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HOUSE OF COMMONS
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PARLIAMENTARY
DEBATES

(HANSARD)

Monday 19 November 2012

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The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

HOME DEPARTMENT

The Secretary of State was asked—

Front-line Police Officers

1. **Mr Andy Slaughter** (Hammersmith) (Lab): What change in the number of front-line police officers there has been since May 2010. [128813]

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mrs Theresa May): May I take this opportunity first to welcome the 41 police and crime commissioners who were elected last Thursday? They have important responsibilities and will be an important voice for people in their force areas in policing local communities. Police and crime commissioners take up their office officially this Thursday. I look forward to working with them in future to do everything we can to ensure that we can continue to cut crime.

Between March 2010 and March 2012, the total number of front-line officers fell by 6,778.

Mr Slaughter: There are more people here than voted for police and crime commissioners.

The Mayor of London has cut 3,500 police officers and police community support officers in the last two years. The Metropolitan police is getting rid of borough commanders and neighbourhood sergeants, and closing 65 police stations to the public across London, including Shepherd's Bush in my constituency and South Norwood in Croydon North. Does the Home Secretary think that will make the public in London feel safer or less safe?

Mrs May: Of course, the Metropolitan police has put forward some proposals today in relation to its budget, including proposals to cut central costs significantly and actually increase the number of constables. Neither the hon. Gentleman nor those on his Front Bench are able to get it yet. The Opposition have continually claimed that it is not possible to cut budgets without damaging front-line services or without crime going up; yet budgets are being cut, front-line services are being protected, the number of neighbourhood officers is going up and crime is falling.

Mr James Gray (North Wiltshire) (Con): As the Home Secretary correctly says, it is possible to do more with less, as the recent crime statistics have demonstrated. Does she agree that the election of PCCs, such as the excellent Angus Macpherson in Wiltshire—the first ever to be announced—is central to deciding how we can use scarce resources to best effect in tackling crime?

Mrs May: I congratulate Angus Macpherson on his election; indeed, it was good to see that as the first result. My hon. Friend is absolutely right that PCCs will have an important role to play in ensuring that police forces are delivering against their budgets in a way that we all want, which is by ensuring the protection of services such that we can continue to cut crime.

Yvette Cooper (Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford) (Lab): In last week's elections for the Home Secretary's flagship policy, 85% of the public decided not to vote. She chose to spend £100 million on having these elections and this transition, which could have been spent on 3,000 police officers this year. She chose to hold the elections in November, to get the Home Office to run them and to deny the public proper information. She was warned in the Commons and the Lords, and by the Electoral Commission and the Electoral Reform Society, that those decisions were wrong. Given the overwhelming public message she received last week, will she now tell us which of those decisions she regrets?

Mrs May: The right hon. Lady really needs to get her story straight on this. She complains about the amount of money that was spent on the police and crime commissioner elections, yet in the same breath she wants more money to be spent on them. Which is it: too much money or too little?

Yvette Cooper: That was not an answer to the question. The Home Secretary has to take some responsibility for the shambles that she has created. In April she got the decision and the date wrong over Abu Qatada by accident; in November she got the date wrong on the elections deliberately. By not holding them in November, she could have saved £25 million alone, but she chose not to. People did not want these elections last week. They said it was a waste of money, they said they did not know anything about it, they objected to the policy and they did not want to vote in the dark. She did not listen to those warnings and she is not listening to the public now or the message that they sent last week. Why does she not listen to them and apologise for the shambles that this Home Secretary and her decisions have created?

Mrs May: I make no apology for introducing police and crime commissioners, who have a democratic mandate for the first time. For the first time, the public know that there is somebody who has been elected who is visible, accessible and accountable to them. PCCs have replaced invisible, unaccountable, unelected police authorities. I think police and crime commissioners are going to make a real difference to cutting crime in this country.

John Penrose (Weston-super-Mare) (Con): Last week there was also a parliamentary by-election in Manchester Central, where the turnout was 18%, yet I notice that nobody is arguing that it was in any way a shambles or that there was a lack of a democratic mandate. Does my

right hon. Friend agree that all this says more about the Opposition's party political point scoring than about any concern for police matters?

Mrs May: My hon. Friend makes an important point. I would also point out to the shadow Home Secretary, the right hon. Member for Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford (Yvette Cooper), that I believe that there was a freeport in that by-election, although it did not seem to drive up the turn-out. I have heard no comments about the legitimacy of the individual who has been elected as a Member of Parliament.

Immigration Rules

2. **Paul Blomfield** (Sheffield Central) (Lab): What plans she has to review the timing, frequency and communication of changes to the immigration rules and associated guidance. [128814]

The Minister for Immigration (Mr Mark Harper): Changes to the immigration rules and associated guidance are scheduled twice each year, with additional urgent changes being made when required. Guidance explains how the rules must be applied, and it may be updated more frequently. We keep the need for changing the rules and the guidance under constant review.

Paul Blomfield: I thank the Minister for his reply, but he will know that there have been 15 changes to the UK Border Agency's guidance to the higher education sector in relation to tier 4 sponsors over the past couple of years. Does he acknowledge the concern on both sides of the House and beyond at the inclusion of international students in net migration targets? Will he also acknowledge that, despite the damage that that has caused to university recruitment, the Government said in their response to the Lords Science and Technology Committee that they were committed to the growth of the university sector? Will he commit to a period of stability in relation to guidance, and to providing better support for tier 4 sponsors?

Mr Harper: The hon. Gentleman knows this area very well as a result of his long experience in the sector. He will be aware that we did a full consultation before we introduced the changes to tier 4 rules, and that we rolled them out in three tranches in order to give the sector time to adjust to them. He is wrong on this point: we deliberately protected the university sector, and the UCAS figures that we have just seen show that international student acceptances to universities are up by 4%. Our education sector is open for business.

Lorely Burt (Solihull) (LD): I very much welcome the coalition Government's efforts to manage and control immigration, but does the Minister agree that we would be throwing the baby out with the bathwater if we were to exclude specialist temporary workers who were the existing employees of British companies? We cannot say to inward investors, "We want your money, but we don't want your workers or your expertise to help us to grow the company."

Mr Harper: The hon. Lady will know that we have a cap on skilled workers, and that, so far, we have not come anywhere near to it taking effect. No business

that has wanted to hire a skilled worker who meets the requirements has been unable to do so. Our policies are sound: we are keeping control of immigration but contributing very successfully to economic growth.

Meg Hillier (Hackney South and Shoreditch) (Lab/Co-op): I represent Tech City, and in my regular meetings with representatives of those technical businesses, immigration comes up as one of the main challenges. For all the Minister's comments just now about there being no cap, he is causing confusion and complication in a sector that could be driving the British economy. When will he rethink?

Mr Harper: I really do not think that the hon. Lady is right. We have a cap on skilled migration, but we have not come anywhere near it. We have a clear system for businesses being able to bring in skilled workers. If she has specific examples from businesses in her constituency, I would be delighted to meet the people involved so that I can set out clearly what our policies are, and if there are genuine issues, I will absolutely look at them.

Mr James Clappison (Hertsmere) (Con): Will my hon. Friend give me an assurance that all changes will be properly announced? In particular, I should like an assurance that there will be no repeat of what happened from 1997 onwards, when there was a massive increase in the number of work visas granted to non-EU workers, without proper announcement, and the implementation of a de facto open-door immigration policy—even though it sounds very much as though the Opposition would like to do the same thing again.

Mr Harper: I can give my hon. Friend that assurance. We want to ensure that we have firm but fair immigration controls, and that we have a cap on immigration, not least so that businesses can give British workers a proper opportunity to get into employment. If there are skill shortages, they can be dealt with. Our university sector is protected. We have sensible policies that have been announced to the House, and I am very happy to defend them.

Drugs Strategy

3. **Paul Flynn** (Newport West) (Lab): What recent assessment she has made of the Government's drugs strategy; and if she will make a statement. [128815]

The Minister of State, Home Department (Mr Jeremy Browne): The Government published an assessment of the drug strategy in May 2012. We are making good progress. Drug use remains at its lowest since measurement began in 1996. We have the highest numbers completing treatment, and the drug sector is refocusing its approach to move beyond treatment and achieve recovery.

Paul Flynn: The Welsh police unit involved in Operation Tarian reports that the effect of a ban on mephedrone has been to double its use in Wales. Will the Minister bear that in mind when considering a ban on the drug khat, which would almost certainly lead to an increase in use and drive a wedge between the police and the Yemeni and Somali populations?

Mr Browne: We are always open to strong evidence-based research on how to reduce the harm from drugs, but it is worth bringing to the House's attention the fact that existing illegal drugs such as heroin and crack cocaine have seen a dramatic fall in their use, while there has been quite a big increase in legal drug consumption. It is not automatically the case that making something legal leads to a reduction in its consumption.

Rehman Chishti (Gillingham and Rainham) (Con): Given that the number of legal highs detected in Europe has more than doubled since 2009, what action is the Government taking against those who are supplying these drugs?

Mr Browne: My hon. Friend is right to draw the House's attention to this increasing problem, which has been raised with me at the constituency level as being a serious reason to be alarmed. We are obviously making sure that the law is adjusted to take account of the threat to society, but it is a difficult field because it is, of course, evolving very quickly. We need to make sure that we take the necessary measures to protect society. Just because a drug is legal, does not necessarily mean that it is not harmful, especially if taken in the wrong way, so members of the public need to be mindful that this is a potentially hazardous area.

Diana Johnson (Kingston upon Hull North) (Lab): The Government promised swift action against legal highs and official figures show that 57 legal highs have hit the UK market just this year—nearly two a week—yet there has been only one temporary banning order in two years. These dangerous substances are killing people, so when will the Government act to protect young people in particular with timely bans and to ensure that the drug strategy promise of good-quality drugs education is delivered in our classrooms?

Mr Browne: On the hon. Lady's second point, I think there is an awareness and knowledge, particularly among young people, of the harms that drugs can cause. I see that among 11 to 15-year-olds there has been a quite marked decline in drug consumption over the periods for which surveys have been carried out. Of course legal highs are a new threat—not just to young people, but to the population as a whole—which is why we have to consider how best to respond to them. This is an increasing threat, but I repeat the point that overall, drug consumption in this country is falling.

Student Visa System

4. **Mr Marcus Jones** (Nuneaton) (Con): What steps her Department is taking to reform the student visa system; and if she will make a statement. [128816]

The Minister for Immigration (Mr Mark Harper): We have overhauled the student visa regime with a series of reforms designed to drive abuse out of the system while improving standards in the sector. As I said in reply to the previous question, we have seen that being successful. The overall number of visas in the part of the sector where there has been abuse is down, but the number of non-EU students accepted into our universities is up. Our universities are very much open for business, and there is no cap on recruitment to them.

Mr Jones: Many of my constituents have been appalled at the systematic abuse of the student visa system. Will my hon. Friend reassure us that his Department will continue to pursue bogus colleges, which for far too long under the previous Labour Government just opened doors for people to come to this country on bogus student visas?

Mr Harper: I very much agree with my hon. Friend. The point of having student visas is to allow students to come here to study, not to work illegally. We have a very good offer for our higher education sector; students can come here, study and take up work appropriately, and then come here after their studies for post-study work. It is a very good offer. Our good universities should have no trouble converting it into attracting students and saying that they are very much open for business.

Jeremy Corbyn (Islington North) (Lab): Will the Minister take this opportunity to wish the international students at London Metropolitan university all the best for their continuing studies there and assure those who have been given one year that they will indeed be allowed to complete the totality of their degree course? Will he confirm that he is having discussions with the university to allow it once more to recruit international students to what is an excellent course of study offered by it?

Mr Harper: The hon. Gentleman will know that London Metropolitan university did not carry out the obligations it was supposed to under its sponsor licence, yet it was given plenty of notice to do so. He will also know that the legitimate students who were here appropriately have been given the opportunity to stay either to the end of their course or to the end of the academic year. They have all been written to, and all had the opportunity to reply. UKBA is working closely with the university to make sure that those legitimate students are properly protected.

23. [128837] **Karl McCartney** (Lincoln) (Con): I am pleased to hear that the Government are cracking down on the number of bogus students. However, with the closure of the post-study work route, what reassurance can the Minister give me and the House that we are not discouraging bright and capable international students from studying in the UK in the light of the short time frame they are given to find graduate employment?

Mr Harper: Those students who are here to study at universities have an opportunity to find graduate level employment for several months after the end of their course. They can then convert their visa into a work visa and stay here after their course. I think that gives bright students every opportunity to do so, without letting people stay here to do unskilled work that is not of economic benefit to the United Kingdom.

Mr Nick Raynsford (Greenwich and Woolwich) (Lab): Does the Minister accept that, while it is entirely right to bear down on abuses in the system, it is widely felt by higher education institutions throughout the United Kingdom that a message is being conveyed to areas such as south-east Asia and China that this country is no longer as welcoming as other European countries to

overseas students who wish to study here? Does he recognise that that is potentially very damaging to the long-term health of the UK economy?

Mr Harper: I can tell the right hon. Gentleman that Ministers take every opportunity—as I have today—to make clear that we have a very good offer to make. The only people whom I ever see quoted in the media saying that the UK is closed for business seem to be people from the education sector. I have pointed out to them directly, and will do so again, that there is a great offer for our university students. They should help us to sell and market Britain abroad, as I take every opportunity to do.

Policing Levels (East Midlands)

5. **Mr Edward Leigh** (Gainsborough) (Con): What recent assessment she has made of policing levels in the east midlands; and if she will make a statement. [128817]

The Minister for Policing and Criminal Justice (Damian Green): I congratulate the chief constables and police officers of Derbyshire, Leicestershire, Lincolnshire, Northamptonshire and Nottinghamshire on rising to the challenge of cutting crime with reduced budgets. The latest recorded crime statistics show a 15% reduction in recorded crime in the east midlands in the two years to June 2012, with officer numbers down 6% in the past year.

Mr Leigh: Clearly the new police and crime commissioner will have a very challenging role in the current environment. Should not we as a Government show a degree of humility in admitting that very serious errors were made in the way in which we publicised last week's elections, show determination to make the system work, and explain to people that replacing anaemic police authorities with a single identifiable head is the right way forward?

Damian Green: I agree very much with my hon. Friend's second point, but less with the first. The police and crime commissioners, including the very good commissioner who has just been elected in his own county—[HON. MEMBERS: "The Tory candidate lost."] Unlike the Opposition, I am being non-partisan about this.

The new commissioner can build on work that is already under way. Her Majesty's inspectorate of constabulary has found that forces expect the proportion of officers working in front-line roles to increase from 83% in March 2010 to 89% in March 2015. That 15% fall in crime in the east midlands is the biggest percentage decrease in all the regions of England and Wales, which demonstrates that the effectiveness of a police force depends not on overall numbers but on how well it deploys its resources.

Nic Dakin (Scunthorpe) (Lab): My constituents are puzzled by the fact that the Government's priority was to spend £100 million on an election that was unwanted rather than spending that money on 3,000 more police officers. What explanation can the Minister give my puzzled constituents?

Damian Green: The hon. Gentleman is merely repeating the question asked by his right hon. Friend the shadow Home Secretary. Let me point out to him that—as was pointed out to his right hon. Friend on television yesterday—the figure that Labour Members keep producing would involve employing 3,000 police officers for one year and then sacking them all. I think his constituents would be pretty puzzled by that.

UK Border Force

6. **Mr Iain McKenzie** (Inverclyde) (Lab): What assessment she has made of the morale of staff in the UK Border Force. [128818]

The Minister for Immigration (Mr Mark Harper): The morale and professionalism of the staff in the Border Force is obviously vital to the defence of our border security. They performed very well during the Olympic and Paralympic games, and I think that the country was very proud of that. The Home Office has just conducted its annual staff survey, and we will use the results to work with our staff to continue to improve the performance of the Border Force.

Mr McKenzie: The number of cases in which people have been refused the right to remain in the UK but the UK Border Agency does not know whether they have left has shot up by 8% in the last quarter. Is the Minister overseeing a new low in the UK Border Agency, and when will he get to grips with that increasing figure?

Mr Harper: I think that the hon. Gentleman has got his UK Border Agency and his Border Force muddled up. His question was about the Border Force. I have to say, on the basis of my limited time in this job and the visits that I have made to our border controls at Heathrow and Gatwick and the juxtaposed controls in Paris, that the staff whom I have met have been incredibly professional and very hard-working, and have delivered excellent border security. Long may they continue to do so.

Michael Ellis (Northampton North) (Con): Speaking as a member of the Home Affairs Committee, which has produced a number of reports on this subject, I wonder whether my hon. Friend agrees with me that, in fact, there has been a lot of progress with the Border Force and a great deal of improvement on the situation we inherited from the previous Government.

Mr Harper: I do agree. I mentioned the Border Force's performance during the Olympic and Paralympic games. There was some scepticism as to whether it would be able to continue that during the very busy September-October period for student arrivals, but I am pleased to say that it performed very well during that period; we did not see a resumption of queues at Heathrow, and it can be very proud of that level of performance.

Asylum Seekers

7. **Stephen Phillips** (Sleaford and North Hykeham) (Con): What plans she has to speed up the removal of people refused asylum in the UK. [128820]

The Minister for Immigration (Mr Mark Harper): Swift action will be taken against all those who have no lawful permission to remain in the UK. That includes not only failed asylum seekers, but everyone who does not have permission to be here. We are not repeating the last Labour Government's mistake of focusing only on one thing at a time and letting everything else get out of control, which resulted in the situation we inherited when we came to power.

Stephen Phillips: Speaking as a member of the European Scrutiny Committee, I am extraordinarily grateful to my hon. Friend for that answer. He will know that the issue of those who remain in this country illegally is of huge concern to all our constituents. Can he update the House on what action is being taken to deal with it specifically in the east midlands and my constituency?

Mr Harper: I am grateful to my hon. and learned Friend for that question, and I will enjoy being scrutinised by him, as a member of the European Scrutiny Committee, in due course. I can give him a couple of examples. Obviously, we have conducted enforcement operations in his constituency, and he might also be interested to know that this summer in London Operation Mayapple led to more than 2,000 individuals from the London area without permission to be in the UK leaving the country. The number of enforced overstayer removals is up 21% compared with April to September 2011, and arrests are up 16% this year compared with last year.

Keith Vaz (Leicester East) (Lab): As the Minister will know, the report published last week by the Home Affairs Committee showed that the current backlog in the UKBA had reached one third of a million cases, which is equivalent to the population of Iceland. While I absolutely accept that this backlog began under the previous Government and was there under successive Governments, it has risen by 25,000 in the last three months. What steps is the Minister going to take to ensure this backlog is cleared, and will he commit to ensuring there are no more bonuses to senior UKBA officials until it is cleared?

Mr Harper: The right hon. Gentleman—who, of course, chairs the Home Affairs Committee—will know that we inherited 500,000 cases on asylum alone from the previous Government, and we have been diligently working through them. He will also know that that will be the focus of a report in due course. Some of the cases will be closed because we see no evidence that the person concerned is in the country, but others will have to be worked through. I will make sure that there is a clear timetable to work through all of them, to ensure that all the people concerned are given a clear decision and matters are concluded on a timely basis so we can finally clear up the situation we inherited from the previous Government.

Policing (Bureaucracy)

8. **Mr David Ruffley (Bury St Edmunds) (Con):** What steps she is taking to reduce bureaucracy in policing. [128821]

The Minister for Policing and Criminal Justice (Damian Green): We have swept away central targets, removed red tape, and extended police powers to prosecute. These

measures will cut inefficiency, save time and taxpayers' money and bring swifter justice, freeing up more than 4.5 million police hours—the equivalent of putting over 2,100 officers back on the beat.

Mr Ruffley: I thank the Minister for that reply, and may I congratulate the Home Secretary on setting out a very robust plan for putting more officers back on the beat by reducing bureaucracy? Does the Minister agree that part of the responsibility for cutting red tape lies with chief constables, and some of them are not doing enough to reduce unnecessary form-filling in their forces? Will he also set out what he sees as the newly elected police and crime commissioners' responsibilities in respect of reducing unnecessary form-filling?

Damian Green: My hon. Friend has been a member of the Treasury Committee for many years, and he is keen on cutting public spending where it is wasteful. He is right that police and crime commissioners will play a key role in encouraging chief constables who need to do better on this to do so. Indeed, the PCC in his county of Suffolk made practical commitments on reducing bureaucracy, including the idea that the time spent supervising criminals or offenders in detention centres, hospitals and behind desks could be carried out by other staff, not by trained police officers. It is that kind of practical approach that will cut bureaucracy and release police officers to serve on the front line, where we want them.

Mr Elfyn Llwyd (Dwyfor Meirionnydd) (PC): As a member of the Select Committee on Justice, I recall that some years ago, Jan Berry, the ex-chair of the Police Federation, was appointed to conduct a review of police bureaucracy and identify how it could be cut. She well understood the need for a balance between keeping the spirit of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 and doing away with needless paperwork. How many of her recommendations have, in fact, been adopted by the Government? If the Minister cannot answer today, will he send me a note—[*Interruption.*] I do not mean to be offensive, but perhaps he can write and tell me?

Damian Green: I cannot off the top of my head give the right hon. Gentleman the number, but I am pleased to assure him that I have worked closely with Jan Berry, who comes from Kent and still lives there, and has continued to take an interest in police affairs after standing down from the Police Federation. The right hon. Gentleman is right that many of her ideas are extremely good, and I shall write to him with the details.

Mr David Hanson (Delyn) (Lab): Does the Minister agree that the Home Office is not best placed to lecture on bureaucracy, given that it presided over a shambles of an election that cost an extra £25 million just because it took place in November? Will he remind the House of the basis on which November was chosen for the election date?

Damian Green: The election date was chosen by Parliament. There have been many elections in November. Indeed, the right hon. Gentleman may have noticed that the American public went to vote earlier this month—they do not seem to object to a November election.

He would do well to take the advice of the Chair of the Select Committee on Home Affairs, who said on Friday after the elections were over:

“We shouldn’t carp, we should now move on and we should accept the elections of the new commissioners as they come through and...make sure that it works because they are there, they’re in place, the public have spoken”.

I think that the Chair of the Select Committee is wiser than the shadow Minister.

Andrew Bridgen (North West Leicestershire) (Con): Does my right hon. Friend agree that participation in future PCC elections will improve, as excellent candidates such as Sir Clive Loader in Leicestershire will be able to point to a record of achievement? Does he agree, too, that one method of increasing voter participation that should not be encouraged, and should be resisted at all costs, is giving prisoners the vote in these or any other elections?

Mr Speaker: I remind the Minister that we are discussing reducing bureaucracy in policing.

Damian Green: I will happily obey you in this instance, Mr Speaker, as I always do.

Sir Clive Loader will make an excellent PCC, and he will be keen to reduce bureaucracy. It is precisely on their record of releasing the energies of the police to do what we want them to do and serve on the front line that PCCs will be judged when the elections come round again. I am sure that that will engage the public more.

Student Visas

9. **Pamela Nash** (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab): How many student visas she expects to be issued in 2013. [128822]

The Minister for Immigration (Mr Mark Harper): Our student visa reforms are tackling abuse of the system while protecting universities.

We do not publish forecasts of numbers of grants, but the recently published entry clearance visa statistics for the year to June 2012 show that the number of tier 4 study visas was 214,000. That is a 30% decrease on the year before, mainly from the non-university sector. There is no cap on recruitment to universities and, as I have said, UCAS acceptances of non-EU students are up 4%.

Pamela Nash: I thank the Minister for his answer. He has said that the number of visas granted has gone down. Does he want that trend to continue, or does he agree with me that that will damage any attempt to promote our higher education system as a great British product?

Mr Harper: As I have said, there is no cap on the number of students going to universities. I want the number of visas granted to people who plan to come to the United Kingdom to abuse our immigration system to go down, which is exactly what has happened. We have got rid of the abuse and we are making sure that our university sector is open for business. I make no apologies for the fact that I have said that three times during questions. We have a good offer for our university sector, and it can make a success of it.

Nicholas Soames (Mid Sussex) (Con): Given the scale of the earlier abuse, does my hon. Friend agree that the integrity of the student visa system depends on interviews? Is he satisfied that there will be sufficient staff at our embassies and consulates overseas to cope with the valued and welcome arrival of students in this country?

Mr Harper: My right hon. Friend makes a very good point. We have started to do some interviewing in some high-risk countries, which has been very successful and has demonstrated the value of interviewing in certain locations, which allows us to drive out some clear abuse. Where that makes sense, we will continue to do it and will increase our ability to do so.

Chris Bryant (Rhondda) (Lab): The Prime Minister told students in Dubai—he has a habit of answering questions when he is abroad, if not when he is in this country—that there is no limit on international students in the UK, and the Minister has repeated that this afternoon. However, the Migration Advisory Committee states that there will have to be 86,600 fewer students over the next three years if the Government are to meet their target. Who is right? Is Boris Johnson right to say that we are losing a massive business opportunity? Is the director general of the CBI right to say that it is putting people off? Or is the Minister just confused?

Mr Harper: The hon. Gentleman should understand that we have a net migration target, so those students who come to the UK, study and leave make no contribution to the net migration statistics. Our universities can go out, recruit smart students and educate them and they will make no difference at all to net migration. The Prime Minister is absolutely spot on and I think that it is the hon. Gentleman who is confused, as someone who does not believe in having a net migration target at all.

Visa System

10. **Peter Aldous** (Waveney) (Con): What steps her Department is taking through the visa system to enable business and tourist visitors to contribute to economic growth. [128823]

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mrs Theresa May): The UK Border Agency supports economic growth through delivering an effective visa service, which processed almost 2 million applications for visitor visas in 2011, and exceeding our public commitment to process 90% of cases within 15 working days. We take our economic responsibilities seriously and the UK Border Agency is constantly looking to improve the service it offers. Amongst other measures, it has launched priority services, such as providing a five-day visa service, premium lounges for high-value customers and out-of-hours appointments at visa application centres.

Peter Aldous: What steps is my right hon. Friend taking to speed up clearance and entry for Chinese business visitors, tourists and investors who have been identified by Visit East Anglia, Suffolk chamber of commerce and chambers of commerce across the UK as a vital means of growing international trade and export markets?

Mrs May: I thank my hon. Friend for highlighting the issue of Chinese visitors to the UK. That is an important market for the UK and I am pleased to say that we have seen some strong growth in the number of Chinese visitors to the UK for both business and tourism. It is one of our priority markets, so we have undertaken a number of changes to our system. Half our Chinese business customers, for example, now benefit from access to a priority scheme. We have opened new expanded visa application centres in a number of cities, but we will continue to look at what we do to ensure that our clear message is that Britain is open for business and has a functioning visa system that ensures that those whom we wish to welcome to the UK can come.

Ms Gisela Stuart (Birmingham, Edgbaston) (Lab): It is no good saying that we are open for business when the perception out there is that we are not. Will the Home Secretary consider meeting admission tutors from the Russell group and representatives of chambers of commerce to familiarise herself with what is happening on the ground? The perception is that we are not open for business and that access is not as quick as it should be.

Mrs May: One problem is that a lot of people are claiming that the UK is not open for business because of our visa system. The former Immigration Minister went out to visit China and clearly gave out the message. The former and current Immigration Ministers and I have met people from the universities, the CBI and other business sectors to talk to them about the issue. It is not just for the Government to go out and say that Britain is open for business—business organisations and universities should give out that message. As the Immigration Minister said earlier, UCAS figures show that the number of applications from non-EU overseas students to our universities has gone up. The universities should stop claiming that there is a problem and go out and say that they are open for business.

Police Procurement

11. **David Mowat** (Warrington South) (Con): What assessment she has made of the potential for achieving savings through economies of scale in police procurement. [128824]

The Minister for Policing and Criminal Justice (Damian Green): The Government estimate that savings of £200 million per year, including from economies of scale, can be made through joining up police procurement by the end of March 2015.

David Mowat: One area with potential benefits is IT spend, which should not continue to be replicated 42 times. Will the Minister give us an update on the progress of the Police ICT Company, announced in July, and confirm that the police and crime commissioners, including the excellent John Dwyer in Cheshire, will be expected to use it?

Damian Green: I echo my hon. Friend's praise for the new PCC in Cheshire. We hope that the PCCs will eventually own, take over and run the Police ICT Company because its purpose is to ensure that the PCCs have the opportunity to secure critical services and help to make

savings. The company will offer services that help individual forces achieve efficiencies through the procurement, re-use and management of their ICT, and I very much hope that a large number of commissioners will take up this offer.

Bill Esterson (Sefton Central) (Lab): In Kent the new PCC was the outgoing chair of the police authority. When she was elected, she made it clear that she would have no truck with privatisation. It should be said that she resoundingly beat the Tory candidate by nearly 2:1. Is that not an indictment of the Government's policy on PCCs, and is it not an example showing that the existing chair was much preferred—

Mr Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman's question is rather long and it is only tangentially related to the matter on the Order Paper. I have indulged—*[Interruption.]* Order. I have indulged him adequately.

Damian Green: I am not entirely sure that the hon. Gentleman had got to a point yet. It will clearly be in PCCs' own interest to look at the best way of spending most efficiently the money that they control so that police are visible on the front line and are able to cut crime. In the end PCCs have been elected, they are responsible for their own actions and what they say, and the electorate will judge them after a few years. I urge all PCCs to take a sensible and pragmatic view about the Police ICT Company and collaboration.

Antisocial Behaviour

12. **Stuart Andrew** (Pudsey) (Con): What progress her Department has made in reducing levels of alcohol-related antisocial behaviour. [128825]

The Minister of State, Home Department (Mr Jeremy Browne): Last month, the Government commenced new powers to help local authorities and the police tackle alcohol-related crime and disorder. They can now impose early-morning alcohol restriction orders and charge a late-night levy on pubs and clubs to go towards the costs of policing the late-night economy. We have already reformed alcohol licensing laws. We will also give front-line professionals faster, more effective powers to protect the public from antisocial behaviour.

