WRAP, in encouraging best practice in recycling and working with councils to make food recycling more convenient for residents, does the Minister

agree that cutting funding, without assessing the impact, will send out completely the wrong signal and undermine progress? Although the Government can identify areas in which to step back, is this not one where it is far from clear that businesses are better placed to act? Does the Minister identify waste prevention as revealing clear market failure?

The Government's response welcomed the committee's support for the Groceries Supply Code of Practice and the Groceries Code Adjudicator. The response clarified that the jurisdiction of the GCA extends only to direct suppliers to the large retailers, and this was mentioned tonight by my noble friend Lord Whitty. However, it is often the late cancellation of orders, especially in the fresh produce sector, where suppliers are most critical of the unfair relationship with retailers. Might it not be an aspect of the adjudicator's role to monitor this sort of action which, even if compensated by the retailer, could have a large impact on waste prevention?

The report identifies the excellent progress made by retailers reducing unnecessary packaging and co-ordinating action through the Courtauld commitment. My noble friend Lord Whitty underlined that retailers can assume a far greater responsibility for the prevention of food waste in the chain as well as in the home. Retailers must ensure that incentives and promotions offered to consumers do not transfer waste from the store to the household.

The report suggests, as have speakers throughout tonight's debate, that food labelling remains confusing to consumers. Would the Minister agree that the food information for consumers regulation remains work in progress and in urgent need of clarification and communication to the consumer? What plan does the Minister's department have to take this forward? Does he agree that it is confusing that there is still a lack of adoption of the agreed terms?

The report has clearly identified that there is much to be achieved and it provides a critical assessment of the milestones ahead. It is to be commended on its identification of challenges to policy implementation, to which the EU and member states must respond. The members of the committee who have spoken tonight bear testament to the importance of the inquiry for the House's consideration.

6.50 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Lord De Mauley) (Con): My Lords, by 2030 a rising global population is expected to mean that demand for food will have increased by 50%. Food waste requires urgent action across Europe and throughout the world, as several noble Lords have said. A third of the food produced globally is wasted, which is about 90 million tonnes in Europe and 1.3 billion tonnes globally. We must address this if we are to mitigate the increasing demand for food and resources around the world.

I welcome and am grateful for the committee's report and the direction in which it points as to where we need to take action. It makes an important contribution to the whole subject of food waste and provides some helpful recommendations. It is timely because, as noble

[LORD DE MAULEY]

Lords know, the Commission is undertaking a review of the revised waste framework directive. Indeed, we do need to work together across Europe to reduce waste. We have now seen the EU Commission's proposal on food waste, which we broadly welcome. As noble Lords have said, the UK has already taken concerted action to reduce food waste over a number of years, and is recognised as a world leader in food waste prevention through the work of WRAP.

We have built up extensive knowledge in measuring and understanding how to reduce food waste, and a mark of how WRAP's advice is recognised is through its input to EU projects such as FUSIONS, work by the World Resources Institute and UNEP. The UK's approach is being used as a case study for the OECD. We are pressing to ensure that the Commission's target to reduce food waste by 30% recognises our early action. We are currently undertaking an analysis on how any such target might be reached, and its potential impact on the UK.

UK householders waste 7 million tonnes of food—that is £12.5 billion of food per year, which is about £60 a month for an average family. Of that, £5.5 billion is due to food not used in time. Food is also wasted across the supply chain—roughly 4 million tonnes in manufacturing, 0.5 million tonnes in food retail and 1 million tonnes in the hospitality sector. We all know that we ought to be wasting much less food. Food wasted means that we have fewer pounds in our pocket and the energy and water used to produce and transport the food has been wasted. Most people want to do something about food waste and we are taking steps to help them do that. Food waste was identified as a priority nearly a decade ago for my department, and the UK has taken early action. It remains a cornerstone of WRAP's work and a priority for future work addressing the whole waste hierarchy for food.

The first step of this work was the launch of the Courtauld commitment in 2005—a voluntary agreement with the grocery sector. Under this agreement all the main supermarkets and food manufacturers signed up to targets and action on food and packaging waste in the supply chain and in households. While initially focusing on packaging, a food waste target was introduced in 2007. Over the first two phases of the Courtauld commitment we have seen that: 2.9 million tonnes of waste with a value of £4 billion was prevented; packaging was reduced by 1 million tonnes; and UK annual household food waste decreased by 15%—1.3 million tonnes—between 2007 and 2012. The third phase of the Courtauld commitment is under way, running until the end of 2015, and we expect it to prevent just over 1 million tonnes of waste, with additional savings of £1.6 billion and to lead to a total reduction of household food waste of 20% since 2007.

Running alongside the Courtauld commitment has been the Love Food Hate Waste campaign, providing ideas and information to help households waste less. Around half of food waste is produced by households. We have evidence of increasing positive behaviours among consumers, such as checking cupboards before shopping, making shopping lists and planning meals.

In addition, we have diversified our approach to include the hospitality and food service sector, launching the voluntary hospitality and food service agreement in 2012. There are over 170 signatories and supporters with ambitious targets to reduce the amount of food waste that they produce, and to manage it better by recycling and sending food for anaerobic digestion to produce energy.

In response to my noble friends Lady Scott and Lady Byford, we have also worked with industry to move to a simpler date-labelling system, with the phasing out of “display until” or “sell by” dates. As the committee recommended, the guidance on the Food Information Regulations is now available on the Food Standards Agency website, and will be further improved and moved to the GOV.UK website by the end of the year.

Related to this, the noble Lord, Lord Whitty, referred to “buy one, get one free” deals. The majority of promotions are temporary price reductions; examples include “was £8, now £6” or “three for £10”. “Buy one, get one free” deals are often on non-perishable items or items with long lives. WRAP works with retailers to encourage alternative promotions for perishable foods. This approach enables consumers to make savings, but still buy the amounts or range of food that are right for them.

The Product Sustainability Forum, which is a collaboration of organisations made up of grocery retailers and suppliers, academics, NGOs and Government, works to measure, improve and communicate the environmental performance of grocery products, using a farm-to-fork approach. This included a project on potatoes that identified points in the whole value chain where waste was created and how it could be reduced. We have also commissioned research to improve our understanding of wastage on farm, as I know the committee's report has recommended a need to look into this sector.

Action has been taken to ensure that surplus food can be redistributed to people before being put to any other use. While the committee's report has recommended the need for fiscal measures, WRAP advises that a financial incentive already exists, the redistribution and collection costs being on average cheaper than collection costs and gate fees when sending to anaerobic digestion. The industry working group that we convened has been identifying other barriers and then solutions. The result of this was the publication in March of new research, case studies and guiding principles to enable the industry to redistribute more food.

My noble friend Lady Scott, among others, asked about feeding waste to animals. If not suitable for people, some food waste may indeed be fed to animals. As the committee's report has recommended, there is a need to seek to increase this. As noble Lords know, there are strict EU regulations governing this, but in response to the noble Lord, Lord Grantchester, we have commissioned further research to examine the risks to determine whether that approach is still appropriate. WRAP also produced guidance, published in September, to demonstrate that some food, such as bread, cakes, confectionary and cheese, would be permitted for this purpose, and set out the economic case for doing so.

The noble Lords, Lord Whitty, Lord Cameron, and Lord Grantchester, among others, asked about WRAP funding. I am on record as being a huge fan of WRAP and endorse the supportive comments of noble Lords. We worked closely with WRAP and key stakeholders, particularly those in the industry, to ensure that the activities that we fund are targeted and making a critical difference to business performance. WRAP has stepped back from work in areas such as construction and demolition waste, where market failures have already largely been addressed; the industry is now recovering a large amount of the materials used through re-use and recycling.

Food waste, however, remains an area where market failures still exist, as the noble Lord, Lord Grantchester, said. So we continue to support WRAP for this work at a level of funding that is broadly similar to that before the review. WRAP will continue to deliver priority projects such as Courtauld, the hospitality agreement and Love Food Hate Waste. It will also develop an ambitious post-2015 programme of work.

The noble Lord, Lord Cameron, spoke of wastage in developing countries. I agree that this is an important area. He mentioned research that this country funds and he knows of our agritech strategy, in which DfID is a key participant department. Some £10 million of the funding in that strategy is targeted at developing countries. Indeed, technology could make dramatic improvements in efficiency and bear down on waste.

In response to a question from my noble friend Lady Scott, Defra has been working with the Commission and other member states on the Commission's communication on sustainable food. The publication of the communication has to be a decision for the new Commission—and I have to say, it is early days.

My noble friend Lady Scott and the noble Lords, Lord Whitty and Lord Grantchester, referred to the Groceries Code Adjudicator and whether she could make a difference in this area. The Groceries Supply Code of Practice aims to prevent retailers from transferring excessive risk to their suppliers through unreasonable business practices—that is what it is about. Two of its conditions cover wastage and forecasting errors, clarifying the conditions on which compensation for these may be sought. The greater certainty provided to suppliers and the role that the Groceries Code Adjudicator will play may indeed help to reduce waste.

My noble friend Lady Parminter asked about the reporting of retailers' figures. Retailers currently report their food waste figures through the Courtauld commitment. We are working with WRAP and industry partners to develop a collaborative framework for the reduction of waste throughout the food chain. This framework will continue the good work of Courtauld and will be the place for the continued reporting of food waste.

The noble Lord, Lord Trees, asked about publicising Love Food Hate Waste. Information on choosing,

cooking and eating a healthy diet is provided via NHS Choices, including the Change4Life social marketing campaign and guidance on healthier and more sustainable catering. The “eatwell plate” displays the proportions and types of foods that should be eaten as part of a healthy lifestyle. The Government's Change4Life programme provides tools and resources that incentivise and encourage behaviour change; for example, the Meal Mixer app has been downloaded more than 1 million times and contains hundreds of quick, healthy and affordable family recipes.

Some noble Lords asked about collection at local authority level. We have no plans to compel councils to adopt household food waste collections, but WRAP has been working in seven local authority areas to understand methods to maximise resident participation in food waste collections and ensure that all non-preventable food waste is recycled. Early indications are that there are a number of affordable interventions that local authorities can adopt to maximise take-up of existing schemes. WRAP will be providing updated guidance for local authorities in December.

To the extent that I have not answered noble Lords' questions, perhaps I might write. The committee's report included a recommendation on the need to work with WRAP to deliver a whole-supply-chain approach. I agree that there is a need for policy and action to evolve to tackle food waste across the whole value chain and I recognise the close relationship between food waste, food security and sustainability. That is why we have been working closely with WRAP in its development of proposals for an initiative that looks at how the food we produce and eat can be more sustainable and secure and where waste can be further reduced. This is more than a mere successor to Courtauld 3 but it will continue and expand that work, and put the onus on industry to take greater ownership. This project should influence global supply chains and could therefore have an impact in the EU and beyond.

That work demonstrates the knowledge we have developed and the tried and tested approaches that we have delivered, and is a model that we encourage others across the EU to take up. This action demonstrates the good work that has already been done and is currently happening, but we are looking to the future to develop a strategic and long-term approach to reducing food waste.

Draft Protection of Charities Bill

Message from the Commons

A message was brought from the Commons that they concur that it is expedient that a Joint Committee of Lords and Commons be appointed to consider the draft Protection of Charities Bill presented to both Houses on 22 October 2014 (Cm 8954), and that the Committee should report on the draft Bill by 28 February 2015.

House adjourned at 7.03 pm.

Grand Committee

Thursday, 6 November 2014.

Deregulation Bill

Committee (5th Day)

2 pm

Relevant documents: 4th Report from the Constitution Committee, 14th Report (Session 2013–14) from the Joint Committee on Human Rights and 5th and 9th Reports from the Delegated Powers Committee

Clause 45: Management of child trust funds: looked after children

Amendment 62C

Moved by **Lord Tunncliffe**

62C: Clause 45, page 37, line 21, at end insert—

“(5) Under the provisions of the Child Trust Funds Act 2004, the Secretary of State must issue guidance on the support to be provided to account holders when they reach the age of 18 by local authorities and persons authorised to manage a child trust fund for looked after children under section 3(10) of that Act.”

Lord Tunncliffe (Lab): My Lords, in moving Amendment 62C, I shall speak also to Amendments 62D and 62E. There are four clauses—Clauses 45, 46, 47 and 48—about child trust funds and they are so exciting that, at Second Reading, the Minister devoted two lines in *Hansard* to them, to call our attention to the fact that they were there. I hope the Committee will forgive me if, so that my amendments and remarks make sense, I outline the clauses and what they do. I hope the Minister will correct me if I make any errors.

The four clauses concern child trust funds. The first, Clause 45, is about looked-after children and changes the sole manager from being the Official Solicitor to others. Clause 46 is about child trust funds and the role of 16 and 17 year-olds. Clause 47 is about transfers and child trust funds morphing, for want of a better word, into junior ISAs. Clause 48 is the wonderful clause that creates the capacity for enormous regulation, right in the heart of a deregulation Bill—more of that later.

I start with Clause 45, which relates solely to looked-after children. We know that looked-after children are some of the most disadvantaged—probably the most disadvantaged—young people in our society. In some ways, they are a group of people of whom we, as a society, should be ashamed because of the paucity of their outcomes. We know from recent publicity that they are the subject of sexual predation and that they generally, in education, work and so on, have very poor outcomes. When child trust funds were invented in 2003 and introduced in 2004, the Government committed to ensuring that looked-after children would participate in them. In the period within which those children born became eligible for child trust funds—from 2004 to 2011—some 9,000 looked-after children got child trust funds.

To remind the Committee, child trust funds were funds to which the Government made an initial payment. That fund became the property of the child and was managed so that they did not have access to it until they were 18. In general, a parent looked after the management until the child reached the age of 16. However, in 2011 the present coalition Government decided that child trust funds could no longer be afforded but, in a little-known act of generosity, created junior ISAs so that looked-after children would have an equivalent benefit. It is rare for me to find an opportunity to praise the Government but, in this case, I am reluctantly forced to do so.

I do not know whether it was the creation of junior ISAs that led to the creation of the Share Foundation but it is the organisation that manages junior ISAs. It is a third sector organisation and, while it is difficult to judge from just looking it up on the internet, from everything I can find out about it, it seems a thoroughly excellent organisation. It does the management role, but it is also a charity that tries to get contributions to child trust funds for disadvantaged children. As far as I can see, it is to be admired.

The regulations under which child trust funds were set up stated essentially that where there was not a parent or guardian—where the child was a looked-after child—the manager had to be the Official Solicitor. The language of this clause makes it sound as though other people could become the manager. In practice, as far as I can tell from the facts and from the debate in the Commons, effectively the only other manager would be the Share Foundation, because it is a third sector organisation that has shown skill in those areas.

My Amendment 62C is a probing amendment. Essentially, it looks not at the commendable improvement in flexibility, which we support, but at the fundamental dilemma of the whole concept of the child trust fund: what does the child do with the money at 18? The Minister in the other place suggested that one of the possibilities might be to throw a big party. He also implied that that might be a regrettable outcome. We all want every child to act responsibly when they have the benefit of the child trust fund, and take control of it, at the age of 18. Our probing amendment seeks the agreement of the Government that a proper objective of government is ensuring that children have the education and skills to act responsibly.

The amendment seeks to understand what guidance the Government intend to give to local authorities and account providers to advise them on how to deal with this task of helping children to act responsibly. In responding to this, I wonder whether the Minister—I pause to check that I have his attention—might focus on the particular question of looked-after children. What general guidance will the Government give to try to ensure that looked-after children have financial training as they approach 18? As we all know, one of the problems with looked-after children is the precipice they face at 18, as they fall from one area of responsibility to another. It is a period when they particularly need financial education. The Minister might want to comment on that, as it was also the topic of a short debate in the other place on the general context of how all children

[LORD TUNNICLIFFE]
are educated financially in the later years of their schooling, to prepare them for the difficult world of money.

Turning to Clause 46, we have no amendments. The clause merely gives some flexibility. The present regulations require 16 and 17 year-olds to take responsibility for the management of their child trust fund. This is a sensible piece of deregulation, permitting—if the child so wishes—the parent or guardian to continue responsibility. It is, dare I say, a sensible piece of deregulation.

I turn next to Clause 47, with which goes our Amendment 62D. The clause concerns the transfer of child trust funds into junior ISAs. However, it could never be that simple, could it? Anyone who cares to read the appropriate definition and looks for the words “junior ISA” will not find them; they will find the words “protected child account”. My understanding is that the rest of the world refers to these things as junior ISAs. If I have that wrong, I hope the Minister will tell me.

Assuming I have that wrong, the regulation addresses the issue whereby if you were born between particular dates—I think they are 2004 and 2011, roughly—you get a child trust fund and you cannot have a junior ISA. If you were born outside that time, you do not get a child trust fund but you can choose to have a junior ISA. In many ways, a junior ISA is much like any other ISA. Its essential feature is that it is a tax-advantaged savings product that can roll into the next year and not count against the limit. In fact, it is an ISA for which the manager is a parent or guardian. The two options this clause allows are for the child trust fund to be converted into a junior ISA or, at the age of 18, for the child trust fund to continue and remain in its tax-advantaged situation. That is how I read it and I hope I have it right. I assume that is because the present legislation is a bit woolly about what happens at 18 because 18 will not happen until 2020, and we have only just got around to thinking about what to do about it, but that is good. That is not a criticism; it is good to tidy things up.

The issues of flexibility, choice and competition are prayed in aid of this, and that is probably fair enough. The desire is that this choice and competition should improve the market for these products. Amendment 62D probes that to see how much the Government have thought this through and what their expectations are. The essential question behind the amendment is about the extent to which the Government intend to promote competition between providers. Are they going to go out actively to do that? Are they going to promote competition between child trust funds and junior ISAs or between junior ISAs? We all know that you can create a system of rules whereby financial instruments can move from one description or firm to another, but we also know that the ease with which that can be done varies radically between different financial instruments. I am interested in the extent to which the Government will be looking to make any such competition easy so that there is a genuinely competitive market. I hope that in answering that question, the Minister will be able to give some indication of the discussions he has had with providers about ways to improve competition.

Finally, Amendment 62E relates to Clause 48, which is an absolute delight to somebody like me. I, unlike the party opposite, do not think that every regulation is a bad thing. I believe that good regulation is the essence of a civilised society. Good regulation is a good thing. It is great that the coalition Government recognise this by creating a clause that allows them to make just about any regulation conceivable about child trust funds. Indeed, I really enjoy the language. If I go to page 38, new Section 7C(1) states:

“The Treasury may make regulations under this section if the Treasury think it appropriate”—

I love the word “appropriate” as it means “I have not got a decent argument”—

“to do so for the purpose of safeguarding the financial interests of children, or any group of children, who hold child trust funds”.

New subsection (3) states:

“The regulations may authorise the Treasury to require any account provider or any account provider that is prescribed, or of a description prescribed, in the regulations to take one or more of the following steps in relation to every child trust fund held with it”.

That seems to me to be a description of everything. The most draconian of all the steps thereafter is to,

“to transfer an amount in cash representing the value of all the investments under the fund (whether consisting of cash or stocks and shares) to a protected child account that can be used for investments in cash and is provided by a person specified by—

wait for it—“the Treasury”. The Treasury will be able to make any rules to move anything about to anybody.

2.15 pm

The unlimited extent of these powers takes one’s breath away when one gets to new subsection (7), which states:

“The Treasury is not liable in respect of ... a decision made by it as to the person to be specified in a requirement of a kind mentioned in subsection (3)(d)”.

As I understand it—once again, the Minister will correct me if I am wrong—the parliamentary procedure to which the new Section is subject is that of negative resolution. Our amendment does not resist this new Section, because, at the end of the day, we do not really know when we set up a competitive market what the outcomes might be, but we want to see consultation and to be given a feel, as far as possible today, as to the circumstances in which Her Majesty’s Government would intervene.

Of course, the track record of this industry in the most general terms is hardly good. We have had many mis-selling scandals, the closest example perhaps being that of pensions, so I can see that there will be some circumstances when intervention is needed, but it would be good to know which circumstances the Government had in mind in creating this capability for regulation. What do they think is the correct level of interference in the market? When and whom will they consult before they make any regulations? Why will it be Her Majesty’s Treasury and not the FCA that does it? Do they anticipate making any special preparations for 2020, when these funds start to mature and, as some have speculated, possibly produce particular disturbances in the market?

Our amendments are designed to probe. I hope that the Minister can answer some of my questions, but I realise that this is not a general but rather a specialist subject and I entirely accept that he may have to write. We support the initiatives. I ask the Minister to write very carefully, because my objective is not to make this speech again on Report. Therefore, I would like answers that fully satisfy my concerns. Our interests are in financial education, the effectiveness of the market and where intervention might be necessary. I beg to move.

Lord Wallace of Saltaire (LD): My Lords, I thank the noble Lord for that speech and I am glad that he has so much enjoyed reading the details of Clause 48. I confirm that his understanding of these clauses is by and large correct.

The Government are most concerned, of course, about looked-after children. As I understand it, the change in the 2011 Act was introduced partly as a result of pressure from within the House of Lords, so we were doing our job properly at that time—I do not know who was involved in it; certainly, I was not myself. I am also told that a number of charitable bodies and philanthropists have in some instances added to these new junior ISAs for looked-after children, which seems to us to be a good public benefit and a step forward. That is very much part of where we are. The move to junior ISAs allows for a more flexible system, and it is expected that better-to-do parents and, speaking personally, better-to-do grandparents should contribute to junior ISAs when they can afford to do so. One is therefore most concerned about disadvantaged children.

The remainder of the clause concerns the transitional impact as one moves from child trust funds to junior ISAs; I wrote a note to the noble Lord, Lord Kennedy of Southwark, yesterday. Part of the transition is what happens to existing trust fund organisations, which may include credit unions, as much of the money is taken out. At a certain level, there is a point at which the scheme might become unviable. The Government are very concerned about those transition issues.

Financial education is a particular issue for looked-after children, but it is a broader issue for all children. This is why financial education now forms a part of the compulsory national curriculum in England in citizenship classes, which should teach 11 to 16 year-olds the functions and uses of money. Budgeting, managing risk and financial mathematics are also included in the maths curriculum for this age group. The noble Lord might say—I would probably agree with him—that we all know, and have often debated in this House, the inadequacies of citizenship education so far. There is clearly a long way to go. That is something on which I suspect that, again, the House of Lords in its revising role should keep exerting pressure on schools to make sure that citizenship education continues to improve. Of course, the child trust fund and the junior ISA provide an excellent way of increasing a child's financial capacity and to learn about the role of savings, mortgages, trusts and the like.

The second amendment was about junior ISAs and protected child accounts. My understanding is that the reason for using “protected child accounts” rather

than “junior ISAs” is that, as we have often discovered, the exact names of financial instruments may change over the years, but they will continue to be protected child accounts even if they are later renamed from junior ISAs to something else. That is the simple reason for that. At the moment, we are of course talking about junior ISAs. The question about the transition from one to the other is well taken. We are of course concerned to provide the maximum amount of competition. If the noble Lord is not satisfied with anything I have had to say on this point, I am happy to write to him further on that. One wants a range of providers. We want, however, to make sure that the providers are viable and have sufficient financial reserves.

The noble Lord asked about the Financial Conduct Authority. I can answer with reference to both of these amendments: the FCA has a crucial role in ensuring that account holders are treated fairly, but its remit does not extend to making detailed changes to the child trust fund account rules. Such changes will be required if the safeguards envisaged in Clause 48 are applied. Changes to the CTF rules are most appropriately brought before Parliament by Her Majesty's Treasury. I am sorry that the noble Lord is so suspicious of Her Majesty's Treasury—I picked up on that—which has been responsible for the development of child trust funds and the detailed account rules since the account was created.

I think that the noble Lord was most concerned about Clause 48, which is again about making sure that, as we go through the transition, which he rightly points out will be from 2020 to 2029, we guard against any untoward developments. That is why Clause 48 is there: it is very much precautionary. It is intended to ensure that if things that we have not yet anticipated come along, the Government are able to respond. We consider it prudent to seek these powers, given the background of uncertainty about the impact of transferability on the child trust fund market. We do not know—and I cannot speculate on at the moment—what action the Government may need to take in this area or the timescale for such an intervention. However, if it became necessary to use these powers, the Government would have to act promptly and appropriately. Therefore, we felt that we should include this measure, with the proviso that it would be subject to the usual public law safeguards. The overriding interest would be to safeguard the interests of the trust fund holder.

The Government's usual approach is to consult on changes to the child trust fund rules where possible. However, while the Government will always look to consult and engage interested groups wherever possible, they must also be free to intervene at short notice in response to market conditions. I hope that provides the reassurance the noble Lord seeks.