Stuart Andrew: Alcohol-related antisocial behaviour can be a blight on some of our towns and cities and is particularly distressing for victims. Will my hon. Friend urge the newly elected PCCs to work with local authorities to implement this welcome new tool?

Mr Browne: I recognise the problem identified by my hon. Friend and I urge all PCCs who were elected last week to work in partnership with local authorities, the police and others to use the new powers that we have given them to enhance the safety of the communities they represent.

Ian Lucas (Wrexham) (Lab): In Wrexham CCTV has played an important role in reducing alcohol-related antisocial behaviour. Is it the Government's policy to reduce the number of CCTV cameras?

Mr Browne: In my constituency, Taunton Deane, CCTV plays a useful role in protecting the public as well. The Government's policy is that CCTV can play an important role in community safety and reducing crime, but it is not the same as Labour's position, which is that the more CCTV cameras there are, the better the society we live in. We think these things have to be proportionate. CCTV has a role to play but it is not as big a role as the hon. Gentleman perhaps feels.

Police and Crime Commissioners

13. **Paul Goggins** (Wythenshawe and Sale East) (Lab): When she plans to meet the police and crime commissioner for Greater Manchester. [128826]

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mrs Theresa May): I welcome Tony Lloyd to his new role as the first police and crime commissioner for Greater Manchester. I am writing, I hope today, to all PCCs in advance of their assuming office on Thursday, to congratulate them and to invite them to join me and my ministerial team for an event on 3 December.

Paul Goggins: I am grateful for that answer and for the warm welcome from the Home Secretary. I am sure that when she meets Tony Lloyd, she will want to thank him for standing in the election because without Labour last Thursday, the turnout in Greater Manchester would have been lower than 7%. Given the level of concern expressed during the campaign about antisocial behaviour, will she review her current approach and, instead of rebranding and weakening antisocial behaviour orders, will she work with Tony Lloyd and other police and crime commissioners to strengthen the law in this respect so that those who make other people's lives unbearable can be dealt with effectively?

Mrs May: I note that Tony Lloyd, referring to the turnout at the elections, said:

"It doesn't take away the mandate of the PCC... That, like any good politician, is earned not only at the election; it's earned by working with the public, being there to listen to the public and to represent the public."

On antisocial behaviour orders, we are strengthening the ability of the police and others to work against antisocial behaviour. Crucially, we are giving local communities and individuals greater powers, such as the community trigger, which will enable people, if action is not being taken on antisocial behaviour, to require that action is taken. That did not happen under the Labour party.

Gloria De Piero (Ashfield) (Lab): Let me tell the Home Secretary:

"What we ended up with was a toxic mix of low voter awareness about the role, the absence of an active public information campaign, near silence from politicians and polling day moved to a time of year when it gets dark at 4 pm."

Those are the words of the Conservative Member for Bournemouth West (Conor Burns). In truth, Members across the House have raised concerns about the elections. Does she accept that any mistakes were made?

Mrs May: As I have said elsewhere, of course I am disappointed about the turnout. I believe that the turnout at the next elections will be higher because people will

have seen police and crime commissioners in their role and the commissioners will have a record to defend, as the right hon. Member for Wythenshawe and Sale East (Paul Goggins) has just said, but it was up to politicians across the board and others to go out and campaign, and the Government did run an awareness campaign. I return to the point I made at the beginning of Question Time: police and crime commissioners replace police authorities, which were invisible, unaccountable and unelected. Police and crime commissioners are elected, visible, accessible and, crucially, accountable to the people.

Gangmasters Licensing Authority

14. **Michael Connarty** (Linlithgow and East Falkirk) (Lab): What discussions she has had with the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs on the effectiveness of the Gangmasters Licensing Authority in tackling trafficked labour. [128827]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (James Brokenshire): The Gangmasters Licensing Authority plays a key role in protecting workers who may be exploited in the agriculture, shellfish, and food processing and packaging industries. A recent Government review streamlined its remit to focus on suspected serious and organised crime, working more closely with the Serious Organised Crime Agency and other specialist law enforcement agencies.

Michael Connarty: I thank the Minister for that endorsement of the work of the Gangmasters Licensing Authority, particularly given the recent evidence of the Noble/Freedom Food eggs scandal, which was described as the worst case of human trafficking the Gangmasters Licensing Authority had ever seen. However, would it not be better if the Government took on the principles contained in my Transparency in UK Company Supply Chains (Eradication of Slavery) Bill so that companies ordering those goods have a responsibility to trace right back to the source what is happening in the supply chain and we stop that kind of abuse of workers who come here to pick and work in our farms?

James Brokenshire: I certainly recognise the serious nature of the crimes the hon. Gentleman highlights and am sure that he will welcome a number of the joint operations with the Serious Organised Crime Agency—in a recent case, 30 Lithuanians were freed as a consequence. I hope that he will also welcome the work of colleagues in the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills who have recently put out for public consultation legislation on the human rights reporting requirements of quoted companies, which we believe will go a long way towards addressing the concerns highlighted in his Bill.

Mr Peter Bone (Wellingborough) (Con): In human trafficking, far more people are exploited for labour than for sex, and the Minister is right to concentrate on organised gangs. Will he expand a little on how the Government will target organised gangs?

James Brokenshire: I know that my hon. Friend has a long-standing commitment to and interest in this important issue. I highlight the creation of the new National Crime Agency with an attached border command, which

will harness greater intelligence. The national human trafficking centre will form part of that and will, we believe, really strengthen the approach in combating that appalling crime.

Topical Questions

T1. [128838] **Christopher Pincher** (Tamworth) (Con): If she will make a statement on her departmental responsibilities.

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mrs Theresa May): The Government have a comprehensive programme of police reform. To make policing more professional and evidence-based, we are establishing a college of policing. To get tough on organised crime, we are establishing the National Crime Agency. To ensure we reward specialist skills, we are reforming police pay. To give the public a stronger voice, we have introduced crime maps and mandatory beat meetings, and the election of police and crime commissioners will give the public a say for the first time in how their local police forces are run. Police reform is working; the front-line service is being maintained and crime is falling. I commend police officers for their achievements.

Christopher Pincher: Since the passage of the Human Rights Act a decade ago, the time taken to deport potentially dangerous individuals, such as Abu Hamza and now Abu Qatada, has reached unacceptable lengths. Will my right hon. Friend pursue any and all measures to ensure that those people who may represent a threat to our country can be quickly deported from our country?

Mrs May: My hon. Friend raises a point that I know is of concern not only to Members of this House, but to many members of the public. I assure him that the Government are looking at pursuing a number of avenues to ensure that we can reduce the length of time it takes both to deport people from this country and, indeed, to extradite people. In the case of Abu Hamza, the judiciary has itself made comments about the need to look at the processes that we follow, to ensure that we can use not only the reforms of the European Court, but those in our own judicial processes to reduce the length of time it takes to deport those people who are a potential threat to this country.

T2. [128839] **Simon Danczuk** (Rochdale) (Lab): Following my comments in the House about Cyril Smith's abuse of boys, I understand that the Crown Prosecution Service has now located investigation files relating to Smith from the 1960s. Could the Home Secretary now look at whether it is true that the then Director of Public Prosecutions received a second opinion recommending that Smith be prosecuted; why he concluded that it was not in the public interest; what role, if any, the security services played; and how the Government intend to get to the bottom of what several former police officers are now referring to as a cover-up?

The Minister of State, Home Department (Mr Jeremy Browne): All I can say to the hon. Gentleman is that if members of the public have concerns that they wish to report, they should report them to the police, and if they have concerns about the police, they should report

them to the Independent Police Complaints Commission. Obviously, we would expect those authorities to act on the information provided to them.

T3. [128841] **Mr Adrian Sanders** (Torbay) (LD): Some of my constituents have had their applications for indefinite leave to remain returned after months of waiting, only to find that there was an error in their payment details. Why is there a separate verification process for payment details? Why not have one process? That would solve the problem of people going back to the beginning of the queue simply because of an error that is not always of their making?

The Minister for Immigration (Mr Mark Harper): I am grateful to my hon. Friend for raising that issue. The process for scrutinising applications is such that any payment issues are supposed to be looked at right at the beginning of the process, so that they can be dealt with swiftly. If my hon. Friend knows of specific cases in which that has not happened, I would, of course, be pleased to either hear from him or meet him to discuss them in more detail.

T5. [128843] **Rosie Cooper** (West Lancashire) (Lab): At 32 square miles, Scarisbrick in my constituency is the largest parish in Lancashire. The village now shares its one police constable and two police community support officers with neighbouring Burscough, following the £42 million-worth of cuts to Lancashire's police budget. At night, three police officers cover 50 square miles from Ormskirk to Skelmersdale, which are vast areas for the police to cover. How can the Home Secretary justify to my constituents that the £100 million spent on the police and crime commissioner elections, with a turnout of just 15% in Lancashire, is an effective use of scarce resources when we are losing front-line officers?

The Minister for Policing and Criminal Justice (Damian Green): Obviously, it is not for me to comment on the individual operational judgments of the chief constable of Lancashire, but I am happy to be able to tell the hon. Lady and the House that, despite the constraints that she has mentioned, recorded crime in Lancashire between June 2011 and June 2012 went down by 2%. I hope that not just her constituents, but others in Lancashire are reassured that the police there are doing an extremely good job of cutting crime and keeping the streets safer.

T4. [128842] **Stuart Andrew** (Pudsey) (Con): Metal theft has been a huge problem for some community groups and churches in the Pudsey constituency. It costs a great deal of money and is a problem throughout the country. Does my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary welcome the passage through the House of the Scrap Metal Dealers Bill and share my belief that we must reform the industry in order to support legitimate dealers and make it much harder for those who provide a market for stolen metal?

Mr Jeremy Browne: I strongly agree with my hon. Friend. Crimes such as taking lead from church roofs or stripping plaques from war memorials cause offence to Members of all parties. The Government are already taking action. On 3 December, new measures will come into force to better regulate the scrap metal industry. My hon. Friend has rightly drawn the House's attention

to the private Member's Bill that received its Third Reading last week. We are also taking additional actions in concert with the Bill's promoter, my hon. Friend the Member for Croydon South (Richard Ottaway), to further regulate this important industry and make sure that it does not contain criminal behaviour.

T6. [128844] **Mr Jim Cunningham** (Coventry South) (Lab): I was interested in the answers on student visas because a week ago on Saturday, I had a meeting at Coventry university with a Minister from Oman who takes an interest in science and technology and who wants to do business with the university. The issues raised were the delay in getting student visas, which seems to be putting people off, and the cost for students. What will the Government do about that? It is no good making excuses.

Mr Harper: It sounds as though it would be helpful if I looked at the details of the case, so I would be happy to hear from the hon. Gentleman. In most cases, visa applications are processed very quickly. We say yes in most cases and deliver a timely service. Without knowing the specifics, such as which country the students are from, it is difficult to give a specific answer. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Gentleman says Oman. We deliver an excellent visa processing service for a number of the Gulf countries. If he gives me more details, I will look into the matter for him.

T7. [128845] **Peter Aldous** (Waveney) (Con): To many, it seems that the rights of dangerous hate preachers are now more important than the rights of the British people to a peaceful and secure life. What steps is the Secretary of State taking to ensure the safety of the British people and that there is no place in this country for those who would harm us?

Mrs May: As my hon. Friend points out, he is raising a concern that is felt by many members of the public. Obviously, we have recently had the judgment in relation to Abu Qatada, which I think may have triggered my hon. Friend's thinking on this issue. We are seeking leave to appeal that judgment, but we will also continue to work with the Jordanian Government to see what can be done. We will pursue all avenues to ensure that we can deport Abu Qatada. This Government have taken a stronger line on whether we allow those who can be described as hate preachers into this country and have ensured that fewer of them cross our shores.

Hazel Blears (Salford and Eccles) (Lab): The Home Secretary will be aware that there are concerns about the provisions in the Justice and Security Bill, which is being debated in the other place today, that introduce closed material proceedings. The provisions will enable judges to see all the evidence in cases that affect national security, while protecting vital intelligence. Will she work with the Minister without Portfolio, the right hon. and learned Member for Rushcliffe (Mr Clarke) to reassure Members of the Lords and of this House that those proceedings, while essential, will be used only when absolutely necessary?

Mrs May: I am happy to give the right hon. Lady an assurance to that effect. This is an important Bill, because in a very small but growing number of cases, it

is not possible for the Government to defend themselves because the information cannot be made available in open court. As a result, settlements have to be made and there is no justice, because there is no trial or judgment on the rights and wrongs of the case. Hence, there is a desire to introduce closed material proceedings in a very limited number of cases, where it is necessary and proportionate. I am obviously working with my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister without Portfolio to that end.

T8. [128846] **Jason McCartney** (Colne Valley) (Con): The net receipts under the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002 were £165 million last year. I appreciate that a fair chunk of that money is reinvested in local crime-fighting initiatives, but will the ministerial team look at the percentage that is allocated to local community projects, so that more groups like the Thornton Lodge action group can be successful in their bids?

Mr Jeremy Browne: Yes, I can give that undertaking. A small amount of the money is made available to community groups. My hon. Friend makes a valid point about whether that percentage could be higher and we will look at how that might be achieved.

Andrew Gwynne (Denton and Reddish) (Lab): It is no good Ministers lecturing police and crime commissioners on the merits of forces sharing costs in procurement when they could have saved the public purse £25 million by combining the PCC elections with other local elections. Why did Ministers ignore the calls from Opposition Members to combine the elections with next year's county council elections?

Damian Green: Opposition Members must get their story straight. Half of them say that we should not have spent as much money on these elections as we did; the other half say that we should have spent more money. If they come up with a coherent argument, we will give an answer.

T9. [128847] **Mr Richard Bacon** (South Norfolk) (Con): Mindful of the Home Secretary's well known views on the Human Rights Act 1998, but also of the difficulties of coalition government, will she persuade the Leader of the House to make time available for my forthcoming ten-minute rule Bill, which would repeal that Act?

Mrs May: My hon. Friend is tempting me to make comments on that particular issue. I am sure that the Leader of the House, who is present, has heard what he said and will give due consideration to the issue that he raised.

David Wright (Telford) (Lab): Police and community support officers are incredibly popular in West Mercia, and their numbers should be sustained at current levels. Does the Home Secretary believe that, by the time of next election, the number of PCSOs in the West Mercia area and in Telford will be at current levels, or will there be fewer or more?

Mrs May: The change that we have made as a Government is that we say to local police forces, "With the police and crime commissioners in place, it will be

up to you to decide how you wish to have the staffing, and the numbers that you want". That decision will be taken at police force area level, not dictated by the Home Office. I believe that that is right.

Simon Hughes (Bermondsey and Old Southwark) (LD): Will the Home Secretary join me in congratulating the Metropolitan Police Commissioner, not only on reducing crime figures in the London area, but on his ambition to have 2,000 extra police constables each year for the next three years so that, by March 2015, there will be a record number of 26,000 police constables in Greater London? Will she congratulate him—effusively, if she wants?

Mrs May: I am happy to commend the work that the Mayor of London as police commissioner and the deputy Mayor have done for several years, although the Mayor formally became a police and crime commissioner only in January this year. He has always emphasised recruiting and the number of constables who are out there and available. Obviously, the Met and the deputy Mayor, who has responsibility for crime and policing, are looking carefully at the Met's budget to ensure that they can take out waste and that the money is spent cost effectively, as they said today, on recruiting more constables.

Joan Walley (Stoke-on-Trent North) (Lab): Given the large number of voluntary organisations around the country, including SAIVE in Staffordshire, that look to provide counselling for the children who were abused in sex scandals, will the Home Secretary consider assessing the extra resources that are needed to provide counselling as a result of the inquiries that she has set up?

Mrs May: I think I recall that the hon. Lady raised the point when I made the statement on north Wales. I have taken away that issue. Obviously, the Home Office does not provide the particular service that she mentioned, which comes under other Departments. I will raise the matter with those Departments.

Mark Reckless (Rochester and Strood) (Con): Does the Home Secretary agree with the conclusion of the Home Affairs Committee that, compared with police authorities, the police and crime commissioners will "have a greater incentive to make savings since the level of police precept will be one of the most visible indicators of their performance to their electorate"?

Mrs May: I am very pleased to agree with my hon. Friend and the Home Affairs Committee on that matter.

Kate Green (Stretford and Urmston) (Lab): Some women asylum seekers end up on the detained fast-track procedure because they have been reluctant to disclose sexual violence and abuse. How can Ministers ensure that the system will be sensitive to such women's experiences?

Mr Harper: One of the things that the UK Border Agency is attempting to do is make sure that the system is more sensitive to those who have suffered sexual violence and have been trafficked. It has recently published some information about how it goes about doing that through training its front-line officers and its caseworkers. I take that matter very seriously, and will ensure that the UK Border Agency pays great attention to it. If the hon. Lady has any particular concerns about specific cases, I am of course happy to discuss them with her at any time.

Mr Speaker: Last but not least, I call Andrea Leadsom.

Andrea Leadsom (South Northamptonshire) (Con): Thank you, Mr Speaker. I have been complaining to a national housing association for the past two years on behalf of a small group of constituents who are suffering at the hands of a small group of social tenants things such as homophobic attacks, domestic violence on the street and drug dealing in the streets. The housing association has done nothing about it. What more can we do to force housing associations to take their responsibilities more seriously and allow other people to live their lives quietly?

Mr Jeremy Browne: The housing association, and, indeed, the local authority and the local police force should take my hon. Friend's complaints and those of the residents in her area more seriously. I urge her to ensure that they work effectively on behalf of her constituents. If she feels that that is not being done, she may wish to raise the matter with the new police and crime commissioner.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Mr Speaker: I am sorry to disappoint colleagues, but, as they know, in Home Office questions, demand invariably exceeds supply. We must now move on.

UK Aid (Uganda and Rwanda)

3.34 pm

Mr Ivan Lewis (Bury South) (Lab) (*Urgent Question*): To ask the Secretary of State for International Development if she will make a statement on UK aid to Uganda and Rwanda in light of renewed conflict by M23 rebels in Goma, eastern DRC, and the Secretary of State's announcement that she has suspended aid to Uganda as a result of serious allegations of corruption.

The Secretary of State for International Development (Justine Greening): The Foreign Secretary and I are deeply concerned by the rapidly deteriorating security and humanitarian situation in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo—DRC—caused by the military activities of the March 23 Movement, known as the M23. On 17 November, the M23 launched an attack on Congolese army positions at Kibumba, a key defensive position 30 km north of Goma, and fierce fighting then ensued. The UN forces—MONUSCO—have also engaged to seek to prevent the M23 advance. We understand that the M23 has not taken Goma, but the situation is deeply unstable and the local population extremely worried. We do not yet have clear figures on casualties. I understand that up to 80,000 people are moving around Goma to refugee camps on the other side of the town, but we have not seen any major movements of refugees across the border.

As the Foreign Secretary said in his statement at the weekend, the Government

“strongly condemn the M23's advance towards Goma and call on it immediately to desist from further violence. I am particularly concerned by the risk to civilians, the population of Goma and refugees in surrounding areas. I urge those with influence over the M23 to call on them to stop fighting and not to provide them any external support.”

The UK Government call for a cessation of hostilities and for all parties to engage to resolve this crisis without further bloodshed.

On aid programmes in Rwanda and Uganda, as I said to the International Development Committee at its evidence session on Rwanda last week, I will be reviewing all the evidence—including, of course, the latest evidence on renewed fighting in eastern DRC—and look at how the situation develops before making any further decisions on the next disbursement of general budget support.

As I announced last week, following the suspension of aid to the office of the Prime Minister in Uganda in August, I have now suspended all aid that goes through the Government of Uganda's financial systems. That is as a result of initial evidence emerging from our ongoing forensic audit of the office of the Prime Minister, which indicates that aid money may have been misused, and an additional report by the Ugandan Auditor General into the misuse of aid by other donors. I have suspended £11 million of our aid programme, including general budget support, although other aid that is not channelled through the Government is continuing. The driver for that decision is obviously distinct from the situation about which the hon. Gentleman asked regarding the M23 and activities in DRC.

I am sure the House will share my concern, and that of the Foreign Secretary, about the situation in eastern DRC. We remain committed to working with the region

to find durable solutions that bring stability and remove causes of conflict that currently leave space for armed groups to prosper. Solutions could involve security sector reform, work to return refugees to their places of origin over time, or work to extend the state reach of the Government in Kinshasa to all parts of DRC. Solutions must be led by the Government of DRC and will need the support of the region to be implemented. Our role is to try to assist in creating conditions that can bring durable peace, both through our development programmes in the region and our diplomatic efforts. However, there is no magic bullet to solve the crisis.

Mr Lewis: I thank the right hon. Lady for that answer, but she is developing an unhealthy habit of making important announcements via the press, rather than directly to Parliament. That was the case in relation to aid to India a couple of weeks ago, and now with Uganda. Will she reassure hon. Members that in future all important statements will be made first to the House of Commons?

As the right hon. Lady has said, we heard disturbing news overnight that the M23 militia is advancing on Goma. Its activities have terrorised the civilian population, led to the displacement of thousands of people, and caused yet another tragic humanitarian crisis in eastern DRC. Successive UN reports have been damning in their criticism of direct support for those activities by the Government of Rwanda, and have also expressed serious concern about the involvement of the Ugandan Government.

The Government's policy on this crisis has been nothing short of shambolic and has seriously undermined the international effort to send a unified and unequivocal message to the Rwandan Government that their actions are entirely unacceptable. The answer today was incredibly complacent.

First, will the Secretary of State now acknowledge that her predecessor's decision to reinstate budget support to Rwanda was a profound error of judgment? Secondly, will she explain why—according to her predecessor's recent evidence to the International Development Committee—the decision was taken despite Rwanda's failure to meet two of the conditions laid down specifically by the Prime Minister? Those two conditions were a public condemnation of M23 and a cessation of all support for its activities by the Rwandan Government. Thirdly, will the Secretary of State today stop dithering and make it clear that the next tranche of budgetary support will not be released to Rwanda unless it fully complies with the Prime Minister's own conditions? Finally, what steps has the Foreign Secretary taken to indicate our serious concerns to the Government of Rwanda? Is it not now essential that he or one of his Ministers calls in the Rwandan ambassador to the UK for urgent talks?

On Uganda, when the Government came to power, they made a strong commitment to be tough on corruption. That is absolutely right; British taxpayers have a right to expect that their hard-earned money goes to the poorest, and not to the bank accounts of the rich and powerful. However, in November last year, the Independent Commission on Aid Impact, which was set up by the previous Secretary of State, identified a major gap between the Government's rhetoric on corruption and the realities of the measures being taken by the Department for International Development.

Will the Secretary of State therefore tell us in some detail when the allegations of corruption first came to light? How were they brought to the attention of her Department? What estimate has been made of the amount of UK aid that has been siphoned off for inappropriate purposes? What steps are being taken to recover any losses of British taxpayers' money? What criteria will she apply when deciding whether to reinstate direct financial aid to the Ugandan Government? Finally, does she not feel in the slightest bit embarrassed that, when the rest of the international community is suspending budget support to the Government of Rwanda because they are actively supporting a militia that is undermining the civilian population in eastern DRC, she is a member of a Government who have departed from that international coalition and who have sent entirely the wrong message to the President of Rwanda?

Justine Greening: I am disappointed by the tone that the hon. Gentleman has taken on this important matter, and by his attempt to politicise something that is of deep concern to hon. Members on both sides of the House. I can assure you, Mr Speaker, that, as you know, I make written ministerial statements whenever we believe them to be of a substance that is warranted in the House—[*Interruption.*] We did indeed make statements to the House, and I will endeavour to continue to do so. I am always happy to answer urgent questions on any issues, as you see fit, Mr Speaker.

On Rwanda, I should point out that, under my predecessor, the Government reduced the amount of general budget support from the levels we inherited. That support will continue to fall over the coming months. The shadow Secretary of State mentioned the President of Rwanda, but a Labour predecessor of mine called him a “sweetie”. Labour therefore has no ability to criticise the Government in relation to tracking the results of our aid or in relation to being clear on whether it is being spent appropriately. Whenever we have needed to take action to curb aid, we have done so.

The shadow Secretary of State may disagree with the reasons for partially putting through some further budget support earlier this year, but I have been clear with the International Development Committee, including last week, that I will take a look at all the evidence on the ground from all sources when I come to make my decision in December. I will not pre-empt that. When I met the Committee last week, the situation on the ground in eastern DRC was different from how it is today. He might want to pre-empt where we might be in December, which is when I will take my next decision, but it would not be correct for me to follow suit, as he wants me to do.

In relation to what conditions we will seek to see adhered to, we have been clear cut about both the partnership principles that we struck up with the Government of Rwanda and the PM's conditions. I think they are absolutely right, and I will again look at them when I come to take my decision in December.

The hon. Gentleman asked what steps the Government had taken in relation to the Rwandan Government regarding the M23. The Foreign Secretary spoke with the Rwandan Foreign Minister at the weekend.

On Uganda, I have to say that we have taken action in a timely fashion in relation to suspending aid to Uganda. I presume the hon. Gentleman does not disagree with the

decision I took. No, he clearly does not. I am delighted he supports the decision we have taken. If I can set out the chronology of what happened, in August we had initial reports of fraud and corruption in relation to the office of the Prime Minister—not in relation to our money, but other donor money. At that stage, we duly suspended our further funding to the office of the Prime Minister. After that, we initiated a forensic audit, and the initial results of that forensic audit have led me to suspend all aid, more broadly, to the Government of Uganda.

This has been a logical process that has taken account of all information, but has sought always to consider the fact that we still want to make sure that our development work in countries such as Uganda and Rwanda helps to alleviate the extreme poverty faced by the people on the ground on a day-to-day basis. These are often difficult decisions to have to take, but we take them based on the facts that we have at the time, and in discussion across Government. I hope that that answers the hon. Gentleman's questions, and I look forward to other questions from my colleagues.

Sir Malcolm Bruce (Gordon) (LD): I am sure that hon. Members in all parts of the House agree that what matters in this conflict is the needs of the people of Rwanda, Uganda and eastern Congo, and the need for them to receive the support and assistance that aid provides and also have some kind of trust in their own Governments. What steps will the Secretary of State take to consult all other donor agencies to try to ensure that we co-ordinate our response?

May I remind the House that this is not the first time that aid has been suspended to Uganda because of corruption? The previous Government had to do this, too. This is a disappointing development that suggests that the Ugandan Government have not learnt very much. I remind the House that the Select Committee on International Development is currently conducting an inquiry into the situation in Rwanda. We hope to have a report ready in time to help the Secretary of State with her decision.

Justine Greening: I appreciate the work the right hon. Gentleman's Committee has done to help inform these important decisions. He is right that we discuss with other donors, both at official and ministerial level as appropriate, all views that are held about what is happening on the ground, and, critically, the implications for aid. As he rightly pointed out, we must always bear in mind that the point of development programmes is to help people on the ground. Surely, we have to bear that in mind before we simply turn off the tap. That is precisely what I intend to do.

Pamela Nash (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab): Over the past 10 years, I have worked in Uganda and have seen the impact of DFID's direct budget support, particularly on health care. Will the Secretary of State tell us what impact assessment DFID has carried out in Uganda on the possible reduction of vital services to the Ugandan people as a result of the suspension of direct budget support?

Justine Greening: To provide the hon. Lady with some reassurance, let me say that the vast majority of our aid goes not through the Government of Uganda,

[*Justine Greening*]

but through other non-governmental organisations on the ground. We are looking at what we can do to ensure that we continue to achieve the same results in relation to the programmes that we had planned to have undergoing at the moment in Uganda. Again, I have to steer a balance in ensuring that taxpayers' money is spent appropriately and is not withdrawn from the system by corruption and fraud, while, as she pointed out, making sure that we bear in mind that the programme was there to make a difference and that we still want that difference to be made.

Mr Henry Bellingham (North West Norfolk) (Con): Does my right hon. Friend agree that no effort should be spared in bringing to justice the wicked and evil Bosco Ntaganda, a convicted war criminal? What extra efforts are being made to apprehend him?

Will my right hon. Friend also reinforce the point that her predecessor, our right hon. Friend the Member for Sutton Coldfield (Mr Mitchell), behaved honourably and correctly, as he made clear to the International Development Select Committee the other day?

Justine Greening: Yes, and I will start by reiterating the points I made to the Select Committee. I believe that my predecessor went through an extremely robust process and took a robust decision on Rwanda, and I fully support his actions. Of course, I will have to go through a similar process and reach my own conclusions about the next tranche.

On those who have led the horrific violence on the ground, which has included sexual violence against women and getting children to sign up to armies against their will, we should absolutely leave no stone unturned in bringing them to justice

Cathy Jamieson (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (Lab/Co-op): The Secretary of State referred to a conversation with the Rwandan Foreign Minister. Did that conversation include discussion of the implications for services on the ground—my hon. Friend the Member for Airdrie and Shotts (Pamela Nash) mentioned this—particularly in relation to health care? Rwanda has made considerable progress, but does the right hon. Lady agree that that is being undermined by the current situation?

Justine Greening: The Foreign Secretary's discussions were clearly aimed at discussing what could be done to alleviate and resolve the situation on the ground. The hon. Lady is right that by working with the Rwandan Government many donors have made combined efforts that have substantially reduced poverty in Rwanda. It is worth bearing in mind, however, that 5 million people are still living in extreme poverty, which is precisely why we would like that progress to continue. However, the Government have a memorandum of understanding with the Rwandan Government that includes partnership principles, which we will focus on greatly when we make our next decision on whether to disburse further budget support in December.

Mr Brooks Newmark (Braintree) (Con): I echo the sentiments expressed by my hon. Friend the Member for North West Norfolk (Mr Bellingham).

As the Secretary of State may be aware, I have been travelling to Rwanda for seven years, working on primary education projects. International development is about reducing poverty, not playing politics with the poor. Does she agree that with the support of the Department for International Development—under the last Government and our Government—we have made huge strides in reducing poverty in that tragic country?

Justine Greening: I believe that the Government have worked extremely closely and successfully with the Rwandan Government, as did the last Government, and obviously it is of concern when there are issues that put that progress under threat. We would like it to continue. I am clear, however, that the partnership principles set out in the memorandum of understanding with Rwanda are important, and it is those that we will consider when we decide whether to disburse further budget support in December.

Jeremy Corbyn (Islington North) (Lab): When the Secretary of State looks at the issue of aid to Rwanda and Uganda, will she also reflect for a moment that the fundamental cause of instability, misery and poverty in the eastern DRC is the greed of mineral companies and many others for the natural resources of the region? Will she look carefully, therefore, at the role that any British-based mining companies have played in promoting militias, supporting inappropriate development or extracting large untaxed profits from the region?

Justine Greening: The hon. Gentleman touches on an important issue. The Government have been clear that progress on the extractive industries transparency initiative is very important to ensuring that, critically, when countries with clear mineral or natural resources want them exploited for the benefit of that country, that happens, and that they are supported in getting the most out of the revenue stream that those minerals can help unlock. There are several causes of the particular situation in eastern DRC, but I can assure him more broadly that the Government take seriously the issue about extractive industries and are seeking to make more progress on it, along with our international partners.

Mr Philip Hollobone (Kettering) (Con): Nothing enrages my constituents more than the prospect of Britain's international aid falling into the hands of corrupt officials, because my constituents want the money that we provide to go to the poorest people who need the help the most. Is the Secretary of State satisfied that her Department has a sufficiently robust early-warning system, so that she is advised of any potential corruption in any of Britain's aid programmes?

Justine Greening: I am going through that process right now, so that I can assure myself of that, but it is worth pointing out that in the case of Uganda we suspended donations and aid to the office of the Prime Minister when fraud and corruption issues were seen by other donors, not in relation to our budget, so we have always taken a precautionary approach wherever we can.

Kevin Brennan (Cardiff West) (Lab): I raised the issue of reinstating aid to Rwanda with the Prime Minister on 17 October at Prime Minister's questions, because of

the Rwandan Government's support for the M23 rebels, who are murdering, maiming and raping in eastern Congo. The Prime Minister said he had spoken personally to President Kagame about it, but it obviously did not make much difference. Why is the Secretary of State not acting now to ensure that we are in no way supporting the Rwandan Government, who are supporting the M23 rebels?

Justine Greening: The hon. Gentleman is making some statements of fact; the reality is that we have a leaked report from the UN group of experts which makes some assertions about what may be happening on the ground. That is going through the UN sanctions committee. Bearing in mind the implications that the report may have on the aid programme in Rwanda, the right thing for us to do is to wait for the UN sanctions committee and, indeed, the UN Security Council to go through that full process and not jump the gun.

Robert Halfon (Harlow) (Con): Like my hon. Friend the Member for Braintree (Mr Newmark), I also went on Project Umubano—twice—and learnt a lot about the genocide. Given that the world allowed the genocide to take place in Rwanda, does my right hon. Friend agree that the world, and especially the United Kingdom, has a responsibility to help Rwanda recover from it? The question is not about cutting aid to Rwanda, but about targeting it carefully.

Justine Greening: My hon. Friend is right, but at the end of the day we need to be clear that many of the structures through which we can get change on the ground in Rwanda and alleviate poverty for the many millions who still suffer from it will ultimately also be part the Government systems there, which is why many donors have worked so closely with the Rwandan Government to pursue their development programmes. However, clearly he is right, given the history of Rwanda, and the work of the last Government, along with the work that this Government have undertaken with the Rwandan Government, has clearly been successful. It has been one of the most successful aid programmes we have had. Nevertheless, we will look carefully at the outcome of the UN process on the deeply concerning issues involving the M23 and eastern DRC.

Fiona O'Donnell (East Lothian) (Lab): The Secretary of State's predecessor, in giving evidence to the Select Committee on International Development, was asked whether he believed that the Rwandan Government had ever given practical support to the M23. He said he could not say, putting him at odds with the Prime Minister and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, who have called for an end to practical support. Where does this Secretary of State stand—with her Prime Minister and Foreign and Commonwealth Office or with her predecessor?

Justine Greening: I have to say that I will make my own decisions about what I think is happening on the ground when I take my decision about the future aid programme to Rwanda in December. I can assure the hon. Lady that I will look at what is happening then, not at what has been happening in the past.

Henry Smith (Crawley) (Con): Will the Secretary of State say a little more about the context of when this country ceased giving aid to the Ugandan Prime Minister's office in relation to some of the other donor nations that were providing aid?

Justine Greening: We took steps to stop our money going to the office of the Prime Minister before we had any evidence of a problem per se, particularly in relation to our own money. Other donors took steps once it became clear that there had been fraud and corruption with their money, so I like to think that we acted pre-emptively. The forensic audit that is currently under way will give us the information we need to understand what has happened with UK taxpayers' money and what steps we may be able to take should any money prove not to have been disbursed in the way we wanted.

Barry Gardiner (Brent North) (Lab): When I was in Kinshasa in September, I made it clear to the high commission that more than 30 Members of Parliament whom I had met there had independently raised this issue as a serious concern that was disrupting their programme of government. Because of the amount of money we have invested in the Congo basin forest fund and other work that the Secretary of State's Department is doing to great effect in the region, giving aid in Rwanda that undermines the capacity of the aid in those programmes to deliver is a serious problem.

Justine Greening: I have a huge amount of respect for the hon. Gentleman's work in the area of international development, but we cannot escape the fact that much of the work that has been done alongside the Rwandan Government has been extremely successful in lifting people out of poverty. That is why I need to ensure that all the proper processes are gone through, and that I look at all the separate facts and evidence bases when I reach my decision in December. I can assure him that I will approach that exercise incredibly thoughtfully, and I will make an announcement to the House once I have reached a conclusion.

Nicola Blackwood (Oxford West and Abingdon) (Con): Will the Secretary of State not forget, in the midst of all the politicking, that the militia in the eastern Congo have an horrific record of sexual violence? Can she assure me that, while trying to square the circle that the Opposition are creating about all the money being spent in Rwanda and Uganda, the steps being taken will be monitored for gender-based violence in the Kivus? What measures are in place to trigger early intervention to protect the local communities wherever possible?

Justine Greening: DFID Uganda is very aware of the humanitarian issues that are arising as a result of the violence that has restarted in the Kivus in recent days. Alongside other partners, we will play our role in ensuring that we provide all the support that we can to the victims of sexual violence. We have focused on playing our role in that way in countries such as Syria as well, and we will certainly want to do that in the DRC as appropriate.

Paul Goggins (Wythenshawe and Sale East) (Lab): Further to the question posed by the hon. Member for North West Norfolk (Mr Bellingham), will the Secretary

[Paul Goggins]

of State tell us more about the action that is being taken to put the leadership of M23 where they deserve to be: facing charges at the International Criminal Court in relation to the conscription of child soldiers and other war crimes?

Justine Greening: That is something that our Government have raised at the United Nations. The right hon. Gentleman will be aware that the group of experts' report contains a number of aspects relating to M23, and those are being considered by the UN Sanctions Committee right now. Once the committee has completed that process, I am sure that it will give its assessment of whose involvement has led to these crises, and of the implications for the action that needs to be taken. We have raised this matter at the UN and we are determined that people should be brought to book, when appropriate, and have international law brought against them.

Rehman Chishti (Gillingham and Rainham) (Con): There has been an international arrest warrant against the leader of the M23 since 2006. What steps have been taken over the past six years to bring that horrific person to justice?

Justine Greening: I have no doubt that there have been significant efforts, and I can write to my hon. Friend with further details. The areas in which those people are being tracked down are often hundreds of thousands of square miles across. The lack of success in tracking them down has clearly had profound consequences in relation to the M23 being able to cause this kind of havoc, chaos and violence.

Ian Lucas (Wrexham) (Lab): The M23 rebels, who the United Nations experts say are being directly supported by named individuals in the Rwandan Government, are

attacking Goma as we speak. Far from our Government "jumping the gun", as the Secretary of State unfortunately said a moment ago, is it not the case that people are dying as a result of their providing finance to the Rwandan Government? What will it take for her to make the decision to stop that aid, given that it might be used to support those M23 rebels?

Justine Greening: I have set out very clearly, both today and to the International Development Committee, the measured and thoughtful approach we will take in respect of any future disbursements of budget support to the Rwandan Government. The hon. Gentleman is commenting on a leaked report, which may or may not be the final report that the UN sanctions committee publishes. I think we should wait for that, and in the meantime I can assure him that our Government are playing their role in working diplomatically to encourage all those involved in the violence to bring it to an end.

Ian Mearns (Gateshead) (Lab): The Secretary of State was at pains to say that the M23 had not taken the city of Goma, but local reports overnight suggest that a large refugee camp to the east of the city, which is a home for 30,000 people, was being evacuated urgently with people streaming to the west. This is a very serious and large-scale humanitarian crisis. Will the right hon. Lady urgently review what can be done to minimise the suffering of innocent people in and around the city of Goma?

Justine Greening: I assure the hon. Gentleman that we in DFID are looking at what we can do to play our role in any humanitarian support that needs to be provided for those people.

Mr Speaker: I am grateful to the Secretary of State and to colleagues.

Points of Order

4.6 pm

Paul Flynn (Newport West) (Lab): On a point of order, Mr Speaker. Last week's elections for police and crime commissioners had two remarkable characteristics that should concern the House. On the one hand, they had the lowest participation in any national election ever, and on the other hand, they had the highest number of rejected, spoiled ballot papers ever, when 120,000 people who thought themselves disfranchised wrote powerful, vigorous and emphatic messages on their ballot papers. Should not those messages be sampled and reported to this House?

Mr Speaker: The hon. Gentleman has been in the House long enough to know that neither turnout nor the number of spoiled ballot papers is in any way a matter for the Chair. It does not constitute a matter of order, and I would not want the hon. Gentleman, who is an extremely dextrous and experienced parliamentarian, to get those who are about to become new Members into bad habits at an excessively early stage. He has made his own point in his own way and will find ways to persevere with this matter if he so wishes.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Mr Speaker: Order. Members should calm down. It is impossible for me not to see the hon. Member for Huddersfield (Mr Sheerman), but because he is so enthusiastic, he will have to curb his enthusiasm. I call Mr David Winnick.

Mr David Winnick (Walsall North) (Lab): On a point of order, Mr Speaker. As you will know, there is considerable concern about the violence inflicted on Gaza by Israeli forces and about the civilian casualties. In the last few days, we have seen pictures of young children who have burned to death. It is therefore important for this House to debate the issue as quickly as possible. Will you confirm, Mr Speaker, that the Foreign Secretary will make a statement on Tuesday on this very urgent humanitarian issue?

Mr Speaker: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his point of order. I am happy to confirm that I have been advised that the Foreign Secretary will indeed make a statement on these matters tomorrow. Ordinarily, hon. and right hon. Members might have hoped for a statement today, but it would be fair to say that, as some will know and others might not, the Foreign Secretary is in Brussels today, discussing these very matters. At the first opportunity tomorrow, the House will expect to hear from the right hon. Gentleman, and I feel sure that the hon. Member for Walsall North (Mr Winnick) will be in his customary place.

Mr Barry Sheerman (Huddersfield) (Lab/Co-op): On a point of order, Mr Speaker. I was trying to curb my enthusiasm to make sure that Ministers of the Crown come to this House to make statements that they should make to us rather than either leaking them to the press or launching them without the House's participation. Only last week, when the House was not sitting, the Secretary of State for Education launched his Department's

review—a major review of the Department for Education, including proposals for a savage cut of up to 1,000 jobs and the closure of regional offices. This is a major restructuring of the Department for Education, so this report should have been launched by the Secretary of State to this House. It is disrespectful to us and to the education community to do it in any other way.

Mr Speaker: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his point of order. My understanding was that the Government had announced a review rather than a specific policy. However, my expectation that Ministers make key policy announcements first to the House is both well known and unchanged. If the hon. Gentleman, who on the strength of his 33 years' uninterrupted service knows these conventions, is dissatisfied with the Secretary of State, I have a keen sense that he will display his keenness to pursue this matter for days and days and days.

Barry Gardiner (Brent North) (Lab): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I believe that the Secretary of State for International Development said a few moments ago that she had made a statement—or the Department had issued a statement—on the decision to stop aid to India. I believe that that is not the case, and it is possible that it needs to be corrected.

Mr Speaker: I think I am right in saying that there was a written ministerial statement on the matter. I do not think that any erroneous statement has been made, but the hon. Gentleman, who is a former Minister himself, will know that Ministers are always responsible for the statements that they make to the House.

Huw Irranca-Davies (Ogmore) (Lab) On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr Speaker: I hope that the hon. Gentleman's point of order is on an entirely unrelated matter, and I believe it to be so.

Huw Irranca-Davies: Indeed. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As a Member of Parliament in this place, I sometimes get tired of the endless sniping and backbiting, and being surrounded by rats and snakes and even cockroaches, so I have given up viewing "I'm a Celebrity...Get Me Out of Here!". However, I have now received a letter from a constituent of another hon. Member, which begins:

"May I apologise for writing to you rather than my own constituency MP, but living in Mid Bedfordshire I do not seem to have an MP at the moment."

What advice can you offer, Mr. Speaker? Or perhaps the hon. Member for Mid Bedfordshire (Nadine Dorries) has left a forwarding address in the jungle with you.

Mr Speaker: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his point of order. My advice to him is that he should begin by contacting Members representing constituencies neighbouring Mid Bedfordshire to ascertain whether any of them feels able to provide assistance.

If there are no further points of order, will Members wishing to take their seats please come to the Table?

NEW MEMBERS

The following Member made and subscribed the Affirmation required by law:

Andrew Sawford, for Corby.

The following Member took and subscribed the Oath required by law:

Stephen John Doughty, for Cardiff South and Penarth.

Groceries Code Adjudicator Bill [*Lords*]

Second Reading

4.15 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills (Jo Swinson): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

I am delighted to bring the Groceries Code Adjudicator Bill from the other place to this House. Its purpose is to establish a groceries code adjudicator. The adjudicator will oversee the large supermarkets' compliance with the groceries supply code of practice and will have the power to impose sanctions against retailers that do not treat their suppliers lawfully and fairly as required by the code.

I have been encouraged by the Bill's passage through the other place. All parties showed a real common purpose and commitment to improve market conditions. We are pleased to have accepted amendments that have made the Bill stronger, in particular on allowing a fairer allocation of the levy so supermarkets that behave badly will pay more. We have also accepted changes to ensure that financial penalties can be brought in more swiftly.

Mr Barry Sheerman (Huddersfield) (Lab/Co-op): Will the Minister give way?

Jo Swinson: I will, as I am aware that I am now addressing one of the main topics of debate.

Mr Sheerman: The Minister will be aware that many constituents have written to their Members of Parliament about the size of the fines imposed on supermarkets that do not co-operate, and how quickly they can be levied. Did she get the general impression from the debate in the other place that this is a weak instrument with which to take on some of the most well-organised, monopolistic organisations in the country?

Jo Swinson: I do not agree with that characterisation. I think the adjudicator will be able to make a real difference. We have put a range of tools at its disposal, which, particularly given the importance that supermarkets attach to their brand reputation, I believe will have a real effect. I will discuss this issue in more detail later, but it is worth bearing in mind that the Business, Innovation and Skills Committee looked at this and recognised that the arguments are finely balanced. I acknowledge that Members will, perhaps, come at the issue from different sides of the argument, but I am confident that the Government's position is the right one. I intend to give a brief overview of the Bill and the role of the adjudicator, and I will then set out in detail why we believe financial penalties should initially be a reserve power.

The Bill is important on two counts. It promotes growth and a competitive food and groceries sector, and it helps to ensure a fair deal for suppliers. In the current economic climate, it is more essential than ever that our groceries sector is allowed to grow and thrive. Therefore, Government, suppliers and retailers need to work together to ensure that the marketplace between supermarkets and suppliers is fair, open and competitive.

Sir Robert Smith (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD): I greatly welcome this Bill and I hope it makes good progress through the House. The Minister emphasises that it will help suppliers, but it is important to get across the fact that it will also help consumers by ensuring that a range of suppliers stays in the market and that there is variety and good security of supply.

Jo Swinson: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. We are introducing the adjudicator because of the benefits it will bring in dealing with potential issues of consumer detriment, as identified in the Competition Commission report.

I believe that our large supermarkets can be a very good thing for consumers, for employment and for our economy. In the vast majority of cases, they treat their suppliers lawfully and fairly. Unfortunately, as the House will be aware, the Competition Commission's 2008 report on the supply of groceries showed that in some cases large supermarkets were transferring excessive risks and costs to their suppliers. That included practices such as the retrospective varying of supply agreements to force suppliers to take on unexpected extra costs, which is why the Groceries (Supply Chain Practices) Market Investigation Order 2009 came into force in 2010. The order contains the groceries supply code of practice and requires the 10 largest retailers with an annual turnover of over £1 billion to incorporate the code in all their supply agreements. The code sets out a general principle that retailers must treat their suppliers lawfully and fairly and also contains more specific requirements on how retailers should deal with their suppliers.

Chris Bryant (Rhondda) (Lab): Sometimes these commercial operators try to crowd out competitors using pretty dodgy means. When they are caught, they try to cover it up, which is why it is very important that schedule 2 is strengthened. The adjudicator may well ask for information from commercial operators, but I fear that the powers in the measure are nowhere near strong enough to be able to force operators to provide that information. They are not as strong, for instance, as the civil provisions under Norwich Pharmacal arrangements.

Jo Swinson: If information is not provided to the groceries code adjudicator, that will constitute an offence, which is a strong power for the adjudicator. We can discuss the details in Committee, but we do have the power that is required in the Bill and its schedules.

Chris Bryant: But one problem is that big corporations quite deliberately hide things from adjudicators. Unless an adjudicator knows precisely what to ask for, corporations may end up not handing it over, which is why it is vital that a full disclosure requirement, if necessary, is available to the adjudicator. Will the Minister consider that?

Jo Swinson: The hon. Gentleman is making a distinct bid to be on the Bill Committee, and the usual channels will have taken note. I am sure he would like nothing more than to consider this measure and the schedules in intricate detail. I believe that the power available to the adjudicator is sufficient, and we will make sure that the right individual is in that position with a good understanding of the markets with which they are dealing. That person is therefore unlikely to have the wool pulled over their eyes, and will know the right questions to ask.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Jo Swinson: I should like to make a little progress, but I will then give way to hon. Members. My hon. Friend the Member for St Ives (Andrew George), in particular, has a strong track record on this issue.

To make it clear to the House, the code can be privately enforced by suppliers as a matter of contract, but the Competition Commission considered that that the code would also require public enforcement by an ombudsman or adjudicator. The Government agree that businesses on both sides need to be confident that breaches of the code will be fairly investigated and that, if necessary, appropriate enforcement action can be taken against a retailer who breaches the code.

Suppliers must be able to come forward without fear of retribution from supermarkets, and retailers need to be confident that they will be treated fairly in any resulting investigation by the adjudicator as a public authority. The Bill will establish an independent groceries code adjudicator as a statutory office holder to help to ensure that retailers comply with the code, and accordingly treat their suppliers lawfully and fairly.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Jo Swinson: I shall give way to my hon. Friend the Member for St Ives, who has worked on this issue for many years.

Andrew George (St Ives) (LD): I very much welcome the measure, and I am content that it has the investigatory powers to address the issue raised a moment ago. Nevertheless, the code has been in place since 4 February 2010, so the question inevitably arises of whether the adjudicator has the power to take evidence on the period between 4 February 2010 and the establishment of that post?

Jo Swinson: The adjudicator will be in place and, as has been outlined, the code is already legally binding. The adjudicator can look at the evidence submitted, and will undertake more investigations. It is up to them to gather evidence on the basis of suggestions that things are not working as they should, and require supermarkets to comply with their legal responsibility.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Jo Swinson: I shall give way to my hon. Friend the Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Tim Farron), and then to my hon. Friend the Member for Mid Norfolk (George Freeman).

Tim Farron (Westmorland and Lonsdale) (LD): Those of us who are concerned about fair trade for farmers greatly welcome the Bill. It attempts to correct an imbalance in the marketplace, but it is surely not the only way in which we need to do that, as I am sure my hon. Friend will agree. In particular, is it not just as important to strengthen farmers' hands through a greater export market and through more research and development so that they can punch at an equal weight with supermarkets?

Jo Swinson: My hon. Friend makes a couple of important points and I know that he is an assiduous campaigner on behalf of farmers in his constituency. He will be delighted that our hon. Friend the Minister of State, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, who is responsible for farming, will sum up the debate tonight. He will be able to outline some of the actions the Government are taking to ensure that farmers are empowered.

The other point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale, which is important, is that we must be clear about expectations. The groceries code adjudicator will, I think, be widely welcomed by the various parties in this House, but is not in itself a panacea. It is being introduced for a specific purpose on which there is much agreement, but there are obviously many issues that it does not cover and that will need to be addressed through other means. The Government are committed to taking those actions.

George Freeman (Mid Norfolk) (Con): I strongly welcome the measure and commend my hon. Friend and those on the Government Front Bench. I encourage them to get the Bill through this House as quickly as possible, because it will be a huge relief to many farmers in my constituency, particularly in the dairy sector. As someone who used to work for the National Farmers Union, I know how long many of us have campaigned for this measure. However, as the measure is in fact a schedule relating to an order under the Enterprise Act 2002 rather than a statute, will she assure us that the code is mandatory and will be entirely legally enforceable by the adjudicator?

Jo Swinson: I thank my hon. Friend for his intervention and for his support for the Bill. The code is already legally enforceable by suppliers should they take legal action, but yes, it will also be legally enforceable by the adjudicator, who will make recommendations to supermarkets, which will recognise that they have a legal duty to comply with the code as it is. If the adjudicator thinks that they are not complying with the code, I suspect that that will be taken as a clear sign that they need to change their behaviour.

Mr Adrian Bailey (West Bromwich West) (Lab/Co-op): Will the hon. Lady give way?

Jo Swinson: I will certainly give way to the Chair of the Business, Skills and Innovation Committee.

Mr Bailey: I thank the hon. Lady; I recognise that she has given way several times already. I delayed my intervention to see whether she would give the answer I was looking for in response to somebody else.

One of the recommendations of the Select Committee on Business, Innovation and Skills was that evidence be allowable from trade associations and other third parties. In the other place, the Minister gave that specific assurance and we welcomed that as a Committee. However, I cannot find anything in the Bill that spells it out. All I can find is clause 15(10), which gives the Secretary of State the right to insert after clause 4 proposed new section 4A, which under subsection (2) will enable the adjudicator to consider any appropriate information. Is that the legal base that underlines the right of the adjudicator to

take evidence from a third party? If so, can the adjudicator do that before the two-yearly review specified as the basis for the Secretary of State's introduction of it?

Jo Swinson: I will happily confirm the reference in that clause:

“When carrying out an investigation the Adjudicator may consider any information that it seems appropriate to consider and is not limited to considering the information mentioned in subsection (1)”—

subsection (1), of course, lists a range of places from which information could be provided. The point of that phrasing is to ensure that the adjudicator has flexibility in considering information from whatever source. That includes, but is not limited to, information from trade associations, as the Chair of the Select Committee mentions, from a whistleblower, or others who might have concerns or evidence of malpractice about compliance with the code. We do have—

Mr Mark Spencer (Sherwood) (Con): Will the Minister give way on that point?

Jo Swinson: I am still responding to the earlier question, but if the hon. Gentleman will have a little patience I will come to his intervention shortly.

On the other point raised by the hon. Member for West Bromwich West (Mr Bailey), there will obviously be a regular review of the adjudicator. That is appropriate in ensuring that it functions as it should and that any necessary changes can be made, but we will not prevent the adjudicator from properly considering information before the initial review is produced. I want to make a little progress and then I will take an intervention from my hon. Friend the Member for Sherwood (Mr Spencer).

The adjudicator will be funded by a levy from the 10 largest retailers and will have the power to investigate breaches and to impose sanctions against supermarkets found to have breached the code. Some Members have previously criticised the Bill as being anti-business. What is anti-business about ensuring that the grocery market works as well as it can, without being distorted by anti-competitive and unfair practices?

Peter Luff (Mid Worcestershire) (Con): On that point—

Jo Swinson: I will make a little progress, and then I will give way.

The direct or indirect suppliers who are among the potential beneficiaries of the Bill include fresh food intermediaries and food and drink manufacturers. That is why the Bill is supported by major business groups, including the Food and Drink Federation, the British Brands Group, the Association of Convenience Stores and the National Farmers Union. A fair market is one in which suppliers and supermarkets are free to innovate, expand and offer the widest possible choice to the consumer without fear of being disadvantaged by unfair dealings elsewhere.

Mr Spencer: The Minister refers to blacklisting, when suppliers will be disadvantaged by coming forward. Can she reassure the House about how she will achieve that when, for example, the number of suppliers in the

east midlands for a specific vegetable will be limited, and it will be quite easy to identify which one is supplying that product to a particular supermarket?

Jo Swinson: Clause 18 provides that there is a duty on the adjudicator to protect confidentiality. That goes beyond not allowing publication of the name of the individual or supplier making the complaint. As my hon. Friend rightly says, there are circumstances where an investigation could, in effect, give away who had made the complaint. In that circumstance it would be possible for the adjudicator to undertake a slightly wider investigation in terms of geographic scope or the types of vegetable being investigated, so that it would not be possible to identify which individual or supplier had come forward and made a complaint.

Peter Luff: This welcome legislation, like that which introduced the Gangmasters Licensing Authority some years ago, proves that effective and targeted regulation can help consumers and all those who work in supplying the food industry, but I am sure the Cabinet Office will have thought about deregulatory measures as well, as a quid pro quo for this regulatory measure. In that spirit, will the Minister tell us what progress is being made on the abolition of the Agricultural Wages Board, which would also help consumers and those who supply the industry?

Jo Swinson: Consultation is taking place on that measure. My hon. Friend the Minister of State who is summing up the debate as the Minister with responsibility for farming will, I am sure, be able to enlighten the House further on that point.

What will the adjudicator do? The adjudicator's role is to investigate large retailers and hold them to account if they have broken the groceries code. He or she will also be able to act as an arbitrator to resolve private disputes between suppliers and large supermarkets, as the groceries supply order envisages. Aside from these main roles, the adjudicator will have a number of other functions. These are to publish guidance on when and how investigations will proceed and how enforcement powers will be used, to advise large retailers and suppliers on the groceries code, to recommend changes to the groceries code to the Office of Fair Trading, to arbitrate individual disputes between large retailers and the direct suppliers, as mentioned, or to appoint another person to do so, and to report annually on his or her work, which will be laid before Parliament.

Ian Paisley (North Antrim) (DUP): The Minister knows that the adjudicator cannot do any of those things until after they have published the guidance under clause 12. The adjudicator can take up to six months before publishing the guidance. Have the Government any intention of bringing that date forward so that the adjudicator can get down to this important business as soon as possible?

Jo Swinson: The hon. Gentleman expresses an understandable desire to make sure that the role of adjudicator can be up and running as soon as possible. We all share that desire. I am sure, however, that he would not want the publication of the guidance to be rushed. Although I would be happy if the adjudicator, once in place, decides that the full six months is not

needed and the guidance can be published earlier, it would not be wise to force a faster timetable if that was not felt to be possible.

Mr Mark Williams (Ceredigion) (LD): My hon. Friend mentioned recommendations on possible changes that the adjudicator could make to the code's remit. Will she say a little more about the extent of those changes because, as she will be aware, many primary producers across the country are really anxious?

Jo Swinson: It is not envisaged that such changes would necessarily be wide-ranging, because the role of adjudicator is based on the original Competition Commission reports and the findings of detriment to consumers resulting from excessive risks and costs being passed on to suppliers. If there are related issues that the groceries code adjudicator feels warrant a slight change to the code, he or she can make that recommendation, but that is the remit for what such changes would be. I hope that is helpful to my hon. Friend.

To add to a point raised earlier, there will be no restrictions on who can complain to the adjudicator, and the complainant's identity will be kept in strict confidence. That means the adjudicator can receive information from any source, including direct and indirect suppliers, farmers, whistleblowers within large retailers, and trade associations representing their members. That change was very much welcomed in the other place because it is important, and there is a genuine concern about a climate of fear among some suppliers. The change that has been made deals with that concern.

If the adjudicator, as a result of the evidence they have been provided with, has reasonable grounds to suspect that the code has been breached, they will be able to start an investigation and gather more information from relevant retailers and others. If the investigation finds that a retailer has broken the code, the adjudicator will have tough sanctions, for example the so-called "name and shame" powers to require retailers to publish information about a breach in the trade or national press. We think that those sanctions are powerful enough to uphold the code. However, if that proves not to be the case, the Bill allows the Secretary of State to grant the adjudicator a power to impose financial penalties as well.

Stephen Timms (East Ham) (Lab): I declare an interest as chair of the trustees of the Traidcraft Foundation, which represents producers from developing countries, who welcome and are very much in favour of this measure. I do not understand why fines will not be available from the start. There is quite a wide sense that, if the measure is to be effective, fines should be available from the start, not at some undetermined future date.

Jo Swinson: I understand the right hon. Gentleman's point, which organisations such as Traidcraft have put forward forcefully. Of course, in my duties as Minister I have met Traidcraft and other organisations to discuss the matter, but I am not persuaded that it is necessary to have the fining powers from the start, and I will outline why. I think that the sanctions that are in place and that will be available immediately are robust and will be sufficient to achieve the change we require. The adjudicator will be able to take one or more of three possible

[Jo Swinson]

measures, two of them from the beginning: first, to make recommendations; secondly, to require large retailers to publish information, the “name and shame” power; and thirdly, if we do not think that the other remedies are working sufficiently well, to impose financial penalties.