Lord Tunnicliffe: Will the Minister be kind enough to comment on the parliamentary involvement?

Lord Wallace of Saltaire: I had better write to the noble Lord on that. However, I understand exactly what he is asking and can assure him that I will feed back to him precisely what role Parliament will have in overseeing any such necessary interventions. Having

[LORD WALLACE OF SALTAIRE] said that, I hope that the noble Lord will withdraw the amendment, and perhaps he and I might have a further discussion off the Floor of the Committee about the exact areas on which he would like further reassurance.

Lord Tunnicliffe: My Lords, I thank the Minister for that response. I will read it in *Hansard* with great care and compare our two contributions. I will certainly get back to him if I feel that there are any inadequacies. However, for the moment, I beg leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment 62C withdrawn.

Clause 45 agreed.

Clauses 46 and 47 agreed.

Amendment 62D not moved.

Clause 48: Child trust funds: safeguards for children's interests

Amendment 62E not moved.

Clause 48 agreed.

Clause 49 agreed.

Schedule 13: Abolition of office of the Chief Executive of Skills Funding

Amendment 63

Moved by Lord Wallace of Saltaire

63: Schedule 13, page 155, line 26, leave out ““Chief Executive” substitute “Secretary of State”” and insert “the words from “The” to “facilities” substitute “The Secretary of State must secure the provision of such facilities as the Secretary of State considers appropriate”

Lord Wallace of Saltaire: My Lords, I wish to move this largely technical amendment briefly. It does not alter practice very considerably.

The Government have tabled seven amendments to Schedule 13. Schedule 13 gives effect to Clause 49 of the Bill, which deals with the abolition of the statutory office of chief executive of skills funding, as established by Part 4 of the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009. The chief executive of skills funding is the head of the Skills Funding Agency, which is an executive agency of BIS.

As a result of the abolition of this office, the powers and functions that are currently exercised by the chief executive of skills funding in respect of education and training for adults aged 19 or over and all apprenticeships will in future be exercised by the Secretary of State. I hope noble Lords are aware that we are now approaching 2 million apprenticeships, with which we are extremely satisfied.

Schedule 13 therefore removes the provisions of the 2009 Act that create the office of chief executive, and transfers or amends the current duties of the chief executive so that these duties will in future apply, as

appropriate, to the Secretary of State. The majority of responsibilities are transferred, with any necessary modifications, to the Secretary of State, including the funding powers set out in the 2009 Act. These amendments deal in detail with the transfer of the duties relating to the provision of facilities for education and training, and remove redundant provisions.

2.30 pm

Amendments 63 to 67 deal with Sections 86 and 87 of the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009, which relate to the provision of facilities for adult education and training. The effect of these amendments is to ensure that these duties are appropriate to the Secretary of State and to make consequential changes. In practical terms, the duties to secure the provision of facilities for education and training will continue to apply. However, in transferring the duties formally to the Secretary of State, these amendments recognise the wider remit and discretion of the Secretary of State and seek to reflect this more appropriately in the wording of the statute. By contrast, the current wording is appropriate to the chief executive, whose role as a creature of statute needed to be more closely specified.

Amendment 68 leaves out paragraphs 35 and 36 of Schedule 13, which are now unnecessary following the passage of the Further and Higher Education (Governance and Information) (Wales) Act 2014—with which I am sure all noble Lords are entirely familiar.

Amendment 69 inserts new paragraph 67 into the consequential amendments. These all relate to the Education Act 2011 and simply remove provisions that will become redundant with the passage of Schedule 13 and the amendments outlined above. I hope that provides sufficient information for this, as I say, largely technical set of amendments. I beg to move.

Lord Young of Norwood Green (Lab): My Lords, we do not oppose those amendments, which, as the Minister rightly said, are technical and relate to the decision to transfer the duties.

However, I can resist anything except temptation, as someone once said. I cannot resist responding to the point made about having created approaching 2 million apprenticeships. I welcome the Government's commitment to apprenticeships but I keep making the plea for that figure to be disaggregated. The Minister knows as well as I do that anywhere between 50% and 75% of those apprenticeships are over-25s and really ought to be described as re-skilled adults or adult apprenticeships. It is not that we reject the need to ensure that re-skilling takes place but a number of people have raised doubts about whether they really should qualify as apprenticeships.

Real progress has been made on apprenticeships but I wish we would refrain from quoting that figure as though it were the answer to all the problems. We still have a long way to go in increasing apprenticeships, and I shall quote the usual statistic: only one in five employers and a third of FTSE 100 companies have apprentices. Other than those comments, we are content to support the amendment.

Lord Wallace of Saltaire: Perhaps I may respond. A number of people over the age of 25 have indeed been through the apprenticeship scheme that I know best, in Bradford. I met a splendid woman who had been unemployed for 10 years before she came on to the scheme and is now training apprentices. That is worth while. My deep frustration, given that the scheme deals with the building and maintenance trades, is that we are not putting enough people through these schemes, and we know that part of the problem we face in the economy is that we are desperately short of skilled people in the construction industry. We need to expand such apprenticeship schemes still further.

Amendment 63 agreed.

Amendments 64 to 69

Moved by Lord Wallace of Saltaire

64: Schedule 13, page 155, line 27, leave out “subsection (3)” and insert “subsections (3), (4) and (8)”

65: Schedule 13, page 155, line 28, leave out sub-paragraph (4)

66: Schedule 13, page 155, line 34, leave out sub-paragraph (2) and insert—

“(2) In subsection (1), for the words from “The” to “facilities” substitute “The Secretary of State must secure the provision of such facilities as the Secretary of State considers appropriate”.

(2A) In subsection (3)(b), for “Chief Executive” substitute “Secretary of State”.

67: Schedule 13, page 155, line 36, leave out sub-paragraph (3) and insert—

“(3) Omit subsections (4) and (5).”

68: Schedule 13, page 158, line 34, leave out paragraphs 35 and 36

69: Schedule 13, page 161, line 19, at end insert—
“*Education Act 2011 (c.21)*”

67 In the Education Act 2011, omit the following—

(a) section 30(8);

(b) section 70;

(c) section 72;

(d) in Schedule 18, paragraphs 4 and 6.”

Amendments 64 to 69 agreed.

Schedule 13, as amended, agreed.

Clause 50 agreed.

Schedule 14: Further and higher education: reduction of burdens

Amendment 69A

Moved by Lord Young of Norwood Green

69A: Schedule 14, page 161, line 30, leave out paragraph 2

The Deputy Chairman of Committees (Baroness Andrews) (Lab): Before I call the noble Lord, Lord Young, it is agreed that there has been a mistake in the Marshalled List. The amendment should read, “Page 163, line 35, to leave out paragraph 8”.

Lord Young of Norwood Green: I welcome that clarification and apologise to the Committee for any confusion caused.

My Lords, Amendment 69A seeks to amend Schedule 14 to ensure that teachers at further education establishments have specified qualifications. It seems that there is a dichotomy in government policies: on the one hand, they stress the importance of vocational careers and apprenticeships—we heard the Minister pointing out the difficulties in some areas, such as construction—and the need to enhance public perception of young people, parents and teachers. Yet the schedule seeks to remove the requirement for teachers at further education institutions to have a specified qualification.

The Opposition are not alone in their concern. The City & Guilds institute, in written evidence to a consultation on the proposed revocation of further education teachers’ qualifications, said:

“City & Guilds wishes to see further exploration of the impact of removing the statutory requirements for Further Education (FE) sector teachers to have specific teaching qualifications at the same time as other changes resulting from the establishment of the Education and Teaching Foundation. The Sector faces uncertainties about the expectations for staff qualifications ... The Coalition Government’s *Skills for Sustainable Growth* made clear that a strong FE system should play a key role in social mobility. Qualitative evidence suggests that the 2007 Regulations had a big impact in relation to the FE sector. There has been a year-on-year increase in the proportion of staff with a teaching qualification at Level 5 or above and an increase in the overall proportion of teaching staff in FE colleges holding a recognised teaching qualification (at whatever level) since the introduction of the Regulations (an increase from 74% of staff in 2005-06 to 77% in 2009-10). The majority of teaching staff in FE colleges are either qualified or on the way to becoming qualified according to the most recent data (from late 2010, but including earlier returns for 25% of providers). The Deregulation Bill now puts responsibility on the FE sector to consolidate and improve this momentum, so the sector will need to define and establish clear direction on how it will sustain and enhance its professionalism ... City & Guilds is keen to ensure that the quality of FE teaching is maintained. ‘The quality of an education system cannot exceed the quality of its teachers. If we are committed to high quality vocational education, we must have teachers with the experience and skills to deliver it.’ It is vital for FE providers to strike the right balance in relation to teaching skills and industry/subject expertise within their workforce”.

Those closing points about striking the right balance between having specific qualifications and “industry/subject expertise” lie at the heart of this. I applaud the Government’s commitment to vocational training, but we question whether the schedule’s act of removing the need for teaching requirements is a step too far.

I go further and refer to the proposals of Labour’s independent Skills Taskforce, led by Professor Chris Husbands, director of the Institute of Education, and comprised of leading business and education experts. The work of the task force informs Labour’s shadow business and education teams. It feeds into Labour’s work and business policy commission, and its education and children policy commission.

Under the proposals put forward by the independent Skills Taskforce, colleges will apply to become institutes of technical education, specialising in technical subjects suited to their local labour markets and focusing on offering high-quality technical education to young people. Gaining a licence should be contingent on

[LORD YOUNG OF NORWOOD GREEN]

three core criteria: demonstrable specialist vocational training and expertise; strong employer and labour market links; and high-quality English and maths provision. I would add IT to that. Having a licence would allow these institutes to access funding streams to deliver the technical baccalaureate and off-the-job apprenticeship training. They will consult on the process for licensing colleges.

One option recommended by the Skills Taskforce is to give the UK Commission for Employment and Skills responsibility for determining the full criteria and method for awarding the licences. The report goes on to recommend that, under Labour, college lecturers would be required to obtain a teaching qualification to ensure that standards are high. This is in contrast to the policy of the previous Minister, Michael Gove, of allowing unqualified lecturers, and it is consistent with Labour's position of insisting on qualified teachers in schools.

All further education lecturers will have to become qualified to minimum standards, determined by the Education and Training Foundation. FE lecturers will need to have at least level 2 English and maths, which is surely not an unreasonable requirement. As part of a new agenda for the professional development of FE lecturers, they will also be required to spend time in industry to top up their skills and expertise. Again, I think that strikes the right balance—requiring a qualification plus the need to know what is going on in their particular industry.

Despite calls from industry, the Government have refused to back these steps. We believe that these bold new policies will build on Labour's agenda for those young people who choose not to go to university. It may not be an either/or decision; they may well go on to qualify for a degree later as a result of their technical education. These announcements follow a commitment made by Labour to dramatically increase the number of level 3 youth apprentices over the next five years. We will ask all firms that want a major government contract to provide high-quality apprenticeships for the next generation, in contrast to this Government's attitude of allowing public contracts to have no requirement for apprenticeships.

In closing, I ask the Minister whether there will be any guidance or criteria for FE colleges to consider when appointing teachers in the FE sector and encouraging their career and personal development. Surely all of us in this Committee know that we face a real challenge in meetings shortages of those skills that are vital to the development of industry and the growth of the economy. Quality further education which inspires students, parents, teachers and industry surely lies at the heart of the solution. I look forward to the Minister's response. I beg to move.

Baroness Perry of Southwark (Con): My Lords, I hesitate to contradict anything said by the noble Lord, Lord Young, because I know that his heart is absolutely in the same place as mine so far as vocational education is concerned. I also hesitate very much to go against anything said by the City & Guilds of London Institute, having been its vice-president for many years and then the chair of its quality and standards committee.

However, on this occasion I think that the amendment has got it wrong, and the way the Bill is currently drafted is right.

Let me explain why I think that. I started my own career teaching in further education, so I have worked alongside many people who taught courses in mechanical vehicle repairs and so on who were not qualified teachers and had no teaching qualification. However, they had a passionate commitment to the education and training of the young people for whom they were responsible. Very recently, I visited a further education college and went to see the construction course. I talked to a young man who I think was about 16 or 17, who told me quite openly that he had been truanting from school for many years and was not at all interested in it, but then he saw this course and decided that he would have a go. He absolutely loved it, and he was learning and upping his skills in maths and English and so on.

I then talked to the tutor on the course, who did not have a teaching qualification, but who told me that he himself had been very much like the young man who was now his student. He had played truant from school; he had “messed about”, as he put it. Finally, he had got himself an apprenticeship in the building trade, had worked his way up and become a foreman and had decided that he would go to night school and do some A-levels and so on. He had then sought and obtained a job as a teacher. He was not a qualified teacher, but he was a highly self-educated and aspirational young man, and deeply aspirational for the young students he was teaching.

We would deny to principals of further education colleges the freedom to offer jobs to people like that, who have all the right experience in terms of their knowledge of the industry and a deep commitment to bringing other young people along the path they have themselves followed. The 2002 Act says that it would prohibit the provision of education by a person who does not have that specified qualification. To insist that they have a teaching qualification, as well as all the other qualifications of experience and vocational qualifications, would make for a very sad day for further education. I beg the noble Lord to think again. I pass to him.

2.45 pm

Lord Young of Norwood Green: I ought to clarify that, as I thought I had made clear in my contribution, this is obviously a probing amendment in a way. We sought to oppose the removal of that particular paragraph, which specifies, as the noble Baroness, Lady Perry, rightly says, a particular teaching qualification. If the noble Baroness reflects on my contribution, however, she will note that we talked about a qualification—something like level 2 in English and maths.

I concur with the noble Baroness's point. I, too, have been to FE colleges. The one that stuck in my mind was teaching painting and decorating. They said that it used to be a hopeless course until they got the current teacher in, who had run his own successful business in painting and decorating for 20 years. What he did not know about sticking a piece of paper on a

wall—I say that ironically—was not worth knowing. He was an inspirational teacher, with much the same effect as that referred to by the noble Baroness.

This is in the nature of a probing amendment. My final point was to ask whether there would be any guidance and criteria. I hesitated to interrupt the noble Baroness, but I hope that that has been helpful.

Baroness Donaghy (Lab): My Lords, some noble Lords know that I spent 33 years at the University of London Institute of Education, so teacher training is in my blood. I support my noble friend on this amendment. I do not think there is any intention that we should not recognise some flexibility in the system for those who do not have a traditional academic background. I am sure that that is not what my noble friend meant.

Years ago, I was secretary to a committee of all 36 principals of teacher training colleges in the south-east of England; this was so long ago that some of them wore hats to the committee. Perhaps the noble Baroness, Lady Perry, also knows about a particular set of principals who were a formidable group of, mainly, women. Garnett College in the Roehampton area—the noble Baroness is nodding—trained mature entrants. It was a one-year course, mainly for technical education. To this day, I do not know why that college was closed; that was disgrace. It gave a chance to people who did not have a traditional background. They may have come from what were in those days called the colonies. There was a great tranche of administrators and officials coming from a lot of former African colonies looking for work in their 40s and 50s. There were also ex-service personnel and others who found work as teachers and managed to get an equivalence recognition of their background and experience before they entered the course.

Even for the main Senate House, there used to be a mature entrance system for 600 people a year, who would just have to pass a basic, opening gateway course, as I think they are called now—they were not called gateway courses in those days. It admitted 600 people a year for a shortened teacher training course. Again, it was people who had experience but no traditional academic background. So it cannot be beyond the wit of man or Governments to recreate that kind of system to allow for non-traditional entrants into the system. I firmly believe that we should not go backwards on requiring teacher training of some kind. In the health service, I often chair consultant appointment panels. One of the requirements for the successful applicant is that they should have gone on some teacher training and/or some leadership skills training. We insist on such standards for our consultants so that they can teach the next generation. It would be the height of irony if we should give a hint that we do not expect certain standards from our teachers.

I hope that the Government will rethink on this, if only to get some new thinking about how we train teachers in the non-traditional subjects and the more technical subjects, and how this will fit in with the university technical colleges developed by the noble Lord, Lord Baker of Dorking. This is an extremely important pathway into those colleges and we should

give some active thought to it. If we do not have the teachers trained to make those pupils fit for those technical colleges, we will be failing them at a very early age. With those words—I am delighted to see that the noble Baroness, Lady Thornton, is now here—I will sit down.

Noble Lords: Hear, hear!

Lord Wallace of Saltaire: The thought had not crossed the minds of any of us on this side of the Room that we might possibly be waiting for the noble Baroness, Lady Thornton; we, too, are very glad to see her here.

I do not think we are very far apart on this matter. I think we are all strongly in favour of good-quality teaching. We all recognise that in many of these practical areas people with practical experience also have a lot to offer, but that, as part of their development and encouraging them to become good teachers, it is quite useful these days to give them some teacher training—in spite of the fact that many of them may not want any.

May I declare a slightly embarrassed interest? I taught for 15 years in three successive universities without a single half-hour of training on how to be a teacher—which was the way one behaved in those days. What is more, I gained a prize at one stage for the quality of my teaching. I was rather relieved when, having spent 12 years in a think tank, I came back to universities and found that, although the University of Oxford did not think about training me to teach, the London School of Economics did. Since IT had become an important element in teaching, there were things that we really needed to know about how one handled a different student generation. No qualification was required, but there were some very good short courses on how to use teaching aids.

Thinking about my own university experience, I recall that the most popular course in my department at the London School of Economics was taught not by somebody who had come via the traditional route through universities or research and so on but by a former ambassador. He taught a course in economic diplomacy. The weight of his practical experience, as well as his ability to organise an argument, made a huge difference for students, most of whom would not themselves become university teachers but many of whom were indeed hoping to become diplomats or businessmen and thus picked up that practical experience.

In introducing his amendment, the noble Lord, Lord Young of Norwood Green, citing the City & Guilds institute, said that the majority of FE teachers are either qualified or on their way to being qualified. That is fine; we do not disagree too much—that is where we are and we merely wish to push things a little more in that direction. The noble Lord also said that what we need is both experience and skills.

We recognise that people in these practical disciplines will come from a range of different backgrounds. They will not all have to have extensive professional qualifications but it may be desirable for them to pick up the sort of skills I have been talking about now that we have all these different ways of using teaching aids. The purpose of this amendment is very much to allow

[LORD WALLACE OF SALTAIRE]
colleges to make their own decisions and not to impose too many strong controls from the top. We intend to free colleges from central government control and place responsibility on them to address their various needs.

The Education and Training Foundation has a core responsibility for ensuring the development of a well qualified, effective and up-to-date professional workforce. It is responsible for the standards of FE leaders and teachers and has now taken on responsibility for the membership of the Institute for Learning. The foundation will be looking at what more it can do to help increase the professionalism of teachers in this field. It has recently issued guidance and new professional standards for these teachers.

I hope that suggests that we are not far apart on this. It is really a question of how far we should impose detailed regulations from the top. We are encouraging colleges to work with the Education and Training Foundation to make sure that people who often come from a practical background, as the noble Lord said, are given the chance to acquire the professional skills that they need alongside the inspirational qualities which they may have gained from their practical experience. This is about deregulation, not deprofessionalisation. We have removed the requirement to have a qualification, which as the noble Lord points out, does not apply to a number of people teaching in FE colleges at the moment. However, the expectation is that the large majority of teachers will be qualified. We do not see regulation from the top as the best way to achieve this. Teachers need to play a part in developing their own professionalism, with the Education and Training Foundation providing common standards which will underpin that. On that basis, I hope that I have reassured the noble Lord and that he will feel able to withdraw this probing amendment.

Lord Young of Norwood Green: The Minister's contribution was worth while. I will read *Hansard* and look at what the Institute of Education is saying because that is important. I think the only difference between us here concerns what we would regard as minimum standards in maths and English. On the basis of what we have heard, we will reconsider the issue. I beg leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment 69A withdrawn.

Schedule 14 agreed.

Clause 51 agreed.

3 pm

Amendment 69B

Moved by Baroness Thornton

69B: After Clause 51, insert the following new Clause—

“Schools: establishment as Industrial and Provident Societies

(1) The School Organisation (Requirements as to Foundations) (England) Regulations 2007 are amended as follows.

(2) At the end of Regulation 3(b) insert “or;

(c) A Co-operative Society as defined in the Co-operative and Community Benefit Societies Act 2014.”

Baroness Thornton (Lab): My Lords, I thank noble Lords for giving me time to get here from the Chamber, where we had an excellent three-hour debate on violence against women. I am now very pleased to join the deliberations in Committee.

Amendment 69B concerns co-operative schools. We believe that there is scope within the Deregulation Bill's intention to,

“make provision for the reduction of burdens resulting from legislation for businesses or other organisations or for individuals”,

to correct two specific burdens on the development of co-operative schools and co-operative school trusts. Amendment 69B would insert a new clause to ensure that co-operative schools are able to establish an industrial provident society, should it be desirable, to bring them into line with other types of co-operative organisations.

The background to this is that the first Co-operative Trust school was established just over five years ago. Few would have anticipated the extent of their growth. There are now 700 co-operative trust schools, and that number is expected to increase to 1,000 by the end of 2015. More than a 250,000 pupils in England now attend co-operative schools. The values of these schools are drawn from the global Statement on the Co-operative Identity, which is recognised by the United Nations and forms the basis of co-operative law throughout the world. The co-operative values of self-help, self-responsibility, equality, equity and solidarity, together with the ethical values of honesty, openness, social responsibility and caring for others have been seen by the governing bodies to resonate powerfully within their schools, including with staff and pupils.

In fact, moving to a co-operative model provides a framework in which everybody with a stake in the school's success—parents, teachers, support staff, local community organisations and pupils—have the opportunity to be involved in running it. There is a growing recognition that working co-operatively brings clarity, allows school leaders to concentrate more on the effective leadership of teaching and learning, and raises standards. The value of this kind of collaboration and partnership working between schools was recently highlighted by the Education Select Committee, which highlighted in its report the benefits that collaboration between schools brings, particularly where it is on the basis of mutual benefit.

Examples of these trusts can be seen in Cornwall, where more than 100 schools have become co-operatives and are part of 13 trusts. Most of these are geographically based clusters, enabling small village primary schools to be part of a learning community with a secondary school that most of their young people will move on to. In Leeds, a significant proportion of the city's schools are already in co-operative trusts, and others are in consultation. The remarkable growth in co-operative schools has happened despite, not as a result of, the current Government's policy. This demonstrates that the models developed under the pathfinder scheme programme following the 2006 Act under the previous Labour Administration are enormously attractive to schools.

The case for the changes proposed in the amendment was first made by my honourable friend Meg Munn MP within a 10-minute rule Bill, the Co-operative

Schools Bill, in 2013. The proposals then formed part of an amendment tabled in Committee on this Bill in the Commons when it was debated on 27 February 2014. After the debate, my honourable friends on the Labour Front Bench withdrew their amendment on the basis that the Government had indicated that they were willing to work with the Co-operative Party to adopt the changes into the Bill as government amendments. My honourable friend Meg Munn, with the Co-operative Party and co-operative schools experts, then sought to work with the department over the next few months. While the then Secretary of State Michael Gove MP was personally supportive of the proposals, he indicated that the department lacked the expertise and resources to adopt the changes. I understand that in meetings, the noble Lord, Lord Nash, has, however, expressed very limited support for co-operative schools. Subsequent to the Government's reshuffle, we were told that the department and new Ministers would not seek to adopt our proposed changes.

I raised this issue in a meeting with the Minister before we started discussing the Bill, and again at Second Reading. The Government need to explain their opposition to these proposals because they are in line with government policies, first, on co-operatives and mutuals; secondly, on schools and their freedom to operate; and, thirdly, on deregulation and creating fair circumstances in which organisations and individuals—in this case schools—can operate. It is a complete mystery why the Government refuse either to accept these amendments or to bring forward amendments of their own. I beg to move.

Lord Wallace of Saltaire: My Lords, I was slightly shocked to discover, when I asked for a list of how many co-operative schools there were in West Yorkshire, that there are nine in Leeds, eight in Wakefield but only one in Bradford.

Baroness Thornton: More are coming.

Lord Wallace of Saltaire: I look forward to talking to the noble Baroness about what else Bradford claims, but I am sorry to hear that we are a little behind in this respect. As the noble Baroness said, few would have anticipated the rise of co-operative schools. Indeed, there has been considerable development of them.

The Government are not persuaded that this amendment is needed. We understand the argument that has been made for co-operative schools forming a part of developments under the current school models, which include maintained co-operative schools and co-operative academies. They should do so without weakening school accountability or adding complexity to an already complex system. Some co-operative schools are very impressive but others are rather less impressive. They do not stand out in any particular way.

In line with the Government's earlier undertaking, given in the other House, to investigate the proposals further, my noble friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education met interested parties earlier this year, as the noble Baroness said, to discuss their concerns but was not entirely persuaded of the

merits of their case. The Government are determined to continue to remove the barriers and obstacles that prevent schools delivering the best education possible for their pupils.

The department recognises the general aim behind this amendment. We welcome further discussions and assurances on how these changes can be achieved without changing primary legislation or adding to the complexity of the system. Officials have been engaged with representatives from the Co-operative Party for some time now, and we are yet to see any compelling evidence of clear educational benefits that these changes would introduce.

Baroness Thornton: This amendment is about allowing co-operative schools to have the business form that makes them co-operatives. Given that the Government allow other schools to have the business form that allows them to operate in different ways, such as companies or charities, with religious freedoms and all that, why is this discrimination in place against the co-operative form of doing business?

Lord Wallace of Saltaire: My Lords, the fact that there are now some 700 co-operative schools suggest that they are not suffering from systemic disadvantages in this respect. I was interested to hear from the noble Baroness that the expansion is continuing. If there are strong arguments to make that the current structure is discriminatory, I look forward to hearing them and perhaps we can continue this discussion, but at the moment I hope the noble Baroness has been sufficiently persuaded by my response to withdraw her amendment.

Baroness Thornton: Of course I will withdraw the amendment, and I thank the Minister for the offer to continue these discussions because that is exactly what we need to do. I will bring my co-operative school experts with me because I think the Minister will be persuaded by what they have to say about this. This is an issue that needs to be solved one way or the other. I beg leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment 69B withdrawn.

Amendment 69C

Moved by Baroness Thornton

69C: After Clause 51, insert the following new Clause—
“Nursery schools: inclusion in schools trusts

In section 18 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 (alterations that may be made under section 19), omit subsection (4)(f).”

Baroness Thornton: This amendment concerns nursery schools. The case for the change is that nursery schools would be able to become full members of existing trusts, enabling an all-through vision of education and potentially strengthening most nursery schools—which, by definition, are small—by enabling them to access mutual support from the schools they feed as well as avoiding duplication of effort. It allows for the formal clustering of nursery schools within a local authority, helping them to become more sustainable by co-operatively

[BARONESS THORNTON]

and mutually working together and avoiding duplication of effort. Both these factors will significantly help nursery schools to become market-ready in an increasingly commissioner/provider-driven early years environment.

Around half a dozen nursery schools are already operating as partners in co-operative school trusts in Bristol, Cheshire East, Devon, Norfolk, Staffordshire and West Yorkshire. They would prefer to change category, make the trust their legal foundation and play a full role in developing their local school co-operative trust. Indeed, the Co-operative College believes that it already knows of at least 60 nursery schools that would look to make use of this legislative change were it to go ahead. They include individual nursery schools looking to link formally with their local mainstream schools, as well as those that wish to cluster with other nursery schools in their local authority.

There is also a growing desire among some local authorities to see local authority-wide nursery school co-operative trusts, akin to the local authority-wide special school trusts that initially emerged in Devon and are now in Norfolk. Other local authorities have also indicated an interest in such a change, including Bradford, Bristol, Devon, Leeds, Plymouth, Middlesbrough, Sunderland and Wiltshire, plus a number of London and south-east local authorities.

During the discussions that I referred to in my remarks on my previous amendment, there were also discussions with the department about these issues. My colleagues were told that the department would like to work with co-operative schools to produce data on performance and would look to utilise a power to innovative to unlock the nursery school ask. If successful, the power to innovate would have the ability to suspend a relevant piece of legislation for a three-year test to see whether nursery schools wished to join co-operative trusts. Since this offer was made, the department has now gone silent and has not responded to repeated inquiries. Can the Minister help us to restart those discussions? This would not require primary legislation if they took place. In the mean time, I beg to move.

Baroness Smith of Basildon (Lab): My Lords, I rise to support my noble friend Lady Thornton. I declare an interest: I am president of a co-op trust school, St Clere's School, which is a cluster of schools. It has one secondary school, formerly known as St Clere's, and two primary schools: one junior and one infants. The ethos of that school is very much community-based. It was set up to extend its facilities and to work with the local community to get the best support from the assets held by those schools. St Clere's has also been successful at ensuring that those pupils who came from feeder schools and potential feeder schools would want to be part of the school and its success before they joined. As noble Lords will remember from their school days, having some contact with a secondary school before joining it can make it a less frightening experience. That seamless trust that co-op schools provide has been excellent.

What surprises me about the amendment is that my noble friend has had to table it. It seems to me quite logical common sense that, if a nursery wishes to be part of a co-op trust, it should be able to do so. It is a

matter of choice for the nursery. To deny it that opportunity is something that some parents may feel is rather unfair. I was really encouraged when the Department for Education, under the leadership of Michael Gove—I probably did not agree with very much when Michael Gove was Secretary of State for Education, but on this I did—seemed willing to open up discussions so that, if nurseries wanted to be part of a co-op cluster, they would have the choice to do so. It seems that that has been taken away and no progress has been made. For me, it is a simple matter of that ethos of the co-op: if parents of children in those nursery schools who then go on to primary and secondary schools in the same area wish for them to be part of that trust and choose to do so, they should be allowed that opportunity. It is hardly a radical or striking move, but it seems to be very much a common-sense one.

Lord Wallace of Saltaire: My Lords, I have returned to the issue of nursery schools myself as my grandchildren have reached a certain age. I am conscious of the patchy provision of nursery education. I understand that only a small proportion of the overall sector providers—400 out of 14,500 day nurseries—are presently in the maintained sector. Nursery schools are currently able to federate with other schools and early-years providers. The Government support the broad aims of partnership, collaboration and co-operation. This sector has a diverse range of providers that facilitate parental choice and it enjoys a high degree of autonomy.

The Government are not currently persuaded that there are further benefits in creating a separate category of “nursery academies” at this time. It sounds as though there is further room for continuing discussion, but the Government have not yet been persuaded that this is a necessary addition. Nursery schools can indeed federate with other schools, so I believe that part of what the noble Baroness, Lady Smith of Basildon, is asking for is already available without legislative change. I hope I have said enough to assure the noble Baroness that she can withdraw her amendment and, again, I am willing to discuss this further off the Floor if there are other points to cover.

3.15 pm

Baroness Thornton: I thank the Minister for that reply, and I do indeed think that we need to meet to discuss this. This is not about creating nursery academies, but about allowing nurseries to take decisions about their future. Again, as with the previous amendment, it is about the particular form of organisation that they wish to have. This will need discussion with not only the Minister but his colleagues from the Department for Education. I would be grateful if we could proceed on that basis before the next stage of the Bill, and I beg leave to withdraw my amendment.

Amendment 69C withdrawn.

Schedule 15: Schools: reduction of burdens

Amendment 70

Moved by Lord Clement-Jones

70: Schedule 15, page 165, line 3, leave out paragraph 3

Lord Clement-Jones (LD): My Lords, tourism is a vital component of the UK economy, and is predicted to be a key part of our economic recovery and of future job creation. The tourism industry is predicted to grow at an annual rate of 3.8% until 2025, which is significantly faster than the overall UK economy. The sector supports more than 3 million jobs, which is 9.6% of all UK jobs. The benefits are spread around the UK. They are driven by domestic tourism spending at places including attractions and the seaside.

The British Association of Leisure Parks, Piers and Attractions represents this sector, and it helped me put together this amendment. Most of the tourism spend comes from domestic tourists on day trips, which is the demographic that visits BALPPA's attractions. In 2012, the expenditure on overnight domestic tourism trips in Britain was valued at £24 billion, and a further £57 billion was spent by domestic tourists on day trips. Summer holidays are crucial to this, but other holidays in the warmer months with longer days are also very important. This is because takings at attractions are much better when days are longer and, of course, when the weather is more pleasant.

These times are also crucial because they are the only ones when families, who are the core part of these attractions' business, can go away together. This period is vital, because attractions and seaside areas then have to survive the winter, when tourism falls away. Many attractions close during that time, and so their takings in the winter are nil. If the weather is bad over just one or two weeks in the summer, that can be the difference between making a profit or a loss.

In April last year, Michael Gove made a speech at a conference at which he said that he wanted to reduce summer holidays from six to four weeks. A few weeks later, on 1 July last year, the Deregulation Bill was published and included a clause enabling this. Clearly, the Department for Education would not be advocating this clause if it did not expect some schools to use it. It would cause chaos for families with children at different schools that have different holidays. Even a single group of schools changing term times in a single area would have an impact on the tourist industry. Clause 51 and Schedule 15 are of deep concern to the tourism industry.

Where similar schemes have been introduced in the US, the evidence clearly shows that moving school holidays reduces tourism spending, which is not made up elsewhere. In Pennsylvania, moving the school year to start before Labor Day—which is the first Monday in September—had a dramatic negative impact on economic development and employment, costing the Pennsylvania economy more than \$378 million annually. In South Carolina, the move was estimated to have a \$180 million impact on the state, and more than \$8 million was lost in tax revenues. In Texas, returning to later school start dates resulted in higher direct tourism expenditure, estimated at \$251.9 million per year, and 6,635 more permanent jobs. This is despite the actual number of instructional days staying similar. Eleven US states have now seen fit to introduce laws which mandate school years because they appreciate that there are economic benefits.

Surely all the above merit some consideration in detail about what the impact of these changes would be, yet no assessment has been made. The Department for Education, in advocating Clause 51 and Schedule 15, has singularly failed to engage with the tourism industry which feels strongly about this. The DCMS has admitted that there has been no evaluation of the policy's impact on tourism. On 30 October, Kate Green MP asked,

“the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment his Department has made of the potential effect of deregulating school holidays on (a) tourism jobs in seaside areas and (b) seaside economies”.

Mrs Helen Grant replied:

“There has been no specific assessment of the impact the Government's proposals in the Deregulation Bill will have on tourism jobs. However, impact assessments have been completed on the overall impact of proposals within the Bill. Government is confident that tourism jobs and seaside economies will not be adversely affected overall. Whilst the measures will extend an existing flexibility to a greater number of schools, this does not mean that all schools will change their term dates. This Government believes that decisions about term dates are best made locally. The Department for Education is working with the British Association of Leisure Parks, Piers and Attractions and others to ensure the Department's advice to schools on their new freedoms is clear that term dates should be set in the interests of pupils' education and should also consider parents and local businesses”.

That is quite a miraculous statement. We all know that the Government are confident that they will not be adversely affected overall. That is an answer that does not exactly fill me or the tourism industry with confidence. Throughout the Bill's progress, tourism representatives have been raising strong objections that their concerns have not been addressed. The unintended consequences associated with passing these provisions are enormous. They should not be included in the Bill until their impact has been properly evaluated. I beg to move.

Baroness Perry of Southwark: My Lords, I shall defend paragraph 3(3) for many reasons. First, it is only right that maintained schools should have the same freedom as academies and free schools. A vast number of secondary schools and an increasing number of primary schools already have the freedom to determine their own term dates. It seems quite invidious that we are not allowing maintained schools to have the same freedom.

Secondly, my noble friend made an impassioned plea on behalf of the tourist industry, and we have all seen the lobbying material it has sent. I should like to make an impassioned plea on behalf of parents. As we all know, there is plenty of evidence that if parents can take holidays only in the one prescribed period when all schools are closed, they end up paying two, three or, in some cases, four times what it would cost them to have the same holiday at a slightly different time. I am just as interested in the finances of parents and their wish to be able to take their children out at different times because schools would not all be taking their holidays at exactly the same time.

My noble friend mentioned that it would be chaos for parents if they had children in different schools. For those of us who live in London, that is already the case. Different boroughs in London have slightly different

[BARONESS PERRY OF SOUTHWARK]

term dates and many parents have children in one borough for primary school and in another for secondary school and they cope with that. It is not chaos; it is a perfectly simple thing that parents deal with in the small amount of time for which the schools coincide.

Over the years, various learned think tanks have come up with all sorts of suggestions about changing school terms. Some have suggested that we should go to four terms or that we should split the year into two semesters, each with a break, rather like American universities. They have adduced all sorts of psychological learning reasons for why this would be better for children than the very long gap that we currently have in the summer. I should like to think that this freedom given to schools would enable some of them to experiment in that way, based on very good pedagogical evidence.

I am for freedom. I think the tourist industry would not only cope very well—as it does; I have great confidence in the tourist industry—but would find that its period of busy activity would be extended if there were slight overlaps with some schools closing early in July and others going on to early August and so on. The freedom would enable parents—who, heaven knows, are strapped enough at present in the very grim times we have been going through—to take their family holidays over a slightly more extended period when the prices would not be double and treble what they are in the very compressed period when all schools take their holidays at the same. I think the tourism industry would adapt, and perhaps prosper, in this country.

Baroness Thornton: My Lords, I shall take the opportunity of this amendment to ask two other questions. What was the problem that the Government felt needed to be remedied with these provisions? Is it to reduce administrative costs to schools? I should also like to ask the Minister about reports and the dissemination of information by electronic means, particularly websites, which is included in this part of the Bill. What do the Government think will happen to streamlining the information that is available to parents from schools in areas where there is a digital divide? For example, in Bradford, there are lots of people who are not online and would not be able to receive those reports.

Term times is one of the really difficult problems that I know my Government struggled with, but I would like to know whether the Minister has consulted organisations in the education sector, including teachers, trade unions and head teachers' representatives, to see what they feel about this.

Lord Wallace of Saltaire: My Lords, I am conscious that the issue of school term times and summer holidays is particularly acute, especially for the leisure sector. I have heard a lot of people say that it is absurd that we still have long summer holidays because people went out to help with the harvest. When I was a teenager, that is precisely what I used to do during my summer holiday. I worked on a farm for four to six weeks. When I went back to visit the farm 25 years later,

almost all the jobs that I had done had been mechanised. That is part of what has happened. Farmers do not need the labour, and they did not need that much labour then.

I am also conscious that the speech that Mr Gove made about reducing the length of summer holidays has rung a number of alarm bells. This clause does not give the department the power to reduce summer holidays, and the department has no plans to reduce summer holidays. It is very much intended to push down to the local level where the length of holidays should be agreed. Schools' term dates are already determined locally, but in many cases an individual school's flexibility is constrained by the fact that Section 32 of the Education Act 2002 places responsibility for determining term dates on the local authority. This measure will enable all schools to vary term dates to help pupils, rather than simply following tradition, where there is a compelling need to do so.

3.30 pm

Thousands of schools, educating over half of all registered pupils, are already responsible for their own term dates. Three-quarters of secondary schools and over a third of primary schools are already responsible for their school year. There is a school in every local authority in England with this freedom. This has not resulted in the problems that have been raised in this debate. There are all sorts of other reasons, which have been mentioned, as to why schools within a local area wish to consult, including with the local authority, about arrangements. In practice, the majority of schools have continued to follow their existing term dates, but a small number have made changes where there are a compelling reasons to do so. These may include the religion of the majority of pupils and the question of Muslim holidays, for example. These may be small but not unimportant adjustments. Schools involved have reported a real difference to pupils, especially in disadvantaged areas, as well as helping parents. I had not realised that, for example, a school in Leeds—the David Young Community Academy—has decided to go to a very different pattern, which believes it has a clear advantage in having a succession of shorter breaks and much more support for students. That is not the pattern that is needed in many other areas but there are schools in particular areas where changes in the pattern may nevertheless help.

I can assure noble Lords that the Government have considered the impact on business and the leisure industry, and judge that there will not be a negative impact on business overall. Local authorities have told us that they will continue to co-ordinate term dates. We have not held a formal consultation on this but the Department for Education informally sought the views of a range of interested parties on the measure, including head teachers on the department's Bureaucracy Reference Group, the Local Government Association, the Association of Directors of Children's Services, the Association of School and College Leaders, the National Association of Head Teachers, the National Union of Teachers, the Association of Teachers and Lecturers, the Family and Childcare Trust, Mumsnet—of course, Netmums, and the Federation of Small Businesses. I hope that that is a relatively representative cross-section

with whom to consult. There was broad support for the proposals, with points raised including whether it was right that schools should be able to decide when to change their term dates and that teachers would adapt to this. Indeed, I am told that in at least one case, a school in Cornwall has managed to assist those parents who often work in the leisure industry by putting together a number of what I would have called “Baker days”, but I gather are now called something else, at the end of the summer half-term break, which created a two-week holiday slot for parents who, in the summer, work full time in the leisure industry.

The experience of this so far suggests that there will be no marked change in the pattern in most instances. There will not therefore be the disruption that the noble Lord, Lord Clement-Jones, fears. Officials from the Department for Education have consulted with the British Association of Leisure Parks, Piers and Attractions and others from the tourist industry. I am happy to assure the noble Lord that the Government have agreed that their advice to schools will make clear that: schools should be considerate of the needs of parents and impacts on others by working with each other and the local authority to co-ordinate term dates as far as possible; and that all schools must act reasonably when setting term dates, including considering the impact of changes to term dates on small businesses that rely on tourism from families with school-age children. I refrain from taking that any further into the issue of taking children out of school during term time to take them on holiday.

This measure gives governing bodies of community and voluntary controlled schools the flexibility they need to make changes to term dates to help pupils and parents. As I have argued, there are some instances in which pupils benefit from a different pattern of terms and holidays. As is now the case with academies and voluntary-aided schools, they will set term dates within practical constraints and co-ordinate through the local authority. In the vast majority of schools it is likely that no changes to term dates will be proposed, but where changes can help pupils’ education governing bodies will be able to do so following sensible local conversations with businesses, parents and others, taking into account religious and cultural exceptional cases, and the needs of pupils in particular areas, thereby taking a number of local exceptions into account. I hope that that provides the reassurance that the noble Lord, Lord Clement-Jones, is looking for, and assure him that we are very much conscious of the needs of the tourism industry, as we are of the needs of education, and that we have got the balance right.

Lord Clement-Jones: My Lords, I thank my noble friend for his reply. What happened to evidence-based policy-making? In my all noble friend’s points, I could see assertions; indeed, I could see assertions in what the vastly respected noble Baroness, Lady Perry, had to say. Nothing that my noble friend said was rooted in evidence. He read out a string of educational consultees and the Federation of Small Businesses. Later in his reply he mentioned BALPPA, but BALPPA is extremely unhappy about this. It is one thing to consult; it is another thing to actually listen to what the consultee is saying.

Both the noble Baroness, Lady Perry, and my noble friend talked about parents’ interests and so on. The fact is that many parents already find the system where some schools can set their own dates pretty much of a nightmare as well. There is already some advantage in uniformity. In a sense, the case that I am making is, “Why read the writing on the wall when you can read the book of the US experience?”. If we go to a set of very different dates, which this could potentially lead to, that will have a severely detrimental effect on the tourism industry.

My noble friend is relying on the idea that, in practice, it will not happen. What evidence do we have that it will not happen over a period of time, especially if the pressure is to have shorter summer holidays? That seems to be what the department would like to see, even though I accept the point that it is not up to the department to fix those dates. However, there is a way of establishing a culture, of which it is perfectly capable. The department judging that there will be no impact does not, I am afraid, have a great deal of force behind it. “No change likely” is not particularly plausible.

I very much hope that those local educational establishments—the schools and so on—will consult when they decide what dates they fix if we keep this in the Bill or delete it from Section 32. However, when did local schools ever go to the local attractions and piers and consult with them and local businesses about this kind of thing? It is highly implausible to imagine that the headmaster of a local school is going to consult local businesses when considering what dates they are going to fix, unless it is made clear in some sort of guidance or instruction that that is what they ought to do. Otherwise, I am afraid that it will be a difficult situation for local tourism attractions in these circumstances.

Lord Wallace of Saltaire: There is no plot to reduce the length of the summer holiday. I fear that the noble Lord is suggesting that there is some Govian conspiracy afoot; there is not.

We have clear evidence from academies and pre-schools—the half of schools which already have the freedom. Only 8% have made any changes, and we see no evidence that it is likely that more will do so. There are strong arguments for at least one long break between terms every year. They include basic things such as school maintenance: repairing the roof and other such things. The same sort of argument exists for having a long break for the Houses of Parliament at one point during the year. In most instances we have no evidence whatever that there is a surge of demand to change the existing patterns.

I can reassure the noble Lord that the Department for Education is very much working with and has listened to BALPPA. We have agreed a new position. The advice that I have read out is an assurance: we are giving advice that schools should consider the needs of business. Having visited a number of coastal towns on the east coast of England with my wife this last summer, I appreciate that coastal towns in some instances are in real difficulty. However, that is not necessarily

[LORD WALLACE OF SALTAIRE]
 primarily connected with the position of schools and school holidays. There are a range of other problems that they are facing for other reasons.

I hope that I have said enough to reassure the noble Lord that this is not intended to produce radical revolution, but to produce a reasoned local compromise, a little more flexibility in the system and a little less interference from the top.

Lord Clement-Jones: I thank my noble friend for that peroration. It was very helpful. I think I have kicked the tyres on this particular clause enough. In the mean time, I beg leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment 70 withdrawn.

Schedule 15 agreed.

Amendment 70A

Moved by Baroness Smith of Basildon

70A: Before Clause 52, insert the following new Clause—
 “Review of licensing legislation

(1) No later than the end of the period of 6 months beginning with the day on which this Act is passed, the Secretary of State must commence a cross-government review of all legislation relating to local authority licensing, consents, permits and registrations with a view to streamlining licensing processes.

(2) A report on the review must be presented to Parliament by the Secretary of State no later than the end of the period of 18 months beginning with the day on which this Act is passed.”

Baroness Smith of Basildon: My Lords, there are six amendments in my name in this group; in moving Amendment 70A I will speak to the others. Before I do so, given the nature of the discussion that we will have on this and the following group of amendments, I will make a few general comments about the Government’s general approach to alcohol strategy. I am most concerned that there does not seem to be a coherent approach to evidence-based strategy, as the noble Lord, Lord Clement-Jones, said a moment ago. That is what is missing here. We have a pattern of implementing piecemeal change, which does not have a significant impact on the problems that the Government freely admit need to be addressed. What we really need, and as my amendments address, is a wide review of the licensing system, not randomly to amend various sections of the licensing regime.

We have to recognise that most people drink responsibly. Probably a few of us will have a glass of wine or beer tonight before we retire. Most people can enjoy a drink without causing harm, nuisance or distress to others, or an unnecessary drain on public expenditure. However, there are others, who, because of the amount and way that they drink, cause significant harm to themselves and to others. The challenge for government—indeed, for all of us—is to effect such change that will impact on the behaviour of those who cause and have caused significant problems, without unfairly impacting on responsible and reasonable drinkers.

The Government’s alcohol strategy has done very little to target the problems caused by significant problem drinking. Nearly 1 million violent crimes linked to alcohol still happen every year. The Prime Minister promised,

“a real effort to get to grips with the root cause”

of alcohol problems, with a strategy that attacked alcohol harms “from every angle”. The Home Secretary promised a minimum unit price for alcohol. I will not go into detail because we will come to that later. She said—no ifs, no buts—that it would be introduced. That seems to have changed and there is no immediate plan. I think the phrase that is often used when something is on the backburner or in the long grass is “under review”.

When the Government brought in new licensing conditions that alcohol could not be sold below the permitted price—I have spoken on that order in your Lordships’ House on two occasions this year—they were seriously criticised by the Secondary Legislation Scrutiny Committee for overselling the impact that it would have. In reality, the impact was about a reduction in consumption of alcohol of one glass of wine per person per year. An awful lot of work went into getting a reduction of one glass of wine per person per year. The impact assessment that the Government submitted had to be withdrawn and a new one resubmitted. One of the reasons for that was that the Government put the benefits at £17 million a year when, in fact, the figure was nearer to £1 million—and I think the evidence for that £1 million was somewhat woolly. Therefore, the challenge of affecting harmful behaviour without impacting on responsible behaviour has not yet been met. Our amendments are intended to be helpful in seeking to address that challenge, which we appreciate is difficult.

3.45 pm

Our Amendment 70A seeks a review of licensing legislation. It calls for a comprehensive review across government departments of all legislation relating to local authority licensing with a view to streamlining that process. To be clear, under the Licensing Act 2003, there are four licensable activities: the sale of alcohol; the supply of alcohol; the provision of regulated entertainment; and the provision of late-night refreshment. Licensing authorities are responsible for issuing and enforcing licences, and must do so to promote the four statutory licensing objectives: preventing crime and disorder; preventing public nuisance; public safety and preventing children suffering harm.