That range of measures will mean that the adjudicator can tailor his or her action to the nature of the breach in order to enforce the groceries code most effectively. For example, in the case of a minor or unintentional breach, the adjudicator might decide that a recommendation to change behaviour might be sufficient to bring the retailer back into compliance. In the event of a severe breach that had caused serious harm to suppliers, the retailer could also be required to publish details of its breach prominently in the trade or national press. If it is deemed necessary, they could then incur financial penalties, if the Secretary of State has granted that power to the adjudicator. It is also important to remember that the Bill allows the adjudicator to take more than one measure if that is appropriate in a particular case.

Andrew George: Although I appreciate that the adjudicator will have the power to recover their investigatory costs, fining is very much the issue for debate, as the Minister has already identified. If either the adjudicator or the Secretary of State recommends that a fine should be applied, how many months would it take to implement such powers?

Jo Swinson: I thank my hon. Friend for his question. If the Secretary of State decides that an order needs to be made to allow financial penalties, it is important to know that that would grant the power generally, not on a case-by-case basis, and, as a result of the amendment accepted in the other place, we believe that that could be done within six months. It would be fairly rapid if it was determined that things were not working.

I know as a result of interventions and, indeed, correspondence with the Department that some stakeholders and Members feel that financial penalties should be available immediately. What I would say is that the supermarkets operate in a fiercely competitive marketplace, so major supermarkets are, rightly, very careful about their reputations. As an illustration, in 2010 the four biggest supermarkets—Tesco, Asda, Sainsbury’s and Morrisons—spent £385 million on advertising, which is an indication of the importance that they attach to their brands and what they have to invest to promote them. They are fiercely protective of them and I think that they are likely to take very seriously the impact on their reputation of having to publish their breaches or take out an advert in the trade or national press.

Kerry McCarthy (Bristol East) (Lab): Is it not the case that the Competition Commission inquiry back in 2008 found that more than a decade of adverse media reports on supermarket supply chains had done little to prevent them from engaging in unethical practices? The media are already reporting the abuses, so I do not see how naming and shaming would make much difference.

Jo Swinson: It is important to bear in mind that this will be an independent adjudicator who will conduct an investigation that will consider all the evidence before

coming to a conclusion about specific supermarkets and what they have or have not done. General concerns about the supermarket supply chain have not left consumers in quite the same position of being able to take action, unless, for example, they decide to stop shopping at supermarkets altogether. The Bill is likely to drive change. Consumers have been involved in a variety of movements whereby their concerns about certain issues have driven change in the behaviour of suppliers. Indeed, that was the case with milk prices this summer. Drawing on my personal experience, before I was a Minister I took complaints about misleading advertisements to the Advertising Standards Authority, so I know very well the power of a negative finding, the publicity that goes with it and how companies take it seriously and are very keen to avoid such an occurrence.

Michael Connarty (Linlithgow and East Falkirk) (Lab): Does the Minister not realise that the code makes absolutely no reference to the need to address the supply chains of the major supermarkets in order to prevent modern-day slavery, such as that in the Noble/Freedom Food eggs case? I have written to her about the need to incorporate into this Bill the principle in my private Member’s Bill, the Transparency in UK Company Supply Chains (Eradication of Slavery) Bill. Nothing in this code addresses supply chains, but surely one of the ways to get a level playing field is to prevent major supermarkets from exploiting labour brought into the country as a result of human trafficking to undercut the competition.

Jo Swinson: The hon. Gentleman raises serious issues, not least that of legality and human trafficking. If there is evidence of law-breaking, it should be taken to the appropriate authorities so that it can be followed up. I appreciate his concern, but the adjudicator’s role and the groceries code have been developed in response to the Competition Commission report of 2008. Notwithstanding the serious issues that he raises, the way to proceed is to focus tightly on the report, which provides the clear basis for addressing the problem and consumer detriment that we are trying to solve. Although I have explained to the House that the code is not a panacea that will solve every possible problem, it does mean that we can continue with a strong degree of consensus and cross-party support.

Peter Luff: I reassure the hon. Lady that the Gangmasters Licensing Authority is doing a first-rate job at addressing the concerns of the hon. Member for Linlithgow and East Falkirk (Michael Connarty). If he has evidence of such abuse, he should take it to the authority urgently and it will be addressed effectively and well. That is a tribute to the previous Government’s action on this important question.

Jo Swinson: I thank my hon. Friend for his contribution. He makes his point forcefully.

I believe that the threat to supermarkets of recommendations and requirements to publish details will be enough to drive cultural change. Hon. Members should note that imposing a financial penalty would confer a full merits right of appeal, which would potentially be costly and time-intensive for all parties. It is important that the adjudicator is able to focus on investigations, rather than being distracted by appeals. I am sure that

all constituency Members recognise that where there are appeals procedures, such as in planning, they tend to be used. We do not want the groceries code adjudicator to be tied up in appeal after appeal, but want them to be able to get on with their investigations. That is why we think that it is helpful to proceed with the range of sanctions in the Bill.

Roger Williams (Brecon and Radnorshire) (LD): I welcome the Bill's focus on the role of the adjudicator in enforcing the groceries code. If the adjudicator, in carrying out that work, came across evidence of serious criminal offences, for example in the field of competition or human trafficking, it would surely be up to them to refer that evidence to the appropriate authorities.

Jo Swinson: Absolutely. Morally, it is incumbent on anyone who comes across evidence of appalling crimes, such as human trafficking, to ensure that it is presented to the appropriate authorities so that they can take action.

Even without fines, there are financial consequences for retailers who breach the code. There may be internal costs of complying with an investigation, such as the cost of sending senior executives to give evidence to the adjudicator. The adjudicator will have the ability to make a retailer who has breached the code pay the costs of the investigation. It is also our intention that the retailers who cause the adjudicator the most trouble should pay a greater share of the levy. Taken together, those factors will reward good behaviour and discourage non-compliance.

Mr Spencer: Will the Minister give way?

Jo Swinson: If the hon. Gentleman will forgive me, I will make a little progress, because he has already intervened.

It benefits no one to reach straight for fines before we have exhausted the other options. We seek to impose a proportionate and effective solution. A move straight to fines would risk creating an unnecessarily adversarial environment, which would ultimately detract from our key objective of achieving long-lasting change in the culture of retailers.

Nia Griffith (Llanelli) (Lab): Will the Minister give way?

Jo Swinson: I will give way to the hon. Lady, although I am aware that other Members wish to speak.

Nia Griffith: Under what circumstances would the Secretary of State consider bringing in the power to raise fines?

Jo Swinson: I hope that the hon. Lady will understand that I am not going to give an exhaustive list. If the groceries code adjudicator felt that the remedies were not sufficient and were not being adhered to and if there were repeated breaches or if the recommendations made by the adjudicator were not being followed up on, those things would weigh heavily in the balance.

There has been a lot of lobbying on this issue, not least from hon. Members. As I am discovering, ministerial

life brings with it a variety of interesting experiences, one of which happened last month, when I accepted a petition from a giant dog.

Ian Murray (Edinburgh South) (Lab): Was it an actual dog?

Jo Swinson: It was a man in a dog suit, rather than an actual dog. The event was organised by Traidcraft, ActionAid and War on Want to highlight their message that they want the groceries code adjudicator to be a watchdog with teeth. To further press the point, they left me with my own watchdog, which has brightened up by ministerial office. I assure the House that I have declared the gift appropriately. I appreciate that the decision not to have immediate fines will be disappointing to some supplier and campaign groups, but the dog remains on my office shelf as a reminder that, should we find that stronger sanctions are needed, the Secretary of State will be able to bring in fines quickly. I assure the House that we will have no hesitation in doing so if they are needed.

Albert Owen (Ynys Môn) (Lab): Will the Minister give way?

Jo Swinson: I am coming to a conclusion, so I hope the hon. Gentleman will understand it if I do not give way.

I greatly value the role that campaigners up and down the country have played to ensure that pressure was kept up to deliver a groceries code adjudicator. I particularly acknowledge the work of my hon. Friend the Member for St Ives and the Grocery Market Action Group and that of many Members of all parties in championing the issue.

We ultimately want the same thing: for the adjudicator to be as effective as possible. The Bill helps deliver a grocery sector in which suppliers and retailers can deal fairly and openly with one another to provide real benefits for consumers, business and the UK economy. I commend it to the House.

4.50 pm

Ian Murray (Edinburgh South) (Lab): I did not realise that we could bring toys to the Dispatch Box. If I had known, I might have brought my bear, Frosty, which I have had since I was a child, for everyone to see. Perhaps we can do that next time, or maybe a Scalextric for the Table would be exciting.

I pay tribute to those in the other place who have diligently gone through the Bill and sent it here. It is a significant measure, but it has been a long time coming. Labour Members can rightly claim some ownership of it. As Lord Grantchester said, the Bill

"has Labour's fingerprints all over it."—[*Official Report, House of Lords, 22 May 2012; Vol. 737, c. 728.*]

In government, we gained cross-party support for a supermarket ombudsman to ensure a fair deal for farmers and food producers from the major retailers, and to monitor and enforce the code of practice in the form of the groceries code. We were therefore pleased that the Bill was included in the coalition agreement in the heady days of May 2010.

[Ian Murray]

However, the Government have dragged their feet on creating the adjudicator, and on the powers to help food suppliers. As the hon. Member for St Ives (Andrew George) said,

“we look as though we don’t understand the urgency of this matter. Every week the Government fails to act, farmers are finding themselves in more difficulty.”

Andrew George: Of course, I also used those words when Labour was in power because, as the hon. Gentleman knows, the Competition Commission reported in April 2008, and for two years, there were excuses and consultations, and a variety of reasons were given for the Government’s inability to go ahead at the time, despite the excellent private Member’s Bill that the hon. Member for Ynys Môn (Albert Owen), who is in his place, introduced.

Ian Murray: I am delighted with that intervention because we introduced the code, on which the adjudicator will now adjudicate. We are two and half years into the coalition Government, and the right hon. Member for Arundel and South Downs (Nick Herbert) said when he was a shadow environment Minister at an Oxford farming conference just before the 2010 election that,

“Conservatives are clear: we will introduce an ombudsman to curb abuses of power which undermine our farmers and act against the long-term interests of consumers”.

However, we are on the cusp of 2013, and the Bill has just been introduced.

Andrew George: I do not want the debate to degenerate into a party political spat, but to put the record straight, the Competition Commission had the power to introduce the code, and it, not the Labour Government, introduced it.

Ian Murray: The code is there for everyone to see, and was introduced before the general election. The next paragraph in my speech pays tribute to the hon. Member for St Ives for all his work. If I had my pen handy, I might cross that out, but I would not be so churlish. I therefore pay tribute to the hon. Gentleman, who chairs the Grocery Market Action Group. He has harnessed the support of organisations such as the Rural Shops Alliance, the Association of Convenience Stores, the National Farmers Union, the Farmers Union of Wales, the National Farmers Union of Scotland, the British Independent Fruit Growers Association, the British Brands Group, Traidcraft, ActionAid UK, Banana Link and many others in pushing the agenda from the early days of the Competition Commission inquiry, which he mentioned, in 2006 through to the establishment of the new groceries supply code of practice. He deserves great credit for continuing the fight, and I hope that he will support the Opposition in wanting to create a robust adjudicator.

I also take the opportunity to put on record thanks to my hon. Friend the Member for Ynys Môn (Albert Owen), who is in his place and has long championed the establishment of an adjudicator. It is now more than two years since his private Member’s Bill—the Grocery Market Ombudsman Bill. In the debate on Second Reading of that measure, he made it clear that the concept of a grocery ombudsman or adjudicator was

not about being pro or anti any particular interest group, but about fairness, and the Opposition echo that sentiment. Nevertheless we are here now and, in a sense of cross-party support, we wish the Bill a swift passage on to the statute book. It is important, however, to get the legislation right, and although the Opposition are generally pleased with the current Bill, we will seek to strengthen it so that the adjudicator has the powers it needs to be effective from day one.

As the House will be aware, competition authorities have held two major inquiries into the grocery market. The first, by the Office of Fair Trading in 2000, led to the creation of the code of practice to regulate the relationship between the largest supermarkets and their suppliers. In 2006, the Office of Fair Trading referred the market to the Competition Commission, which completed a second inquiry in 2008. At the time, the commission said that,

“the transfer of excessive risk and unexpected costs by grocery retailers to their suppliers through various supply chain practices if unchecked will have an adverse effect on investment and innovation in the supply chain, and ultimately on consumers.”

It recommended a strengthened and revised code of practice to be enforced by an independent ombudsman—an unambiguous case for an adjudicator. As a result, in February 2010 the Labour Government brought in the groceries supply code of practice—GSCOP—to replace the supermarket code of practice, with the intention of putting the adjudicator on a firm statutory basis.

I am sure Members across the House will appreciate the work of the Business, Innovation and Skills Committee, which is brilliantly chaired by my hon. Friend the Member for West Bromwich West (Mr Bailey) who I see is in his place. He did a diligent job on the Bill during pre-legislative scrutiny—I should perhaps declare an interest as I was on that Committee at the time and have probably just patted myself on the back a little.

In its report, the Committee raised two concerns about the way the adjudicator’s office would operate. First, it was anticipated that the office would be able to launch investigations based only on evidence supplied by retailer or suppliers. The Committee argued that third parties such as trade associations or whistleblowers should be able to submit complaints about retailers. I am pleased that the Government made changes in that respect prior to Second Reading in the other place. They are to be commended on that alteration which the Opposition consider key to ensuring that individuals have the confidence to come forward with complaints under the cover of an industry group to protect anonymity and secrecy.

Secondly, the draft Bill allowed the adjudicator to impose fines on retailers that had breached the code, but only if the Secretary of State made provision for that by order. The Committee rightly argued that the adjudicator should be allowed to impose fines from day one—I shall return shortly to that crucial point.

There is little doubt that this legislation is necessary, and it is important to emphasise that supermarkets and retailers support the adjudicator in principle. One such retailer wrote to me privately earlier this week and stated:

“The groceries code adjudicator will encourage fair and robust regulation of supplier-retailer relationships.”

That speaks volumes.

We will scrutinise the Bill to ensure that it delivers on three key tests—that it promotes innovation and investment in the supply chain; ensures a fair deal for farmers and producers; and delivers better outcomes for consumers in terms of prices, quality and service.

Michael Connarty: As my hon. Friend will have heard in my earlier intervention, having read through the code it seems there is absolutely nothing in it to protect the labour factor in the supply chain. Will my hon. Friend take on board the need to raise that issue in Committee and table amendments so that people who use gangmasters cannot hide behind them if those gangmasters then use crooks, as recently happened in the Noble/Freedom Food eggs case, which I believe is now going to court?

Ian Murray: I know that my hon. Friend has worked on the Gangmasters Licensing Authority, and we will take that debate forward to Committee. The Gangmasters Licensing Authority has been downgraded under this Government—indeed, the Beecroft review recommended that it be scrapped. We must be vigilant and ensure that the great work done by that authority in saving lives and stopping exploitation continues, and we can debate that in Committee. If I look towards the Whips, perhaps my hon. Friend will join us on that Committee to make those points—his name is being jotted down as we speak.

I was talking about the huge impact and value that supermarkets bring to our economy. The groceries market was worth nearly £157 billion in 2011, and it provides significant choice and good value for customers, which is vital. A number of supermarkets in my constituency do a tremendous job through investment in our high streets, job creation, and supporting community projects, and I am grateful to them for that positive role. I also place on record my thanks to Sainsbury's at Cameron Toll in my constituency for its continued support for my schools Christmas card competition. Likewise, farmers and small suppliers play a critical part in achieving economic growth. It is an incredibly difficult time to be a farmer or small supplier in the UK—there have been increases in feed prices, not to mention the difficulties that many small and medium-sized enterprises have experienced in accessing finance. We should set retailer abuses against that backdrop.

We should acknowledge that retailers have done much to clean up their supply chains, but we know that abuses by retailers against suppliers still occur, and that evidence supports the need for a groceries code adjudicator more than ever. FoodDrinkEurope, the European federation, surveyed businesses from around Europe anonymously. It asked whether businesses had been confronted by various situations, and the survey gives us a picture of the situation in the UK. Seventy-seven per cent. of businesses said they had experienced non-respectful contractual terms; 75% said they had experienced de-listing threats to obtain unjustified advantages; and 60% said they had experienced unilateral deductions to invoices. Only a very small number of the businesses interviewed—3%—said that they had done something other than discuss the situation with their customers. When asked why, more than half said they did not believe in the effectiveness of the remedies by public or legal authorities, and 44% said they were afraid of commercial sanctions. In one case of which I am aware, the supplier—a salad grower based in Yorkshire—said:

“The retailer has reneged on a commitment to cover the costs of packaging should they terminate dealings with me at short notice—despite this being confirmed”

on numerous occasions in e-mails.

Ian Paisley: Given those statistics, does the hon. Gentleman believe that food producers will feel emboldened to come forward and make their complaints if no financial penalty is front and centre in the Bill?

Ian Murray: The hon. Gentleman is absolutely right. We need proper sanctions—we need to take the carrot-and-stick approach. Without proper fines in the Bill, the adjudicator could, as the Minister said, be a toothless dog or tiger. I will come to that shortly.

There are times when a market needs intervention to make competition work well, particularly if players in that market become too powerful. Roughly 3.6 million people are employed in food production in this country, and making competition in that market function more fairly through the introduction of the adjudicator is ultimately good for growth and for those jobs. It will undoubtedly also be good for consumers in the long term. Because the choice of products is supported, small suppliers and products will not be driven from the market by anti-competitive practices, which hon. Members have mentioned. The choice of retailers will also be supported, because small retailers will not be driven from the market by the disparity in buying terms, which can be exacerbated by anti-competitive practices. Suppliers will be better able to plan their businesses, yielding efficiencies. Critically, they will be able to invest in innovation, new products and product quality. Finally, more competition will hopefully bring down prices.

The benefits of a strong adjudicator are clear, but fundamentally the Opposition's major concern is that the adjudicator will be toothless. The adjudicator must have teeth to tackle the breaches of which all hon. Members are aware.

Glyn Davies (Montgomeryshire) (Con): The only contention between the Government and Opposition is whether fines should be available at the beginning or whether they should be introduced at the behest of the Secretary of State. Does the hon. Gentleman agree that to supermarkets, which are massive businesses, reputation and name are the most important things of all? Naming and shaming and reputational damage will therefore probably have more force in pressurising them. If that fails, even in the medium term, new primary legislation would not be necessary, because we could introduce fines.

Ian Murray: The hon. Gentleman brings a great deal of experience of the sector to the House. I am not convinced that the public will be surprised if a major retailer engages in a particular practice and is named and shamed in a national newspaper or trade magazine. If the adjudicator does their job properly, we would hope there would be no one to name and shame. It will help the system to operate properly if we can use the stick and say that retailers could be hit with financial penalties. If they can be hit with such penalties, naming and shaming become almost irrelevant.

Daniel Kawczynski (Shrewsbury and Atcham) (Con): Certainly, when I have spoken with supermarket chief executives I have challenged them. They sometimes take

[Daniel Kawczynski]

out full-page newspaper adverts to highlight fair trade for third-world growers. Does he agree that we want to get to the stage where supermarkets are highlighting the fair trade they are doing with British suppliers?

Ian Murray: Absolutely. The hon. Gentleman makes a critical point, but the point is the full plethora of sanctions in the Bill. All we are talking about is what is in the Bill; we are not saying that fines could not exist in the short to medium term at the behest of the Secretary of State, but if he thinks that fines might be required in the future, why not just put them in the Bill?

The Minister of State, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Mr David Heath): Just so we know the terms of debate, will the hon. Gentleman outline how a big a fine he thinks would be appropriate to deter inappropriate behaviour on the part of, say, Mr Tesco?

Ian Murray: That should be in the hands of the adjudicator. We are asking the adjudicator to do a job to assess whether someone has breached the code. The adjudicator should therefore be given the power to determine the sanction. If the sanction is to seek recommendations, then that is the sanction. If the sanction is to name and shame, then that is the sanction. If the sanction is a fine, we should leave that in the hands of the adjudicator to determine. That could be a debating point in Committee. The Minister is chuntering from a sedentary position, but the argument is whether financial penalties should be in the Bill. If they are, the Secretary of State could then propose that fines be within certain parameters, or up to the adjudicator, or a proportion or a multiple of the loss achieved by a particular supplier. There are a plethora of ways for an adjudicator to determine a financial penalty. [Interruption.] The Minister says, “I don’t know,” but the Government have not told us what they would propose. Yes, we do not know how much the fine should be. That would be up to the adjudicator, within parameters applied in respect of the Secretary of State, to determine how much a fine should be, and that should be in the Bill.

Mr Spencer: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that those charged with the responsibility for spreading the message of the naming and shaming will be the same publications taking the advertising revenue? I wonder how much enthusiasm to naming and shaming there will be from those publications, when that might put their own advertising revenue in jeopardy.

Ian Murray: That is a wonderful point, and I think we now have our second candidate for the Committee—or given that helpful comment, perhaps not. The hon. Gentleman is right: there is a conflict of interest. The hon. Member for Shrewsbury and Atcham (Daniel Kawczynski) mentioned the large full-page adverts that supermarkets produce relating to fair trade. Indeed, if it is about advertising revenues, there will be a conflict of interest, and I hope that the adjudicator would take that into account. If fines were included in the Bill, an adjudicator could balance up what would be the best punishment for a particular crime and deal with it in that way. By hamstringing the adjudicator from day one on fines, we are merely pushing down some of those routes by which questions would have to be answered.

Let me run through some of the issues relating to the adjudicator potentially being toothless, which is why we are calling for fines to be available to the adjudicator from day one. We are not the only people who are calling for that. In January 2009, the hon. Member for Somerton and Frome (Mr Heath)—the current Minister with responsibility for agriculture and food, who has been chuntering on about fines for the past few minutes—said, when he was an Opposition spokesperson all those many months ago, that there must be “an ombudsman with teeth” to ensure that farmers get a fair deal. I wonder whether he and his colleagues will support our amendments in Committee to give the adjudicator such powers, because they did not support them in the other place. He is not the only one. The hon. Member for Tiverton and Honiton (Neil Parish) said last year:

“I agree with my hon. Friend and other Members that the adjudicator must have real teeth so that they can take action to stop abuses.”—[*Official Report*, 5 April 2011; Vol. 526, c. 240WH.]

Just this weekend, a host of stakeholders wrote an open letter to *The Sunday Telegraph*. It is worth my quoting from it, because it touches on the crucial part of the Bill:

“Sir, Having got the Groceries Code Adjudicator Bill this far, the government will be scoring an own goal if it denies the supermarket watchdog the one tool that will make it effective: the power to levy fines from the outset. The evidence of supermarkets’ unfair treatment of suppliers—which includes farmers both here and in developing countries—is all too clear. Watering down the bill so that penalties only go as far as ‘naming and shaming’ will not be a sufficient deterrent and the Adjudicator risks failing in its job to hold supermarkets to account.”

That letter was signed by ActionAid UK, the National Farmers Union, the Federation of Small Businesses, the Campaign to Protect Rural England, the National Federation of Women’s Institutes, Traidcraft, the Tenant Farmers Association, the Country Land and Business Association, the Independent Fruit Growers Association, the Catholic Agency for Overseas Development, Friends of the Earth, War on Want, RedOrange and Great Glemham Farms. Clearly, then, there is a great movement to provide for fines in the Bill, and I cannot understand why the Government have not listened to the letter.

We are in danger of creating this toothless tiger—I have “tiger”, but it could be a dog, I suppose. Let us imagine an old-fashioned circus act. Where is the fear in a circus clown putting his head into a tiger’s mouth, only to have his neck viced by the tiger’s gums? There is no way we can put fear into the hearts of the supermarkets with an adjudicator that does not have the power to fine. Providing for fines in the Bill does not mean that fines should be imposed on retailers randomly—I hope there would never have been sufficiently serious breaches to require the invoking of the power—but allowing the adjudicator to have the power easily to hand might influence the retailers’ actions and go some way in preventing serious breeches of the code.

Clause 9 gives the adjudicator the power to fine retailers, subject to permission from the Secretary of State. Even if the adjudicator decided that the power to fine was necessary, several considerable hurdles would have to be jumped. First, the adjudicator, who would be best placed to decide whether fines were appropriate, would have to publish guidance in deciding the amount of financial penalty—a point that goes back to the Minister’s intervention. Secondly, once that had been given to the Secretary of State, he would have to consult

stakeholders on the guidance. Finally, a statutory instrument would have to be presented to Parliament and passed by affirmative resolution. This hugely drawn-out process will do nothing to instil much-needed confidence in farmers and small businesses that might have been severely affected by a breach of the code by a retailer that the adjudicator thinks merits a fine.

We must trust the adjudicator to issue remedies fairly. By not providing in the Bill for the power to fine, the Government are in danger of scoring an own goal, as said in *The Sunday Telegraph* letter from ActionAid. Indeed—if I may continue with the footballing analogy—a red card could be issued. It would be available to the adjudicator in the case of a penalty, but it would not be in its breast pocket, where it could be issued fast and effectively against the offender if necessary. Essentially, we are saying in the Bill that if the referee wants to issue a red card, he will have to ask the Football Association, after which the FA will consult on its use and then pass a new law to allow it to be used. I much suspect that the match would have finished many months before the decision is made.

The Business, Innovation and Skills Committee and the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee have also said that the power to fine should be provided for in the Bill. Furthermore, in a recent joint statement, the Grocery Market Action Group, ably chaired by the hon. Member for St Ives and made up of 23 organisations from across the farming, international development, environmental and small business lobbies, called on the Government to give the adjudicator the power to levy fines. I ask the Minister, again, why she is not listening to the entire industry when it comes to fines.

I turn to the intermediaries. At the bottom of all this lies the nagging doubt that many of the alleged abuses will not be resolved even by the presence of a perfectly functioning adjudicator, because the problem is in the code itself, not its implementation. Central to this idea is the code's limited scope—this point has been raised by voices across the sector—as much of the bad practice occurs at the level of intermediaries not covered by the code and therefore the adjudicator. For example, let us imagine that a supermarket has a ready meal supplier, but decides it wants fewer carrots in the ready meal and goes through the proper GSCOP processes to remove carrots. The supermarket can do that legitimately under the code, and that is only right. However, the ready meal supplier will buy those carrots from a carrot supplier, and could therefore dismiss one of its suppliers of carrots or change the terms of the contract without any recall to the groceries code. In that example, nothing would have gone wrong according to the groceries code, so we could see suppliers further down the chain being harmed quite considerably by the decision of an intermediary.

Equally, that binary view of the market seems inappropriate when the supplier is a huge manufacturer of branded goods, such as Unilever, Kraft, Nestlé or Coca-Cola, whose turnover may exceed that of even the retailer. We are protecting the relationship rather than the carrot producer further down the chain. The adjudicator will be required to recommend changes to the code to the Office of Fair Trading, yet the British Retail Consortium claims that the OFT has taken no action to offer feedback on the annual reports that its members have already submitted under GSCOP on their implementation of the code or even to publish them.

Many farmers and growers are currently not covered by the code, as they do not directly supply the 10 largest retailers. Nevertheless, they are often the ultimate victims of unfair behaviour and the transfer of risks and costs. We hope that ensuring that retailers comply with the code will resolve those issues. If, despite the adjudicator's best efforts, those problems persist, primary producers will continue to struggle to make a fair return for their enterprises and consumers will continue to suffer from the subsequent lack of investment. That is why it is critical that the adjudicator should have the power in the Bill to keep the code live, to enable such issues to be dealt with if the adjudicator deems that to be necessary. May I ask the Minister what consideration she has given to those concerns and whether she will come back to us in Committee with an assessment of the issues affecting intermediaries?

Finally—

Daniel Kawczynski: The hon. Gentleman, who appears to be moving towards the end of his speech, mentioned carrots. The British carrot industry is actually doing quite well, but I very much hope that he has spent some time thinking about how the adjudicator will help our British dairy industry, which is on its knees, with many farmers going out of business every month. In the last Parliament I set up the all-party group on dairy farmers in order to fight for them. Our main report suggested that we should have a grocery adjudicator Bill. Will he spend a few moments talking about our dairy farmers?

Ian Murray: The hon. Gentleman raises a critical point, because naming and shaming did not work for the dairy farmers. What worked were blockades and sanctions in getting their points across to the Government. I will perhaps highlight the dairy industry and how the groceries code adjudicator should be able to help, but he makes a critical point about how the Bill could be seen as toothless, because the dairy industry had to blockade and withhold its services to get any action on how the supply chain worked. It neatly follows that the debate needs to be on where the code sits in the legislative framework.

Glyn Davies: It concerns me that the hon. Gentleman has just said that the improvement in the dairy farmers' returns was based on just direct action. There was a serious debate in this House and a serious debate in central London, and the normal processes of politics had a great influence. It is not just direct action and blockading properties that are needed to have an influence on businesses.

Ian Murray: I take the hon. Gentleman's point. The point I am making—I think his hon. Friend the Member for Shrewsbury and Atcham was making it too—is merely that we can draw a parallel between the code in the Bill and how it could work in the example I gave involving carrots in a ready meal, and what happened with the dairy industry. We are merely drawing parallels. I am not denying the actualities of what the hon. Gentleman has said; I am saying that having an adjudicator without teeth—one without the power to deal with the issue—could lead to exactly the same examples with many other industries.

[Ian Murray]

To finish, my noble Friend Lord Knight—I pay tribute to the work he did on the Bill in the other place—speaking on behalf of the Opposition on Second Reading in the Lords, said:

“It is fundamentally odd that while Parliament is entitled to debate and scrutinise the function and powers of the referee, we are denied the opportunity to give the same scrutiny to the rulebook itself.”—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 26 June 2012; Vol. 738, c. GC80.]

I appreciate that the Minister said that the code has a footing, in that the adjudicator can use it to compel supermarkets and retailers to comply, but there is a question whether it should be put on a statutory footing in this House to allow that to occur, rather than be dealt with through executive order.