Well over 150 licences, permits, consents and registrations are issued by councils and many more are issued by government and its agencies. A business establishing even a standard business model can be required by law to submit numerous licence applications relating to the same premises and containing overlapping information to different parts of the relevant council. For example, a small restaurant could be required to apply for up to eight or nine different licences or registrations. At the other end of the scale, some large businesses have had to employ a dedicated person to keep track of the different renewal dates that their multiple licences require. That is costly and

burdensome and detracts from their core focus of serving customers, growing their business and supporting the economy.

One of the main barriers to streamlining those licensing processes is that some legislation—most notably, the Licensing Act 2003—requires that councils use the application forms set out in regulations. I am getting into my flow but I see that the noble Lord wants to intervene.

Lord Wallace of Saltaire: I read this amendment as also covering taxi licensing, scrap metal dealers—the whole caboodle of local authority licensing. The amendment refers to,

“all legislation relating to local authority licensing”.

Was it the noble Baroness’s intention to include all that?

Baroness Smith of Basildon: On my reading of the amendment that is not its intention. If the noble Lord wants to carry out a review of all licensing, I am very happy with that, but it is not the intention of the amendment. I am talking specifically about alcohol licences and the problems that are caused by the way in which they are operated. As I said, the application forms councils have to use are set out in regulations. This means that local authorities cannot combine forms so that a business can provide basic information once or even twice. Instead, businesses must complete this for each and every form required, overlapping and duplicating the information they provide. Councils tell us that they would like to have the freedom to remove this burden by combining and simplifying forms to cover just the information they need, thereby not placing undue burdens on businesses. Ending prescribed forms by regulation would enable that to happen without taking up parliamentary time. It is an easy thing for the Government to do by regulation. I always like to make things easy for the Government.

Individually, licensing regimes make sense and most of them continue to provide valuable safeguards. Typically, they have been brought in to tackle specific problems as they occur, which makes sense, as we have seen with the Scrap Metal Dealers Act. However, collectively, licensing regimes are a complex set of conflicting rules. The Licensing Act 2003 made an initial attempt to bring together multiple licences covering alcohol, entertainment and late-night refreshment under one Act. We want to take that further by rationalising and updating the legislation which is currently across at least five government departments. To give the Minister an example, I just referred to the Home Office and to the order I spoke to earlier this year, the draft Licensing Act 2003 (Mandatory Conditions) Order 2014. We have before us today a document on licensing from the Cabinet Office, and I was today given an impact assessment from the DCMS for yet another proposal to exempt regulating the provisions of the Licensing Act 2003.

That is very difficult for small and large businesses to manage and to cope with, but it can be simplified. That is a really easy thing to do, and does not cost any money. If we establish broad and consistent criteria for licensing schemes, we have to include transparency.

There is also an issue around appeals and cost recovery processes. We need to enshrine the principle of joined-up related applications. That would simplify processes for businesses and councils and would also offer scope for improved safeguards for communities. Our proposal, which I believe is helpful to the Government—I thought I saw the Minister nodding at one point—is for a government-led review of local government licensing legislation, which would give the basis for a comprehensive licensing framework. We believe that that would help economic growth, and it would certainly help those businesses which have told us that they see a problem.

I turn to Amendment 75A, which is about making the licensing authority a relevant person. Clause 52 and Schedule 16 insert a new Part 5A into the Licensing Act 2003, to introduce a new procedure for authorising the sale of alcohol where the sale is ancillary to a community event or the provision of other goods or services. The clause and the schedule as a whole are sensible, and I am not going to oppose them. Currently, the requirement for obtaining a licence to sell alcohol is that it is sold on a commercial basis for profit. It is not to be given away freely or cheaply. However, we have some concerns around the unintended consequences of the new notices, including the potential costs to local authorities.

The new legislation outlines the prescribed fee, and we seek assurances that the fee will cover the cost to local authorities. Amendment 75A would make the licensing authority a relevant person. As the Bill is drafted, the licensing authority is responsible only for processing the applications. Objections to ancillary notices can be made only by the police or by council environmental health teams, not by the licensing authority. The licensing authority is the district council, the metropolitan London borough or unitary authority. That is the authority responsible for considering applications to sell alcohol and issuing a licence.

I am indebted to the Local Government Association, which supports Amendment 75A. I should declare that I am also one of its vice-presidents, as are many noble Lords. This mirrors a change made to the Licensing Act in 2012. When that change was introduced the Government said that licensing authorities were better able to respond quickly to the concerns of local residents and businesses by taking actions they considered appropriate to tackle irresponsible premises without having to wait for representations from other responsible authorities. We agreed at the time and we still agree with those reasons but we believe that they apply to all aspects of licensing. The Explanatory Notes on ancillary sales notices state that licensing authorities have the right to raise objections, but there is no wording to allow this. Expert legal advice confirmed that this power will not be available without an explicit reference in the legislation. Licensing authorities should be included on the list of relevant persons to ensure that they can raise local concerns about a notice if it is appropriate for them to do so.

My final amendments in this group, Amendments 75B, 75C, 75D and 75E, introduce a right of appeal to the licensing committee. This is really a streamlining process, because they introduce a right of appeal to the local licensing committee for applicants to use if their notice

[BARONESS SMITH OF BASILDON]

is refused because of an objection. That mirrors the Licensing Act regarding licensing committees whose judgment and applications are the subject of objections. Each licensing authority is required to establish a licensing committee that is formed of elected councillors, which will hold hearings and make decisions relating to licences.

Local government prides itself on being the most open and transparent part of government and on being directly accountable to residents and businesses. It is worth noting that it also has the strictest rules regarding conflict of interests. I do not understand the reasons why, under the Government's proposals, the only right of appeal against the decision not to grant a notice because of an objection is by judicial review. That seems a lengthy and expensive process, particularly when you take into account that applicants are prevented from reapplying for a licence for a period of 12 months. There is supposed to be a light-touch approach. Is that not hugely disproportionate and expensive for those businesses concerned?

I feel—and I am sure other noble Lords will probably accept this—that licensing processes within local government are pretty robust, but within any system objections can be raised with which applicants do not agree. Businesses should be able to appeal against objections they feel are unfair or do not take full account of their business proposal in a way that is straightforward and affordable. If we are insisting appeal has to be by judicial review, while that has to be part of any wider appeals process, it does not meet the criteria of being proportionate, straightforward and reasonable in cost.

We are not talking about a great deal of money here. Fewer than 5% of regular licences are refused. It is anticipated that it will be even lower for the new licences, so the financial impact on most applications would be negligible. It seems a bit OTT to have a judicial review process before any other appeal process is brought into play. I look forward to the Minister's response. I beg to move.

Lord Clement-Jones: My Lords, perhaps I should not use the expression “happy hour” in this context, but we have spent many happy hours over the past few years debating licensing provisions. I have a bit of a horror of this clause, I must confess. The idea of this gargantuan review of what is effectively the amended Licensing Act 2003 seems to be vastly overengineering what is needed in this context. The reason I say that is that I remember pressing the Government nonstop between 2005 and 2010 on entertainment licensing, asking them to take a view about the way in which the Act worked for live music. Finally, rather than wait for a review, I had to put a Private Member's Bill in and get that through before we got any further sense—luckily from this Government—on the wider scope of deregulation of entertainment more generally.

The idea that we are going to start digging up the plant by the roots at this stage, whether entertainment licensing, alcohol licensing or whatever, fills me full of horror. We have had debate after debate. We had a very long debate on the late night levy. We have got to

let that bed in. I was not a great fan of some of that legislation, and I would very much like to see whether it is working. I suggest a rather more piecemeal approach to review. I am not against reviewing bits of the legislation, but this kind of vast superstructure of review over the whole of licensing in this area seems undesirable.

Lord Brooke of Alverthorpe (Lab): My Lords, I support my noble friend Lady Smith on Amendment 70A. I will not comment on Amendment 75A and the subsequent amendments as I will speak on those topics separately later. I am full of horror on hearing the noble Lord, Lord Clement-Jones, express that view. What has been happening with licensing is an absolute shambles, an absolute mess, at local authority level. If the Minister responds that he would like to see a review of all of them, which is what was advocated in *Rewiring Public Services: Rewiring Licensing*, I would be very happy to support him. There are so many areas in which local government needs to come into the present century and to review the way it looks at issues, particularly using old-fashioned approaches when in fact it should be moving in a digital way in so many ways, that it is high time that there should be an overall review right across the board on what is happening there and to see how we can effect some greater efficiencies than we have at the moment. When this report came out earlier in the year, it was looked at in the context of the debates that took place on the Deregulation Bill. I recommend that those who are opposed to it go back and read the *Hansard* report and they will see that a fair wind was given by Ministers at the other end to this being a possibility in the future. The simple fact is that if work had been done on the LGA's report, with more time spent on that and legislation produced on it, much of it would be a damn sight better than some of the stuff that we have in the Deregulation Bill.

4 pm

Lord Wallace of Saltaire: My Lords, the LGA published *Rewiring Public Services: Rewiring Licensing* in 2014, calling for a major review. I had indeed read Amendment 70A as covering the whole remit of local authority licensing. This is a very large area, and I am conscious that it is an important part of how local authorities regulate local communities. It is also a not insignificant part of how some local authorities recoup the costs of what they do. I note the case made for moving towards harmonised dates for renewal and for reforms to be completed. I also note with my different Cabinet Office hat on that, as we move towards digital interaction between companies, individuals and local authorities, some of these things will become easier than they were—as the noble Baroness will know, that is something which the Government are actively promoting. Some small businesses are much slower than others in moving towards digital interaction with their local authorities, but that will help to reduce a number of these burdens.

We have reviewed a range of licensing areas through the Red Tape Challenge, including alcohol, entertainment and taxis, and we do not see the need to do another

major review of all licensing legislation. Therefore, having looked at the LGA report, we do not accept its proposals, although we are still considering some of the issues raised. Certainly, the Government remain committed to reviewing unnecessary bureaucracy. A 2011 survey by the Federation of Small Businesses found that only 8% of small businesses identified local authority licenses as the most challenging area of regulatory compliance.

Baroness Smith of Basildon: When the Minister intervened on me previously, it was because he thought that my amendment was significantly wider than I intended it to be. I apologise if there is a drafting defect; it was never intended to be as wide. Does the 8% figure that he gives for the proportion of businesses which are concerned about the licensing regime relate to the vast, entire licensing regime or just to the regime relating to alcohol that my amendment refers to?

Lord Wallace of Saltaire: I suspect that it is about a much wider issue; we are in that sense at cross-purposes. I thought the amendment was concerned with alcohol licensing and other forms of planning licensing. As I was being briefed on this, I was thinking of the example of a bar in Saltaire that lies halfway between where I live and where the noble Baroness, Lady Thornton, lives. It is a very popular bar which is licensed for the sale of alcohol. It is sufficiently popular that its clients spill out over the pavement and on to the road. The question of whether tables can be put out on the pavement has been raised and you begin to deal with different sorts of issues, such as disruption to traffic, noise and so on. So putting everything into a single category is not entirely straightforward. The Government are not therefore convinced that we need an overall review at present. I know that we will come back to some of these issues when we consider the amendments in the name of the noble Lord, Lord Brooke of Alverthorpe.

I turn to the other amendments proposed by the noble Baroness on community and ancillary sellers notices or CANs. The noble Baroness asked why there was no provision for appeal if a CAN is revoked. Our intention is that there will be no prescribed right of appeal for the user either at the stage at which the CAN is given in cases where it is rejected, or where revocation takes place after a CAN has taken effect. This is one of the key ways of keeping the costs of the CAN as low as possible as it avoids costly hearings processes, as well as reflecting what is intended to be the light-touch nature of the authorisation. We believe that this is justified on the basis that the user will be given very limited rights to sell alcohol. The authorisation lasts for three years only and it always remains open to the user to apply for a full premises licence or to use a temporary event notice. The business of the ancillary seller would also not be unduly affected by revocation because the alcohol sales are by definition only a small part of the overall service being provided. It would remain open, as the noble Baroness has suggested, to the CAN user to seek redress via administrative complaint to or about the licensing authority, or ultimately, in extreme cases, by judicial review.

I hope that that provides some reassurance to the noble Baroness; she looks a little puzzled by this. The intention is to limit the complications of this very limited change in the alcohol regulations.

I was asked whether the fee will cover the cost to the licensing authorities. Licensing fees are set on a cost-recovery basis. We will be working with the LGA and licensing authorities to estimate the cost of processing a CAN before we set the fee. I hope that that covers the issues that have been raised and invite the noble Baroness to withdraw—

Baroness Smith of Basildon: I apologise; I am intervening rather than making my final remarks. I think that the Minister addressed the point about the ancillary sales notice. The Explanatory Notes state that licensing authorities have the right to raise objections, but there is no wording to allow this. Our legal advice is that the power will not be available without explicit reference in the legislation. It is in the Explanatory Notes; it is not in the legislation. The Minister did not answer that point.

Lord Wallace of Saltaire: It is probably better if I write to the noble Baroness to make sure that I am absolutely clear about it.

Baroness Smith of Basildon: That is helpful. That point needs clarification if we are to achieve what the Government say they want to achieve, and we are not opposed to that.

I am rather disappointed with the Minister's response and, indeed, that of the noble Lord, Lord Clement-Jones. This gargantuan review is not quite as gargantuan as the noble Lord thought it would be. The figures to which he referred are for the gargantuan review, not the review that we are asking for. When those who are dealing with this, day in, day out, say that there is so much ad hoc regulatory change and ask whether it might not be better to look at it in the round, that seems to be a sensible approach.

The noble Lord made his own case on the late night levy. He and I debated that as we have debated other issues such as the licensing order, referring to mandatory licensing conditions, earlier this year. We had a number of discussions about it being very piecemeal, and we were also critical of the late night levy, which is also proving to be quite ineffective because of how it was set up.

I will read again what the Minister said about the right of appeal being through judicial review. He seems to be saying that because there is an admin review process when someone wishes to make a complaint, it can replace any other appeal. It seems rather costly and disproportionate if the only right of appeal is through judicial review. However, I will read what he said in *Hansard* so that I am absolutely clear on his points before I decide whether to bring this back at another stage. For now, however, I beg leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment 70A withdrawn.

Clause 52: Sale of alcohol: community events etc and ancillary business sales

Debate on whether Clause 52 should stand part of the Bill.

Lord Brooke of Alverthorpe: I shall speak also to Amendments 71 to 75 to Schedule 16 to the Bill which are tabled in my name.

I first raised my opposition to this part of the Bill in the debate on the Queen's Speech back in May. I raised a number of questions about it after having carefully followed what had been happening in the debates on the legislation in the Lords. I did the same at Second Reading on 7 July, and I did not have any satisfactory response to some of the questions I put to the Government. I was told that later regulations, when they come after the Bill becomes law, will address many of the questions that I was raising.

At the end of July, in response to a very welcome invitation from the Minister, I asked to see officials to see whether I could follow through some of the questions which I had been posing. Last Friday at 4.30 pm, I had a response from officials inviting me to have discussions prior to today's Committee. My diary was full this week—I have just spent two days in Brussels—and there was no way that I could do that, so I am none too happy about the way this has been handled and the time that has been taken. While I might be in a minority on this issue in pursuing the topic, I believe I am entitled to get proper service so far as possible from the Government.

I will put a series of questions, some of which I have I have posed previously, and I hope the Minister will be in a position to answer them this afternoon or will address them before Report. I underline that this part of the Bill is not deregulatory at all. It is new legislation. The Minister just used the phrase "limited changes", but I believe that the limited changes could be more significant than he believes. Therefore, if we are, in effect, dealing with new legislation, we should have the maximum information before us at the time that the legislation is going through rather than having to wait for regulations later down the line after further consultation has taken place.

This is a serious issue. It may appear quite minor, but I think it is serious and I hope the Government will now give some serious attention to the points I shall make. In fairness to them, they endeavoured to do the best they could with the problems we face with alcohol when they produced their alcohol strategy in 2012. I was one of those on this side of the Room who welcomed it very strongly indeed because I believed they identified the core of the problems which the country faces with alcohol and its abuse: first, the cheapness of drink, and secondly, easy and proliferating access to it in so many places.

Regrettably, on pricing, the Government abandoned the very strong stance they had taken—the Prime Minister had personally taken a very strong position on it—and opted for a change that will make next to no difference. As my noble friend Lady Smith indicated, it will change consumption by one glass of alcohol per

drinker per year, which will make no difference whatever to alcohol abuse. I have therefore tabled Amendments 73 and 75 to remind the Government of where they started and where they have now ended. I have not got a great deal of hope that I am going to get far down the road with those amendments, but they ought to be on the record. While I have proposed 50p per unit, the latest evidence, which comes from the University of Sheffield, which is the leader in this area, indicates that it should now be 65p per unit.

4.15 pm

While I acknowledge that the Government have legislated to tighten up local alcohol licensing laws, as referred to in earlier debates, there is still a major omission in their not introducing an additional statutory criterion for local public health to be taken into account. Many bodies, particularly health bodies, are calling for this change—many of them being the Government's own bodies. Public Health England is now on record as stating that there is a need for public health to be taken into account in licensing. Those bodies are joined by many local authorities around the country, which have backed a Private Member's Bill that I am trying to get through. There is not much chance of it being heard, but it is good to know that I am representing a substantial body of interests around the country. In addition, the Scottish Parliament and the Welsh Assembly have either adopted the additional public health criterion test, or are in the process of so doing. Momentum is gathering for this change to be introduced. It behoves the Government to look at it again. That is why I have tabled my amendments.

I hope noble Lords will note that I am not speaking to anything new or radical. I may in due course move my amendments; they will be nothing more or less than what the Government set out in their own strategy as the appropriate means to address the problem. That strategy was drawn up in 2012. I am sure that the Minister will point out that there was a commitment in that strategy to introduce the freedom to sell alcohol at community events. It might seem churlish that I am paddling this long canoe opposing that change; in due course I will seek to strike it out. However, I am baffled to understand why WI or church events need licences that will start at 7 am. Unless the church is now contemplating selling alcohol at early morning mass, I do not see why these licences should start so early in the day.

I am interested to see how Governments will enforce the stipulation in Clause 52 that selling will be limited to three units of alcohol per customer per 24-hour period. Can that really be enforced? Is making such a statement really worth while? Amendments 72 and 74, which are self-explanatory, endeavour to establish just how responsible the sellers handling this will have to be.

My principal objection to Clause 52 is the way that requests for more freedom to sell alcohol at events, which originally came from community activists such as the WI, have moved into a much wider front—into the business community and wider society—with its extension to so-called ancillary licences, with a new licensing regime attached. The Government have instanced

that this would be used with bed and breakfasts. Again, I am amazed that they have licenses to sell alcohol starting at 7 am. We go back to one of the debates we had earlier on problems arising for Airbnb with changes to bed and breakfasts' terms. Presumably this will equally apply to that site. It would be amazing to know how anyone could possibly police the application of those changes within the limits that the Government think the selling of alcohol should take place.

I said that we could see quite a cultural change coming from this, not so much in community events but in the way it will extend in business. I mentioned that I believe that hairdressers would wish to take ancillary licences, as well as tanning shops and nail boutiques and even sandwich bars. As I understand it, they would have the freedom to start selling alcohol, admittedly on a limited scale. The Government said that this will not happen, but so far there have been no consultations to indicate whether or not it will. Unless I have got this complete wrong, the Government are moving in a direction that will extend the sale of alcohol over a much wider area than we have had hitherto. I will be very happy to hear the Minister say what work he is doing to make certain that there will be some clear limitations on the extent to which these changes will be applied throughout the community, because, if there are not, the abuse of alcohol or the sale of alcohol, which is what the Government have been seeking to limit in their alcohol strategy, will go in precisely the opposite direction.

Baroness Smith of Basildon: My Lords, whenever I listen to my noble friend Lord Brooke of Alverthorpe speak on these issues, I am always conscious of—I hesitate to use the word “experience” on the issues we are talking about—his knowledge of and commitment to these issues. He has been a campaigner to protect people from the harm that those who overindulge and unwisely use alcohol are subject to.

My noble friend has hit the nail on the head on public health. When we were discussing the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Bill in 2011, we proposed that public health should be one of the licensing conditions. I mentioned the four licensing conditions earlier, but we recommended that public health should be one of them. That proposal was blocked by the Government, yet the Government's alcohol strategy includes a commitment, as the noble Lord said, to look at including public health and the cumulative assessments that councils undertake. I am not aware that that has been taken forward, even though it is in the Government's strategy. It would be helpful if the Minister could tell us whether that has been taken forward, given that it was in the Government's strategy. At some point, but not today, I would be interested to know which measures from the Government's strategy have been taken forward. Perhaps the Minister will write to me on that. The Alcohol Health Alliance UK and the Local Government Association want to see public health included in the licensing process. There is widespread support for that. It seems a sensible measure to include it, not as the overriding measure but as one of the measures taken into account when licenses are awarded. I should like to know some more from the Government on that.

When I look at the alcohol strategy, I lose track of when the Government were in favour of minimum alcohol pricing and when they were not. In our debates, I was assured that the Government would look hard at advertising and education involving children to ensure that we are not subjecting children to the kind of alcohol advertising that would encourage them to drink at too young an age. Pan-European research shows that children in the UK see more alcohol advertisements than adults and more than their European counterparts in Germany or France. I have asked about this before. I would like to know why the Government have not moved forward to look at that kind of advertising and how to combat it. If we are talking about young people and their health, that is a key thing that could really make a difference, and we have not seen the progress we were promised.

I still cannot understand what has happened on minimum alcohol pricing. I have raised this in your Lordships' House on a number of occasions. The Government have moved from absolute certainty that minimum alcohol pricing would be introduced. The Home Secretary said, without ifs or buts, that the Government would introduce minimum alcohol pricing. When the Government undertook their consultation on the strategy, they specifically excluded minimum alcohol pricing from it. I raised this back in July 2013, so it is not a new issue; I am sure that the Government and the Minister are aware of it. The Government said in their consultation that they were committed to introducing a minimum unit price, but added:

“However, in other areas, this consultation seeks views”.

The Secondary Legislation Scrutiny Committee states in its 32nd report that it contacted the Home Office when it was seeking to introduce a permitted level of pricing—which is different from minimum alcohol pricing. It asked, “Why are you bringing this in now, because you've said that the minimum unit price is still under consideration?”. The Home Office explained:

“Minimum Unit Pricing remains a policy under consideration, but will not be taken forward at the present time”.

That is not what the Home Secretary said. So it would be helpful to understand the Government's thought processes and whether any advisers in Downing Street or political lobbying played a part in this. Why did the Government move from absolute certainty that they were going to do something to “maybe” and then, as I think is the position now, to not going to do something? If we are to take an alcohol strategy seriously, we need to know what the Government are seeking to achieve and how committed they are.

There are two points in particular that I wish to emphasise and seek assurances from the Minister on. First, what has happened to dealing with advertising and education aimed at children who could be at risk of harm from alcohol? Secondly, why are the Government so set against including public health as one of the considerations when introducing a licence?

Lord Wallace of Saltaire: My Lords, I am very glad that the noble Lord, Lord Brooke of Alverthorpe, was able to get back from Brussels and apologise to him for our not yet having managed to fix up a meeting. If he would like to have a meeting, we will make sure that

[LORD WALLACE OF SALTIRE]

it is pursued as soon as possible. I recognise his strong concerns in this area and the amount of work that he has put in and continues to put in on these broader issues.

On the implementing regulations, we are about to go out to consultation on what they should be. We are of course ready to discuss informally our current thinking, but it seems to us right that we should consult on where we might go from here.

I think we all recognise that the focus on alcohol-related problems is at its most acute in the centre of some of our cities on Saturday evenings. I have been in Leeds and Wakefield on a Saturday evening and it is very much a problem involving young persons in those areas. Sometimes, in the winter, I think that there is also a hypothermia problem, from the fact that they wear so little as they go out. What we are proposing here is absolutely separate from that. It is thinking about deregulating some of the issues which arise for local events and ancillary sellers.

As it happens, my wife and I went to rather a splendid party in a village hall just north of York in the summer. One of those who attended explained to us that they had had some difficulty about this, because they are allowed to have events that serve alcohol in the village hall only once a month. This was for all sorts of restrictive reasons, and that is the sort of area where we would like to loosen the constraints and the number of times a year that village halls can have events of that sort.

That is the “community events” to which the measure refers; the ancillary sellers are the bed-and-breakfasts, as the noble Lord knows. I am informed that the reason why 7 am is specified in the Bill is so that if, on a particularly special occasion, a bed-and-breakfast wants to provide a champagne breakfast it should be allowed so to do. I have been trying to think about having a champagne breakfast in any of the last three or four bed and breakfasts that I stayed in in the north of England. It is an interesting concept and I shall probably go to sleep tonight imagining what one might look like. However, that is the justification for 7 am starting point.

This is intended to be deregulatory, to exempt community groups and small providers of accommodation from needing premises licences on multiple temporary event notices, and to limit the costs to them of having to renew these licences so frequently. We are very much responding to community pressure, and again I think about how this affects my locality. This would cover events in the park in Saltaire but would not cover the wonderfully bucolic Bradford Beer Festival, complete with a large number of large stomachs, which is held once a year in Victoria Hall. That is a big event at which a lot of alcohol is served—beer—which therefore requires a different sort of licensing regulation. That is why I stress that this is a limited measure. The terms “ancillary” sellers and “community events” explain how limited this measure is.

4.30 pm

Lord Stevenson of Balmacara (Lab): I accept the noble Lord’s point that, taken event by event, or even instance by instance, we are talking about relatively

small numbers—one or two glasses, not magnums, of champagne. I think that the point my noble friend was making, picked up by my other noble friend Lady Smith, is that in aggregate, if we are talking about nail bars, hairdressers and small events, we are talking about a potential explosion in the total quantum of alcohol being provided. Is the Minister happy with that?

Lord Wallace of Saltaire: My Lords, the concept of having my hair cut and being offered a whisky at the same time had not occurred to me. I recall that when thinking about the 7 am starting point, the one occasion of which I was conscious, when listening to someone describing how pleasant it was to have alcohol at breakfast, was when I got up very early, heard the BBC farming programme, and a good friend of mine who appeared on that programme was having breakfast with the noble Lord, Lord Mackie, at his farm, who had indeed offered him a dram with his breakfast. He remarked that that was an unusual occurrence. I do not think that that is the sort of thing that bed and breakfasts will want to do very often.

Baroness Smith of Basildon: The noble Lord, Lord Mackie, would not have required a licence to offer a friend a glass of whisky at breakfast if he chose to do so. The point made by both noble Lords who raised this issue was to express concern about the 7 am start. Does it open a door far wider than the Government intend in order to allow an occasional champagne breakfast at a bed and breakfast?

Lord Wallace of Saltaire: I will take both points back and see how much this opens a door wider than intended. If it is possible to interpret the measure in such a way as to open a door much wider, we will clearly need to tighten this. I hope that we can provide reassurance on that point.

Lord Brooke of Alverthorpe: Are you going to mention the ancillary sellers?

Lord Wallace of Saltaire: Certainly, because, again, the measure is intended for small providers of accommodation, so that they can provide guests with an evening drink if they wish. As I say, the B&Bs with which I have been familiar in the north of England in recent years had not done that, although I would probably have appreciated it if it had been possible. Again, the intention of including “ancillary” sellers is to allow small-scale provision of alcohol in small-scale establishments. Does that begin to satisfy the noble Lord?

Lord Brooke of Alverthorpe: The answer to that is no. The great danger of these debates is that we pick out a particular instance and focus on it. I have said that my concern has not been particularly about community events but the movement of ancillary licences into the business community. I have asked for a definition of the range that will be eligible. We focused on the bed and breakfast people, and I suspect you will find

that it is much wider than that; they are just a small element. I suspect that you can almost look down any street in a town and see several people who would fall into the category. Hitherto they have never sold alcohol because it is not their main business but, under the new arrangements, they would be free to apply to do so. There is no reason why you would stop them.

I have sought from the Minister a definition of the extent to which freedom to apply for the licence will be available. I have not got the answers. Again, we are focusing on a limited area when, in fact, this will spread over a much wider front. I will be reassured if the Government can limit it.

Lord Wallace of Saltaire: I think that I can now give the noble Lord some further reassurance. I am told that, in the other place, the Minister for Crime Prevention spelled out specifically that we will not and should not allow businesses such as hairdressers, sandwich shops and florists to benefit, and that this is intended very much to permit certain prescribed businesses to sell small amounts of alcohol as a minor part of the service that they provide.

I will take the noble Lord's questions back and will look again at the details, but that is the assurance that the Minister for Crime Prevention gave in the Commons. This is intended to be for bed and breakfasts and businesses of that sort, and is not intended to provide me with a shot of whisky with my coffee when I go into a coffee shop on Gordon Terrace at 11 am, which I think is the sort of thing that the noble Lord is suggesting that we will spread into if we are not entirely clear.

I hope that I have managed to answer most of the questions. I note that the noble Lord has some much larger questions, including on alcohol and pricing. I am informed that the issue of minimum alcohol pricing in Scotland is currently being challenged before the European Court of Justice. That is one powerful reason why Her Majesty's Government are taking a pause in considering the matter further in the English courts, being, as we of course are, strong supporters of the European Court of Justice. Perhaps if there were to be a Labour Government they would wish to ignore that particular constraint but I rather suspect that they would not.

The Government have a range of other considerations to bear in mind on alcohol pricing; not only the EU legal challenges but also the not insubstantial question, particularly in southern England, of smuggling, which arises if the price in Britain differs too sharply from that across the Channel. If one goes through Calais and around there, one can see how much that is a possibility that could easily expand.

I also note, with respect, the noble Lord's insistence on the public health dimension. That is a broader issue, which covers the Government's alcohol strategy as a whole, to which we will return. We have already been discussing citizenship education, but it is clear that part of the answer is to educate children in schools about the problems of alcohol. Binge drinking among young people is the single biggest alcohol problem that we face in Britain at the moment, on which we need to do more.

I hope that I have provided enough to satisfy the noble Lord, and I have no doubt that he will continue to pursue his wider campaign on alcohol strategy as a whole on this occasion and the many other occasions on which he will be able to do so.

Clause 52 agreed.

Schedule 16: Part to be inserted as Part 5A of the Licensing Act 2003

Amendments 71 to 75E not moved.

Schedule 16 agreed.

Clauses 53 and 54 agreed.

Schedule 17 agreed.

Clause 55: Sale of liqueur confectionery to children under 16: abolition of offence

Debate on whether Clause 55 should stand part of the Bill.

Lord Brooke of Alverthorpe: My Lords, this is a genuinely deregulatory measure. It will repeal Section 148 of the Licensing Act 2003, which concerns the sale of liqueur confectionery to children. I have been surprised by the amount of correspondence I have had on this topic, and the number of different bodies which have been in touch with me. I am not really sure as yet why the Government feels the need to move to repeal this.

If there had been a meeting with the Government, I would have asked out of interest what burden was placed on industry because of the continuing presence of this regulation. I would have asked how many prosecutions there were because of this piece of legislation between 2005 and 2010, and how many between 2010 and 2012, and how many since the alcohol strategy was published in 2012. I would have asked why this change has come about, who wants it and for what purpose. I would have asked why there has not been a consultation with the public or with parents about this. I would then have looked at the information I was given, which seems to indicate that it is solely the producers and manufacturers who have asked for this change to be put in place. I would ask the Minister to confirm that my analysis is correct.

Would the Minister also agree that ethyl alcohol is not simply a drink, but it is also a drug? We talk about drink and drugs, but alcohol is a drug. It is one of the most addictive drugs if misused, and abuse has very serious consequences. That is why the Government have very extensive provisions in the 2003 Act to control the way it is sold and administered, and to prevent liquid alcohol being sold to those under 18.

There is a well held medical view that if one starts to drip-feed an addictive drug to young people it gathers momentum and they are, as night follows day, likely to be pulled further and further into the addictive process and into drinking more. In that

[LORD BROOKE OF ALVERTHORPE]
context, Section 146 in the 2003 Act is particularly relevant, because it prevents people selling liquid alcohol to those aged under 18.

4.45 pm

Alcohol, of course, can be presented, and is being presented these days, in an increasing number of ways to both adults and children. It can now be produced in powder form, and has been for some time. It can also be baked into confectionery, and is sold in that form in some parts of the world. People can get quite drunk from eating cake containing alcohol. That is not dissimilar from the way that many people used to add cannabis and marijuana to different products. Is the Minister aware that the clause which the Government wish to repeal is the only existing protection preventing alcohol being sold to children in other than liquid form? If I am wrong about that, I would be grateful if the Minister would correct me but my understanding is that that is the case.

Is the Minister aware that drink and food manufacturers are already adding increasing amounts of alcohol to an increasing number of their products? Does he know that alcohol is now being added to some ice cream and sorbets, and that vodka is now being added to ice cream by Smirnoff? I wrote to the noble Earl, Lord Howe, about this matter some time ago and asked whether the Government had had any discussions with their partners in the responsibility deal on the recent introduction of vodka sorbet in supermarkets. The noble Earl, Lord Howe, replied:

“The Department does not discuss individual products with producers or retailers”.—[*Official Report*, 26/9/14; col. WA 349.] So it would appear that they can insert alcohol into a whole range of different products and sell them. The Government have no involvement whatever in that, nor have they indicated a wish to get involved. However, many of these products comprise items that children normally buy. I know of children who have purchased ice cream containing vodka. Those products may not contain a very high element of vodka. However, champagne truffles, for example, have an alcohol content in the order of 6% or 7% proof, which is higher than some beers which are 3% or 4% proof. A child is not permitted to purchase beer for very good reasons but under this legislation will be permitted to buy the confectionery I am discussing. Norman Baker MP was challenged about the possibility that this was a move in the wrong direction but responded:

“Liqueur chocolates are not seen as a risk to children because of the extremely low amounts of alcohol they contain. Children are more likely to be sick than get drunk from eating too many”. That may be the case but, with respect, Norman Baker is not a medical authority on this topic. Some medical authorities have been in touch with me on this issue. I suggest that the Minister might check the view of Public Health England on children under the age of 18 having access to alcohol—admittedly in small amounts—and on what the effects of that might be in later life.

Will the Minister also check what government Chief Medical Officers have said on this topic? The former Chief Medical Officer—not the current one—stated that children under 16 should not in any way be

exposed to ingesting alcohol. He said under the age of 16, not 18—it is 18 in law. I have also had contact from the Office of the Children’s Commissioner. She has been concerned to see what the Government are doing. Have the Government sought her views and will they seek her views before we put this through?

I believe that for the best of reasons this looks like legislation that we can get rid of and that does not really matter. I believe that if we get rid of this legislation the Government will open up changes over a wider front than they have foreseen. They should be asking themselves why the drinks industry wants it. Why is it pressing for it, and where is it going? The Government should be asking themselves why they have not consulted the public and parents to see what they think about this. If they did, they would find they are making an error. I hope that before we get to Report some of these issues will have been addressed in all seriousness. I know this topic can be made a joke, but we are talking about the health and welfare of children in the future. If the Government proceed to repeal this, they will make a big mistake.

Baroness Smith of Basildon: My Lords, as ever, my noble friend Lord Brooke has given us food for thought on this issue. I was unaware of the detail of the issues that he raised. This goes back to our earlier comments about policy being evidence-based. I am not quite clear about why this has been brought forward and about the purpose behind it. When we look at it, it does not seem to have much of an impact on business so repealing it has only a very tiny, albeit positive, as the noble Lord thinks, impact on business.

I understand that the Licensing Act 2003 requires premises to obtain the relevant licence before selling liqueurs due to their alcoholic content. The Act exempts liqueur confectionery from being classed as alcohol and defines liqueur confectionery as containing alcohol in a proportion not greater than 0.2 litres of alcohol per kilogram of the confectionery. I do not know what 0.2 litres of alcohol per kilogram means. The noble Lord referred to something being 6% proof. If I buy, as I may on occasion, a bottle of wine, the label will tell me the percentage proof, as it will with beer or any other kind of alcohol. It does not tell you on confectionery. In the interests of evidence-based policy, can the Minister tell me what 0.2 litres of alcohol per kilogram is in terms of percentage proof? It is an important point: 6% proof for a five year-old is significant.

The law states that the chocolates must be sold as separate pieces so they are not consumed en masse. I am puzzled by that because anybody who eats chocolate as I do always eats chocolate en masse. There is no other way to eat chocolate. One buys boxes of liqueur chocolates, and it seems to me that they are not being sold individually in that case. They are being sold en masse. I would like to understand a little more about the interpretation of the law. If that is not possible today, I am happy for the Minister to write to me because I do not understand what that means. I have to confess that when I was 14 my French pen pal sent me a box of Mon Chéri liqueur chocolates, which I ate. I do not think I liked them terribly much at the time, but I grew to like them. I probably felt more sick from the chocolate.

I am trying to understand exactly what is intended here. There is a negligible effect on business. There is a tiny minority of businesses that sell such confectionery. The point raised by my noble friend when he asked who asked for the change is interesting because when something is deregulated it is normally because somebody wants it because it is an onerous burden on them. In most cases we obviously want to reduce overonerous burdens on businesses. Who asked for this change? Were there any complaints about the law and how it has been implemented? Where did they come from? Is there any intention to have any consultation on this? My noble friend Lord Brooke has raised issues that I was not aware of. This first became an offence in 1961 under a Conservative Government. Labour's Licensing Act 2003 built on the definitions that were brought forward in 1961. The Conservative Party tabled an amendment during the Licensing Bill Committee for the age to be increased from 16 to 18. We held out against that and it was withdrawn.

My first reaction was not dissimilar to Norman Baker's: you would have to eat the equivalent of nine Mars bars of liqueur chocolate to drink the same quantity of alcohol in a regular bottle of wine with a content of about 12%. However, I think that misses the point, and that is what worries me about this. One of my concerns is whether it helps young people get a taste for alcohol: does it encourage them? That is a valid point to look at. I am interested in the evidence base on both sides of the argument. It would be helpful to understand that.

My noble friend raised some points that I am unclear about. Does the Government's proposal also impact on the kinds of alcohol that are being sold in forms other than liquid? Does that mean it is easier to buy vodka ice cream or vodka lollypops? I have some concerns about alcopops: people drink quite large quantities of alcohol because they are very sweet-tasting and fruit-flavoured. They do not realise the content that they are drinking. I stressed that I will leave here tonight and will no doubt enjoy a glass of wine at some point. However, there is a difference between responsible drinking of alcohol and almost surreptitious drinking, where people are not aware of the alcohol content that they are drinking.

I have concerns about this. I would like to know what the evidence base is—the consultation, where the request came from and what differences it makes—particularly if it opens up a much wider area than indicated by the Government's proposals.

Lord Wallace of Saltaire: My Lords, this debate has ranged a good deal wider than liqueur chocolate. I stress that the amount of liqueur chocolate sold in this country is very small and we have no evidence that it is likely to increase. I am unaware, and I have checked with the officials, that there was any lobbying from the drinks industry on this. It is an issue of retailers and small shops having different levels of regulation about not selling to people under the age of 18. This is something that is for under-16s. This was identified, as part of the Red Tape Challenge, as a piece of law that was not necessary and would not be missed.

Lord Brooke of Alverthorpe: If the Minister were to check the notes that go with the Bill, he will see that the only people who asked for this were from the industry.

Lord Wallace of Saltaire: I will certainly check that. I recognise that the wider issues that the noble Lord has raised about alcohol in other food are serious. I can promise only that I will take that away and consider it. I do not know how much alcohol there is in these new sorbets, let alone in rum and raisin ice cream and other such things. It may well be that the amount of alcohol in sorbets could be quite considerable. I promise to take that away. We will see whether we can respond to the noble Lord on that or whether it is a developing problem. Liqueur chocolate is not a developing problem: there is no sign that very much is sold or that more will be sold.

Baroness Smith of Basildon: My Lords, my noble friend Lord Brooke raised a serious point. The Minister just said he was quite clear that there was no lobbying from the drinks industry on this. He implied that it was not clear that it came from retailers—I am not sure whether he is saying that the retailers lobbied, but that it came from concerns for retailers. If he has erroneously informed the Committee, as my noble friend referred to, will he write to all Members of the Committee and make clear, either in Committee or on the Floor of the House, that that was a mistake and that there has been lobbying from the drinks industry?

Lord Wallace of Saltaire: Certainly, I am very happy to do so. My understanding was that this was very much part of the Red Tape Challenge. I am told it is a piece of legislation under which there has been one prosecution in the last five years and no convictions. As a piece of legislation which might on occasion be used inappropriately, it seemed a good idea that it would be one of those that we might now strike out. I was not aware that the law had been introduced only in 1961. Some of the laws that we are hoping to strike out in this Bill as part of the Red Tape Challenge date back a good deal earlier than that.

My information is that you would have to eat the equivalent of 20 Mars bars rather than nine to become drunk on liqueur chocolates. The amount of alcohol allowed in 100 grams of confectionery—

5 pm

Baroness Smith of Basildon: The noble Lord may be aware that Mars bars have reduced in size considerably in the past couple of years.

Lord Wallace of Saltaire: I think I last ate a Mars bar about 40 years ago, so I had not noticed the shrinkage. The maximum amount of alcohol allowed in 100 grams of confectionery is 20 millilitres. This alcohol can be up to 57% alcohol by volume. Any confectionery containing alcohol in a greater proportion than 200 millilitres per kilogram is defined as alcohol and no one under the age of 18 can buy it. That is probably the answer to the noble Lord's question

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about sorbets; any sorbet that had a high proportion of alcohol in it would be covered by the same regulation. However, the noble Lord raises a number of interesting points which deserve a considered reply.

This pragmatic clause is intended to strike out a piece of legislation which can be used against chocolate retailers, small shopkeepers and others because it is on the statute book as an offence to sell liqueur confectionery to a child under the age of 16. I very much suspect that the number of occasions on which retailers sell liqueur confectionery to children under the age of 18 is actually very small. We do not consider that this has wider implications. The noble Lord raises the prospect that it could, which is something that we might discuss further in terms of developing trends in the food industry.

Baroness Smith of Basildon: I am grateful to the noble Lord for saying that he will write to us with some of the evidence. One of the issues he relied upon for removing this legislation is that there are few prosecutions; that is an entirely valid point. However, could it be that there are few prosecutions because the law is working?

Lord Brooke of Alverthorpe: There is a deterrent effect.

Lord Wallace of Saltaire: I can only say that that surprises me. I think that the demand for liqueur chocolate remains small and is likely to remain so. I see no evidence that there is a pent-up demand that is not being satisfied. The noble Lord may want to say, “Well, that might develop; it might be a new fashion among food manufacturers actively to advertise”. I note the noble Baroness’s point about alcopops being a new development we worried about. I am happy to talk further to the noble Lord about this, but we are proposing a small, limited deregulatory proposal to knock something off the statute book which is rarely used but is a potential irritant to small retailers.

Lord Brooke of Alverthorpe: The important point I am trying to make is that, while there are not many prosecutions, it is a deterrent. That is the effectiveness which has come from this legislation. What I am uncertain about, on which I would welcome the opportunity of a discussion with the Minister, is if that goes, what deterrent is left to prevent food and drink manufacturers increasing the amount of alcohol they are putting into their products which would be available for sale to under-18 year-olds on a wider front than at present? If there is legislation that would prevent it, maybe I would be happy with that.

Lord Wallace of Saltaire: I understand that that is the thrust of the noble Lord’s argument. It is a much wider point, but I will take that back. With that assurance, I hope noble Lords will agree that this clause stand part of the Bill.

Clause 55 agreed.

Clauses 56 and 57 agreed.

Amendment 76

Moved by *Lord Wallace of Saltaire*

76: After Clause 57, insert the following new Clause—

“Motor racing on public roads: general

(1) The Road Traffic Act 1988 is amended as follows.

(2) In section 12 (motor racing on public ways), after subsection (1) insert—

“(1A) Subsection (1) is subject to—

(a) in relation to England and Wales, sections 12A to 12F (which make provision to allow the holding of races or trials of speed between motor vehicles on public ways in England and Wales);

(b) in relation to Scotland, sections 12G to 12I (which make provision to allow the holding of races or trials of speed between motor vehicles on public ways in Scotland).”

(3) After section 12 insert—

“12A Motor race orders: England and Wales: overview

(1) Sections 12A to 12F allow highway authorities to make orders relating to the holding of a race or trial of speed between motor vehicles on a highway in England and Wales (“motor race orders”).

(2) A motor race order is made on the application of the person promoting the event, with the permission of a motor sport governing body (see sections 12B to 12D).

(3) The effect of a motor race order is set out in section 12E.

12B Permission to apply for motor race order

(1) A person who wishes to promote a race or trial of speed between motor vehicles on a highway in England and Wales may apply for a permit to a motor sport governing body authorised by regulations made by the appropriate national authority to issue permits in respect of a race or trial of speed of that kind.

(2) Before issuing a permit, the motor sport governing body must consult—

(a) the highway authority for each area in which the event is to take place or which is otherwise likely to be significantly affected by the event,

(b) the local authority for each such area,

(c) the police authority for each such area,

(d) in the case of an event that is to take place in Greater London, the Greater London Authority,

(e) each person who has given the motor sport governing body written notice within the previous 12 months that the person wishes to be consulted about applications under this section, and

(f) such other persons as the motor sport governing body thinks appropriate.

(3) The motor sport governing body must issue the permit if satisfied that—

(a) the applicant intends to promote the proposed event,

(b) the applicant has the necessary financial and other resources to make appropriate arrangements for the event,

(c) the applicant has arranged or will arrange appropriate insurance cover in connection with the event, in accordance with guidance issued by the motor sport governing body, and

(d) the application includes all necessary details of the safety and other arrangements proposed for the event.

(4) A permit must specify—

(a) any route to be followed in the course of the event;

(b) arrangements for the approval by the motor sport governing body of drivers participating in the event;

(c) arrangements for the approval by the motor sport governing body of vehicles to be used in the course of the event;

(d) arrangements made or to be made for insurance in connection with the event.

(5) A permit may set out conditions that the motor sport governing body thinks should be included in any motor race order made in relation to the event.

(6) The appropriate national authority must by regulations list motor sport governing bodies that are authorised to issue permits for the purposes of this section.

(7) The regulations may specify the kinds of races or trials of speed between motor vehicles on a highway in respect of which each listed governing body may issue permits.

(8) The regulations may provide that a listed motor sport governing body ceases to be authorised to issue permits if the rules of the governing body—

- (a) include provision of a kind specified in the regulations;
- (b) do not include provision of a kind so specified.

(9) In this section—

“the appropriate national authority” means—

- (a) in relation to England, the Secretary of State;
- (b) in relation to Wales, the Welsh Ministers;

“local authority” means—

- (a) a county or district council in England;
- (b) a parish council in England;
- (c) a London borough council;
- (d) the Common Council of the City of London in its capacity as a local authority;
- (e) the Council of the Isles of Scilly;
- (f) a county or county borough council in Wales.

12C Application for motor race order

(1) A motor race order may only be made on an application under this section.

(2) An application may be made only by a person who—

- (a) wishes to promote a race or trial of speed between motor vehicles on a highway in England and Wales, and
- (b) has a permit issued in accordance with section 12B in relation to the event.

(3) The application must be made to the highway authority for the area in which the event is to take place (and, where the event is to take place in the area of more than one highway authority, separate applications must be made under this section to each authority).

(4) The application must be made not less than 6 months before the event.

(5) The application must be accompanied by—

- (a) the permit issued in accordance with section 12B;
- (b) details of any orders under section 16A of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 (prohibition or restriction on roads in connection with certain events), and of any other orders, regulations or other legislative instruments, that will be needed in connection with the event;
- (c) a risk assessment in such form as the highway authority may specify;
- (d) such fee as the highway authority may specify.

12D Determination of applications for motor race orders

(1) Before determining whether to make a motor race order, a highway authority must consider—

- (a) the likely impact of the event on the local community,
- (b) the potential local economic and other benefits (in respect of tourism or otherwise), and
- (c) any other local considerations that the authority thinks relevant.

(2) The highway authority may make the motor race order if satisfied that—

- (a) adequate arrangements have been made to allow the views of the local community to be taken into account,

(b) the person proposing to promote the event has shown that the event is commercially viable, and

(c) effective arrangements have been made to involve local residents, the police and other emergency services in the planning and implementation of the event.

(3) A motor race order must—

- (a) specify the event to which it relates, including the date or (in the case of an event that is to take place on more than one day) the dates on which it is to take place,
- (b) include a map of the area to be used for the event (showing, in particular, the roads which participants will use, and areas which will be available for occupation by spectators), and
- (c) include any other information specified by the appropriate national authority by regulations.

(4) A motor race order may include conditions which must be satisfied before, during or after the event.

(5) A motor race order may, in particular, include conditions designed to ensure that the arrangements mentioned in subsection (2)(c) continue throughout the planning and implementation of the event.