The code must be a living document that is open to continual improvement in order to ensure that the framework is responsive, and that it ultimately works in the best interests of all businesses as well as consumers. The National Farmers Union has raised concerns about the status and enforceability of the code, because it is contained in a schedule to an order under the Enterprise Act 2002, rather than in a statute of its own. We would consider going further, and we will explore the ways in which the code could be a matter for Parliament to consider on the basis of recommendations from the adjudicator, who is best placed to evaluate the code. The code needs to be capable of responding to changing market forces, and to be as durable as the adjudicator who will referee it.

I mentioned extending the scope of the code to intermediaries, and hon. Members have already raised the recent issues surrounding the dairy industry. Cuts to farm gate prices mean that dairy farmers are being paid less for milk than it costs them to produce it. That is not a sustainable model. We welcome the news that there is agreement on the terms of an industry code of practice that will lay the foundations of a new deal between farmers and retailers. For too long, dairy farmers have put up with wholly unbalanced terms and have been struggling to cope in an increasingly unworkable financial situation. It cannot be right that supermarkets use milk as a loss leader while farmers are being paid less for the milk than it costs them to produce it.

Ministers need either to ensure that the voluntary code on dairy contracts works for farmers, or to bring in regulation to fix the dysfunctional supply chain in that marketplace. I believe that the adjudicator could fit that role if necessary, and I would be interested to hear the Minister's thoughts on whether their role could be extended into areas such as the dairy industry when problems arise. That would be part of keeping the code as a living document.

Stephen Timms: Traidcraft and others have raised a point relating to the confidentiality of those who report their concerns. The Minister referred to that matter in her speech. Is my hon. Friend satisfied that the Bill will provide enough protection for those reporting breaches of the code?

Ian Murray: We will have to explore that matter in detail in Committee, because there is confusion in the industry and among trade bodies. They are uncomfortable

with the current requirements, and I hope that the adjudicator will offer recommendations on the level of evidence that will be required to set up an investigation. A balance will have to be struck involving anonymity and confidentiality. That could be difficult in the circumstances in which a product could be uniquely identified as coming from a particular supplier, and care would have to be taken to ensure that that supplier's identity was not disclosed in the course of the proceedings.

This is a good Bill, but it could be a great Bill. The situation was best summed up by the hon. Member for South Staffordshire (Gavin Williamson), who said in the House in April 2011:

“None of us wants a weak, ineffectual, pointless adjudicator which will cost everyone something but achieve nothing.”—[*Official Report*, 5 April 2011; Vol. 526, c. 236WH.]

The adjudicator could and should be strengthened through the various proposals that we have heard this afternoon, and we will seek to achieve that in Committee. I give the Minister a commitment today that the Opposition will work constructively with her. Similarly, I hope that she will be open to giving due consideration to the amendments that we will table in the weeks ahead. I also hope that Hon. Members on the Government Benches who recognise that the Bill does not quite fulfil its potential will look at our proposals in detail in Committee. We look forward to playing our part with the Government in establishing an effective adjudicator as soon as possible.

Several hon. Members rose—

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Nigel Evans): Order. We will start with a time limit of 15 minutes on Back-Bench speeches, with the usual injury time for up to two interventions. Clearly, hon. Members do not have to take the full 15 minutes, however. There will be no penalties if they do not speak for that long. Stranger things have happened.

5.23 pm

Miss Anne McIntosh (Thirsk and Malton) (Con): It is a great pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Edinburgh South (Ian Murray). I should like to congratulate the Under-Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills, my hon. Friend the Member for East Dunbartonshire (Jo Swinson), on starting this Second Reading debate so eloquently. I want to make some comments as the representative of growers and farmers in Thirsk, Malton and Filey, and I want to share with the House the evidence that the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Select Committee has heard on these matters.

I welcome the Bill's Second Reading. I have some common ground with the hon. Member for Edinburgh South on these issues, but probably more with my hon. Friend the Minister. I also have common ground and differences with the hon. Member for West Bromwich West (Mr Bailey), who chairs the Business, Innovation and Skills Select Committee.

We should perhaps pause for a moment to consider the marketplace in which some of the growers we hope will benefit from the Bill are operating. They tend to be very small producers of each vegetable or form of produce, and they are often small in number. There is absolutely no comparison with the size, volume and financial weight of supermarkets.

I welcome the fact that we have reached Second Reading and I welcome the useful amendments made in the other place, but there has been a long gestation period from the Competition Commission report of 2008. I would like to record the thanks of the DEFRA Committee to those who gave written evidence and, more specifically, oral evidence in the context of our brief inquiry. We shared our conclusions with the Business, Innovation and Skills Committee. Some of the points we made have been adopted, but it is worth repeating them today.

We welcome the fact that an adjudicator is going to be established, and we believe that the adjudicator should have the power to accept complaints from indirect as well as direct suppliers. Will the Minister confirm that suppliers will have the ability to make anonymous complaints, which we believe will be fundamental to the success of the groceries code adjudicator?

In a limited market—in Lincolnshire, for example, and other parts of the country—where there are very few leek growers, if one of them wished to make a complaint against a particular supermarket, it would be too easy for the supermarket to identify that particular grower. It is therefore vital that the grower has the safety of knowing that an anonymous complaint can be made to the adjudicator—either directly or, as forcefully expressed by our Committee, through an indirect route via the National Farmers Union, the Country Land and Business Association or the Tenant Farmers Association. They are membership organisations that will represent the individual grower, who will then be able to make a case, safe from persecution and safe from the possibility of having the contract terminated at an early stage.

Ian Paisley: The hon. Lady makes a vital point. If a potato processor or person producing potatoes in Northern Ireland were to make that sort of complaint, it would in effect be one of three people, so a middle way of getting the complaint through must be found.

Miss McIntosh: The hon. Gentleman reaffirms my point very eloquently. He would probably share my view—and I hope that Ministers and shadow Ministers will grasp it—that the security of tenure of some of these growers is absolutely shocking. That is in stark contrast to—albeit another woeful situation—what happens in the dairy industry. A cheese producer in my area contacted me to say that some of the milk supplies for cheese production—a liquid production that we are so good at in this country—are being threatened. The growers that I believe will benefit more directly and more specifically than dairy farmers and others sometimes have only three months' security of tenure or certainty of contract—not even a year. I do not know—perhaps the Minister can help me—whether the Bill will address this disparity between producers of, for example, milk and potatoes, and others. With the groceries code adjudicator, will these producers and growers gain greater security of contract than the three months or less than a year that they have at present?

Let me explain what I believe to be the sticking point. I hope I heard the hon. Member for Edinburgh South correctly as I think he said he would favour the power to have proactive investigations. I believe that that is vital. I should declare my interest—I know that what I say here will not go further than this Chamber, but I also

know that if someone wants to tell a secret, this is the best place in which to share it. I served for six months—in 1978, I am afraid to say—in what is now called DG Competition but was then the Directorate General for Competition, dealing with investigations of complaints brought directly to the European Commission. I understand that the Competition Commission is based on the same philosophy, as it were, as DG Competition.

I should like to know what good reason the Government could have for not introducing a power for the groceries code adjudicator to launch a proactive investigation. It could be based on evidence received by word of mouth, or on material in trade journals. Journalists working in the specialist press often hear things at conferences to which others are not privy.

Jo Swinson: Clause 4 makes it clear that the adjudicator can conduct an investigation

“if the Adjudicator has reasonable grounds to suspect that...the retailer has broken the Code”.

Obviously that could result from a specific complaint made by a supplier, but the adjudicator might become aware of the existence of reasonable grounds through, for instance, press articles or investigatory television programmes. Proactive investigations will indeed be possible as long as such grounds exist.

Miss McIntosh: That is most welcome, although obviously, under the new powers that Select Committees have, we shall analyse the Bill very carefully to establish whether it can be improved. Perhaps the Minister will be good enough also to confirm that anonymous complaints can be made, that indirect as well as direct complaints can be made and that third parties such as trade organisations will be able to make complaints, and will tell us whether the Bill contains provisions relating to the recovery of investigation costs.

We are anxious for the adjudicator to have the power to levy financial penalties without the need for an order by the Secretary of State. That has been mentioned a number of times already in interventions. Having waited since 2008, when the Competition Commission first reported, we would find it unacceptable for the adjudicator not to be fleet of foot and able to levy such penalties without the need for an order. I believe that the Bill allows that in some circumstances, but perhaps the Minister could give us a nod.

Clause 16 refers to the transfer of adjudicator functions to a public body, and states:

“The Secretary of State may by order abolish the Adjudicator”.

Even a cursory reading sets alarm bells ringing. Does that mean that within two or three years of the establishment of the adjudicator, his functions could be abandoned? Would they simply pass to another public body, or would the whole process grind to a halt? Some clarification would be helpful.

Obviously we were briefed by outside bodies before the debate. I should like the Minister who responds to the debate to comment on the views of the National Farmers Union, which is keen for the adjudicator to be able to impose fines as swiftly as possible without waiting for an order from the Secretary of State. Also, can the Minister say whether there will be an ongoing review of the effectiveness of the groceries code itself? There would be some merit in having an independent

[Miss McIntosh]

body look at the effectiveness of the code after some cases have been addressed by the adjudicator, and I am sure my Committee—or, indeed, the Business, Innovation and Skills Committee—would stand ready to do so. Do the Government plan to follow that course of action?

The National Farmers Union has said it would welcome an assurance from the Government that compliance with the code will be mandatory for the retailers it covers. I ask the Minister to set out precisely which retailers it will cover. Will the Minister also state whether the code will be legally enforceable by the adjudicator?

We on the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee are keen to ensure that the new adjudicator will adequately protect farmers and food producers from large retailers. We see this as a good opportunity to restore the balance between the mighty supermarkets and the considerably less powerful growers, who provide the food we eat. I hope we can continue to move towards self-sufficiency in their products.

There has been a climate of fear in the grocery supply chain for many years. We therefore welcome the provisions to allow the adjudicator to receive anonymous complaints—that has, I think, been confirmed. We wish the Bill safe passage today, but, in the light of opinions and evidence heard by us and the Business, Innovation and Skills Committee, we reserve the right to continue to examine it closely as it progresses, with a view to improving it if we believe that is necessary.

5.36 pm

Susan Elan Jones (Clwyd South) (Lab): I am delighted to follow the hon. Member for Thirsk and Malton (Miss McIntosh), who, as ever, speaks with great authority and expertise in this area.

I welcome the Bill. The creation of the groceries code adjudicator is an important step, and it is vital that we get the best adjudicator possible. This issue is not about urban and rural communities; it is fundamentally about supporting producers who produce food in our rural areas. If we do not have that, there will be no locally grown food for markets in our country.

This Bill is about the creation of a level playing field for farmers, small retailers, supermarkets, and the hard-pressed consumer. I heard what the Minister—in consultation with the dog on her shelf—had to say about naming and shaming, and I understand some of the points she makes. However, she also suggested that under the groceries code adjudicator major retailers will probably end up paying different amounts of money proportionately and that she does not think that could incur the threat of legal action, so I find it difficult to understand why she has not considered the importance of fining. Let us have that power to fine now—not through order of the Secretary of State and following publication of guidance. We should listen to the Business, Innovation and Skills Committee, which recommends that the power to fine should be stated in the Bill and the adjudicator should be given the power to escalate penalties if code breaches continue. Surely that is sensible. It is not saying that every breach will result in a fine, but that the adjudicator should be able to use that power if he or she considers it necessary.

A lady from Llangollen in my constituency made the point very well. She said that she shopped at supermarkets but also brought fresh produce and meat locally at shops and markets, and that she was increasingly concerned about issues relating to the developing world. This is not about purism or being against supermarkets and the like; it is about being aware that if we do not support food production in this country, more and more food producers will go out of business, which will ultimately lead to a rise in the cost of food for the consumer. That will mean the end of much of our home-grown food industry, which is why the strongest possible action is essential.

I pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Ynys Môn (Albert Owen), a pioneer who has championed this issue, because he knows how much it matters to the rural community in areas such as north Wales. Without family farms in north Wales we will see the end of rural communities. There would be a massive impact, too, on Welsh language and culture, which my hon. Friends the Members for Ynys Môn and for Llanelli (Nia Griffith), many other Members and I care about, and which are vital in this debate.

We have to think about the needs of our producers and consumers and, more widely, of local economies. I urge the Government to reconsider the issue of fining. It does not mean that if we have the carrot we cannot have the stick, or the other way round. We urge the Government to consider what groups such as farming unions, the Labour party, Select Committees and many others have said. The role of the adjudicator matters far beyond one type of constituency, one party and one part of the country. If we are to have serious, long-term, sustainable food production, we have to get this matter right. I urge the Government to listen to those diverse processes and include the right to fine in the Bill.

5.41 pm

George Eustice (Camborne and Redruth) (Con): I welcome this Bill's Second Reading. As Conservatives, we believe in free and fair markets, but we rigorously oppose the abuse of dominant market power, which is why the Bill is essential.

Before entering politics, I worked in the farming industry for 10 years. We were a major supplier of strawberries to a number of supermarkets, and I experienced first-hand some of the sharp practices that the Bill is designed to deal with. They ranged from forcing suppliers to use third party contractors, for things such as packaging and haulage, who would then charge suppliers more than the market rate. I experienced the retrospective clawing back of costs resulting from wastage on the shelf. Supermarkets would claw back not just what they paid, but the margin that they expected from a product. Growers were frequently forced to participate, often unwillingly, in supermarket promotions, and were expected to sell their produce for below the market rate.

I saw many instances of supermarkets rejecting stock when they had simply made an error in orders. That was a particular problem with the strawberry industry, because a supermarket buyer would place an order for a batch of strawberries, unaware that it would begin to pour with rain the following day. When it pours with rain, strawberry sales collapse and supermarkets are reluctant

to take the orders that they have placed, so they do all that they can to find an excuse to reject batches of fruit that have been supplied to them.

I have been out of the industry for 10 years, and I thought that perhaps things had changed, but other practices have crept in. Only last year, I was talking to a supplier who explained that he was required to show his annual financial accounts to the supermarket as a condition of supply. Ostensibly, that is to check that the business is financially secure, but we all know that in reality it is to see what its profit margin is, and how much further supermarkets can drive it down into the ground without killing it altogether.

Andrew Bingham (High Peak) (Con): The problem, as my hon. Friend sets out, is very serious—it is almost commercial bullying. Does he agree that that is why it is so important that the adjudicator can now receive referrals from third parties, such as trade associations and so on, to protect anonymity and stop future bullying?

George Eustice: I absolutely agree. One of the big improvements made to the Bill in the Lords was the extension of its scope so that that could happen—so that anonymous complaints could be made and so that whistleblowers and third party trade organisations could be involved in the process. The evidence we heard in the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee made it very clear that many suppliers are incredibly fearful of the supermarkets they supply. They are conscious that it is easy for suppliers to be identified as there will sometimes be only a handful of them for a particular product line to a given supermarket. It is therefore very important that the Bill has that extra scope.

I also recently spoke to another supplier who told me about a problem that he had encountered with supermarkets putting him under huge pressure to fulfil the terms written into a contract and supply the volumes that he was no longer able to source due to bad weather or a crop failure. In negotiations, he was put under huge pressure by a supermarket to buy the product from abroad and sell it at a massive loss so that he could fulfil his contract. That is unacceptable behaviour. When prices change, supermarkets should also change their prices.

Mark Tami (Alyn and Deeside) (Lab): Does the hon. Gentleman accept that it also happens the other way? I have come across cases in which supermarkets have turned around and said that they do not want an order any more at very short notice. The supermarkets have the power to say to smaller suppliers, “Take it or leave it, because we can go elsewhere and you cannot.”

George Eustice: I absolutely agree, and that is why the Bill is so important. Over the past 20 years, there has been huge growth in the power of a handful of very powerful retailers who have huge market clout and have, frankly, abused their power. If we want proper market conditions back, in which people are paid a fair market price for their goods, the Bill and the groceries code adjudicator will be vital.

Let me move on to the issue of the financial penalties, which have featured heavily in the debate so far. As my hon. Friend the Member for Thirsk and Malton (Miss McIntosh), the Chair of the Environment, Food and Rural

Affairs Committee, has said, our Committee concluded that there was a case for making those fines available to the groceries code adjudicator from the start rather than waiting for it to become necessary for another order to be introduced by the Secretary of State.

The question of fines is important and I agree with the Minister that naming and shaming might be adequate for some minor breaches, but I take issue with the claim that naming and shaming might be a more powerful deterrent than a fine. The British Retail Consortium might say that we should name and shame, because that is more powerful than a fine, but that is a bit of a clue. When the retailers say that what really scares them is naming and shaming, even though they do not want fines, the Minister ought to be a little more suspicious than she has been.

It is important to have an escalating scale of penalties. Why remove an important tool from the box? It would be possible for the Government to craft guidance on when a fine would be appropriate and what size that fine should be. It could stress that fines should be used sparingly and that other sanctions, such as naming and shaming, should be the preferred route. I think it is wrong, however, to rule fines out at this stage because of the question of what should happen if there is one persistent offender out of the 10 supermarkets caught by the groceries code adjudicator. What if that one offender, however many times they are named and shamed, sticks up two fingers to the adjudicator and says, “We really don’t care.”? That is unfair on the remaining nine, who might be abiding by the code, and it risks making the whole initiative unstable.

The groceries code adjudicator is more likely to succeed if the power to fine is there from the beginning and more likely to fail if it is not. For the adjudicator to work, we need to ensure that its introduction will change the behaviour of the supermarkets. It is not just about having investigations all over the place—we need people to be fearful of a fine, so that they moderate their behaviour.

There is a real problem in the serious mismatch between what a Minister might be told by the public affairs officers who work for the supermarkets and what she would experience if she was a carrot grower supplying supermarkets and dealing with buyers daily. The truth is that public affairs officers for the supermarkets will often strike a paternalistic pose and say, “It is not in our interest to upset our suppliers. We want happy suppliers,” and they will have pictures in their supermarkets of happy farmers’ children working out in the fields. It all sounds great, but the buyers have very different incentives that focus on margins, profit and exercising control over their suppliers. The Minister said that the market for supermarkets was fiercely competitive, and she is right. That is why my fear is that when Parliament’s back is turned, the incentives that motivate the buyers will prevail because it is ultimately their profit margins that they will seek to protect.

The possibility of third party complaints has been raised and is an important power. The industry has a part to play in this. Although it says that we need anonymity and that it is important for complaints to be made without the complainant being identified, the industry has to play its part in helping the supermarket adjudicator identify bad practices. One of the proposals that I have made to the NFU, which keeps telling me

[George Eustice]

that it is under consideration, though I have not heard that it has been taken up fully yet, is the idea of what I have termed a farm-fair index. That would be based on a panel of 500 farmers and suppliers across a range of sectors. Each quarter they would be given a questionnaire asking a series of questions that measured the adherence of each of the 10 supermarkets to the groceries code. There would be a league table of the 10 supermarkets and they would be scored according to which of them abided by the code the most and which departed from it the most. If a particular supermarket was at the bottom of that league table for two consecutive quarters, an automatic investigation by the groceries code adjudicator would be triggered. That would be a good way of ensuring that vexatious complaints were filtered out. A broad panel—the same 500 farmers and suppliers each quarter—who could score the adherence of the supermarkets to their own code would provide an important tool to help the adjudicator identify bad practice.

In conclusion, I welcome the Bill. It is a positive step forward and will improve relations between farmers and their supermarket customers, but I wish the Government would take another look at the issue of financial penalties.

5.52 pm

Ian Paisley (North Antrim) (DUP): The production of food is our most important industry. Let us pause and think about that for one moment. The production of food is our most important industry, not just for what it earns for our economy and what it achieves, but because of what it says about us as a nation and what we are prepared to promote to our people to eat.

Consumers are becoming more and more aware of food traceability and of the importance of our nation's ability to produce good quality, tasty, traceable food with as little intervention as possible of chemicals, and a clear process chain for the production of that food so that we understand food stability, food security, and what real agricultural sustainability is all about. The Bill before the House is so important because it is about understanding the mechanisms and the balances that make up our most important industry.

I do not fear to predict that the production of food over the next few years will become the most important topic in our nation during this century. I say that because of the threat posed by huge cartels and their interests to the production of good quality, tasty food. Handling and protecting our most important industry and doing all we can to ensure that we continue to produce the best quality, tasty, traceable food that our people have come to enjoy and expect should be a key priority not just for the Government, but for everyone in the House.

When I made my maiden speech, the hon. Member for Ynys Môn (Albert Owen) spoke to me afterwards because I had focused on agriculture and the subject of creating a food ombudsman. I was delighted to learn from the hon. Gentleman about the pioneering work that he had tried to do under the previous Government, and it is a huge tribute to him that we have got so far that the House is on the verge of legislating on something so critical to our food security and our food interests. I congratulate him.

I say all this in the knowledge that if we introduce a food ombudsman or a supermarkets adjudicator, there will be certain consequences. One is that we as a nation must educate our people that food can no longer be regarded as a cheap commodity. If we want good quality, traceable, digestible, beneficial food produced in a sustainable way that continues to employ people on a living wage, that will not be done cheaply. We must therefore ensure that the food chain is transparent and that people understand why a certain price must be paid.

Those who would undermine that by marketeering cheap food to our people and bringing cheap food in vast quantities from overseas undermine our ability to produce quality food, ruin the industry and hasten the day when we will have limited choice as a nation and be forced to pay the highest of high prices for food. That is why we must protect the primary and key producers of food in our nation.

The Bill is a good Bill but, as the Opposition Front-Bench spokesman, the hon. Member for Edinburgh South (Ian Murray) said, some improvements could be made to make it a brilliant Bill, and we should strive to do that. The Bill is not intended, for example, to deal with commercial issues such as the producer price differential which exists between Northern Ireland and the rest of Great Britain. That is particularly important for me in Northern Ireland because of two things. The first is water—17 miles of it between my island and your island, which adds to the price of food and food production, and the demands put on a primary producer in my country when he wishes to supply one of the 10 great supermarkets here on the mainland. The second is climate and the fact that it is considerably colder where I come from, which has a detrimental effect. I see that the hon. Member for Midlothian (Mr Hamilton) seems to think that it is colder where he comes from. Well, he can keep that cold, as far as I am concerned.

We could improve the Bill if we address those issues through the powers of the adjudicator. We should also deal with some of the practices of processors and other intermediaries in the processing of food. That is another critical area left out of the Bill, but it is an area that we should at least try to address. The inability to impose fines at the outset is another flaw that needs to be addressed. I was brought up in a political school which said, "If you want to deter someone, let that person know that if they get into a fight with you, you're going to kick them where it hurts. That usually deters a person from having a fight with you, but if that person is so unfortunate that they still want to have a fight with you, then kick them where it hurts and they probably won't fight with you again." That just happens to be the school of political brawl I was brought up in. It usually works, and with some effect.

The president of the Ulster Farmers Union, Mr Harry Sinclair, wrote to all Northern Ireland MPs at the weekend, stating that

"we firmly believe that the 'teeth' necessary to secure compliance needs to be much stronger"

and that fining should therefore be set out in the Bill. I believe that the Government should listen to those words and deter the supermarkets.

I agree with a huge amount of what the Minister said, especially when she said that the supermarkets like to spend a lot of money on advertising. I was once told

that 50% of all money spent on advertising works and 50% is completely wasted. The problem for the supermarkets is that they do not know which 50% is which, so they would spend less if they knew what advertising actually works. I believe that some of the supermarkets would not necessarily wear the publicity they got as a badge of shame, but they might feel honoured to wear it. We really need to move away from the nonsensical idea that bad publicity in itself will be sufficient deterrent for the supermarkets, because it will not be enough. We must let the supermarkets know that if they price-fix, because they are a cartel, they will be kicked where it hurts, and that will have an effect.

We must also ensure that we bring about a new relationship that rebalances the primary producers' impact on the market with that of the supermarkets. The only way to do that is by ensuring that we reward the farmer for the sweat and toil that he or she puts into the land to make the best quality, most traceable and tastiest food we can get. I believe that the only way we can do that is by establishing a new relationship, not one in which the farmer is king, but one in which he is at least treated equally and feels that his sweat will be rewarded with a fair price. He should be able to encourage his children to aspire to be farmers, rather than having to tell them, "Go somewhere else, because there is no reward in this and you won't be able to make a living, raise a family or spend money on the things you want."

Therefore, we must establish a new relationship that at least treats farmers as equals and allows them to be regarded as such. Otherwise, over the next 20 years our agricultural sector will continue to be dashed and to fall and we will find ourselves held in the grip of outside interests beyond the shores of this nation that will sell us what they want, which will not necessarily be good, clean, traceable or tasty, and they will sell it at their price. Therefore, we have to get this right and get it right now, because, as I said at the beginning of my comments, it is our most important industry. It is about what we tell our people they should eat and what is good for them.

Although the adjudicator is an important part of the process of getting to that stage, I believe that it is only one part of a cocktail of necessary measures. We must have price transparency—having the adjudicator is, of course, one way of providing price transparency—so that the consumer knows why they have paid a certain amount for steak, poultry, pork or other products, what it has cost the farmer to produce, what it has cost the processor to process and make good for them and what it has cost the supermarket to retail. They must know each cost along the supply chain, because otherwise they are being robbed of a vital thing: knowledge about what they are being shown they should eat.

We should also have clear food labelling and ensure that we know whether a product has been made in the United Kingdom or was brought in from elsewhere. In many instances there is nothing wrong with food brought in from elsewhere, but we should at least have clear labelling so that we know where it is from. We should also ensure not only that we encourage our products to be sold here in the United Kingdom, through good procurement policies in our schools and hospitals, but that it is marketed abroad. All these issues can ensure that those involved in the most important industry in our land are encouraged to continue to produce the best, cleanest, tastiest and most traceable food possible.

6.5 pm

Simon Hart (Carmarthen West and South Pembrokeshire) (Con): This is an eagerly awaited moment, and it is a very welcome one for Members from all parties. I suppose I should declare an interest, as some of my relations will benefit from this proposal. Certainly, many of friends will benefit, and most importantly, so will many of my constituents. The shadow Minister was perhaps a little unkind when he criticised the Government for a lack of progress, because progress has been pretty swift and there is a momentum behind the process, as has been recognised and is respected by all those who will, in due course, be on the receiving end of its impact, be that negative or positive.

I want to take a few moments to make two points. First, on the plus side, there has been some discussion of the confidentiality element, whose importance I do not think should be understated. It has concerned many people across different parts of the supply chain, but particularly in farming, where there is some nervousness, not necessarily about the content of the contract, but about its length, as was touched on in the most important contribution made by my hon. Friend the Member for Camborne and Redruth (George Eustice).

Confidentiality is very important, particularly in agriculture, where there is a large debate about long-term investment. There is real concern, particularly in the dairy industry, about entering into investment arrangements that will take, in some cases, 20, 30 or 40 years to reap the necessary rewards. Any degree of confidentiality that can be guaranteed for those producers will in turn secure a better contractual relationship with the retailers and enable them to invest properly in agriculture, which we constantly refer to in this House.

Secondly, I want to touch on the argument that has been made, albeit fairly weakly so far, about whether the proposal constitutes yet more regulation that our agricultural industry will have to put up with. Regulation is frequently misquoted in this House, particularly regulation relating to farming. No farmer I know is opposed to regulation; what farmers are opposed to is unnecessary regulation, poor regulation or regulation that fails to achieve its original objectives. I suggest that the proposal is a form of regulation that does exactly what it says on the tin. It is desired by the agricultural community and so provided that it migrates into law broadly in the manner currently proposed, it should give great reassurance. Therefore, I do not think that we should dwell too long alongside those who dismiss it simply as some kind of intrusive regulation, because it is not. It will make the business of farming and making a living in the countryside all the more secure.

Reference has also been made to the contrast between naming and shaming as a means of deterrent and fining. I must say that I think I am in step with everyone other than the Government when it comes to the view that naming and shaming alone will not be sufficient. If it was, why have I received only one piece of correspondence from any of the 10 supermarkets that might be affected? Waitrose is the only company that has bothered to write to me at all about today's debate. I do not detect that those in the higher echelons of the so-called big 10 are quaking in their boots. The idea that naming and shaming a supermarket on some website or trade magazine will deter purchasers from going into their stores is, frankly, an exaggeration. If the proposal could provide the

[Simon Hart]

adjudicator, rather than just the Secretary of State, with a power to fine more urgently, that would undoubtedly chime with the evidence and submissions that have been provided to us all from countless individuals and organisations.

I hope that the Government will not fall into the trap—I am sure they will not, because this is a good proposal—of believing that they have a monopoly of wisdom on this particular point. I cannot believe that all the trade organisations, individuals, farming businesses and other observers of the process who have written to us are wrong and the Government right. Perhaps I am missing the point. If there is a clever reason why we should not go down this route, will the Minister who responds to the debate explain it in their winding-up speech? It seems to have bypassed not only me, but everybody else with an interest in the issue.

I also hope that we will be careful in managing expectations, particularly those of the agricultural industry. The original idea was for a supermarket ombudsman and it looked like they would have all sorts of powers that the adjudicator will not have. Some thought that that would be a means by which price could be manipulated or guaranteed, so I hope that we can continue to make it clear that this is not a mechanism, nor should it be, that will guarantee a particular price for a product. The measure has been announced in various manifestos and, over time, that red herring has been allowed to stick.

I hope that the Minister will refer to smaller suppliers who might suffer at the hands of retailers that do not fall under the top 10, or big 10, category. Plenty of the producers who are watching our progress with great interest do not supply the big 10, but they might supply the next big 10, so they hope that the measures may rub off in that regard.