(6) In this section, “the appropriate national authority” means—

- (a) in relation to England, the Secretary of State;
- (b) in relation to Wales, the Welsh Ministers.

12E Effect of motor race order

(1) A motor race order made under section 12D has the effect described in this section.

(2) Section 12(1) does not apply to the promoter of the event if that person—

- (a) promotes the event in accordance with any conditions imposed on the promoter by the motor race order, and
- (b) takes reasonable steps to ensure that any other conditions specified in the motor race order are met.

(3) The provisions listed in the Table do not apply in relation to a participant or an official or (as the case may be) in relation to a vehicle used by a participant or an official provided that—

- (a) the participant has been approved by the motor sport governing body that issued a permit in respect of the event or (as the case may be) the official has been authorised by the promoter,
- (b) the participant or official complies with any conditions specified in the motor race order that apply to participants or (as the case may be) officials, and
- (c) the participant or official also complies with any conditions imposed on him or her by the promoter.

<i>Provision</i>	<i>Topic</i>
Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984	
Section 18(3)	Contravention of order relating to one-way traffic on trunk roads
Section 20(5)	Contravention of order relating to use on roads of vehicles of certain classes
Section 81(1), an order under section 84(1), section 86(1), an order under section 88(1) and section 89(1)	Speed limits
Regulations under section 99	Removal of vehicles illegally parked etc
Section 104(1)	Immobilisation of vehicles illegally parked
Road Traffic Act 1988	
Section 1	Causing death by dangerous driving

Section 1A	Causing serious injury by dangerous driving
Section 2	Dangerous driving
Section 2B	Causing death by careless, or inconsiderate, driving
Section 3	Careless, and inconsiderate, driving
Section 3ZB	Causing death by driving: unlicensed, disqualified or uninsured drivers
Section 12(1)	Motor racing on public ways
Section 21(1)	Prohibition of driving or parking on cycle tracks
Section 22	Leaving vehicles in dangerous positions
Section 22A	Causing danger to road-users
Section 36(1)	Drivers to comply with traffic signs
The Highway Code, as it has effect under section 38	
Section 40A	Using vehicle in dangerous condition etc
Regulations under section 41	Regulation of construction, weight, equipment and use of vehicles
Section 41A	Breach of requirement as to brakes, steering-gear or tyres
Section 41C	Breach of requirement as to speed assessment equipment detection devices
Section 42	Breach of other construction and use requirements
Section 47(1)	Obligatory test certificates
Section 87(1)	Drivers of motor vehicles to have driving licences
Section 103(1)(b)	Driving while disqualified
Section 143(1) and (2)	Users of motor vehicles to be insured or secured against third-party risks
Sections 164 and 165	Powers of constables to require production of driving licence, obtain information etc
Section 165A	Power to seize vehicles driven without licence or insurance
Section 170	Duty of driver to stop, report accident and give information or documents
Vehicle Excise and Registration Act 1994	
Section 1(1)(b)	Circumstances in which vehicle excise duty is chargeable on unregistered mechanically propelled vehicles
Section 29(1)	Offence of using or keeping an unlicensed vehicle

(4) The appropriate national authority may by regulations amend this section so as to—

- (a) add or omit an entry in the Table in subsection (3);
- (b) provide that subsection (3) applies in relation to a provision for the time being included in the Table only for purposes specified in the regulations;
- (c) provide that subsection (3) applies in relation to a provision for the time being included in the Table only if a condition specified in the regulations is included in the motor race order.

(5) However, regulations under subsection (4) may not add any provision of sections 3A to 11 of this Act (motor vehicles: drink and drugs) to the Table in subsection (3).

(6) The promoter of an event in respect of which a motor race order has been made is liable in damages if personal injury or damage to property is caused by anything done—

- (a) by or on behalf of the promoter in connection with the event, or
- (b) by or on behalf of a participant or an official, unless it is proved that the promoter took reasonable steps to prevent the injury or damage occurring.

(7) For the purposes of the Law Reform (Contributory Negligence) Act 1945, the Fatal Accidents Act 1976 and the Limitation Act 1980 any injury or damage for which a person is liable under subsection (6) is to be treated as due to the fault of that person.

(8) In this section—

“the appropriate national authority” means—

- (a) in relation to England, the Secretary of State;
- (b) in relation to Wales, the Welsh Ministers;

“official” means a person who facilitates the holding of a race or trial of speed.

12F Regulations by appropriate national authority: procedure

(1) A power to make regulations conferred on the Secretary of State or the Welsh Ministers by section 12B(6), 12D(3)(c) or 12E(4) is exercisable by statutory instrument.

(2) A statutory instrument containing regulations made by the Secretary of State under section 12E(4) (whether alone or with other provision) may not be made unless a draft of the instrument has been laid before, and approved by a resolution of, each House of Parliament.

(3) A statutory instrument containing regulations made by the Secretary of State under section 12B(6) or 12D(3)(c) (other than regulations to which subsection (2) applies) is subject to annulment in pursuance of a resolution of either House of Parliament.

(4) A statutory instrument containing regulations made by the Welsh Ministers under section 12E(4) (whether alone or with other provision) may not be made unless a draft of the instrument has been laid before, and approved by a resolution of, the National Assembly for Wales.

(5) A statutory instrument containing regulations made by the Welsh Ministers under section 12B(6) or 12D(3)(c) (other than regulations to which subsection (4) applies) is subject to annulment in pursuance of a resolution of the National Assembly for Wales.

12G Authorisation of races and trials of speed in Scotland

(1) The Scottish Ministers may by regulations authorise, or make provision for authorising, the holding of races or trials of speed on public roads in Scotland.

(2) Regulations under this section may in particular—

- (a) specify the persons by whom authorisations may be given;
- (b) limit the circumstances in which, and the places in respect of which, authorisations may be given;
- (c) provide for authorisations to be subject to conditions imposed by or under the regulations;
- (d) provide for authorisations to cease to have effect in circumstances specified in the regulations;
- (e) provide for the procedure to be followed, the particulars to be given, and the amount (or the persons who are to determine the amount) of any fees to be paid, in connection with applications for authorisations.

(3) Regulations under this section may make different provision for different cases.

12H Races and trials of speed in Scotland: further provision

(1) Section 12(1) does not apply to the promoter of an event that has been authorised by or under regulations under section 12G if that person—

- (a) promotes the event in accordance with any conditions imposed on the promoter by or under the regulations, and
- (b) takes reasonable steps to ensure that any other conditions imposed by or under the regulations are met.

(2) Section 12(1) does not apply to a participant in an event that has been authorised by or under regulations under section 12G, provided that the participant complies with any conditions imposed on participants by or under the regulations.

(3) Sections 1, 1A, 2, 2B and 3 do not apply to a participant in an event that has been authorised by or under regulations under section 12G or to any other person of a description specified in regulations made by the Scottish Ministers, provided that the participant or other person complies with any conditions imposed on participants or on persons of that description by or under regulations under section 12G.

(4) The Scottish Ministers may by regulations make provision for specified provisions of legislation of a kind mentioned in subsection (5)—

- (a) not to apply in relation to participants in events authorised by or under regulations under section 12G or (as appropriate) in relation to vehicles used by such persons;
- (b) to apply in relation to such persons or vehicles subject to modifications specified in the regulations;
- (c) not to apply in relation to persons of a description specified in regulations under this subsection or (as appropriate) in relation to vehicles used by such persons;
- (d) to apply in relation to such persons or vehicles subject to modifications specified in the regulations.

(5) The kinds of legislation are—

- (a) legislation restricting the speed of vehicles or otherwise regulating the use of vehicles on a public road;
- (b) legislation regulating the construction, maintenance or lighting of vehicles;
- (c) legislation requiring a policy of insurance or security to be in force in relation to the use of any vehicle;
- (d) legislation relating to the duty chargeable on, or the licensing and registration of, vehicles;
- (e) legislation requiring the driver of a vehicle to hold a licence to drive it;
- (f) legislation relating to the enforcement of any legislation mentioned in paragraphs (a) to (e).

(6) However, regulations under subsection (4) may not disapply, or otherwise alter the application of, sections 3A to 11 of this Act (motor vehicles: drink and drugs).

(7) The Scottish Ministers may by regulations amend section 16A of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 so as to enable orders under that section that are made for the purposes of an event authorised by or under regulations under section 12G to suspend statutory provisions in addition to those specified in section 16A(11).

(8) The promoter of an event that has been authorised by or under regulations under section 12G is liable in damages if personal injury or damage to property is caused by anything done—

- (a) by or on behalf of the promoter in connection with the event,
- (b) by or on behalf of a participant, or
- (c) by or on behalf of a person of a description specified in regulations made by the Scottish Ministers,

unless it is proved that the promoter took reasonable steps to prevent the injury or damage occurring.

(9) For the purposes of the Law Reform (Contributory Negligence) Act 1945, any injury or damage for which a person is liable under subsection (8) is to be treated as due to the fault of that person.

(10) In this section, “legislation” means—

- (a) an Act or subordinate legislation (within the meaning of the Interpretation Act 1978);
- (b) an Act of the Scottish Parliament or an instrument made under an Act of the Scottish Parliament.

12I Regulations under section 12G or 12H: procedure

(1) Before making regulations under section 12H(3), (4), (7) or (8), the Scottish Ministers must consult such persons as they consider appropriate.

(2) Regulations under section 12G are subject to the negative procedure.

(3) Regulations under section 12H(3), (4), (7) or (8) are subject to the affirmative procedure.””

Lord Wallace of Saltaire: My Lords, we come to a set of government amendments—Amendments 76 to 78, 97 and 98—which we are introducing on motor racing. Currently motor racing on public roads can be permitted only by Parliament using the Private Bill procedure for specific events. These new provisions enable authorising bodies, in conjunction with the local highway authority, to run motor races on roads which have been closed for the purpose without the need for individual primary legislation. They also redress the anomaly which allows local authorities to close roads for all sorts of events, such as street parties, parades and motor events that do not involve racing, as well as for cycle racing, as in Yorkshire this summer, but not motor racing. The amendment will extend that permission to motor races.

The sorts of races envisaged are small-scale local events, such as rally stages, sprints and hill climbs—not a London Grand Prix. Although the legislation removes a potential obstacle to on-road F1 races, major logistical and financial challenges remain and it is not likely that one would be held. The Motor Sports Association and the Auto-Cycle Union have estimated there might be up to 100 new events per year. The bulk would be very small events that would often form part of larger local festivals and events. They estimate that there might be one or two new very large events annually on the scale of the Jim Clark Rally in the Scottish Borders, which is permitted under private legislation. Similar events are already permitted in the Isle of Man and Northern Ireland, where the major racing events the North West 200 festival and the Ulster Grand Prix—both motor cycling—provide major financial investment, attracting thousands of spectators from home and abroad.

The Government consulted on the proposals in the spring of 2014. Even treating all the template replies organised by the motor sport organisations as one reply, there was overwhelmingly strong support for all but one of the proposals. The one proposal not agreed to is not being carried forward. The provisions in new Sections 12A to 12F provide for England and Wales and the provisions in new Sections 12G, 12H and 12I provide for Scotland. These are different due to the specifics of the legislative system in Scotland and also reflect the preferences of colleagues north of the border for greater central government input.

The amendment for England and Wales allows a person who wishes to promote a race or trial of speed to apply to one of the motor sport governing bodies for a permit. These bodies will be appointed by regulation and we expect them to be the Motor Sports Association for car races and the Auto-Cycle Union for motorbike races being the very experienced bodies which authorise on and off-road events. The motor racing body would consult the highway authorities, the police, local authorities and anyone else who has requested to be involved and ensure that enough information is provided on resources, safety and other arrangements. That would include

[LORD WALLACE OF SALTAIRE]

having sufficient insurance. Once satisfied, the body would then be able to issue a permit setting out the route and any relevant conditions.

The organiser would then apply to the local highway authority for a motor race order. He would need to provide a risk assessment. The local authority would consider the impact on the local community, the potential benefits and any other relevant factors, such as safety, before deciding whether to proceed. We envisage a high degree of consultation and engagement with such bodies as the police and emergency services before any such decision is taken. This would ensure that races are run only where it is safe and sensible to do so. The local authority would be able to charge a fee for considering the application for a motor race order.

The legislation then specifies some provisions that would be disapplied during these races. They include, among other things, speed restriction, traffic signs and licensing and insurance requirements, but not the provisions in the Road Traffic Act 1988 relating to drink and drugs. This new section would also disapply Sections 1 to 3 of the Road Traffic Act 1988—road traffic offences related to careless and dangerous driving—in respect of competitors. This is because competitive driving has an element of increased risk, since it involves conduct, such as driving at speed, that would be considered careless or dangerous in normal driving conditions, and the vehicles used for some forms of race are not road legal and do not comply with the construction and use requirements. National authorities will be able by regulation to amend the list of disapplied road traffic legislation.

The proposed amendment for Scotland permits motor racing and trials of speed on public roads so long as the event is authorised by regulation and is held in accordance with any conditions imposed on the promoter by or under the regulations. It also disapplies Sections 1 to 3 of the Road Traffic Act 1988—road traffic offences related to careless and dangerous driving—in respect of competitors. The amendment allows Scottish Ministers to make provisions by regulation that specified provisions of legislation should not apply, or should apply subject to modification, to participants in authorised events. These provisions could cover, among other things, speed restrictions, traffic signs, licensing and insurance requirements. These regulations will not be able to disapply the provisions in the Road Traffic Act 1988 relating to drink and drugs, as in England and Wales. Scottish Ministers will be able by regulation to amend Section 16A of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 to add to the list of statutory provisions which may be suspended by a road closure order. The legislation provides that the promoter would be liable in damages if their action, or that of a participant, caused personal injury or damage to property, unless the promoter could show that they had taken reasonable steps to prevent it. This amendment amends Section 16A of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 in respect of England, Scotland and Wales to allow local authorities to close roads in order to hold motor races.

The Government consulted on these proposals and there was strong support for this provision. We envisage a high degree of consultation that would ensure that

races are run only where it is safe and sensible to do so. Certain legislation would be disapplied during these races, including speed restrictions and road traffic offences related to careless and dangerous driving in respect of competitors. I beg to move.

Lord Purvis of Tweed (LD): My Lords, I support the amendments in this group, in particular those that transfer powers to Scottish Ministers. I crave the indulgence of noble Lords as I have not taken part in this Bill in Committee so far, but having listened to the eclectic subjects of schooling, tourism, licensing evenings in villages halls, haircuts, whisky ice cream and the size of Mars bars, it is much more attractive for me to carry on to take part in the debate.

These amendments are welcome. They reflect that rallying in Scotland has a long history and is enjoyed by thousands of dedicated individuals: spectators, drivers and volunteers. Scottish drivers and co-drivers have reached the highest levels of competition, for example, winning the World Rally Championship and building on Scotland's motor sport tradition. As the Minister indicated, for more than 40 years the memorial rally for Jim Clark has been a fixture in the Scottish rally scene, in particular in the Scottish Borders in the constituency of my right honourable friend Michael Moore and in the ward of Councillor Frances Renton who is a tireless supporter of the rally. For more than 40 years, this annual event has taken place on private roads and tracks in the Scottish Borders in memory of my father's hero Jim Clark, who was Formula One World Drivers' Champion in 1963 and 1965. It is the only closed-road rally in mainland UK and therefore this measure will be of relevance to the Scottish Borders and the Jim Clark Rally.

It is held over three days in the Scottish Borders. It is worth acknowledging the work over many years by dedicated volunteers, and the real professionalism in the local authority and the local police and emergency services. However, despite that, this year the rally was struck by tragedy and three spectators were killed.

5.15 pm

I note that some of the issues regarding the requirements for regulations have been addressed very recently in the early report of the Scottish Government's commission into that dreadful event. The group chaired by the Scottish Government was established to review the safety of the rally, taking into consideration other motorsport events across Scotland, including in Mull and the highlands. The group has a wide membership, including representatives of the Motorsport Industry Association, the Scottish Auto Cycle Union, Police Scotland, the Health and Safety Executive and the local authority. The group also benefited from expert advice from Sir Jackie Stewart, who is noted for his long experience on road safety.

The conclusions, although early, which the group is drawing support the role of the clerks of the course, the surrounding support offered by the emergency services, safety plans, learning from other areas and multi-venue rallies, and for there to be further guidance that could well be consistent across other measures. This will inform the regulations that will now become the responsibility of Scottish Ministers. In that regard, this is particularly welcome.

As the Minister has highlighted, currently the Jim Clark Rally has legislative authority through the Scottish Borders Council (Jim Clark Memorial Rally) Order Confirmation Act 1996, which was a private Bill. This has meant that the rally can take place only in the district of Berwickshire in the Scottish Borders. When there has been work to try to expand the rally into further areas in other parts of the Scottish Borders, that was restricted because it would have required primary legislation in this Parliament. This move towards Scottish Ministers is particularly welcome.

If I may, I will ask the Minister a couple of questions regarding the processes going forward. The first concerns the persons who under the regulations will be given the authority to operate such events. My question is whether the Government have considered allowing a relevant local authority to be such a person with regard to the competence of this legislation. I ask this because in many instances it would be of assistance if a person authorised for the race included a local authority or local authorities, with the support of the Scottish Borders Council. That would help with having the regulatory power when it comes to other organisers, and those associated with that event.

The second area is whether there could potentially be improvement to the other conditions which would be specified in the regulations. These are by their nature generic. They are being brought forward by the Scottish Government, and they could also stipulate the conditions of those regulations which can be enforced by the authorised body. That would also assist local authorities within Scotland to make sure that the events are conducted to the highest possible standards.

While understanding what the Minister said in the context of events in London or on the English side of the border, because these would be by nature generic, there would not necessarily be any distinction between a proposed Glasgow Grand Prix or making improvements for a specific event in a rural area such as the Jim Clark Rally.

Before I draw my comments to a close, I also would like the Minister to consider whether there could be conditions that relate specifically to public safety.

Proposed new Section 12G(2)(c) states that there will be conditions on what these regulations are able to cover. I noted that public safety was not an element of that. While I would not wish to pre-empt what the Scottish Parliament may well approve in legislation—I say that with respect to the institution in which I had the privilege to serve—and cognisant of the circumstances that we have seen at the Jim Clark Rally, public safety is an element.

Finally, I am pleased that a legislative consent Motion in the Scottish Parliament has been passed and there has been good co-ordination between the UK Government and the Scottish Government in transferring the powers. As a Liberal Democrat, it is pleasing to see that we are not only providing support for local events such as the rally, support for local authorities such as Scottish Borders Council, ensuring that regulation is improved, and carrying out what we believe in, which is transferring appropriate powers to the responsibility of the Scottish Parliament. If it

means that we support a rally that I and my family are passionate about, I also have a personal interest in seeing the success of this measure.

Lord Stevenson of Balmacara: My Lords, I thank the noble Lord, Lord Purvis, for his useful contribution to our debates. He certainly caught us on a colourful day. We had a succession of rather intimate disclosures around eating habits and various other things, which has not been a hallmark of this Committee—and I have been here for every minute of it so far. However, we still have two days to come; perhaps a trend is being set, and we may get on to that, certainly with subjects such as television on the horizon. I am sure that there is room for manoeuvre. The noble Lord would be welcome to participate or just to observe.

I am left slightly unsuspected on this because I had expected my noble friend Lady Smith to respond to this amendment, but she decided to go off and console herself with some Mars bars, I think, and left me to pick up the pieces. I therefore have only three small points to raise, to which I hope that the Minister can respond. First—although I am not sufficiently up to speed on this issue to know whether this is the case—presumably, when one is talking about passing responsibility for these matters to local authorities, we are anticipating situations involving large-scale events such as the recent Tour de France in Britain, which might span several counties or other city authorities. There may be a variable response. Can he explain the process for that? Will there be a lead authority that would, presumably, normally take responsibility? Given that this is a big change, and we are talking about high-speed, rather dangerous sporting events, it may be a bit of a worry if there are variable local authority standards, or if it is not clear what happens if one authority agrees and another does not agree to run an event on the scale of, say, the Tour de Yorkshire. I know that the Minister and the amendment say that the measure is restricted to smaller-scale events, but small-scale events involving cars are, in my view, still quite large-scale. They are certainly noisy and quite dangerous. I would like some reassurance on that.

Secondly, as regards my point about variable standards, if there are to be differences, there is an issue as to how the events will be sustained. Parliament can currently take an overview of the standards it wishes to see. The devolution of these responsibilities is not a bad thing but it raises the question of variability, and I should like some comments on that.

Thirdly—because it may be topical—what would be the process if it were decided by someone, say the mayor of a large conurbation, to have an F1 race in that city? Would we be stuck with the current arrangements for an Act of Parliament in order to provide, say, the “London Grand Prix”?

Lord Wallace of Saltaire: I thank both noble Lords for those interventions. I am particularly grateful to my noble friend Lord Purvis, who clearly understands much more about the implications of this from his personal experience, and from the Jim Clark Rally and its history, than many of us do. It was extremely valuable to have his contribution. Perhaps I should mark to noble Lords that a series of amendments are in the name of both myself for the Government and

[LORD WALLACE OF SALTAIRE]
the noble Lord, Lord Rooker—not a Member of your Lordships' House who is least careful about the importance of new legislation.

This group of amendments ought to have been in the Bill earlier. We apologise for their late introduction during the passage of the Bill. DCMS consulted on these measures in spring this year. The Government's response to the consultation was announced by the Prime Minister on 11 July and we tabled these amendments at the end of July. However, for a number of reasons—including the fatalities at the Jim Clark Rally in the Borders just ahead of Second Reading in the Commons, when it was planned to table this—introduction was delayed to ensure that the provisions satisfied the need for confidence in the safety of such events. The Scottish review of the safety of these events will report at the end of the year. The provisions as drafted, which require secondary legislation to give these provisions effect, give Scotland, Wales and England the opportunity to have regard to any recommendations in the review.

My noble friend Lord Purvis asked a number of questions. He first asked whether the Government have considered allowing a local authority to be the regulating authority; I understood his second question to be whether the regulatory authority can enforce restrictions. In Scotland, the person or organisation authorised to carry events forward will be up to the Scottish Government, which can regulate. Enforcement of the regulations can also be determined by Scottish Ministers by regulation. Conditions in respect of public safety will be added to the regulations if the Scottish Minister wishes. I hope that my noble friend Lord Purvis will regard that as a matter of good co-ordination between the Scottish Government and Westminster.

On the question of safety for participants and spectators, we will certainly want to take into account the reviews that are following the Jim Clark Rally and apply those. We know that a number of local authorities would like to hold races. They apparently include: Oban South and the Isles; Torbay; Eastbourne; Isle of Wight; and Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council. We see those as being small events in a single local authority, with nothing on the scale of the Tour de Yorkshire, which, as the noble Lord, Lord Stevenson, remarked, involved very considerable distances. Of course, across the north of England every summer we have effective motorcycle races by very large numbers of people—usually looking as though they are slightly older than me—which have fatalities on public roads. Indeed, my wife and I were crossing the North Yorkshire Moors when one of those sad accidents took place. There will be much more regulation under these circumstances than what currently happens.

The noble Lord, Lord Stevenson, asked what the circumstances would be if the Mayor of London wished to have a London Grand Prix. I am informed that this legislation would be adequate in principle for an F1 race around London, but the wider logistics would also need to be considered. It could well be that a really large event in London, or another big city, would have to have its own specific legislation, as the Olympics did, because of the sheer scale of the operation. This is intended to cover small events.

Lord Stevenson of Balmacara: The Minister is trying to have it both ways. He said that it would be for small-scale events, not for F1, but on the advice of his officials he then said that the legislation would allow one to run an F1 event in London. Can we have a clear statement on where the break point is? The idea of F1 cars skidding around corners in Westminster and other places, which is being envisaged in this, puts a completely different light on it.

Lord Wallace of Saltaire: I accept that. I can assure the noble Lord that I will check that and write to him to reassure him on that matter. I hope I have answered the questions from both noble Lords who spoke.

Amendment 76 agreed.

Amendments 77 and 78

Moved by Lord Wallace of Saltaire

77: After Clause 57, insert the following new Clause—

“Motor racing: road closures

(1) Section 16A of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 (which allows a traffic authority to impose by order restrictions or temporary prohibitions on the use of roads in connection with certain events) is amended as follows.

(2) In subsection (4), in paragraph (a), after “(motor racing on public ways)” insert “unless a motor race order under section 12D of that Act is made in relation to the race or trial or it is authorised by or under regulations under section 12G of that Act”.

(3) After subsection (11) insert—

“(12) An order under this section that is made for the purposes of a race or trial of speed in relation to which a motor race order under section 12D of the Road Traffic Act 1988 has been made may also suspend—

- (a) regulations under section 25(1);
- (b) section 28(1);
- (c) an order under section 29(1);
- (d) byelaws under section 31(1);
- (e) any provision made by or under Part 4.”

78: After Clause 57, insert the following new Clause—

“Motor racing: consequential amendments

(1) The Road Traffic Act 1988 is amended in accordance with subsections (2) to (5).

(2) For the italic cross-heading before section 12 substitute “Motor racing on public ways”.

(3) Before section 13 insert the italic cross-heading “Other motor events”.

(4) In section 193A (tramcars and trolley vehicles), after subsection (3) insert—

“(3A) Sections 12A to 12I do not apply to tramcars or to trolley vehicles.”

(5) In section 195 (provisions as to regulations), after subsection (5) insert—

“(6) This section does not apply in relation to regulations under section 12B(6), 12D(3)(c) or 12E(4) (provision as to which is made by section 12F) or regulations under section 12G or 12H(3), (4), (7) or (8) (provision as to which is made by section 12I).”

(6) The Secretary of State may by regulations made by statutory instrument repeal any local Act passed before this Act which makes provision for authorising races or trials of speed between motor vehicles on highways in England and Wales (and, for this purpose, “highway” has the same meaning as in the Road Traffic Act 1988).

(7) Regulations under subsection (6) may include transitional, transitory or saving provision.

(8) Before making regulations under subsection (6), the Secretary of State must consult such persons as the Secretary of State considers appropriate.

(9) A statutory instrument containing regulations under subsection (6) is subject to annulment in pursuance of a resolution of either House of Parliament.

(10) The Scottish Ministers may by regulations repeal any local Act passed before this Act which makes provision for authorising races or trials of speed between motor vehicles on public roads in Scotland (and, for this purpose, “public road” has the same meaning as in the Road Traffic Act 1988).

(11) Regulations under subsection (10) may include transitional, transitory or saving provision.

(12) Before making regulations under subsection (10), the Scottish Ministers must consult such persons as they consider appropriate.

(13) Regulations under subsection (10) are subject to the negative procedure.”

Amendments 77 and 78 agreed.

Lord Gardiner of Kimble (Con): My Lords, I think it might be an appropriate moment for the Committee to adjourn.

Committee adjourned at 5.30 pm.

Written Statements

Thursday 6 November 2014

Energy: Oil and Gas Statement

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department of Energy and Climate Change (Baroness Verma) (Con): My right honourable friend the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change (Edward Davey MP) has made the following Written Ministerial Statement.

In June 2013 I took the opportunity to commission Sir Ian Wood to undertake a comprehensive review of the regulation and stewardship of the UK's hydrocarbon reserves. The resultant Wood Review made recommendations that will refresh the management of the UK Continental Shelf in a profound way that will benefit both the UK economy as well as the myriad businesses involved in the recovery of oil and gas offshore. Sir Ian's review estimated an extra 3-4bn barrels of oil equivalent could be recovered that otherwise would not be.

In July of this year I published the Government Response to the Wood Review. The recommendations made by the review were accepted in full and we have been working hard to establish the new Regulator, the Oil and Gas Authority (OGA), in time for launch in April 2015. We have brought forward legislation that will set out the principles of Maximising Economic Recovery from the UK territorial sea and the UK Continental Shelf (MER UK) and provide for a levy making power. We are in the process of recruiting high calibre individuals to staff the OGA, from a chief executive and chair of the board to engineers and geologists to provide additional technical skill and expertise to our licensing, exploration and development team.

This Call for Evidence, published today brings a special focus on how we can best implement the recommendations contained in the Review. We are inviting evidence from all stakeholders that will help us create an effective and efficient regulator with no unforeseen consequences.

In particular, we seek evidence on the establishment of the OGA as a Government Company, on the development of the MER UK strategy, on how the new powers of the OGA will be defined and used, on building a robust and proportionate sanctions regime to ensure the success of MER UK and on the new cost recovery regime to fund the OGA.

This exercise will inform our policy development and legislative agenda for the new year and help ensure the OGA will be fully vested to safeguard the economic future of the UK Territorial Sea and Continental Shelf.

Energy: Oil and Gas Authority Statement

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department of Energy and Climate Change (Baroness Verma) (Con): My right honourable friend the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change (Edward Davey MP) has made the following Written Ministerial Statement.

The UK's oil and gas industry is of national importance: a key contributor to growth, jobs, tax revenue and energy security. The industry supports 450,000 jobs directly or indirectly and paid £4.7 billion in direct taxes in 2012/13.

Around 42 billion barrels of oil and gas have so far been produced from the UKCS, and around 20 billion could still be discovered. Although peak production is now behind us, we must maintain our momentum and make the most of the huge opportunity that the UKCS still represents.

To ensure we maximise the economic recovery of the UK's oil and gas resources, in 2013, I commissioned Sir Ian Wood to lead a review into the challenges the oil and gas industry is currently facing.

Sir Ian published his final report on 24 February 2014. His key finding was that Government (both HM Treasury and the Regulator) and Industry must adopt a cohesive tripartite approach to develop and commit to a new, shared strategy of Maximising Economic Recovery for the UK (MER UK) to maximise the huge economic and energy security opportunity that lies off UK shores. Sir Ian also recommended that DECC should create a new arm's length body to undertake the role of economic regulator as we move into the next phase of the UKCS, and that the new regulator should seek a number of commitments from industry in areas such as committing to the MER UK strategy, more efficient sharing of infrastructure and improving collaboration.

Government has accepted Sir Ian's recommendations in full and we are making good progress in implementing them, including establishing a new arm's length body: the Oil and Gas Authority (OGA), which will be headquartered in Aberdeen.

Today, I am delighted to announce the appointment of Andy Samuel as Chief Executive Officer of the OGA. This is a significant milestone in the establishment of the OGA and demonstrates our commitment to the UK's oil and gas industry and implementing Sir Ian's recommendations.

Andy is an outstanding candidate and brings a wealth of relevant experience to the role having previously held senior positions within the oil and gas industry, most recently as Managing Director of BG PLC's Exploration and Production in Europe.

Andy has a strong technical understanding of the oil and gas industry, both nationally and internationally, and also, crucially holds significant credibility within the industry. Andy also has considerable experience with regard to rebuilding and reshaping companies, which will be a vital as he guides the initial stages of the OGA. I am confident that Andy has the right skills, leadership qualities and commercial and fiscal understanding to ensure the success of the OGA.

Andy will begin this role in early January 2015 and will play a pivotal role in shaping and establishing the new body he will lead. The OGA will be formally established as an Executive Agency in April 2015 to ensure we are maximising economic recovery of our oil and gas resources.

We continue to make strong progress implementing all of the Wood Review's recommendations. We have launched the recruitment of new technical staff to

expand our existing capability and capacity within the teams in DECC which will move to the OGA. We are also in the process of recruiting a Chair, who will be instrumental during the establishment of the OGA.

We have introduced clauses into the Infrastructure Bill which provide for a levy to fund the new body and which place a duty on the Secretary of State to establish, with the industry, a strategy for delivering MER UK.

In the spirit of the tripartite approach, we have today published the “Wood Review Implementation Call for Evidence” to consult key sector stakeholders on how Sir Ian’s recommendations can be best implemented. The views sought will be essential in helping to inform the policy and legislation required to implement the Wood Review recommendations in an efficient and practical way.

The substantial progress we have made since the final Review was published in February 2014 demonstrates the Government’s commitment to the future of the Oil and Gas industry.

Energy: Oil and Gas Licences

Statement

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department of Energy and Climate Change (Baroness Verma) (Con): My right honourable friend the Minister of State for Energy and Climate (Matthew Hancock MP) has made the following Written Ministerial Statement.

The offshore oil and gas industries currently support the employment of 450,000 people in the UK. They make a vital contribution to the UK economy and to the nation’s energy security with UK oil and gas production still supplying around half of the UK’s primary energy needs.

After thorough consideration of the applications made in the 28th Offshore Oil and Gas Licensing Round, I am pleased to be able to announce an initial tranche of offers of 134 production licences. This demonstrates the continuing attractiveness both of the United Kingdom Continental Shelf as an oil and gas producing province and of our approach to offering a range of licences meeting a diverse range of needs.

As required by the Habitats Directive, my officials have carried out a screening assessment of the Blocks applied for. As a result, licences for 94 of those Blocks, which are close to, or in, certain Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs), will be subject to environmental assessments before any offer is made. The EU Habitats Directive requires that “appropriate assessments” be conducted where proposed activities are likely to have significant effects on any SACs and SPAs. The assessments will examine the implications for these protected nature conservation areas of awarding oil and gas licences, and will be subject to appropriate consultation, before any decision is made on whether to offer any of these Blocks.

Details of the offers that have been made can be viewed on the DECC Oil and Gas pages at <https://www.gov.uk/oil-and-gas-licensing-rounds>

EU: Red Tape

Statement

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (Baroness Neville-Rolfe) (Con): My Rt hon Friend the Minister of State for Business and Enterprise (Matthew Hancock) has today made the following statement.

The Business Taskforce report—“Cut EU red tape”—published a year ago, set out practical ways to reform EU rules, regulations and practices to make European businesses more competitive.

It put forward thirty recommendations to reform the most burdensome EU rules, and proposed the COMPETE principles to ensure new EU proposals are pro-innovation and pro-growth. The report was welcomed by the Government and is now central to its EU reform agenda.

To mark the first anniversary of the Business Taskforce report, the Government today is publishing a short report—“Cut EU red tape: One year on”—setting out action to date in delivering the Taskforce’s recommendations.

The progress report shows welcome progress, with ten of the thirty recommendations already achieved, and a series of further recommendations where good progress is being made.

The report also illustrates the considerable support shown for the COMPETE principles, including from UK and EU business organisations, the European Parliament, and the Commission’s own Better Regulation Advisory Group (the Stoiber Group).

The Government continues to press the Commission and EU partners to take action on the remaining recommendations, including those that are longer term and where delivery will be slower. The Government also continues to call on the Commission to implement the COMPETE principles in order to boost growth, competitiveness and innovation across Europe.

Copies of the progress report have been placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

The progress report, and the Taskforce’s October 2013 report, “Cut EU red tape”, are also available online at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/cut-eu-red-tape-business-taskforce-report-one-year-on>

Ministry of Justice: Contingencies Fund

Advance

Statement

The Minister of State, Ministry of Justice (Lord Faulks) (Con): My honourable friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Justice, Minister for the Courts and Legal Aid (Shailesh Vara) has made the following Written Ministerial Statement.

“The Ministry of Justice requires an advance of £900,000 from the Contingencies Fund in 2014-15 to meet the requirement for a temporary Exchequer grant in accordance with Article 11 of the Royal Charter on self-regulation of the press.

The department intends to rely on the Supply and Appropriation (Anticipation and Adjustments) Act. Accordingly, additional resources of £900,000 will be sought in a Supplementary Estimate for the Ministry of Justice. In the meantime, the temporary Exchequer grant will be met by repayable advances from the Contingencies Fund.”

NHS: Jimmy Savile Statement

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department of Health (Earl Howe) (Con): My right hon Friend the Secretary of State, Department of Health (Jeremy Hunt) has made the following written ministerial statement:

Further to my oral statement on 26 June 2014, Official Report, cols 482 -498, I wish to update the House about the investigations into Jimmy Savile and the NHS.

28 investigation reports into the activities of Jimmy Savile on NHS premises were published on 26 June 2014. We expected the remaining NHS investigation reports, including that relating to Stoke Mandeville, would be published later in the year.

At the request of the Crown Prosecution Service, the publication of the NHS investigations into Jimmy Savile is being delayed until the conclusion of ongoing legal proceedings. Therefore, I wish to advise the House that there will be a delay in the publication of the outstanding NHS investigation reports. We now hope trusts will publish their reports in January 2015, alongside Kate Lampard’s lessons learnt report.

The remaining investigations reports that were not completed in June and are still to be published are:

	<i>Hospital</i>	<i>Relevant Trust</i>
1.	Stoke Mandeville Hospital	Buckinghamshire Healthcare NHS Trust
2.	Rampton Hospital	Nottinghamshire Healthcare NHS Trust
3.	Springfield Hospital	South West London & St Georges Mental Health NHS Trust
4.	Crawley Hospital	Sussex Community Trust

Alongside these reports further reports will be produced by new NHS investigations that have come to light since June 2014. The NHS Savile Legacy Unit, chaired by Sue Proctor, is providing independent oversight and assurance of these new NHS investigations. Information provided to the NHS Savile Legacy Unit by victims, and from the Metropolitan Police Service, has been passed on to the following 12 trusts that have responsibility for the relevant hospitals as set out in the table below:

	<i>Hospital</i>	<i>Relevant Trust</i>
1.	Leeds General Infirmary	Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust
2.	Stoke Mandeville Hospital	Buckinghamshire Healthcare NHS Trust
3.	Birch Hill Hospital Rochdale	Pennine Acute NHS Trust

	<i>Hospital</i>	<i>Relevant Trust</i>
4.	Scott House Hospital Rochdale	Calderstones NHS Foundation Trust
5.	Bethlem Royal Hospital	South London and the Maudsley NHS Trust
6.	Shenley Hospital	Central and North West London NHS Trust
7.	West Yorkshire Ambulance Service	Yorkshire Ambulance Service
8.	St Martins Hospital Canterbury	Kent and Medway NHS and Social Care Partnership Trust
9.	Queen Elizabeth Hospital Gateshead	Gateshead Health NHS Foundation Trust
10.	Royal Victoria Infirmary	Newcastle upon Tyne NHS Foundation Trust
11.	Meanwood Park Hospital	Leeds and York Partnerships Foundation Trust
12.	Calderdale Royal Hospital	Calderdale and Huddersfield NHS Foundation Trust

Names of the hospitals are taken from the information received. These include hospitals that may have closed in which case the information has been passed on to the legacy organisation. Members interested in particular investigations should contact the relevant Trust.

As a consequence of the CPS request there will also be a corresponding delay to the investigations into Savile in children’s homes and schools, which are overseen by the Department for Education, and to the lessons learnt report by Lucy Scott-Moncrieff.

I will update the House once the legal proceedings conclude.

Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe Statement

The Lord Privy Seal (Baroness Stowell of Beeston) (Con): My Rt Hon. Friend the Prime Minister has made the following statement to the House of Commons:

The hon. Member for Barrow and Furness (John Woodcock) has been appointed as a Full Representative of the United Kingdom Delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe.

Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe Statement

The Lord Privy Seal (Baroness Stowell of Beeston) (Con): My Rt Hon. Friend the Prime Minister has made the following statement to the House of Commons:

The hon. Member for West Bromwich East (Tom Watson) has been appointed as a full member of the United Kingdom Delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe.

Public Records: Review
Statement

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Baroness Anelay of St Johns) (Con): My Right Honourable Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr Philip Hammond) has made the following written Ministerial statement:

As part of the Government's response to the inadvertent release of sensitive records relating to the UK's involvement in events in Amritsar in the summer of 1984, my predecessor, the Rt Hon Member

for Richmond (Yorks), announced that Sir Alex Allan would complete a review of the position across government on the annual release of papers to The National Archives and the ability and readiness of departments to meet the requirements of moving from a 30 to 20 year rule, including the processes for withholding information.

I have today placed a copy of Sir Alex's report in the Library of the House. The report contains a number of recommendations relating to how government should manage its records. We have accepted these recommendations in full.

Written Answers

Thursday 6 November 2014

Burkina Faso

Questions

Asked by **Lord Chidgey**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the decision of the President of Burkina Faso to amend the country's constitution to permit him to seek a third term in office. [HL2538]

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Baroness Anelay of St Johns) (Con): The decision by President Compaoré to attempt to amend the constitution has proved disastrous for democracy in Burkina Faso. The UK and our international partners had cautioned President Compaoré against seeking a third term, highlighting the potential risks that taking such action would pose. In the event, the demonstrations resulted in President Compaoré being swept from power and an interim military government being installed.

We now call on the Burkinabe military and security forces to move swiftly to restore a democratically elected civilian government in Burkina Faso. We urge all parts of society to work calmly and collaboratively in this endeavour. We also support the efforts of the African Union, the Economic Community Of West African States and the UN to bring this crisis to a swift and peaceful resolution.

Asked by **Lord Chidgey**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what work the United Kingdom Special Envoy has undertaken in Burkina Faso since being appointed to the post. [HL2539]

Baroness Anelay of St Johns: Since being appointed in October 2012, the Prime Minister's Special Envoy for the Sahel has devoted much of his time to helping to resolve the crisis in Mali. He has visited most countries in the North and West Africa region, but has not yet visited Burkina Faso in his current role. The then Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for the Department for International Development, the right Hon. member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Lynne Featherstone), visited Burkina Faso in February 2014.

Asked by **Lord Chidgey**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the risks of (1) domestic, and (2) regional, destabilisation as a result of current political events in Burkina Faso. [HL2540]

Baroness Anelay of St Johns: The UK and our international partners cautioned President Compaoré against amending the constitution ahead of the elections in 2015, highlighting the risks that such a course of action would pose. We have seen these consequences manifest themselves:

1) Domestically, demonstrations have seen President Compaoré swept from power, the constitution suspended and a military government installed. We now urge the interim authorities to work with all parties to bring about a swift return of civilian democratic governance.

2) Prolonged instability in Burkina Faso could have a wider impact given the underlying security and development challenges in the region. Therefore, we support the efforts of the African Union and the Economic Community Of West African States, alongside the UN, to bring about a resolution to the crisis.

Asked by **Lord Kennedy of Southwark**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the political situation in Burkina Faso. [HL2560]

Baroness Anelay of St Johns: We are deeply concerned by the violence and uncertainty in Burkina Faso, caused by President Blaise Compaoré's attempt to change the constitution in order to seek a third term, and the subsequent installation of a military government.

We call on the Burkinabe military authorities to work swiftly with all parts of society to restore a democratically elected civilian government in Burkina Faso. We also support the efforts of the African Union, the Economic Community Of West African States and the UN to bring this crisis to a swift and peaceful resolution.

Council Tax Benefits

Question

Asked by **Baroness King of Bow**

To ask Her Majesty's Government when they will publish the detailed terms of reference for the review of the impact of abolishing Council Tax Benefit. [HL2301]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Communities and Local Government (Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon) (Con): The Department is currently working with the Council Tax Partnership Forum and local authorities to identify appropriate and proportionate data for the independent three-year review of the local council tax support policy.

The timetable, coverage, process for data collection and detailed terms of reference for the review will be agreed and published in due course.

Spending on council tax benefit doubled under the last Government, costing taxpayers £4 billion a year—equivalent to almost £180 a year per household. Welfare reform is vital to tackle the budget deficit by the last Administration.

Our reforms to localise council tax support now give councils stronger incentives to support local firms, cut fraud, promote local enterprise and get people to into work. We are ending the last Administration's "something for nothing" culture and making work pay.

Dropbox

Question

Asked by **Lord Blencathra**

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they have made any requests for account information from Dropbox using the Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty with the United States. [HL2117]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Home Office (Lord Bates) (Con): The Home Office does not currently hold a central record of which company is the subject of a request under the Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty with the US.

Egypt

Question

Asked by **Lord Kennedy of Southwark**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the political situation in Egypt. [HL2561]

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Baroness Anelay of St Johns) (Con): Since January 2014, Egypt has held a constitutional referendum; elected a new President; and is preparing for parliamentary elections to be held in the coming months. We look to President Al Sisi to take steps to implement the rights contained in Egypt's constitution, in particular ensuring freedom of expression and association, as well as ensuring that human and legal rights are fully upheld. We express our concern to the Egyptian authorities when we see these rights being threatened, such as in the mass death penalties handed down in Minya; the prosecution of journalists; the detention of people engaging in peaceful political expression, the limitations on peaceful protest, as well as restrictions on the freedom of non-governmental organisations. We believe that a genuinely open political process, in which all political groups are able to participate, will lead to long-term political stability in Egypt.

EU External Trade: Tunisia

Question

Asked by **Lord Hylton**

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they and the European Union are making any special provision for access for imports from Tunisia, in particular for olives and tomatoes. [HL2426]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Lord De Mauley) (Con): Imports from Tunisia are subject to the terms of an Association Agreement with the EU, which provides for elimination of duties or preferential duties to be applied to the majority of Tunisian goods. Prepared or preserved olives are free of any import duties. Fresh tomatoes can also be imported into the EU without payment of import duties provided that the import price is equal to or greater than a fixed entry price.

Honours

Question

Asked by **Lord Jopling**

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answers by Lord Wallace of Saltaire on 10 July (HL828) and 28 July (HL1115), whether they will now consolidate the replies and list the figures for the birthday honours list for 2012 which have not been supplied with regard to the number of Knighthoods and Damehoods given to those described as professors. [HL2384]

Lord Wallace of Saltaire (LD): The information requested concerning the number of honours recipients described as holding the title of professor since the Birthday 2012 Honours List at Knighthood/Damehood and Commander of the Order of the British Empire (CBE) levels is in the public domain, and can be found in The London Gazette at www.london-gazette.co.uk. Percentages are as follows:

<i>List</i>	<i>Number of recipients at Knight/Dame</i>	<i>Knight/Dame recipients who described themselves as Professor</i>	<i>Percentage of Knight/Dame recipients who described themselves as Professor</i>
BD 2012	31	7	23%
NY 2013	37	8	22%
BD 2013	38	12	32%
NY 2014	38	10	26%
BD 2014	37	12	32%

<i>List</i>	<i>Number of recipients at CBE</i>	<i>CBE recipients who described themselves as Professor</i>	<i>Percentage of CBE recipients who described themselves as Professor</i>
BD 2012	96	21	22%
NY 2013	103	15	15%
BD 2013	109	13	13%
NY 2014	104	22	22%
BD 2014	99	21	21%

India

Question

Asked by **Lord Kennedy of Southwark**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the Indian authorities regarding Soni Sori. [HL2381]

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Baroness Anelay of St Johns) (Con): We are aware of the case of Ms Soni Sori but have made no representations on it. We continue to monitor the general human rights situation in India. This includes maintaining a dialogue with Indian officials, not least through the EU-India human rights dialogue which most recently took place on 27 November 2013.

Iran

Question

Asked by *Lord Maginnis of Drumglass*

To ask Her Majesty's Government, in the light of the execution of Reyhaneh Jabbari on 25 October, what evidence they have to demonstrate that the United Kingdom's resumption of direct contact with Iran on 20 February has had a positive effect in reducing capital punishment in Iran; and what are the comparative figures for male and female prisoners executed in Iran during each of the last four 6-month periods. [HL2459]

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Baroness Anelay of St Johns) (Con): We were saddened to hear of the execution in Iran of Reyhaneh Jabbari, especially as there were questions around due process in her case. The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, my hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth East (Mr Ellwood), made a statement on 25 October urging Iran to put a moratorium on all executions.

Obtaining accurate figures on executions in Iran is difficult. The UN Special Rapporteur for Human Rights in Iran reports of 852 executions in Iran between July 2013 and June 2014. However, as the Iranian government does not publicise every execution, it is difficult to obtain reliable figures.

The UK opposes the use of the death penalty in all circumstances, and we will continue to use our bilateral relationship to encourage Iran to improve their human rights situation.

Israel

Question

Asked by *Lord Kilclooney*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what is their assessment of the decision by the government of Israel to close access to Al-Aqsa mosque; and whether they intend to raise the matter at the European Union Council of Ministers. [HL2525]

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Baroness Anelay of St Johns) (Con): The temporary closure of the Temple Mount/Haram al Sharif compound on 30 October has added to the growing tensions in East Jerusalem. There is a serious risk of escalation and further violence. Along with international partners, including other EU Member States, we will continue to press all sides to de-escalate and protect the status quo, and we will continue to monitor the situation closely in the run up to the Foreign Affairs Council later this month.

Middle East

Question

Asked by *Baroness Tonge*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what support European Union members are giving to the United Nations Secretary-General's investigation into Israeli attacks on United Nations facilities during Operation Protective Edge. [HL2443]

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Baroness Anelay of St Johns) (Con): The UK fully supports the efforts of the UN Secretary-General and calls on all sides to cooperate with the investigation. As the UK and EU made clear, the attacks on UN schools in Gaza, which resulted in the deaths of innocent children, were shocking. We are pressing Israel to demonstrate accountability for its actions during the conflict, both through internal processes, such as Israel Defence Forces' investigations of specific cases of engagement, and international procedures, such as this inquiry, which must be independent and balanced, and examine the actions of both Hamas and Israel.