Finally—I said that my contribution would be brief—I hope that further attention will be given to the funding model. Rather than continuing with the current model, which is a one-size-fits-all, across-the-board flat fee, a model that more accurately reflects the scale of offences that might be committed by the retailers might be a fairer way of securing the confidence of not only the producer, but the customer. As we all know, the brand is probably the most vital part of the big 10 retailers' business, but the bottom line is also important, so the question is: what comes first—the brand or the bottom line? This debate has been helpful, particularly, as I have said, the contribution of my hon. Friend the Member for Camborne and Redruth, which I hope the big 10 retailers will take a long, hard and close look at when *Hansard* is published tomorrow.

In summation, this is a great moment. It proves that some of the things that we write in our manifestos resonate with the wider public. The issue addressed by the Bill certainly does. It was mentioned in the run-up to the last election and I am delighted that we have got on with it as quickly as we have. Its basis seems to attract widespread support throughout the House and, more importantly, among retailers throughout the UK, particularly in Wales, where this activity is being scrutinised. I hope that we will be able to deliver a result that will please the constituents of that country.

6.13 pm

Mr Adrian Bailey (West Bromwich West) (Lab/Co-op): I first declare an interest. I am a Labour and Co-operative Member of Parliament for West Bromwich West, and the Co-operative party is financed by and linked to the co-operative retail movement, which is both a major retailer and a major farmer, so it is involved in both sides of the argument.

I pay tribute to the many Members who have worked on the issue over the years and brought it to this point. As Chair of the Business, Innovation and Skills Committee, which played a significant role in making the recommendation that is being adopted today, I cannot but reflect on the irony that I, a Member who represents one of the most industrialised manufacturing constituencies in the country, have suggested proposals that are so significant to the farming and rural community. Perhaps that is a reflection of one of the strengths of our democracy.

I welcome the Bill. In paying tribute to those who have worked on the issue, I mention my hon. Friend the Member for Ynys Môn (Albert Owen), who promoted a private Member's Bill, the Grocery Market Ombudsman Bill. It is also appropriate to mention the hon. Member for St Ives (Andrew George), notwithstanding anything he might say in response to my comments. The Chair of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee was also kind enough to do some work and feed it into our deliberations. I have also read the debate held in the other place, and its Members explored the issues thoroughly.

A lot has been said about the delay. I do not want to get involved in a party political argument, but the previous Labour Government were castigated by members of the current Government for deeming it reasonable to see how the grocery code would work in practice before legislating. Last year, the BIS Committee was invited, as a matter of urgency, to undertake its pre-legislative scrutiny, which we completed by the recess, and the delay in implementation since then has caused some bodies to raise concerns about the Government's commitment to the measure. I am satisfied that they are committed to it, but they still need to examine some flaws closely; otherwise, those concerns may continue to prevail in some sectors of the industry.

On the Bill's proposals, I am pleased to say that the Government have accepted about 80% of the amendments suggested by the Committee as a result of its pre-legislative scrutiny. It would be churlish not to recognise the Government's willingness to listen to arguments and to take our proposals on board. I think that both industries will be strengthened as a result of the Bill. It is important to recognise that we are talking about two of our most successful industries. Our retailing industry is phenomenally successful and a model to be copied the world over. Similarly, our farming is among the most highly productive anywhere in the world.

It is undoubtedly true, however, that there has been an imbalance of power, and examples of the abuse of that power have been to the detriment of the producers, particularly the farming industry. Unless addressed, that in itself will have implications for the ability of that industry to introduce new products and innovate. By addressing the issue and redressing the balance, we will strengthen the supply to our retailing industry in the long term, and that will be to the benefit of both industries.

Many hon. Members have already highlighted the main area of disagreement between the Committee and the Government, namely whether the Bill should include the power to fine. The Minister said that the Committee had acknowledged that the arguments for and against that power were fairly even, but what she did not say was that we came down on the side of advocating fines. Some of the arguments in favour of fines have already been made. I think the Government's approach has been to assume that the publication of evidence that could damage a supermarket's brand in a highly competitive market could mean that supermarkets risked losing trade and profitability.

It is difficult to work out what the precise implications of the publication of evidence of a breach of the groceries code would be. It might be published in a press release, in the retailer's annual report or on the retailer's website. However, I have the gut feeling that relatively few consumers, particularly in these hard-pressed times, will change their shopping habits as a result of a retailer breaching the groceries code. That just does not ring true.

Fiona O'Donnell (East Lothian) (Lab): In many constituencies, such as mine, which is predominantly rural, people only have a choice between two of the major supermarkets.

Mr Bailey: My hon. Friend makes an important point, which I was going to come on to. An individual's shopping habits are determined by all sorts of factors. I do not know what evidence there is, but I would guess that the perception of value for money at different retailers is an important criterion. Other factors are accessibility and personal habits and traditions. I do not see that the publication of an adverse report by the groceries code adjudicator about a particular retailer would affect many people's shopping habits and, therefore, the bottom line of that retailer.

Mr Spencer: Does the hon. Gentleman recognise that the opposite might be true, in that a supermarket whose brand is built around price point might gain kudos from squeezing its supply base so tight that it can deliver the lowest prices to the consumer?

Mr Bailey: The hon. Gentleman makes an interesting point. I am sure that one could develop an argument along those lines. I hesitate to do so because I have an innate faith in good will and do not believe that a supermarket would be so unscrupulous as to do that. Perhaps he does not share my innate faith in the good will of supermarkets.

John McDonnell (Hayes and Harlington) (Lab): The best example of that is that when the Competition Commission found that a supermarket was reducing the price of bread to 7p, which was below cost price, that supermarket gained a boost in sales.

Mr Bailey: That is a form of advertising that could, in certain situations, benefit a retailer.

It is simplistic to believe that the possibility that the Secretary of State will implement fines will be a sufficient deterrent. Even if the Secretary of State feels that it is appropriate to levy fines, the process for arriving at that

point is slow and cumbersome. Under schedule 3, before the Secretary of State can make such an order, he must consult six bodies, plus any other body that he feels it appropriate to consult. That is a time-consuming and possibly self-defeating process. It is a slow and ineffective way to implement the deterrent on the retailer, which could be exploited considerably.

I also find the Government's approach rather strange in respect of the escalation of penalties. The adjudicator can take notice of the failure of a supermarket to respond to highlighted breaches of the code, but seems to have no enforcement powers to do anything about it. There is no express sanction for non-compliance with a recommendation, but it may be taken into account when further arbitration is carried out. That is hugely time consuming and amounts to an invitation to ignore the adjudicator. I cannot help but reflect on the danger identified by Murray Worthy of War on Want:

"A watchdog that is all bark and no bite won't be able to stop supermarkets bullying their suppliers."

I will move on briefly to a couple of other issues. The Business, Innovation and Skills Committee reflected on intermediaries at some length. We said that third parties, such as trade associations, should be able to give evidence to initiate an inquiry. The Ministers seem to have accepted that point and my intervention earlier elicited the sort of response that I wanted. I emphasise that this issue is extremely important and that there should be no delay in the adjudicator being able to implement such provisions.

Lastly, I have a request. Given the importance of the adjudicator, I hope that the Government will allow the Business, Innovation and Skills Committee to hold a pre-appointment hearing with the proposed adjudicator. Given that the Select Committee was entrusted with the pre-legislative scrutiny and given the concerns that have been echoed in all parts of the House, I feel that it is important for the Select Committee to have the chance to question the adjudicator to ascertain whether we feel that they will apply the rigour and forensic examination that are needed to deliver what everybody in the House wants.

There is a huge groundswell of support from all parties for the Government to consider fines. Although I recognise that the Bill is very significant as it stands, I hope that the Government will listen to the voices from all parts of the House and table an amendment at a subsequent stage to ensure that there is a power to levy fines. That would make a good Bill into a very good Bill indeed.

6.27 pm

Andrew George (St Ives) (LD): It is a pleasure to follow the Chair of the Business, Innovation and Skills Committee, the hon. Member for West Bromwich West (Mr Bailey). It was interesting that in his introduction he declared an interest as a Labour and Co-operative party Member. It has been my privilege over many years to chair the Grocery Market Action Group, which has been mentioned in this debate. Reflecting on the discussion about naming and shaming, I should perhaps name and shame the stores that indicated that they would support the measures proposed in the Competition Commission's report of April 2008 when we wrote to the stores that would be affected. Marks and Spencer, Waitrose and Aldi were the three stores that indicated

[Andrew George]

that they would support the measures, with some reasonable conditions. In spite of my efforts to talk to the Co-op, I was surprised that it was not prepared to sign up at that stage. However, the regulation has been in place since February 2010, and there are opportunities now for all those stores to reflect on that.

Like others, I want to commend many people who have been the architects of this extremely welcome measure. The hon. Member for Ynys Môn (Albert Owen) has already been mentioned—indeed, I mentioned him in an intervention. His private Member's Bill did a great deal to pave the way for the measure. Former Members, too, made significant contributions. In 1998, Colin Breed, the former Member for South East Cornwall, made a valiant effort to put the matter on the agenda. He undertook an inquiry, which stimulated a further inquiry by the Competition Commission, entitled, "Checking out the Supermarkets". He stimulated much activity, which is reaping the appropriate reward today on the Floor of the House. The former Member for Stroud, David Drew, was also a significant contributor to the debate, as was the hon. Member for Shrewsbury and Atcham (Daniel Kawczynski), who is not in his place, but was present earlier. I have had many conversations with the hon. Member for Tiverton and Honiton (Neil Parish), who has been a strong supporter of the proposal for a long time. I also commend the Minister for an excellent exposition of the purpose of the measure, and the Government's strong support for what is now Government primary legislation, even though its origins were a private Member's Bill under a previous Government.

I do not need to repeat much of the background to what we hope will be legislation in perhaps weeks—certainly not many months. It is worth reflecting on the fact that, when I was originally involved, and certainly when the former Member for South East Cornwall engaged in the work, there was no party political support for regulation, even among Liberal Democrats, who subsequently adopted the proposal in their 2005 manifesto. In those days, the proposal that there should be any regulation was advanced only against all the odds. Even the National Farmers Union proposed a buyer's charter and set its face against regulation, even though I and others had proposed it. It has therefore taken many years and a glacial pace to achieve progress. To be in the position whereby the proposal had all-party support at the last general election was remarkable. The larger parties clambered on board at the last minute, only months before the election. However, we had almost created a "who blinks first" scenario as we went into the general election, and all parties came on board and supported the proposal.

Significant commendation should be given to Peter Freeman, chairman of the Competition Commission, and the whole commission, for an excellent inquiry, which commenced in 2006 and concluded in 2008. It considered all the evidence that many of us had been encouraging the competition authorities to scrutinise for many years. It reached the telling conclusion that, in some cases, as the Minister said, the supermarkets were guilty of transferring excessive risk and unexpected costs to suppliers, with the consequent detrimental knock-on effect on not only suppliers and their capacity to continue trading, but consumers and, indeed, innovation in the retail sector.

I do not approach the matter from the position that supermarkets are wicked. Their activities are entirely rational. Had all of us been in the same position, and we had not maximised all our market muscle to advance the interests of our company, and we had therefore lost market share in a cut-and-thrust market, we would have failed in our duties. However, the question is, "When does effective, clever and successful use of power become abuse?" The Competition Commission rightly identified that we have long passed the point at which that use of power has become abuse, as the many examples that have been given today show.

The previous Government rightly supported changes to the common agricultural policy, which forced farming to become much more market facing. Price support policies were done away with, the protections that farming was so used to in this country were no longer in place, and the industry needed to live or die by the marketplace. However, how could farmers and growers succeed or survive in that climate? I appreciate that many growers, pig farmers and others struggled to survive long before those changes. Nevertheless, leaving that aside, how could farmers survive when, as Prime Minister Tony Blair said, the supermarkets had got them in an arm lock? One could argue that they had got them in an even more painful position at times. The supermarkets were able to control market conditions, which was a conclusion of the previous Competition Commission report.

What are we trying to achieve? It has always been my view that if supermarkets have nothing to hide, they have nothing to fear from embracing the Bill. I have said to the supermarkets that, if they are clever, they should embrace the proposal and see it as something good. The hon. Member for Camborne and Redruth (George Eustice) suggested that there should be a panel to review the supermarkets' success in applying the code. My view is that, if the supermarkets are prepared to embrace and invest in the proposal, there would be fair trade regulator, which could give a mark to each supermarket to show whether it was a fair trader and grade it accordingly. Supermarkets could then perceive the code as a promotional tool rather than a stick with which to beat them.

Fining has predominated today's discussions and will doubtless do so in Committee. After all these years, I do not want to risk any further delay in implementing the proposal. I would not like any amendment to the Bill to cause such delay. Will the fear of reputational damage be sufficient to persuade supermarkets to apply the code effectively and not to engage in the sort of practices that got us into the current position? Of course, I am on the side of those who want fining on the face of the Bill, but I believe that reputational damage has an impact. I remember the days when genetically modified technology was introduced and available to the supermarkets. Non-governmental organisations undertook a lot of campaigning, which dissuaded the supermarkets from putting GM products on their shelves. If there were adverse reports, the campaigning bodies—if they were doing their job—would draw the attention of customers and the public to the failure of those supermarkets.

Mr Spencer: On that point, there cannot be a more passionately felt issue than animal welfare. Does the hon. Gentleman acknowledge that the British pork industry had much higher standards of animal welfare

than its counterparts in Europe, but that that made no difference to whether consumers bought British or foreign pork?

Andrew George: There is evidence and evidence to counter it on all sides, and that takes us to a point that the hon. Member for South Antrim (Dr McCrea) made earlier. Providing that customers who are buying British are reassured that it genuinely is British and not some kind of subterfuge, the point about animal welfare is relevant. Customers understand that significantly higher animal welfare standards have been in place in the UK for many years, particularly in the pig industry, and that is one of those reassuring messages. I agree, however, that it does not always work, particularly when the message becomes confused.

When I intervened on the Minister, I said that there was likely to be a lot of evidence of contraventions of the code from the time it was first put in place on 4 February 2010. My concern is that the position of adjudicator will be such that they will operate for only one day a week from the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, and when they are fully operational, they will work three days a week with three or four members of staff. I also understand that the Gangmasters Licensing Authority already wants to present 1,000 pieces of evidence to the adjudicator, and I am concerned about whether sufficient resources will be in place to deal with all the work, cases and evidence that may be brought forward.

Jo Swinson: Let me clarify to the House that the adjudicator will look at breaches of the code from when it comes into force. It may investigate evidence of problems that have been ongoing, but if a breach stopped before the adjudicator was established, it would not be able to impose sanctions. Because the code is already legally binding, other legal routes are open to suppliers that fall into that category. The Government want to ensure that this measure is successful, and we have outlined what we think will be its initial budget. We will, of course, keep that under review and work closely with the groceries code adjudicator when it is established.

Andrew George: I am grateful to the Minister for that clarification, although I am also disappointed. A lot of people—certainly suppliers—want to ensure that we have an adjudicator that can look at breaches of the code that have taken place from the introduction of that code, not from the point at which the adjudicator is established. I hope that we can explore that a little further in Committee. We want to ensure that the adjudicator has the time and resources to investigate matters properly.

Clause 10 of the Bill concerns the power of the adjudicator to apportion investigation costs. I hope that will reassure supermarkets that the adjudicator can also apportion costs against those who make vexatious complaints or claims that are without merit. To a certain extent, that answers the point made earlier by the hon. Member for Camborne and Redruth—such powers already exist. I would be concerned about my hon. Friend the Minister's proposal because the Bill is quite clear that such matters should be at the discretion of the adjudicator, and not at that of a self-appointed panel that might produce a survey report by which the adjudicator would then be bound.

Overall, the Bill is extremely welcome and not before time. I would not wish to get involved in a discussion with the hon. Member for Edinburgh South (Ian Murray), whom I thank for his kind words earlier. There is no point in looking to the past for an explanation of why it has taken so long for the Bill to proceed. We must now ensure that it is implemented effectively and properly as quickly as possible, so that suppliers get the protection that they richly deserve.

6.45 pm

Albert Owen (Ynys Môn) (Lab): It is a genuine pleasure to follow the hon. Member for St Ives (Andrew George) on this issue. As many Members have rightly said, he has been a long and steadfast campaigner for a supermarket ombudsman—I will call it an ombudsman in my remarks, because I think that would have been the correct title.

I also pay tribute to Members of the previous Parliament who sponsored and helped me with my private Member's Bill. The legislation that I put through Second Reading and Committee was supported by Members not only from the larger parties, but from some of the smaller parties and across the United Kingdom. Support came from the Social Democratic and Labour party and the Unionist parties in Northern Ireland, and from the SNP, Plaid Cymru and Members from the larger parties. The Bill had cross-UK as well as cross-party support, which was important when taking it forward. I know, Mr Deputy Speaker, that you took an interest in that Bill—I will refer to that shortly when you are not being disturbed. You may recall, however, that you actually sat on the Bill's one Committee sitting. I do not know whether it was a record, but I managed to get that private Member's Bill through one Committee sitting with almost total agreement.

As right hon. and hon. Members will know, private Member's Bills are an important vehicle and people become extremely popular when they are drawn in the top 10 in the ballot. As my hon. Friend the Member for Hayes and Harlington (John McDonnell) will testify, one receives hundreds if not thousands of letters and e-mails—he has done it twice so he will speak from experience. People probably become more popular than if they go out to the jungles of Australia, so Members should persevere and get into the ballot for a private Member's Bill if at all possible.

I welcome the Bill—it would be churlish not to, having promoted a private Member's Bill the main tenets of which are still contained in the Bill under discussion. However, as the hon. Member for St Ives said, there was not a lot of enthusiasm for this measure when I successfully won that ballot. In fact, I was popular not just with outside organisations that wanted me to take legislation forward, but with those in the Whips Office who had a number of Bills they wanted me to promote. As you know, Mr Deputy Speaker, I have never done anything the conventional way in this House—or, indeed, in my life—so I resisted the charm of the Whips Office at the time, and pursued this legislation because I thought it was the right thing to do. It brought together a broad coalition of farmers, suppliers, non-governmental organisations and many farming unions, and I pay tribute to the Farmers Union of Wales and the National Farmers Union in Scotland and England for their work. It has been difficult for any party to ignore this issue, and each of the larger parties put this legislation in their manifestos.

[Albert Owen]

This Bill has been a long time coming. I remember gathering support from other parties when I was pursuing this legislation through Parliament, and there was a division in each party between spokespeople from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs who were keen for the Bill to proceed, and those from the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills who were less keen to get it through—that is a nice way of putting it. When we were able to get all parties to concentrate their efforts on the Bill, they started to bid for who would take the legislation through Parliament the quickest once there was an election. I remember Conservative agriculture spokespersons of the time going to fairs, which all hon. Members go to in their constituencies, and saying that a supermarket ombudsman would be a priority for the next Conservative Government. I know they are in coalition, but I see no reason why the Bill was not introduced much sooner—all parties agree and there is a broad coalition of support.

The Minister of State, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, was a very good supporter of my private Member's Bill and he is now a supporter of the Bill. If he were less conventional than he is, and if he, like me, was not a Minister, he would probably say, "I agree the Bill needs more teeth. I agree we need fines in the Bill." He will not say that now—possibly for good reasons—but I see no good reason for not including fines in the Bill.

That is the argument I want to develop. Many groups have lobbied for fines to be included. Had the Under-Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills, the hon. Member for East Dunbartonshire (Jo Swinson), taken an intervention, I would have had the opportunity not only to congratulate her on her promotion and new post, but to ask her to come clean and name the individuals and groups who have lobbied against including fines. It would be difficult for her to name any apart from those inside the British Retail Consortium. It is wrong that the Government have capitulated—they have not struck the balance—and not included fines in the Bill.

I do not believe that naming and shaming will be an adequate deterrent, for the reasons that hon. Members have given. A fine would appear on a company's financial accounts, to which shareholders' and ordinary members' attention is drawn at annual general meetings. The large supermarkets might still make large profits, but shareholders' attention would be drawn to a fine on those accounts, even if it is insignificant compared with the profits. That would be enough for many of the shareholders to say, "We need to do things better, and to work with the adjudicator." In that way, the supermarket would not just sit back and wonder whether the news that day would mean that they would be named and shamed in a newspaper headline, or a retail magazine, which not everybody reads. I should like to concentrate the Government's mind on that—the suggestion comes not just from Opposition Front Benchers

Although my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh South (Ian Murray) made a good, detailed speech on the measures in the Bill that the Opposition support, he also spoke about the differences between the Government and the Opposition. He did not do so for the sake of having differences, but so that we get the measures right

at the first opportunity and legislate properly. We want a fair Bill, and we want an adjudicator, referee or ombudsman who has the tools from day one to do their job. They should not have to come cap in hand to Parliament for another measure.

The reserving of fines is nonsense. As the Minister said, they could take up to six months to set up, in which time there might be other priorities, as there have obviously been in the two and a half years when the Bill was not introduced, or there could be a lack of will on the Government's part. The House has the opportunity to table an amendment in Committee. After the pressure of this debate, the Government may introduce a measure to give the adjudicator the ability to fine.

Roger Williams: The hon. Gentleman has a proud record. He condemns the Government for being slow to introduce the Bill, but does he agree that Governments are very often criticised for not having pre-legislative scrutiny? In this case, that has taken place, probably to the benefit of the Bill.

Albert Owen: The hon. Gentleman is a supporter of pre-legislative scrutiny, but he does not believe it delays Bills for two and a half years. The Government have not had a heavy work load on Bills. If we compare the number of legislative days in the House with the number in other Parliaments, we see that the Government have had a lot of time to introduce the Bill. With respect to the hon. Gentleman, I want to move on to whether we should have a fine or naming and shaming.

The only difference between the Government and the Opposition is on whether we have adequate sanctions for the big 10 supermarkets. Has the Minister or the Government considered not only the big 10, but the major suppliers in the chain, which are as big as the supermarkets? Will the adjudicator have the ability to name and shame them? That is important. Some of the major suppliers are multinational organisations, and put a lot of pressure on our growers and farmers. Will the Minister respond on that? I would have pushed for such a measure in my private Member's Bill, because I want fairness right through the supply chain, and not just among the top 10 supermarkets, which have the ability to self-finance the measure so that all are treated equally. The supermarkets should also have the ability to complain to the adjudicator or ombudsman. That is important if we are to have a fully open system of recourse through naming and shaming. The supermarkets should be able to put their side of the argument if the boot is on the other foot, although that would not happen often. I should like the Government to take that on board.

The measure has popular support, not just in the House, but in the country. As I have said, it has brought together non-governmental organisations, lobby groups, and farmers and growers throughout the UK, because there has been an injustice in how the grocery market has operated. The Government and the Under-Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills, the hon. Member for East Dunbartonshire (Jo Swinson), who is the third to take up the role in less than three years, have an opportunity. Her predecessor but one, the right hon. Member for Kingston and Surbiton (Mr Davey), who is now Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change, said only last week at the Dispatch Box that it was

essential to use sanctions to fine energy companies, which are alleged to be ripping off their customers. We must have consistency. The same should apply to large supermarkets that are alleged to be ripping off suppliers and consumers—at the end of the day, consumers pay the higher prices that filter through.

Rather than naming and shaming, we need fines in the Bill, and a real commitment to fairness in the system. The Bill will help, and I support it, but I hope that hon. Members on both sides of the House will vote for including fines in the Bill rather than just make speeches about it. The eyes of the consensus that the Bill has gathered will be on us, and we should show that we speak with one voice. Although the Under-Secretary would not take an intervention from me, I will take one from her if she wants to say who has lobbied her and why we should not include fines in the Bill. She has tried to make the case, but she does not want to take the opportunity I am offering her. Many of the supermarkets I have spoken to would not be that bothered if fines were included in the Bill, which has also achieved consensus among all the bodies I have named. As the hon. Member for St Ives has said, two or three supermarkets have come out in favour of the Bill. It will not be long before there is consensus among the top 10 supermarkets.

Jo Swinson: One key point the supermarkets have put to me was that there were no appeal powers for them in the Bill. Not going ahead with fines from day one means that we avoid the problem of mirroring the groceries code adjudicator in appeal processes. That is one reason why seeing whether naming and shaming is effective is a good way to proceed. The hon. Gentleman said that himself—he said he does not believe the supermarkets will be particularly bothered about fines, but they certainly were bothered about appeals.

Albert Owen: The Minister tells the House that we need to build in a proper appeals procedure, but hon. Members will work together to ensure that that happens.

Jo Swinson: The retailers argued for a proper appeals process. The challenge I outlined was that the adjudicator could end up running around in circles dealing with appeal after appeal rather than getting on with the important job of carrying out more investigations, which is what we want. Without the power to fine, we are convinced that a full merits appeals process is not required. That is one advantage of the Government's approach.

Albert Owen: If, further down the line, serious breaches are identified by the adjudicator and the reserve power is used, we will be in that position anyway.

Jo Swinson: If.

Albert Owen: If. I am hopeful that if that situation arises the Government will bring forward their reserve powers, so we are only delaying the inevitable.

John McDonnell: If there is an adjudication that affects the trade of an individual company, it will resort to law anyway.

Albert Owen: Absolutely. The House could come together, as it has on this measure, to find a way of short-circuiting some of the appeals procedures, if we felt that companies were dragging their feet. That is one of the powers we need to give to the adjudicator. Yes, the law currently allows them the opportunity to appeal, but there is a consensus here and I feel that we can do it. If the Government seriously want the Bill to have the proper teeth—the farming Minister and I have often argued for it—then we can work together and do it. Where there is political will, there is a way of resolving this matter.

This is a good Bill. It has many merits and it can be improved quickly and easily. Those on the Government Front Bench have got the message tonight, not just from Opposition Members but from all parts of the House and from the wider country, that the Bill needs to have the teeth to do the job. The adjudicator or ombudsman—or ombudswoman—who takes over the role will have the support of Parliament to ensure that the grocery market is a success. The Minister has the opportunity to go down in grocery folklore as the Minister who took a robust stand against the supermarkets. She will get my backing, and, I am sure, the backing of hon. Members across the Floor.

7.2 pm

John Stevenson (Carlisle) (Con): Much comment has been made about the farming perspective. I appreciate and understand fully that farmers welcome the Bill, but other groups are supportive of the Bill too. For the record, I chair the all-party group on food and drink manufacturing. Our group and the food and drink sector are interested in the progress of the Bill. The sector is the largest manufacturing sector in the country, with a turnover of approximately £75 billion. It employs 400,000 people and is a key part of our economy. Critically, the sector contains a lot of small and medium-sized enterprises dispersed across the country, whose commercial power is therefore greatly weakened.

The Bill should be seen in the right way—as a positive, and not a stick to beat the retailers with. It can be used to help relationships between suppliers and retailers, and help to rebalance the commercial power between the two groups. Our large retailers come in for a considerable amount of stick and criticism at times, but we should recognise that they have achieved a lot for the country and for the consumer. They are highly efficient organisations, with strong leadership, strong management and powerful brands. They pay their taxes in this country and make a valuable contribution to our economy. Up and down the country, they employ thousands of people, providing a livelihood for many families. They provide career opportunities for many and, in many cases, quality training. The consumer has seen a massive increase in choice. I look back to when I was a child and the choice that my parents had when they went to the shops compared with what we have today. There has also been a huge improvement in quality. I often wonder whether it should cause us some concern that kids wonder why we get carrots that are bent, rather than always straight. Finally, there is competitive pricing—food is remarkably cheap compared with many years ago, and we should recognise that the supermarkets have helped to contribute to that.

To a certain extent, however, we have become victims of our own success and so have the supermarkets. There are increasing, and legitimate, concerns about the market

[John Stevenson]

dominance of the supermarkets, the commercial power of the retailers, and the effect that that has on suppliers. The impact on the supply chain, on innovation and, potentially, on investment should concern us all. I do not believe that the appointment of an adjudicator will solve all these issues—far from it—but it will undoubtedly go some way to help. It should complement the groceries code and give it more bite. Therefore, I welcome the creation of the adjudicator.

I want to touch on a few points relating specifically to the Bill. Clause 2 deals with arbitration. Arbitration is a cost-effective, practical way of resolving issues. I therefore welcome the fact that the adjudicator will be involved in any matters of arbitration between suppliers and retailers.

Clause 4 is the most central to the Bill, which deals with the power to investigate and request information. I welcome that, and particularly welcome allowing trade organisations to be involved. As I mentioned, the food and drink manufacturing sector is made up of a lot of SMEs. They will be concerned about their position when they are in negotiations with retailers. That is why having a trade organisation to represent them can be beneficial.

Clause 4 is linked with clause 18 and the duty of confidentiality. That must also be welcomed as it is clearly needed, particularly to protect smaller suppliers and organisations that would be concerned about the difference between their commercial strength and that of the retailer. Retailers should not be over-concerned; I do not believe there will be frivolous and unwelcome applications. Quite simply, the power of the adjudicator to award costs will be an incentive for those bringing forward issues and complaints to do so in a justified and proper manner.

Many hon. Members have talked about enforcement. The power to make recommendations is very sensible and clearly everybody would support that. On the power to require information to be published—effectively naming and shaming—many hon. Members have already commented that supermarkets would be nervous about that. They have powerful brands. They are, within themselves, in a competitive market and they will be concerned. However, I accept fully and acknowledge that ultimately some might ride roughshod over that or be quite happy to take the criticism that comes their way. Therefore, the ability to impose financial penalties is critical and must be supported. I think I am with most people in the House in believing that the power to do that should be given to the adjudicator, and that it should be included in the Bill rather than given to the Secretary of State to introduce at a later date. I will be interested to see whether the Ministers go away and reflect on the views of the House when they consider amendments in Committee.

Finally, I welcome the review by the adjudicator of the groceries code set out in clause 13. Indeed, the adjudicator should take a proactive role. Arguably, the clause should be strengthened so that the adjudicator has a duty to report and comment on the success of the groceries code. Overall, however, I give a strong welcome to the Bill. I think it will help in a small way to rebalance the relationship between large retailers and suppliers, and ensure that we have a competitive and, most importantly, fair market.