Motor Vehicles: Excise Duties

Questions

Asked by *Lord Naseby*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what were the main constituents of the change in administration of the Vehicle Excise Duty that make up their estimated saving of £20 million. [HL2495]

The Minister of State, Department for Transport (Baroness Kramer) (LD): The recent changes to the administration of vehicle excise duty are expected to save the public purse £13.8m per year. These savings are made up of the elements shown in the table below:

No longer having to print or store tax discs	£1.3m pa
No longer having to post tax discs to customers	£7.9m pa
No longer having to process applications for vehicle excise duty refunds (which are now paid automatically without the need for an application) or handle enquiries about lost or missing tax discs	£1.2m pa
Reduction in Post Office Ltd costs as they no longer issue paper tax discs, but offer an assisted digital service instead	£3.4m pa

Business will also save an estimated £8.6m per year from the changes. The savings arise from leasing companies no longer having to post tax discs to customers or businesses having to apply for refunds of vehicle excise duty and paying to replace lost or stolen tax discs.

Asked by *Lord Naseby*

To ask Her Majesty's Government, in the light of the removal of visible paper tax discs from vehicles, why they consider one reminder letter to constitute adequate notice to the vehicle keeper of the need to renew Vehicle Excise Duty. [HL2496]

Baroness Kramer: The Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) sends a reminder letter to the registered keeper around three weeks before a vehicle is due to be relicensed. If no action is taken, the DVLA sends a second reminder after the vehicle excise duty has expired.

Asked by *Lord Naseby*

To ask Her Majesty's Government how they distinguish between a motor trader and a motor retailer or repairer for the purposes of Vehicle Excise Duty. [HL2497]

Baroness Kramer: The Vehicle Excise and Registration Act defines a motor trader as a manufacturer or repairer of, or a dealer in mechanically propelled vehicles. No distinction is made between a trader, retailer or repairer for the purposes of vehicle excise duty.

Asked by Lord Naseby

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the risks associated with the use of trade plates on cars with integrated bumpers and parking sensors; and whether they consider that recent changes to Vehicle Excise Duty will increase those risks through the greater use of trade plates. [HL2498]

Baroness Kramer: No assessment has been made of the risks associated with the use of trade plates on cars with integrated bumpers and parking sensors, or of the effect of the recent changes to the administration of vehicle excise duty on this issue.

In recognition of feedback from motor traders about displaying trade plates on some vehicles, the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) is currently reviewing its advice on this matter. As part of this review, the DVLA will consult with the relevant experts to ensure that the specific point you have raised is fully considered.

Asked by Lord Naseby

To ask Her Majesty's Government what consideration they gave, in making their changes to Vehicle Excise Duty, to the situation of motor traders not eligible for trade plates who wish to move vehicles. [HL2499]

Baroness Kramer: The recent changes to the administration of vehicle excise duty have not affected the use of trade plates by motor traders. The law defines a motor trader as a manufacturer or repairer of, or a dealer in mechanically propelled vehicles. Any person or company meeting this definition can obtain trade plates, which can then be used to move unlicensed vehicles that are part of their stock.

Asked by Lord Naseby

To ask Her Majesty's Government what consideration they have given to the impact of the changes in Vehicle Excise Duty on the ability of purchasers of vehicles to enjoy a cooling-off period after purchase. [HL2500]

Baroness Kramer: No consideration has been given to this matter. It is a long standing legal requirement that all vehicles used or kept on public roads must be licensed. The recent changes to the administration of vehicle excise duty have not changed this requirement. The registered keeper of a vehicle will automatically be sent a refund of any full months of remaining vehicle excise duty they have paid once they have notified the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency they are no longer the keeper.

National Insurance: Foreign Nationals

Question

Asked by Lord Laird:

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many foreign nationals have been given national insurance numbers in the last eight quarters; how many were given numbers in total in those two years; and what were the top 20 nationalities of those given national insurance numbers in the last two years. [HL2129]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Work and Pensions (Lord Freud) (Con): The number of National Insurance numbers registered to foreign nationals in the last 8 quarters and the total number registered in the two year period from July 2012 to June 2014 is shown in Table 1.

The top 20 nationalities for those registered with a National Insurance number in the same two year period is in Table 2.

Table 1: Number of NINo registrations to adult overseas nationals entering the UK by quarter for the last two years.

Jul-12 to Sep-12	123,590
Oct-12 to Dec-12	139,390
Jan-13 to Mar-13	178,372
Apr-13 to Jun-13	131,525
Jul-13 to Sep-13	148,389
Oct-13 to Dec-13	158,953
Jan-14 to Mar-14	164,432
Apr-14 to Jun-14	93,945
Total	1,138,593

Table 2: Total number of NINo registrations to adult overseas nationals entering the UK for the top 20 nationalities in the last 2 years.

Poland (Joined EU in 2004)	188,046
Spain	88,388
Romania (Joined EU in 2007)	81,122
Italy	74,374
India	56,694
Portugal	50,257
Rep of Lithuania (Joined EU in 2004)	45,950
Hungary (Joined EU in 2004)	45,450
France	41,920
Bulgaria (Joined EU in 2007)	31,580
Rep of Ireland	30,604
Pakistan	25,979
Rep of Latvia (Joined EU in 2004)	22,845
Slovak Rep (Joined EU in 2004)	22,361
China Peoples Rep	21,910
Australia	20,788
Germany	20,423
Nigeria	19,965
Greece	17,260
USA	16,767

Source: Stat-Xplore, Department for Work and Pensions

Notes:

1. Statistical disclosure control has been applied to this table to avoid the release of confidential data.
2. A change to the process of recording NINOs during the quarter April-June 2014, means that the volume of NINo registrations recorded are lower in this quarter than would

otherwise be the case (estimated to be around 15% - 25% lower in the quarter April - June 2014 and 2% - 5% lower for the year to June 2014). Therefore, comparisons of NINo registrations over time for the latest periods (quarterly and annually) should be viewed with caution. The process issues impact all nationalities i.e. the impact is not skewed to migrants from specific countries.

3. Registration date is derived from the date at which a NINo is maintained on the National Insurance Recording and Pay as you Earn System (NPS).

4. Data is available up to June 2014, which is the latest information available.

North Korea

Questions

Asked by **Lord Alton of Liverpool**

To ask Her Majesty's Government why North Korea is not one of the countries that the Department for International Development has prioritised for the funding of journalistic training for escapees; whether, in considering the allocation of resources, it considered that country's media environment; and whether the Department for International Development is considering extending its funding to groups run by North Korean refugees that broadcast information into that country. [HL2356]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for International Development (Baroness Northover) (LD): DFID does not have a bilateral programme with North Korea. In the Financial Year 2014/15 the Foreign and Commonwealth Office's Human Rights and Democracy Programme is funding a project delivered by the Thomson Foundation titled 'Inside Out: Working in North Korea to connect its journalists to the Internet world', which aims to give North Korean journalists a greater understanding of freedom of expression and using the internet to express it.

Asked by **Lord Kennedy of Southwark**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what is their most recent assessment of food shortages in North Korea. [HL2379]

Baroness Northover: Despite generally good aggregate cereal harvests for the fourth consecutive year in 2014/15, 16 million people remain chronically food insecure and highly vulnerable to production shocks. The UN Food and Agricultural Organisation/ World Food Programme Crop and Food Security Assessment Mission to the Democratic people's Republic of Korea, 2013, reported an estimated uncovered food deficit of 40,000 tonnes for that marketing year. The report stated that the food security situation remained similar to previous years with most households having borderline poor food consumption.

Occupied Territories

Question

Asked by **Lord Kilclooney**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what is their assessment of the decision by the government of Israel to build a further 1,000 homes in East Jerusalem; and whether they intend to raise the matter at the European Union Council of Ministers. [HL2526]

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Baroness Anelay of St Johns) (Con): The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, my hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth East (Mr Ellwood), issued a statement on 29 October condemning the announcement of plans for 1060 new housing units in East Jerusalem. He made clear that this was an ill-judged and ill-timed decision, which makes it harder to achieve a two state solution with Jerusalem as a shared capital. We will continue to work closely with European partners to discourage settlement expansion, and discussions are currently underway in Brussels to that end.

Official Cars

Question

Asked by **Lord Hunt of Chesterton**

To ask Her Majesty's Government, when purchasing vehicles for use by government departments, what criteria they apply regarding whether to purchase petrol- or diesel- fuelled cars. [HL2347]

Lord Wallace of Saltaire (LD): Public sector procurers are required to seek value for money through fair and open competition and Government will always award contracts on the basis of the best value for money for the taxpayer.

Crown Commercial Service manages a framework agreement for the supply of diesel, petrol and electric powered vehicles which Government departments use to meet their vehicle requirements.

Departments decide which fuel is most appropriate based on their individual requirements including whole life costs and may access advice and guidance from Crown Commercial Service as appropriate.

Palestinians

Questions

Asked by **Baroness Tonge**

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many Palestinians they estimate to have been displaced from their homes in East Jerusalem during the last two years. [HL2441]

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Baroness Anelay of St Johns) (Con): According to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 419 Palestinians were reportedly displaced in East Jerusalem between January 2013 to August 2014 following evictions and demolitions.

Asked by **Baroness Tonge**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what action the European Union is taking to ensure that East Jerusalem remains a part of Palestinian territory. [HL2442]

Baroness Anelay of St Johns: In its 22 July 2014 Council Conclusions, the EU made clear that it will only recognise changes to the pre-1967 borders, including with regard to Jerusalem, when agreed by the parties. Settlements, including in East Jerusalem, are illegal

under international law and an obstacle to the two state solution. Discussions are continuing in Brussels on how the EU can best discourage further Israeli settlement expansion including in East Jerusalem. The EU has also called on both parties to resume serious peace negotiations, which must resolve the status of Jerusalem as the future capital of both states.

Asked by Baroness Tonge

To ask Her Majesty's Government what discussions they have held with other European governments concerning the case for lifting the blockade of Gaza. [HL2480]

Baroness Anelay of St Johns: The UK fully supports the August EU Foreign Affairs Committee Conclusions, which note that the situation in Gaza has been unsustainable for many years, and a return to the status quo prior to the latest conflict is not an option. The EU stands ready to support a comprehensive ceasefire agreement, and discussions are ongoing on options for this, including support in the area of movement and access. We are clear that whilst we recognise the need to address Israeli security concerns, there is a need to meet Palestinian requirements regarding the lifting of restrictions, including the blockade, on Gaza.

Asked by Baroness Tonge

To ask Her Majesty's Government what discussions they have held with the government of Israel concerning the planning of a Gazan seaport. [HL2481]

Baroness Anelay of St Johns: The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, my hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth East (Mr Ellwood), discussed this issue with the Israeli Justice Minister Livni, Intelligence Minister Steinitz, and Deputy Foreign Minister Hanegbi during his visit to Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories between 5-8 October. This issue was also raised during the Quint/European External Action Service meeting with the Israeli National Security Adviser on 15 September.

Asked by Baroness Tonge

To ask Her Majesty's Government what discussions they have held with the government of Israel concerning recent reports of an arrest by the Israeli military of a mentally disabled boy in Hebron. [HL2482]

Baroness Anelay of St Johns: The boy in question was released immediately following intervention by his father. The Israel Defence Forces have launched an investigation into the incident. We have not raised this specific case with the Israeli authorities.

Asked by Baroness Tonge

To ask Her Majesty's Government what progress has been made concerning the treatment of children in military detention in Israel following the recommendations made by the report on the matter funded by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. [HL2483]

Baroness Anelay of St Johns: Since the publication in June of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office-funded independent report on Children in Military Custody, there has been some limited progress. This includes a pilot project to use summons instead of night-time arrests, and steps to reduce the amount of time a child can be detained before seeing a judge. We have welcomed the steps taken to date, but we have called for further measures, including the mandatory use of audio-visual recording of interrogations, investigation into continued reports of single hand ties being used, and an end to solitary confinement for children.

Prisoners: Suicide

Question

Asked by Lord Clinton-Davis

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to reduce the number of suicides in HM prisons. [HL2334]

The Minister of State, Ministry of Justice (Lord Faulks) (Con): Every death in custody is a tragedy, and the Government is committed to reducing the number of self-inflicted deaths in prisons. All prisons are required to have procedures in place to identify, manage and support people who are at risk of harm to themselves. These procedures include the Assessment, Care in Custody and Teamwork (ACCT) process, which is a prisoner-centred, flexible care planning system for prisoners identified as at risk of suicide or self-harm. Prisons are also required to ensure that they have procedures in place to learn from deaths in custody to prevent future occurrences.

We are working hard to understand the reasons for the recent rise in the number of self-inflicted deaths, but there is no simple explanation. Additional resources and support are being provided for safer custody work in prisons, and in particular to improve the consistency of the ACCT system. The National Offender Management Service has also put in place additional staff at regional level to support staff in prisons and to share good practice, and created a dedicated learning and knowledge management team at headquarters which is providing further support for safer custody work.

Data on deaths in custody is published quarterly in the Safety in Custody Statistics Bulletin, available at www.gov.uk/government/publications/safety-in-custody-statistics.

Public Expenditure

Question

Asked by The Marquess of Lothian

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to review the Barnett Formula. [HL2485]

The Commercial Secretary to the Treasury (Lord Deighton) (Con): In the context of the Scottish referendum debate, the leaders of the three largest UK political parties made clear that the Barnett formula would continue.

Pupils: Bullying

Question

Asked by **Lord Lexden**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what action they are taking to tackle homophobic bullying in schools. [HL2523]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Schools (Lord Nash) (Con): The Government has made preventing and tackling bullying one of its top priorities by striking the right balance between schools' legal requirements, freedom and accountability.

On 16 October, the Department for Education announced the £25 million National Prospectus grants programme. Voluntary and community sector organisations, social enterprises and other organisations will be able to bid for part of this funding to tackle bullying. On 29 October, in tandem with the Government Equalities Office, the Department also announced that £2 million will be made available in 2015-16 to help schools tackle homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying more effectively.

All schools are required by law to have a behaviour policy with measures to address all forms of bullying, including homophobic bullying. We have strengthened teachers' powers to tackle bullying and are providing £4 million to anti-bullying organisations that are working with schools and children to combat bullying. We have also issued specific advice to schools on preventing and tackling bullying in which we link to national organisations such as Stonewall who can provide specialist advice to schools to tackle homophobia. This information is published online at:

www.gov.uk/government/publications/preventing-and-tackling-bullying

Schools are also held to account by Ofsted for their effectiveness in managing pupil behaviour and safety, which includes homophobic bullying. Inspectors must consider pupils' freedom from all forms of harassment, bullying and discrimination. As part of the inspection, schools are asked to make available evidence of records and analysis of bullying, in particular homophobic bullying.

Railways

Question

Asked by **Lord Berkeley**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what savings they have made from alliances between passenger train operators and Network Rail. [HL2589]

The Minister of State, Department for Transport (Baroness Kramer) (LD): Network Rail's Strategic Business Plan for the period 2014-2019 concluded that savings of between £438m and £1,128m could be made from closer working between Network Rail and Train Operators. The Department for Transport and the Office of Rail Regulation will be monitoring progress made towards securing these efficiencies as Control Period 5 progresses.

Reading Station

Question

Asked by **Baroness Deech**

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Baroness Kramer on 13 October (HL1928), what assessment they have made of the compliance with the standards required by the Governance for Railway Investment Projects process in the redevelopment of Reading Station, in particular as regards (1) the provision of large printed timetables, (2) the visibility and positioning of platform number signs on the platforms, (3) the visibility and positioning of indicator screens, (4) the detailing of intermediate stations on concourse indicator screens, (5) the presence of staff to provide information to passengers, and (6) weather protection. [HL2467]

The Minister of State, Department for Transport (Baroness Kramer) (LD): The implementation of the Governance for Railway Investment Projects (GRIP) process is the responsibility of Network Rail and it are responsible for meeting all relevant standards.

Network Rail has however, advised me that:

1) The station operator; First Great Western has decided not to specify the provision of large printed timetables.

2) The platform number signs are standard size signs and are positioned to not interfere with signal sighting along platforms. The signs are identical in size to those that were hung from the previous canopies.

3) The indicator screens are an industry standard with this particular type widely used throughout the Great Western route. Equipment on platforms must be mounted a minimum of 2.5m above the platform to comply with standards.

The location of the indicators were carefully selected to avoid being at the foot of escalators and stairs and positioned in areas where passengers can congregate without affecting the flow along the various platforms and around the station.

4) The indicator screens on each platform contain full details of all stopping points for that train, whereas the 'summary of departures screens' show final destinations.

5) The staffing levels on Reading station are the responsibility of by First Great Western. A significant number of additional customer assistants have now been employed by First Great Western to cater for the enlarged station.

6) The design of the new canopies has had to take into account the need of future electrification. As a consequence the canopy is higher and set back behind the platform edge.

However, observations made during periods of rainfall since May 2013 clearly show that if passengers are standing behind the yellow line will generally remain dry. Obviously the further back from the edge of the platform, the more likely to remain dry they will be.

Saudi Arabia

Questions

Asked by *The Lord Bishop of Coventry*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what is their assessment of freedom of religion or belief in Saudi Arabia and the extent to which discrimination against and restrictions experienced by Shiite Muslims contribute to sectarian unrest and dissent in that country. [HL2365]

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Baroness Anelay of St Johns) (Con): The British Government strongly supports the right to freedom of religion or belief, which is severely restricted in Saudi Arabia. We make our views well known through the UN Universal Periodic Review Process, in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office Annual Human Rights and Democracy Report, and to the Saudi Arabian authorities. We have made clear the importance of religious tolerance, including for different branches of Islam. There are some long-standing tensions between some Shia communities in the Eastern Province and the Saudi authorities. We continue to monitor developments. We welcome all efforts to increase religious tolerance in Saudi Arabia, including the recent calls by King Abdullah and Saudi religious leaders for greater religious tolerance in the Kingdom.

Asked by *The Lord Bishop of Coventry*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of Saudi Arabia's Specialized Criminal Court; and whether they consider that the proceedings of that Court are compatible with international human rights standards. [HL2366]

Baroness Anelay of St Johns: The Specialised Criminal Court came into operation in Saudi Arabia in 2008 to try cases related to security and terrorism. We support Saudi Arabia's judicial reform programme, particularly greater judicial training. However our concerns about the Saudi justice system remain and we continue to raise the importance of adhering to international human rights law with the Saudi authorities.

Asked by *The Lord Bishop of Coventry*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the government of Saudi Arabia regarding the decision taken on 15 October by the Specialized Criminal Court to sentence to death Sheikh Nimr al-Nimr, a prominent Shia cleric. [HL2367]

Baroness Anelay of St Johns: We understand that Sheikh Nimr al-Nimr has been sentenced to death. It is still possible for him to appeal the decision.

The death penalty undermines human dignity and its abolition is a human rights priority for the UK. Government Ministers, our Ambassador in Riyadh and officials from our Embassy raise the issue of the death penalty with the Saudi authorities, both bilaterally and through the EU. We recognise that total abolition of the death penalty is unlikely in Saudi Arabia in the near future. Our focus is therefore on the introduction

of EU minimum standards for the death penalty as a first step, and on supporting access to justice and rule of law.

Seas and Oceans: Pollution

Question

Asked by *Lord Hunt of Chesterton*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what actions they are taking to deal with plastic waste in the ocean through international co-operation, including programmes such as the United Nations Environmental Programme, the Intergovernmental Oceanic Commission and the International Maritime Organisation. [HL2349]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Lord De Mauley) (Con): The primary focus of the UK's international cooperation on marine litter is the OSPAR convention for the protection of the marine environment of the North-East Atlantic. In June 2014, OSPAR contracting parties agreed a regional action plan on marine litter. This plan fulfils requirements of the EU's marine strategy framework directive for EU Member States to work together to address marine litter, and contributes to United Nations Environment Programme's global partnership on marine litter. The UK also works within the International Maritime Organization (IMO), which has banned the discharge of plastic from shipping under MARPOL Annex V since 1988, and keeps MARPOL and its other Conventions under review.

Taxation

Question

Asked by *Lord Myners*

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether the UK Statistics Authority was consulted about, or intends to review the categorisation of expenditure used in the recent letter sent to taxpayers regarding government expenditure. [HL2658]

Lord Wallace of Saltaire (LD): The information requested falls within the responsibility of the UK Statistics Authority. I have asked the Authority to reply.

Letter from Sir Andrew Dilnot CBE, Chair of the UK Statistics Authority to Lord Myners dated 6 November 2014.

As Chair of the UK Statistics Authority, I am replying to your question asking whether the UK Statistics Authority was consulted about, or intends to review, the categorisation of expenditure used in the recent letter sent to taxpayers regarding government expenditure. [HL 2658]

The UK Statistics Authority was not consulted about the categorisation of expenditure.

The Authority is aware of some concerns about the categorisation of expenditure used, and the Authority intends to make further enquiries in accordance with its statutory responsibilities under section 8 of the *Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007* (Monitoring and reporting of official statistics).

Tribunals

Question

Asked by **Lord Sharkey**

To ask Her Majesty's Government how much it cost to prepare the Senior President of the Tribunals' annual report on the performance of decision-making in the Ministry of Justice, in each of the last ten years. [HL2355]

The Minister of State, Ministry of Justice (Lord Faulks) (Con): Section 15A of the Social Security Act 1998 requires the Senior President of Tribunals, annually, to make a written report on the standards achieved by the Secretary of State for Work & Pensions in the making of decisions against which an appeal is made to the First-tier Tribunal (Social Entitlement Chamber—Social Security and Child Support). That report must be published by the Lord Chancellor.

The duty to report was discharged by the President of the Appeals Tribunal prior to the implementation of the Tribunals, Courts and Enforcement Act 2007. The Senior President of Tribunals has delegated this responsibility to the President of the Social Entitlement Chamber since the implementation of the Tribunals, Courts and Enforcement Act 2007.

Preparation of the report costs approximately £20,000 in judicial time each year; however, this is within their salaried hours, so there is no additional cost beyond their salary. There are some associated printing costs but records of these are not held centrally.

Ukraine

Question

Asked by **Lord Hunt of Chesterton**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assistance the United Kingdom and the European Union are providing to Ukrainian scientific institutions that have been adversely affected by the recent political instability in that country. [HL2399]

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Baroness Anelay of St Johns) (Con): The UK and EU are providing support to scientific institutions in Ukraine in several areas though not as a consequence of recent political instability. The Royal Society is currently funding, through its Department of Business Innovation and Skills grant, two international exchanges involving Ukrainian scientists worth £24,000.

The British Council has awarded grants of up to £5000 to support the development of partnerships between Ukrainian and UK higher education institutions in 2014-15. Priority was given to applications focussed on energy. The partnerships include:

Keele University - V.N.Karazin Kharkiv National University, Ecology Department;
University of Manchester - Ivano-Frankivsk National Technical University of Oil and Gas;
Energy Institute, University College London - V.N.Karazin Kharkiv National University, Department of Physics and Energy;

Aberystwyth University - Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv, Department of Geology;

Durham University - V.N.Karazin Kharkiv National University, Department of Chemistry.

The EU's Horizon 2020 programme is funding several projects in Ukraine, such as BILAT-UKR*AINA which supports science and technology policy dialogue between the Commission, EU Member States and Ukraine. The EU Delegation in Ukraine provides funding for a number of projects in areas such as energy, environment and the sustainable management of natural resources. In addition, Ukraine is a partner country to the Erasmus+ programme, and therefore has automatic access to a number of Erasmus+ activities in the area of youth and higher education, financed through EU external and internal funds.

Welfare Assistance Schemes

Question

Asked by **Baroness Lister of Burtersett**

To ask Her Majesty's Government when they expect to publish the review of the use of local welfare provision funding, mentioned at paragraph 1.10 of Local Welfare Provision in 2015-16; and whether they plan to make a written statement when it is published and place a copy of the review in the library of the House. [HL2435]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Communities and Local Government (Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon) (Con): I refer the noble Lady to my answer to the noble, Lady Baroness King of Bow, of 5 November 2014 (*Official Report*, Column WA 255).

Work Programme: Bristol

Question

Asked by **Baroness Royall of Blaisdon**

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many people in Bristol have enrolled in their Work Programme; and how many of those, after six months, were not in employment, education or training. [HL2140]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Work and Pensions (Lord Freud) (Con): The number of people in Bristol City Local Authority who have been referred to the Work Programme up to and including June 2014 is 13,060.

This information is published and can be found at: <http://tabulation-tool.dwp.gov.uk/WorkProg/tabtool.html>

Guidance for users is available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dwp-tabulation-tool-guidance>

Information on those not in employment, education or training after six months on the Work Programme, is not available.

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