7.8 pm

Kerry McCarthy (Bristol East) (Lab): As has been said, it has taken a long time for the Bill to come before the House. It has recently been through extensive scrutiny in the other place and, before that, by the Select Committee on Business, Innovation and Skills and the Select Committee on Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. I am glad that we are now finally in the position to debate the Bill properly in this place. I have received many postcards on this issue going back as far as before the general election, during the time of the previous Labour Government. I remember the Minister of State, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, the hon. Member for Somerton and Frome (Mr Heath), in his previous role in the Liberal Democrats, urging the then Government to make great haste with the Bill, and perhaps criticising us for being a little bit tardy. I accept that we are where we are now, and I am grateful that we have finally got here, even if it has been rather slow.

As has also been mentioned, the Bill received considerable support from organisations such as the Fairtrade Foundation, Traidcraft, ActionAid, Friends of the Earth and even the National Farmers Union, which perhaps does not always sit in partnership with those other organisations. So there is a lot of public support.

In 2008, when the food and farming Minister, the hon. Member for Somerton and Frome, was official spokesperson for the Liberal Democrats, he called for an ombudsman with teeth. I share colleagues' concern, however, that the Bill might not meet that test, particularly regarding the reserve powers provision giving the adjudicator the power to issue fines. Under the Bill, the adjudicator will not immediately have that power. It will be subject to future review. I agree with colleagues in the other place that in this respect the Bill is clunky, over-bureaucratic and drawn out. We do not want to wait several years for the adjudicator to have the power to issue fines. We have waited long enough. The evidence of compliance with the groceries code suggests that firm action—or at least the threat of firm action—against major retailers will be a useful weapon for the adjudicator to wield, so the Bill must enable the adjudicator to issue fines from the outset.

The Under-Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills, the hon. Member for East Dunbartonshire (Jo Swinson), talked about the power to name and shame, and seemed to place great faith in the power of negative findings to persuade supermarkets to change their behaviour. The competition inquiry in 2008, however, showed that more than a decade of adverse media reports on how supermarkets dealt with their supply chains and their relationship with farmers had done little to change their business practices or prevent them from engaging in what many would regard as unethical practices.

The Minister referred to consumer pressure, arguing that if a retailer was named and shamed, consumers might take their business elsewhere. I think that consumer pressure is incredibly powerful, as we have seen in the recent debate about whether companies such as Starbucks pay tax in the UK—it puts pressure on companies, makes them rethink their policies and sends their public relations machines into overdrive—but I am not convinced that a supermarket having a certain contractual relationship with its suppliers would be enough to send shoppers elsewhere, and certainly not in significant enough numbers to affect supermarkets' business practices. I am unconvinced, therefore, that consumer pressure will play a major role.

The power to fine ought to be reserved now, rather than invoked later. I might be wrong, but I think that the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills has accepted that compliance with the groceries supply code of practice would be less in the absence of fines, which are a standard measure in most regulated industries, and would be used only as a last resort and only with strong evidence. The argument, then, that fines would pass significant costs on to consumers or lead to a raft of long and burdensome appeals is greatly overstated.

I want to focus on the vital contribution the Bill can make to reducing food waste across the supply chain. As some Members will know, I introduced a Food Waste Bill earlier this year dealing with the other end of the supply chain—with consumers not wasting food and supermarkets making food available for donation and to organisations such as FoodCycle, FairShare and the many food banks that sadly have grown up around the country, rather than letting it go to landfill. Obviously, the Bill deals with the other end of the supply chain. None the less, this is a useful opportunity to flag up some of these issues again.

Retailers and manufacturers waste a staggering 3.6 million tonnes of food per annum. Some of that can be directly attributed to how supermarkets do business with their suppliers. The Competition Commission's 2008 report concluded that supermarkets were guilty of transferring unnecessary risks and excessive costs on to their suppliers. One practice is when supermarkets agree a price for a product with their supplier but, when sales are less than predicted and prices need to be reduced, require the supplier to share the burden of reduced revenue.

Then there are the notorious take-back agreements, under which supermarkets return to the manufacturer or farmer produce they fail to sell, including when the former have made forecasting errors. When I was looking into the issue of food waste, I found that forecasting errors by supermarkets were a major factor. If supermarkets have supplies ordered from farmers sitting in their distribution centres, but the same produce is not selling in their stores, the produce ordered goes to landfill or, at best, is used in anaerobic digestion. A supermarket might tell a manufacturer a week in advance that it needs 100,000 sandwiches or however many pounds or kilos of potatoes, but if, on the day, it decides it does not need them because it does not expect to sell as much as it predicted, that leaves the supplier with a pallet-load of sandwiches or sacks of potatoes that it cannot sell.

Worse still, many of these products will already have been produced with the supermarket's own brand. Supermarkets often forbid the manufacturers from selling on the food, insisting that it be sold to them exclusively. Neither do they allow them to give such food to charity, because of erroneous concerns that they might end up on market stalls, for example, which they think could damage the prestige of the brand. That is particularly an issue with premium products. All that pushes up suppliers' costs

I want to touch on a matter that, as far as I am aware, the Bill does not deal with. The hon. Member for South Thanet (Laura Sandys) talked about "ugly food". Supermarkets demand perfect vegetables and produce from farmers these days. This is an issue. It is entirely up to Tesco or Sainsbury's whether they want to sell perfect apples, but the fact that farmers are not allowed to sell

the remaining produce to other people—it is still a practice, I think—needs to be addressed. It is true that the groceries code prohibits some of these practices—for example, large retailers are not now allowed to vary supply agreements retrospectively, except in specific circumstances, or to make suppliers pay compensation for wastage or forecasting errors—but there is no specific duty on large retailers to comply. That is why we need a groceries code adjudicator to enforce the code. Otherwise, the only mechanism for redress is for an individual to bring a complaint under the dispute resolution procedure or to bring a case before the courts under contract law. As the British Brands Group concludes in its briefing on the Bill, which has been sent to most MPs:

"This simply will not happen in most cases, due to the prevailing 'culture of fear' and the high level of dependency of supplier on each of the large retailers".

That is why the Bill is necessary and why it is important that third parties are able to report breaches under the anonymity provisions, which I am glad are now included in the Bill.

I want to touch briefly on low pay in supermarkets. A report this year from the Fair Pay Network has shown that the big four supermarkets—Sainsbury's, Asda, Morrisons and Tesco—which collectively are the second-largest employer in the UK after the NHS, are paying their staff poverty wages, while making huge profits and raising executive salaries. Only one in seven supermarket workers earn the living wage, yet supermarkets award their chief executive officers between £3.2 million and £6.9 million a year. Given that differences are made up through in-work benefits, such as tax credits, supermarkets again find themselves in the morally hazardous situation of not having to take responsibility for their actions, which would otherwise have resulted in reduced spend in their supermarkets and would have hit their profits.

I appreciate that that issue needs to be taken up in another arena, but I wanted to raise it anyway. Nearly two thirds of children in poverty live in working families where the parents earn less than the living wage, and, as we have heard, many families who are in work still have to resort to food banks because of rising food prices. These issues are all interconnected. So, although I welcome the Bill, I consider it only a small part of tackling the issues around food production in this country. I shall not venture into the territory of the common agricultural policy—I am sure that the Minister and everyone else will be glad to hear that—but it is obviously another factor.

It is great that we have had the opportunity to discuss the matter and to put these issues on the agenda, but we have a long way to go and many more problems to address before we really tackle the issue of food production in the UK.

7.18 pm

Julian Sturdy (York Outer) (Con): I am grateful for the opportunity to speak in this debate. As a Member representing a series of villages linking the city of York to the distinct rural north and east Yorkshire countryside, I am always keen to speak in debates touching on the agricultural industry. Before my election to Parliament, I, too, was a farmer, and as such I have first-hand knowledge of some of the pressures facing many of the UK's independent producers. I must therefore draw Members' attention to my declaration of interests.

[Julian Sturdy]

Like many Members from both sides of the House, I congratulate the Government on introducing this Bill. Like many Members, I have long called for some form of adjudicator or ombudsman to ensure that our major supermarkets and retailers operate fairly throughout the industry's supply chain. This is about treating farmers and suppliers fairly and lawfully. My representations have followed on from first-hand experience of dealing with constituents' cases in many parts of York Outer, where small independent farmers or producers feel unfairly treated by the tactics of some national supermarket chains. However, it would be wrong to view this Bill simply as a reflection of a fundamental battle between big supermarkets and small producers. On the whole, our national supermarkets should be a source of great pride. They are massive job and wealth creators in our country, which is something the Minister touched on in her opening remarks. Many supermarkets undertake superb community work whenever they open a store. I am sure that, like me, Members from across the House will have first-hand experience of the community work that supermarkets do in their patch.

Nevertheless, as in all areas of industry, it is right that accountability, transparency and an independent watchdog should encourage and ensure fair practice for all involved. That is what a groceries code adjudicator will do. As such, I am pleased that the general principles behind the Bill seem to be attracting cross-party support, allowing today's debate to focus on the powers and responsibilities that the adjudicator will have. Introducing a groceries code adjudicator represents a common-sense step in the right direction, but that will be undermined if the body lacks the teeth it needs to operate effectively.

It is worth mentioning that we have had a groceries supply code of practice in force for a few years now. As the president of the National Farmers Union, Peter Kendall, has said, it is

“essentially a rulebook without a referee.”

I would go one step further and suggest that without adequate teeth, the groceries code adjudicator would be like a referee without a whistle—or, as the hon. Member for Edinburgh South (Ian Murray) said, one without a red card in his top pocket. As a Leeds United supporter, I would not mind a referee at our next match without a red card in his top pocket, but we need a groceries code adjudicator with the ability to take action. The fear with all new regulatory bodies is that they are set up too cautiously, becoming ineffective talking shops, unable to gain influence or authority in the sector. To me, the idea of setting up an adjudicator now, before adding powers at a later stage, is frankly flawed. If we are going to do this, we must do it properly and equip the adjudicator with the necessary powers from day one.

In my view, the necessary powers should at least include the ability to fine retailers for major—I stress the word “major”—breaches of the groceries supply code of practice. Without that power, I fear that the adjudicator will have limited impact. One example of where a properly empowered adjudicator would make a real difference in the supply chain is the current plight of the dairy industry. Over the past few years, many dairy farmers have been unfairly penalised by what can only be described as unfair, inflexible contracts that have sought to take advantage of the product's perishable

nature. There is hope on the horizon, following the agreement of a voluntary code of practice for milk supplier contracts between UK dairy farmers and processing firms. However, getting the voluntary code agreed required substantial political pressure and lengthy negotiations, with dairy farmers sadly going to the wall in the meantime. This is a perfect example of where a strong groceries code adjudicator could make a difference, intervening in such disputes with authority at an early stage.

In conclusion, this Bill is welcomed across the country by the independent suppliers who need the reassurance and support of an independent watchdog. Moreover, a strong groceries code adjudicator would encourage strong links between all parties in the supply chain, benefiting those at each level and ultimately the consumer too. It has to be in the interests of consumers that we have a thriving agricultural sector in this country supplying high quality products, while at the same time reducing our reliance on imports, at a time when food security will undoubtedly become one of the big issues of the future. However, the Government have grasped the nettle on a groceries code adjudicator, and they should be applauded for doing so. This is a good Bill, but the question throughout its legislative journey will be about its strength. I encourage Ministers to show strength by adding the powers required to make the groceries code adjudicator a real success.

7.25 pm

Ms Margaret Ritchie (South Down) (SDLP): I will be supporting this long awaited Bill, and I am in favour of the primary motivation behind it: to create a dedicated and impartial adjudicator. However, we must ensure that this does not become a missed opportunity to introduce lasting reform of the regulation of the relationship between producers, suppliers and consumers.

The broad coalition of signatories to the letter in *The Sunday Telegraph* yesterday, which included the NFU, ActionAid and the Federation of Small Businesses, is testament to the depth of feeling on this issue. I represent a rural constituency in Northern Ireland, where farming, fishing and tourism are the main economic drivers, and there is a growing need to sustain the current economic base at a time of low economic growth. Producers of food and consumers are facing daily economic and financial challenges. If handled properly, this Bill affords an opportunity to redress the balance in the supply chain.

I do not want to paint an entirely negative portrait of the relationship between suppliers and the large supermarkets. I know that often they work together extremely well—I know that is true of Sainsbury's—and many examples of good practice can be found that are central to the development of a sustainable supply chain. However, it must be acknowledged that the regime for dealing with bad practice is not even close to what it could be. To provide that stability and protection to farmers and producers, we need to introduce a groceries code adjudicator that possesses the necessary statutory and legislative teeth to correct unfair practices that have been apparent for some time in the food market chain. There is broad support in the farming community for this Bill and the implementation of its provisions without delay following Royal Assent. Farmers and their respective representative bodies have argued for years for action to prevent retailers from treating their suppliers, particular

smaller producers, unfairly. The establishment of the ombudsman or adjudicator to monitor and enforce a code of practice has been the central part of the campaign in recent years, and to this end the Bill is welcome.

Having accepted that such an adjudicator is necessary, it is vital that it should be adequately empowered and not become a paper tiger. The adjudicator must have robust powers of investigation and enforcement to hold to account the organisations engaged in bad practice. A primary concern is that we should endow the adjudicator with the capacity to accept representations, appeals and complaints from a range of interested parties, including trade associations. Not doing so in this Bill is a missed opportunity, which we will be looking to address through amendments at later stages. Empowering the adjudicator to receive representations from trade associations would create a much needed buffer between suppliers and supermarkets. Too often, suppliers fear that making complaints will prejudice their future business with large, dominant retailers and are hesitant to initiate complaints under the existing dispute resolution mechanism. A buffer could enable a more harmonious relationship between suppliers and supermarkets. Furthermore, the involvement of trade associations or representative bodies would allow a wider scope of analysis that could take in a wider picture of market practices, in contrast to cases that just focus on one supplier and one retailer.

I also support the Competition Commission's call for the adjudicator to have the capacity to implement fines in cases of serious breach or malpractice. A naming and shaming system will simply not be strong enough to hold retailers to account. Large retailers would be delighted if the adjudicator did not have the power to levy fines. I appreciate that the Government could introduce a fining system at a later stage through secondary legislation if the watered down approach were to prove inadequate, but I strongly contend that the adjudicator must be able to fine retailers from the outset if the code is breached. No doubt the Minister will address that point when he winds up the debate. We must have learnt by now, whether in relation to energy market regulation or banking regulation, that a regulator must have real teeth and real power if it is to have any influence or impact. Let us not make the same mistake again with the groceries code adjudicator. I want to see an emboldened Government here tonight saying that they will ensure that the adjudicator has real teeth.

From a devolved perspective, it is regrettable that the adjudicator will not be tasked with addressing the producer price differential that exists between Northern Ireland and Britain, or with overseeing the practices of processors or intermediaries. Many of the food producers in Northern Ireland feel that there is a dysfunctional food supply chain, and that what the consumer pays for food produce bears no resemblance to what the farmers receive for the product from the processors or retailers.

The Minister will recall that I raised this issue with him when we met several weeks ago. It needs to be addressed, to ensure that the primary food producers in Northern Ireland are protected. I suppose that that might fall outside the scope of the Bill, but I will take the matter up with the devolved Minister and with DEFRA. It is important that this dysfunctional relationship should be investigated and that measures should be put in place to remedy the situation. The hon. Member for North Antrim (Ian Paisley) has already raised the matter

today. The Ulster Farmers Union has been lobbying us to a significant degree, although my approach to the question is slightly different from his, in that I believe that we need a partnership rather than a fight. Fighting will not resolve the situation.

It is clear that the Bill offers the potential for real, lasting reform of the groceries market. If we set up a weak adjudicator, however, we will have undermined the new regime before it has been in operation for even a day. If we do not grant the adjudicator the necessary powers, on a statutory basis, to fine and to investigate without prejudice, we will have missed a golden opportunity to rebalance the supermarket supply chain and provide support to our farmers and producers. It is in everyone's interest—the supplier, the farmer and the consumer—that we create a sustainable food supply chain that is profitable for all, and not just for the dominant players.

As the Bill makes its passage through its Committee and Report stages, I hope that the Government will table amendments to ensure that it is made stronger through greater enforcement measures and a greater capacity to impose fines. I hope that it will be suitably amended to provide remedies that will further protect the primary producer and the consumer.

7.34 pm

Mr Mark Williams (Ceredigion) (LD): It is a privilege to follow the hon. Member for South Down (Ms Ritchie). Like her, I represent a rural constituency, and I can testify to the great passion that many people there, including those in the Farmers Union of Wales and the National Farmers Union, attach to this issue. I can think of no meeting that I have held in the past 12 years or so as I have fought elections in Ceredigion at which the issues of an ombudsman, an adjudicator and the overwhelming power of the supermarkets have not arisen.

There has been consensus in the House today. We have resisted some of the partisan points made in the earlier stage of the debate. Reference was made to a quote from the noble Lord Grantchester in the other place about the fingerprints of the previous Labour Government being all over the Bill. The fingerprints of this Government are all over it as well, in the form of those of the Under-Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills, my hon. Friend the Member for East Dunbartonshire (Jo Swinson), the Minister of State, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, my hon. Friend the Member for Somerton and Frome (Mr Heath) and, critically, my hon. Friend the Member for St Ives (Andrew George), who has done so much work on this subject. Also, my hon. Friend the Member for Ynys Môn (Albert Owen) put a huge amount of effort into his private Member's Bill, to which I was privileged to be a co-signatory, towards the end of the previous Labour Government.

We are where we are, and we need to be clear about what the Bill will achieve—which I think will be commendable—as well as what I hope that it should achieve. I share the concerns that have been raised here today and by the Business, Innovation and Skills Select Committee and the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Select Committee. Before I address those concerns, however, I want to add another test, which I shall call the Ceredigion test. The test asks how the Bill will impact on the large number of small family farms across my constituency in

[Mr Mark Williams]

west Wales. The truth is that, as the Bill stands, it might not have as robust an impact as it should, but I am sure that we will have an opportunity to table amendments to it as it continues its passage.

We have heard today about toothless dogs sitting on ministerial ledges waiting to be dusted down if necessary. We have heard about tigers with a proliferation of gums but no teeth. The hon. Member for North Antrim (Ian Paisley) talked about kicking supermarkets where it hurts. An important theme in today's debate has been the power to impose fines. We have also heard about a lengthy list of signatories to a letter from the interest groups that have urged the Government to think again about fines. They include the Farmers Union of Wales, the National Farmers Union, ActionAid UK, the British Independent Fruit Growers Association, the Campaign to Protect Rural England, the Church of England, the Country Land and Business Association, the Federation of Small Businesses, the Forum of Private Business, the Tenant Farmers Association, Unite the union, the World Society for the Protection of Animals, the Worldwide Fund for Nature and the National Federation of Women's Institutes. We ignore the Women's Institute at our peril, as others have found out in the past.

So long has been the gestation period of the legislation that expectations are running very high indeed. As the Bill stands, however, fines could be enforced only if an order by the Secretary of State under schedule 3 was in force. The Government have stated that such an order could be made, if it were deemed necessary, and that the power to fine could be enacted in six months. It must be said in the Government's defence that that represents an advance, which was the result of deliberations in the House of Lords. That was a step in the right direction, and I hope that we can have further such discussions during the Bill's passage through the House of Commons. On Second Reading in another place, we heard complaints that the proposed process was too cumbersome and laborious. I agreed with that at the time, and I would hazard a guess that six months will still prove lengthy and cumbersome, given the enormity of the complaints that are sometimes made against our supermarkets.

The Government have argued that naming and shaming is disincentive enough for retailers, and that having the ability to fine from the outset could create hostility in the industry. I agree that naming and shaming can influence consumers on where to buy. Had the Minister of State's predecessor—my right hon. Friend the Member for South East Cambridgeshire (Sir James Paice)—not brokered a deal in the dairy sector, an elaborate and effective campaign against certain supermarkets would have been launched. We must be realistic about how far this can go, however, and I question whether naming and shaming is disincentive enough in comparison with having the capacity to levy those fines from the outset.

I know the Minister is aware of these concerns—as will be his colleagues in BIS after this debate. At the very least, I would like to hear a response from the Minister to the question posed by the Chair of the DEFRA Select Committee about the circumstances in which an order in the Bill should or should not apply.

I wish to raise some points about the accessibility of the adjudicator to everyone in the industry. Two weeks ago, the Welsh Affairs Select Committee, of which the

hon. Member for Llanelli (Nia Griffith) and I are members, visited my constituency and took evidence on the status of the dairy farming industry in Wales. We took evidence from the Farmers Union of Wales and the National Farmers Union, as well as from the Welsh Assembly's Rural Affairs Minister, Mr Alun Davies. There was a consensus from all groups that the adjudicator must be accessible to everyone throughout the chain. As the FUW argued, the adjudicator should not be just about the relationship between two parties—the 10 supermarkets and their suppliers—because in a Welsh context, the majority of farmers operate on a much smaller scale and are not in direct supply contracts with those 10 supermarkets.

The argument is that the adjudicator must be able to intervene throughout the entire chain. It needs to be easy to lodge a complaint, but this is not helped by the fact that the supply chain is not transparent, so it would be unreasonable for a producer to be able to lodge a claim that requires a lot of evidentiary support. The adjudicator needs to be accessible for all producers, including the small family farms in rural Wales. This is impeded, of course, by a code that is laudable but by nature defines the relationship between 10 large supermarkets and their suppliers.

Does the Minister accept that there is a case for the powers of the adjudicator to be extended to cover all powerful companies—big and small—within the supply chains or at least that the adjudicator can be charged with gathering evidence relating to any abuses? I concur with what the NFU said in its briefing, suggesting that the adjudicator should be able to recommend changes to the code, which is the foundation of what we are discussing today. Is the adjudicator able to recommend changes to the code? I also ask the Minister to clarify the extent of the changes that could be recommended. If the plight of primary producers continues to be problematic, the adjudicator may be the best person to make a request to extend the code and possibly extend its remit to others in the supply chain, should they receive complaints of this nature.

I have two final points. First, I welcome what the Government have said about the anonymity of complainants. This has been a prevailing theme through all these deliberations over the last few years—the constraint that the fear factor has placed on a number of potential complainants.

Secondly, to raise a point touched on by my hon. Friend the Member for St Ives, what resources will be available to the adjudicator? Will he be able to look at issues arising since the origins of the code, which are immense, and will sufficient resources be available for him to do so?

The Food and Drink Federation has said that “abuses of retail power by retailers damage suppliers' confidence, and their ability to invest and innovate”. This has led to a reduction in choice and availability, and it increases costs for consumers.

This Bill is designed to protect suppliers from unfair breaches of contract, but as we have heard, it does not address all the issues of fair pricing to farmers and producers. In the context of the dairy industry, we look to the voluntary code to help us in that respect. Sometimes, as I have found in going to agricultural meetings across my constituency, this has been characterised as the panacea or great solution to all the problems and challenges

that the farming industry faces. Somebody—in government or, implicitly, there is a responsibility on all of us—has to talk earnestly and honestly to constituents and remind them that this is not the only way in which we are going to assist and support a vibrant agricultural sector. The Bill is one important part of the process, but it will not achieve everything. It is a critical step towards fair treatment for all producers and it has the potential to do much more. In Welsh there is the phrase “Chwarae Teg”, which means “fair play”. That is what I believe this Bill is out to achieve. With further consideration and further amendment, too, I hope it can achieve that.

7.45 pm

Nia Griffith (Llanelli) (Lab): I am delighted that, at long last, we have reached the Second Reading of the Groceries Code Adjudicator Bill. Its gestation period seems to have been longer than that of an elephant. Before I proceed any further, I pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Ynys Môn (Albert Owen), who brought forward a private Member's Bill with a rather long title—the Grocery Market Ombudsman Bill—back in 2010. He has since worked hard to lobby for a grocery adjudicator—or, as he much prefers to call it, a supermarket ombudsman. I pay tribute, too, to the hon. Member for St Ives (Andrew George), who chaired the Grocery Market Action Group and was active in pushing forward the agenda from the early days of the Competition Commission inquiry in 2006.

I have already put on record my support for a grocery supermarket adjudicator, so I shall confine my comments to the areas where I feel that the Bill could be improved. It is, above all, about fairness—about ensuring that the groceries supply code of practice is properly adhered to. That code came into force in February 2010, but without an adjudicator it is very difficult for any individual supplier to challenge a retailer who breaches the code. A complaint has to be brought under the dispute resolution procedure or go to court.

Having an adjudicator is about ensuring fair play, having a referee and ensuring that everyone plays by the rules. It is important to stress that the Bill is not an anti-supermarket measure. Any retailer who respects the groceries supply code of practice has nothing to fear from the establishment of the adjudicator's office. It is about creating a level playing field and tackling any attempts to breach the code which, if left unchecked, can damage suppliers, rival retailers and ultimately customers.

We should not underestimate the intimidation and difficulties that suppliers face if they are being badly treated by retailers. It is frightening to hear from the Farmers Union of Wales and the NFU about some of the sharp practices to which suppliers are subjected—varying supply agreements and decreasing the price paid for milk retrospectively. There is no doubt that this type of treatment can have a devastating effect on farms, particularly small family farms, and the driving down of prices by these retailers is certainly threatening to put some farmers out of business. We have already lost many farms from the dairy industry, and this type of driving down of prices, particularly when there is little flexibility from the banks, is threatening to put even more farmers out of business.

I very much welcome the fact that the Bill will now allow the adjudicator to accept complaints and evidence from third parties such as trade associations and trade

unions. It can be extremely intimidating for any one supplier to bring a complaint, and trade associations and trade unions can offer help and support, and they are often in a position to see patterns of behaviour emerging—if, for example, there is a systematic breaking of the code.

The very fact that such organisations can bring issues to the attention of the adjudicator will in itself act as an incentive for retailers to abide by the code, but it worries me that clause 15(10) gives power to the Secretary of State completely to rescind that power. If we are serious about giving the opportunity to third parties such as trade unions and trade associations to bring issues to the adjudicator's attention, why on earth do we have such a provision that would allow the list of the adjudicator's powers to be deleted completely? As I say, that worries me considerably.

The question of the safeguarding of anonymity is extremely tricky. Several Members have given instances in which it would be easy to identify suppliers when their number is very small. That is one reason why the adjudicator's power to undertake proactive investigations is so important. It might be possible for an adjudicator with both the power to work with trade associations and unions and the power to undertake proactive investigations to keep an ear to the ground, look out for examples of sharp practice, and take up complaints in a broader context. That could help to protect anonymity.

Like other Members, I am disappointed that the adjudicator will not have the power from day one to impose fines on those who breach the code. The Government propose that the adjudicator must make the case for such a power to the Secretary of State. That process would be very convoluted, and would involve further delay—the Minister herself spoke of a delay of at least six months—but, more important, it would convey the message that the adjudicator was powerless. It would make far more sense to give the adjudicator the power to levy fines from the outset, enabling him to exercise discretion and impose fines if that seemed appropriate.

Mr David Hamilton (Midlothian) (Lab): If the adjudicator were given the power at the outset, would not companies be more likely to self-regulate, because they would know that action could be taken at a later stage?

Nia Griffith: As the hon. Member for North Antrim (Ian Paisley) pointed out, the stronger the adjudicator is from the outset, the more likely everyone will be to fall into line. If it is made clear that the adjudicator has powers that can be used immediately, there will be no need for us to fuff around for six months trying to introduce some other piece of legislation that puts the power in the right place for the adjudicator.

It is crucial for the power to be there from the start. That would give everyone far more confidence in the role of the adjudicator, and would undoubtedly make the adjudicator much more effective. It would enhance the status of the adjudicator in the minds of the public, the supermarkets and the suppliers. We have already heard many Members and many organisations issue a plea for the adjudicator to have the power to fine from the outset, and I hope that the Government will listen to it.

[Nia Griffith]

Many Members have mentioned intimidation and suppliers' fear of victimisation. The adjudicator should also have the power to fine retailers who discriminate against suppliers on the basis that, rightly or wrongly, they are suspected of providing evidence for the purpose of investigation. In other words, there should be some protection for the whistleblower. Otherwise, it will still be incredibly difficult for people to come forward and expose some of what is going on.

I warmly welcome the Bill and hope that it will make excellent progress in Committee, but I think that if we do not grab the opportunity to give the adjudicator the teeth that the office deserves, it will be a wasted opportunity.

7.53 pm

Mr Mark Spencer (Sherwood) (Con): Let me first draw attention to my entry in the Register of Members' Financial Interests. As a farmer, I am in the fortunate position of not supplying one of the major supermarkets, but I do, of course, know plenty of people in that position, including many of my constituents.

I broadly welcome the Bill. It is fantastic, it is timely, and the Government should be congratulated on the way in which they are addressing the current problem. It was with some frustration that I listened to the criticism from the Opposition Benches that it had taken two and a half years for legislation to be presented, given that, when in government, they presided over the rise of the supermarkets and the power that they gained.

Fiona O'Donnell: Rather than referring to "criticisms", perhaps, in this new atmosphere, we could refer to suggestions for improvements—which, in all fairness, have come not just from Opposition Members but from Government Members.

Mr Spencer: I shall be talking about possible improvements. I think that there is a fair amount of cross-party agreement on the way in which the Bill can be improved. However, I also want to talk about some of the good practice that we see out there. We have heard a great deal of criticism of supermarkets and the way in which things work, but there are plenty of examples of supermarkets and farmers working closely together to improve the supply chain, add wealth to both businesses, and bring employment to rural areas. I think we should recognise that there is more to be celebrated than there is to be criticised, although we need to ensure that when things go wrong, there is a way of stepping in to sort them out.

When I embarked on my business career, my grandfather told me that the definition of a good deal was "a bit for me, a bit for you, and then another deal". I think that we have reached a stage at which the supermarket sometimes wields too much power in the relationship, to the extent that I almost feel obliged to make it absolutely clear that some of the practices that I intend to highlight bear no resemblance to the activities of any of my constituents. There is a genuine fear out there of blacklisting and being removed from the stocking lists of supermarkets, such is their power.

I think it worth examining the practices that have gone on in the agriculture industry and its relationship with supermarkets. The first that springs to mind, which

no one has mentioned so far today, is the operation of payment terms, which the supermarkets have stretched to a point at which big business is being financed by little business. That applies not only to agriculture, but to many other UK industries in which little suppliers are delivering products to big suppliers. The big suppliers do not pay for more than 90 days, and the smaller producers are forced to borrow from their banks in order—in effect—to lend the money to them.

One of the most shocking practices, to which other Members have referred, is the practice of rejecting loads of products when the price of the market goes through the roof, when there is over-supply, or when the weather changes, as in the case of the strawberry industry. There is real abuse of the system when supermarkets are able to reject a load that is perishable and cannot be returned without giving any recompense to the primary producer.

I am told that when a contract is being negotiated with a supermarket, the first line of the negotiation relates not to the retail price, the production price or even the wholesale price, but to the margin that returns to the supermarket. The primary producer must guarantee that margin. That cannot possibly apply to any other relationship between supply and retail. Whether the product is cauliflowers, carrots, plimsolls or widgets, if the supermarket decides to arrange a promotion and reduce its retail value, the primary producer will lose out while the margin of the supermarket will be protected and never squeezed.

Huw Irranca-Davies (Ogmore) (Lab): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that those margins are seen not only in the direct relationship between producers and major retailers, perhaps on contract terms, but throughout the supply chain? Sometimes a retailer will say "Well, it's nothing to do with us, guv", but somewhere along the line an intermediary will be saying "We want those margins."

Mr Spencer: That is a valuable point. There have been a number of references to the dairy industry, and to small dairy farmers all over the United Kingdom. It should be borne in mind that very few small dairy farmers deal directly with the supermarkets. They nearly always negotiate through a dairy producer, someone who is making cheese or yoghurt, or even a bottling plant. The hon. Gentleman has made an important point, and we shall probably need to consider it once we have sorted out the Bill.

Another important topic is that of promotions. Many consumers will no doubt think that "buy one, get one free" offers and other promotions show supermarkets' generosity, as they must be shrinking their margins. The truth, however, is that it is the primary producers who pick up the tab for the reduced price of the product, and they are often also asked to increase the supply of that product.

Earlier in the year a series of adverts ran on TV promoting asparagus at half price. The weather had been so shocking that I do not think there can have been a single blade of English asparagus on the market at that time. I almost shuddered for our asparagus producers. Many of them had obviously signed a contract to supply a supermarket, and an advertising spot had been booked six months in advance, without regard to the weather. When that time slot in the calendar came, the

advertised rolled out and asparagus producers were probably having to buy asparagus from Mexico or Spain to meet their contracts to supply that promotion. There is no flexibility in the system, or common sense from some supermarket buyers.

The worst practice, however, is backdating. A primary producer can supply a supermarket for two years, let us say, and then the supermarket can suddenly say to that producer, “By the way, we’re backdating the price of all that product you’ve supplied to us for the last 12 months, and you owe us £50,000.” That primary producer is then faced with the prospect of either finding that money from somewhere—borrowing it or taking it out of their bank account—or reneging on the contract and never being dealt with again. That truly is an abuse of power. I hope the grocery ombudsman will be able to stop such practices.

Key issues are what tools will be available to the ombudsman and how he will make sure the code of practice is adhered to. That brings us to schedule 3 and the subject that has been dominating the debate: if the adjudicator cannot fine supermarkets, will he have sharp enough teeth to ensure that the code is adhered to? I do not ask the Minister to commit to anything in his winding-up speech, but I ask him to assure us that he will have an open mind and will consider the Committee’s deliberations, and be willing to make an amendment if he feels that that is the right thing to do.

I reiterate that there is much more good than bad in this Bill and it represents a great step forward. With the will of the House and a fair wind, I think we can get to the right place for the primary producers, and also for our consumers, who want good quality food in our supermarkets at the right price, and, crucially, at a price that is sustainable.

Small dairy farmers begin the process of producing milk by choosing an animal to breed. They then breed that cow, which takes nine months, bring that heifer to full production, which takes two years, and then, finally, they get milk from that animal. It takes four years of hard work and investment to get to the point of supplying any milk, therefore. In that time, supermarkets can change their contract on an hourly basis. The whole of the risk is with the primary producer, and at present there are occasions when the whole of the reward is with the retailer. I sincerely hope that we can start to redress the balance in that relationship, to the benefit of supermarkets, primary producers and consumers.

8.4 pm

Dr Eilidh Whiteford (Banff and Buchan) (SNP): I am very pleased to be able to contribute to this debate, and I commend the Government on introducing these measures and making such good progress with the Bill.

There is general agreement among Members that effective measures to protect producers in supermarket supply chains are long overdue, and that the groceries code adjudicator is a step in the right direction. The issues we have to grapple with now are whether the Government’s proposals will achieve what they set out to achieve and whether the adjudicator will have sufficiently sharp teeth to be an effective regulator.

If I have one overarching concern about the Bill it is that the establishment of a groceries code adjudicator will not serve to address the underlying problems of the

concentration of power in groceries supply chains and the dominance of a handful of large supermarkets. Indeed, it is not designed to do that. The groceries code adjudicator will not tackle in any fundamental way the huge power imbalance in these supply chains between producers, processors and retailers, but it could, perhaps, tackle some of the symptoms of these underlying issues, and redress some of the worst imbalances, at least to some extent. The adjudicator will only be able to do so, however, if it has real sanctions at its disposal and the confidence of producers.

These are not new problems. Farmers and food producers have complained for years about the way in which supermarket supply chains operate. The specifics change, but the refrain has been the same for at least 20 years: smaller-scale producers, including some farmers in my constituency, secure a contract with a large supermarket and invest in creating jobs and new equipment, only to find that the goalposts shift very quickly. As the hon. Member for Sherwood (Mr Spencer) just recounted from his own experience, as time goes by an unsustainable squeeze is put on them, whether through the imposition of lower margins or changed specifications, or through late payments, demands for the producer to fund promotions or retrospective changes to the terms and conditions of their contract. In short, the risks and the costs are pushed down the supply chain. Those at the sharp end of primary production find they have little negotiating power in a supply chain in which a handful of large retailers and processors reap a disproportionate share of the profit.

I am glad that the proposals will tackle discretionary pricing and the shifting sands in supplier contracts, but the measures need to be enforceable. This evening’s debate has rightly focused on the efficacy and enforcement of the code of conduct and whether reputational risk will be a sufficient deterrent to curb the worst excesses of retailers’ behaviour towards suppliers. I appreciate that any new powers may have unintended consequences, and that we need to ensure that any new scheme does not backfire on consumers, but we must also acknowledge that this has been a long-standing problem. We must appreciate, too, that it is a structural problem. These imbalances have not arisen just in the last couple of years. They have existed for decades, and we must not miss this opportunity to tackle the problems in the supply chain.

We must recognise that these problems have already done considerable damage to our farming communities, and that they are continuing to do damage and are making our processing sector very vulnerable. If we are serious about food security and enabling our primary producers to continue to farm and produce the food we need, we must understand the pressures they face and take them a lot more seriously.

The disturbing and disappointing news breaking this evening that Vion is pulling out of the UK illustrates all too keenly the fragile nature of our food supply chains and the pressure our food producers and processors face in the current economic climate. Some 13,000 people across the UK work for Vion, including more than 130 in my constituency at Strath of Brydock. I know Members across the House will share my concern about the uncertainty facing the employees of Vion, and I ask the Minister to give us an assurance this evening that everything possible will be done to ensure continuity

[Dr Eilidh Whiteford]

in those Vion plants across the UK, and that the Government will be working very hard to find buyers for the businesses.

The problems in the supply chain are one of the factors that give rise to the problems food processors face, and addressing them is one of the objectives of the Bill. This evening's news about Vion is very unfortunate, but it should serve to concentrate our minds on why we so desperately need an effective groceries code adjudicator. This is not a debate about an abstract topic; real people's jobs and lives are at stake.

We should not forget the negotiations on the common agricultural policy. Many farm businesses in my constituency would not be economically viable were it not for pillar one support. Many jobs in the processing sector would be completely unsustainable without that support. I gather from debates in recent weeks that the Government think that there is a case for reducing CAP support to our farmers. Unless we have effective measures to influence supply chains, that is not viable and it will put undue pressure on our rural communities and farmers who are going through difficult times, given the wider economic context in which they are trying to trade. An adjudicator needs proper powers if they are to be able to rise to the challenge of sustainable food production in the years ahead.

Many people say that the problem with voluntary codes is that they do not stand the test of time, and tend to be eroded or watered down once media attention disappears. As public attention wanes on issues such as the situation of dairy farmers, reputational risks diminish for the retailers and it is back to business as usual. That is why reputational risk measures on their own will not be enough to enforce the role of the adjudicator, and we must look at more substantial financial sanctions. Dairy farmers' success over the summer badly needs to be consolidated. Dairy farmers in my constituency cannot spend every Saturday afternoon on the high street at Drummer's corner with petition boards. Young farmers do not want to have to dress up in cow outfits to get attention: they just want to be able to do their job. They cannot rely on being able to generate public sympathy all the time.

Without doubt, retailers value reputations and brands, but without sustained, concerted action by suppliers to keep public attention on their own product the story quickly dies. Retailers employ highly paid, very professional public relations executives, whereas working farmers do not necessarily have that public affairs expertise at their disposal, and do not have the money to pay for it. The loss of reputation for supermarkets does not necessarily translate into sufficiently meaningful change in consumer behaviour and consequently supermarket behaviour. Earlier in the summer, allegations of tax avoidance were levelled at a number of large corporations, including supermarkets such as Tesco and Asda, but that has not translated into a customer exodus, so I caution the Minister against relying too much on reputational damage to enforce the role of the groceries code adjudicator.

Supermarkets insist that price and quality are the key drivers of customer satisfaction, and my own view is that financial penalties are likely to be the most meaningful sanctions, and they should be available from the outset. Responsible retailers do not have anything to fear from that. Indeed, it might encourage them to develop better,

more progressive and responsible supply chain models. To give credit where it is due, Morrisons supermarket has used a different supply chain model for its meat producers. It has a meat-processing plant close to Turriff in my constituency, and farmers are much happier about that model than about previous models. There is a bit of learning still to do in the process, but there is a chance to incentivise good practice in the Bill, rather than simply hold a sword of Damocles over the supermarkets.

Another issue that has been debated this evening is accessibility and whether third parties, trade associations, non-governmental organisations and others should be able to provide evidence to spark an investigation. I am glad that the Government have recognised the valuable role that those third parties can play in the process. From my point of view, it is the veracity of the evidence that matters, regardless of its source. If there is credible evidence that the code has been breached, it should not matter where the evidence comes from. One of the main reasons why the effectiveness of voluntary codes has not been sustained is that suppliers, as has been said, are scared to put their head above the parapet and challenge manifestly unfair supply chain practices by the major retailers because they fear retaliation. They worry about losing their contract, and about getting a reputation as a troublemaker. That is one reason why others need to be able to raise concerns on their behalf.

As has been said, there is a global dimension to the Bill. The retailers who will be affected by the groceries code adjudicator all have extensive overseas supply chains, including in parts of the world where there is scant regard for labour rights, where pay is abysmal and exploitation is widespread. Pushing the costs and risks of production down the supply chain on to producers causes real hardship for our own farm businesses, food producers and processors, and other suppliers. At an international level, however, that squeeze is felt by some of the poorest people in the world, who have no social protection whatsoever. For the most part, they are not in a position to act as advocates for themselves, which is why it is important that others not only highlight the problems in the supply chain—ActionAid, Oxfam and others have done so for years—but can do so with a reasonable hope and expectation of securing meaningful change in practices.

I hear a lot of complaints from farmers in my constituency, but very few of them are willing to go public and put their head above the parapet. The hon. Member for Sherwood was careful not to identify any of his constituents for fear of the consequences. Anonymity and confidentiality are essential, but for suppliers who produce a unique product that no one else produces or a niche product that only a limited number of suppliers produce there is nowhere to hide, because they can be easily identified. I urge the Minister to respond and take on board the important role both of third parties and of the adjudicator in being able to initiate investigations.

I want to conclude by sharing with the House an advert that appeared in the Scottish press in the summer. Tesco, which posted UK profits of £2.5 billion this year, advertised for a buyer to operate in the Scottish islands among some of the most marginal farmers anywhere in the British isles. The job advert asked for candidates who would

“achieve...savings/income target through the 4 ways of buying: Buy for less; Someone Else Pays; Use less; Re-engineer”.

I find that quite shocking, as it is a naked admission from the retailer of what its supply chain model really is. Beneath all the hype and the glossy corporate responsibility literature, the supply chain model is to squeeze small, marginal producers as much as possible to maximise profits. That should be challenged, and when we debate the careful balance of these issues we must absolutely understand that those retailers have been ruthless with small farmers, and have made it increasingly non-viable for them to farm and to produce the food on which we all rely.

We have waited a long time for effective sanctions. Financial penalties will send a signal not just to the retailers but to farmers and producers that the Government are serious about helping them. It would improve confidence in the adjudicator as the post is established. We hear a lot that “Every little helps.” Perhaps it does, but we do not want just a little at this juncture. We want the measure to be a first step, and we want a robust Bill with solid sanctions. The Committees that have produced reports on the issue have said that the Bill needs to go further, and that proper financial sanctions are required. I hope that Ministers will listen and take that on board, and that we will see an effective groceries code adjudicator.

8.18 pm

Roger Williams (Brecon and Radnorshire) (LD): It is a great pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Dr Whiteford), who speaks with great knowledge of and expertise in agriculture, and she knows the contents of the Bill. Her comments about pillar one were particularly well made. The subject has received poor press, but it is absolutely essential to the well-being of many farmers who farm on hill and other remote areas of these islands.

I declare an interest, as I am still responsible for an active farm that sends most of its products to a major supermarket via a slaughterhouse operated by Vion which, as we have heard, announced today that it was going to pull out of the UK. It employs nearly 1,000 people in the constituency next door to mine, and many of the farmers I represent use that facility to market their livestock. I hope that the Minister will take note of that, because it is a particular issue for us.

I commend and congratulate the Under-Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills, my hon. Friend the Member for East Dunbartonshire (Jo Swinson), on how she moved Second Reading. She did it with enthusiasm and panache. Not only is she able, but she is lucky, too. She was in the right place at the right time to pick up the Bill, which has support across the House and is one we have been waiting for for a very long time. She is not only able and lucky, but standing on the shoulders of giants who have taken the business forward in the past. Mention has already been made of Colin Breed, a former Member of this House, who was the first person to produce a report that put in print what many people believed—that is, that supermarkets, because of the way in which they had grown and now dominated the marketplace, were taking an unfair advantage. That led to the first Competition Commission report on the subject.

This is a failing market. Many of us believe that if markets are working properly they need light regulation, but this is certainly an example of a failing market in which the people making the purchasing decisions are so large and dominant in the market that they can

adversely affect it to the detriment of the small producers. We need regulation, and I believe that the Bill is a fine piece of legislation that will contribute to resolving the problems.

Let me make a few suggestions about what we could consider in Committee when the individual clauses are debated. Mention has already been made of the ability of the adjudicator to implement fines. I certainly support that and would support a debate on the subject in Committee. It seems to me that just because an adjudicator could impose fines, fines would not necessarily be imposed or have to be imposed. The fact that the power was available to the adjudicator would make the job a lot easier and would put pressure on the supermarkets to take every opportunity to ensure that their dealings with their suppliers were fair.

Naming and shaming can have a big effect on supermarkets. I have been told that during the summer, when the dairy industry was in turmoil, the straw that broke the supermarkets' backs, making them increase the prices they paid to farmers and enter into the voluntary code that a former Agriculture Minister was so instrumental in introducing, was the huge Twitter and Facebook campaign about the supermarkets that were the worst in abusing their suppliers. That was the turning point. Obviously, the farmers were protesting on the streets, but the campaign among consumers made a difference. Naming and shaming has a powerful impact on supermarkets, but the ability to impose a fine would give extra power to the adjudicator.

One question that has been asked is what role the adjudicator would have in the voluntary code that the supermarkets have entered into with their suppliers, which is something that the Minister should consider. I know that a number of people have written to the Department and not received an answer. Are we dealing just with the grocery code or with other codes that have been entered into voluntarily by the producers and the supermarkets?

Food chains are rather complex, and rarely does a farmer supply a supermarket directly. That does happen, but it is not the usual way in which food moves along the chain. Often, there are other people between the producer and the retailer. In the milk industry, farmers supply dairies that either bottle the milk and send it off in liquid form or produce dairy products such as cheese, yoghurt and so on. In the meat industry, the chain will often include slaughterhouses and meat processing plants. There are also other parts of the food chain, such as wholesalers and distributors. The systems are very complex, and I hope that the Bill will ensure that their complexity will be considered by the adjudicator and that the adjudicator will be able to intervene when he thinks the market is failing.

All in all, I believe the Bill addresses many of the problems that small producers have experienced over the past 20 years in dealing with massive purchasing organisations such as supermarkets. The Bill can be improved, and I ask the Minister to consider the ability to impose fines as well as whether the adjudicator will have a role to play in any codes that are entered into voluntarily between producers and supermarkets.

8.26 pm

Fiona O'Donnell (East Lothian) (Lab): I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak in the debate and, in particular, to follow the hon. Member for Brecon and

[Fiona O'Donnell]

Radnorshire (Roger Williams). For Jenny-come-latelies like me, it is particularly valuable to hear about the journey the Bill has travelled before bringing us here today.

It is also not only a pleasurable experience but a unique one for me, as this is the first time my constituents have urged me to speak up in the Chamber in favour of something the Government are doing. I do not know whether that says more about my constituents or the Government. I hope that we are seeing a coming of age moment for this Government. Let me take my first opportunity to welcome the new Under-Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills, the hon. Member for East Dunbartonshire (Jo Swinson), to her position. I hope that this is a coming of age moment when the Government realise that the market when left to its own devices does not always work in a way that allows them to sit back and turn a blind eye.

The hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Dr Whiteford) spoke about just how dysfunctional the relationship has become among the major supermarkets, the food producers and consumers, which means that it is time for the Government to act and intervene. The balance of power is so out of kilter that it is legitimate even for this Government to intervene to regulate. I hope that the new Minister—well, the relatively new Minister—will keep that feeling in her heart and consider it when it comes to the big energy suppliers and the payday loan companies. There is always a point at which her Government can say that enough is enough and that it is time for them to intervene.

East Lothian has some of the most beautiful and fertile agricultural land in the whole of this nation. The farmers in my constituency are facing a particularly difficult time after the bad summer that we had. Many of the crops will not yield what farmers had hoped for, and I hope for them that the Bill will offer some hope. We will judge the Bill on how it delivers for many of the hopes that we have. As well as a better future for farmers, I hope it will give them the opportunity to innovate, and that they will have the confidence to do that, now that they know there will be fairness in the supply chain.

The hon. Member for Banff and Buchan spoke about the importance for her farmers of having pillar 1 funding from the common agricultural policy. I hope farmers, especially smaller food producers, will see the Bill as an opportunity to plant for the future with some certainty. As farming is a major employer in my constituency, I hope this will lead to the creation of more jobs and improve the working conditions and pay of many of those who work in the agricultural sector and who, with the abolition of the Agricultural Wages Boards, have lost the security that they have enjoyed for decades as a result of the intervention of a previous Labour Government.

I pay tribute to the many Members who, over the years, have succeeded in building a consensus across the House. There is a very different feeling in the Chamber tonight. I was impressed, as I often am, by the words of the shadow Business, Innovation and Skills Minister, my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh South (Ian Murray), when he said that we have an opportunity to make a good Bill a better Bill. I very much hope that the Government will take that opportunity in Committee and that they will be open to opportunities to improve

and strengthen the Bill. I stress to my hon. Friend that this is not a pitch to join him on the Public Bill Committee. One can have too much of a good thing. I previously sat with him on the Committee that considered the Enterprise and Regulatory Reform Bill, where the many valuable contributions that he brought to the debate in that forum were unfortunately spurned by the Government.

We have already seen attempts to improve the Bill, some of which the Government have responded to positively. I hope we continue to see that spirit. I spoke about how we are to judge the Bill. I wish that on Report in the Lords, the Government had accepted an amendment that would have built into the Bill a point at which the Government will review progress. I hope both Ministers were listening to the Chair of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee, the hon. Member for Thirsk and Malton (Miss McIntosh), when she said that her Committee believed that that would strengthen the Bill.

We have heard from various Select Committees and many organisations. I particularly thank ActionAid and Oxfam for the briefings that they have provided on the general debate about food security. I hope Ministers will realise that not just in this place, but out there in a variety of organisations, there is concern about the need to review the Bill and consider further powers for the groceries adjudicator.

I came this evening not to bury the big four supermarkets, but more to praise them. There have been real tensions in communities in my constituency. We are a constituency of small communities and the arrival of out-of-town supermarkets has threatened the future of the town high street and the marketplace. The community has responded positively by innovating, but it will be another test of the Bill if it brings further benefits to high streets that are struggling to compete with the big supermarkets. We have some wonderful specialty shops in East Lothian, in places such as Haddington, North Berwick and Dunbar—some up-market delicatessens where it is a pleasure to browse and shop. It is one of the strengths of East Lothian and why people visit it.

However, there is also a place for the supermarkets and I want to put on record my support for them. Many of my constituents need somewhere on their doorstep where they can buy a cheap school uniform and get the basic range of food and provisions. I do not deny that there is a role for supermarkets, but I want to see the balance maintained in my constituency. Many others in the House no doubt have a similar situation and want to see our town centres grow, thrive, innovate, contribute to the local economy and create jobs.

I welcome the fact that the Government have changed their mind and listened to the concerns about third-party evidence. Will the Minister give us a little more detail? Many producers fear for their future if word gets round. We see blacklisting in other professions. What is the meat of the Bill that will protect those food producers? A little more detail on that would be useful, as would any plans the Government have for improving clause 18.

We have talked about trade associations and trade unions being able to provide evidence, but we have not yet heard whether campaigning bodies will be able to do so. It is very reassuring and I welcome all that, so I wonder why the Government bothered to include in the Bill the power to rescind that, a point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Llanelli (Nia Griffith)—I hope

I have pronounced the name of her constituency correctly; the guttural Scots tongue comes in useful at times. The Government can send some important messages by setting out certain provisions in the Bill. What message do they send the big retailers if the Government are not sure whether or not to include that power? It is a bit of a hokey-cokey clause.

I also have concerns that I am sure Ministers will recognise. We have heard from Members on both sides of the House and from all parties about the effectiveness of naming and shaming. The Minister tried to press Opposition Front Benchers on the size of proposed fines, so I will now press for some detail on what form the naming and shaming will take. She spoke about the possibility of retailers having to place notices in the national press. Will the adjudicator be able to specify the size of those notices and what newspapers they should appear in? Will it just be national newspapers, or will it include local newspapers, which are struggling to raise revenue in the current economic climate? Also, local people often trust more what they read in their local press. It would be good to hear a little more detail about where the retailers will be named and shamed.

Furthermore, what evidence do the Government have that naming and shaming actually works, because we seem to see the opposite? One example is this House. We have come through the expenses scandal—I hope—although it does not always feel that way, but when we ask people on the street which party is worse when it comes to the abuse of MPs' expenses, the reaction is pretty much this: "You're all the same and all as bad as each other." I wonder whether that could be consumers' approach to the retailers. They might not distinguish between the supermarkets, all the information would simply be lost in a blur and there would be an overall perception that there is something rather fishy going on. I really do not think that consumers will use that power and information to hurt an individual major retailer where it hurts—in the pocket. If there is evidence to the contrary, it would be good to hear it.

The Minister spoke about where we have seen consumer power, but that has often been in relation to a single product range or an unethical issue. In the meantime, supermarkets have continued to enjoy large profits. In my constituency the choice is between only two major retailers. Because of the distance between the Asda store in Dunbar and the Tesco store in Haddington, consumers have to travel quite a journey to exercise that right. I will say at this point that Sainsbury's is coming to Haddington. I am not plugging them so that they sponsor my Christmas card, like that of my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh South, but perhaps that is a negotiation I might enter into after the debate. Sainsbury's has shown good practice in working locally to build a vision for Haddington town centre, so that conflicting concerns can be balanced and the livelihood and sustainability of a town centre can be preserved while the out-of-town option is there.

Sheila Gilmore (Edinburgh East) (Lab): Given the clear balance in the speeches that have been made today across the House, would not it be good if Ministers, rather than just waiting for the Bill to go to Committee, said now that they would table the kinds of amendments that everyone seems to be asking for—for example to introduce fines at an early stage?

Fiona O'Donnell: My hon. Friend, as ever, makes an excellent contribution. The Government have a track record in this regard. They accepted some of our amendments to the Health and Social Care Bill, but only after they had branded them as their own, so perhaps our suggestions will morph into Government amendments that will result in an improved Bill.

A message has to be sent. There is no more important issue on which we can send a message to the big retailers than that of fines, and I make that appeal to Ministers. The point has been made by hon. Members of all parties during this debate and by Select Committees and organisations outside this place that we need, at the outset, to give the groceries adjudicator the power to impose fines. That would set a strict limit. We do not want to be like a parent who tells their child, "I'm going to let you out, not give a curfew and see how it goes." It would be better to set a benchmark at this stage—a line that the big retailers cannot cross—rather than let them see how far they can push us.

Some companies irritate many of us by constantly phoning to offer to represent us if we have been mis-sold payment protection plans that we did not know we had signed up to. The reality is that only now that they are beginning to be hurt in their wallets are some of those companies desisting from such practices.

In summary, I see hope for this Bill, but we have offered Ministers the opportunity to improve it. Although I do not expect that to happen this evening, I hope that they will take that opportunity in Committee so that the Bill can be all it can be.

8.41 pm

Neil Parish (Tiverton and Honiton) (Con): It is a great pleasure to speak in this debate and to follow the hon. Member for East Lothian (Fiona O'Donnell), whose remarks I echo. This has been a great cross-party debate and Members want to make sure that the Bill is good and right. I also welcome the fact that Ministers from the Departments for Business, Innovation and Skills and for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs are at one on this. Even the Select Committees are united. There is parliamentary unity on the Bill, so this must be one of the greatest moments of all time.

I say to the Ministers that the Bill will need to have real teeth, for the simple reason that one of this country's retail traders has more than 30% of the trade, a larger turnover than many small countries, and huge powers. It is a great idea to name and shame retailers, but we need to have the powers to fine them and to keep fining them. If they do not adhere in the first instance, there must be real pain, by which I do not mean tuppence ha'penny from the billions of pounds of turnover; the fine has to mean business. We have to turn this situation around.

I am not here to slam the supermarkets—they do a great deal of good—but we have to make sure that enough money cascades from what the consumer pays for his or her product at the supermarket back down to both the producer and the grower.

Guy Opperman (Hexham) (Con): I endorse what my hon. Friend is saying and I know that the growers and producers in Northumberland will support this Bill wholeheartedly. What robust measures does he think would genuinely hold the supermarkets to account?

Neil Parish: I would like to see fines incorporated into the Bill—I am sure that the Government will listen when it is debated in Committee—so that there is real pain. I believe that the threat of fines, as well as that of naming and shaming, will help make sure that not too many of the large retailers will have to go before the adjudicator. If they have nothing to hide and if their retail trade practices are right, they will have nothing whatsoever to fear, either from the Bill or from potential fines.

It is not only the producer who is at risk in these trades. Many of the direct contracts that the supermarkets have with farmers in the dairy and meat trades are excellent. However, supermarkets may decide to have a price war and to reduce their prices, perhaps by using these products as loss leaders. That is wonderful for consumers, provided that it is the supermarkets who pay for those loss leaders, and that they do not go back down the chain and squeeze not only the producer, but the processor.

Guy Opperman: I know that my hon. Friend is a champion of the dairy industry. The Minister who will respond to this debate is the Minister who responded to the dairy debate in Westminster Hall. Does my hon. Friend agree that the dairy industry is the biggest example that we can cite of a price compromise affecting the farmer and the producer such that they effectively go out of business?

Neil Parish: My hon. Friend makes an excellent point. Much work was done by the previous farming and food Minister, my right hon. Friend the Member for South East Cambridgeshire (Sir James Paice), to get voluntary dairy codes in place. The Minister of State, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, the hon. Member for Somerton and Frome (Mr Heath) is carrying on that good work. The hon. Member for Brecon and Radnorshire (Roger Williams) said that we need to be sure that the groceries code adjudicator will be able to look at the voluntary codes and contracts. I repeat that it is essential that a share of the money that the consumer pays for his or her product goes to the processor and the producer.

We are moving into a world of some 7 billion people. That world does not have oceans of cheap food. In many ways, that is a good thing, but it is also difficult for consumers across the world. There are people in this country who are struggling to buy food and it is essential that they get a good deal. However, in order to get a good deal, we must ensure that the producer, be it of milk, beef, lamb, carrots, potatoes or other vegetables, gets a return. If they get a return on their investment, they will produce more food and do so efficiently. That is the way to ensure that we can deliver products at a good price on the supermarket shelf.

Some of the ways in which large buyers and retailers have abused their position over the years have made food prices higher rather than lower. In the short term, when the supermarkets have a price war that drives prices down, it seems like the consumer is getting a good deal, but it drives many people out of business, meaning that there is less production than there was before.

Until now it has been possible to go around the world and bring in the extra product that is needed. However, to take the meat sector, where is the beef that is out

there in the world? Forty years ago, the Chinese were eating 500,000 tonnes of beef a year. Now, they are eating 5 million tonnes of beef a year. The UK produces about 1 million tonnes of beef, so one can see that instead of eating half as much beef as we produce, China is now eating five times that amount. All the beef that used to be sloshing around in Brazil and Argentina, which could once be bought cheaply and used, dare I say it, to drive down the price of beef in this country, is no longer there. That is why it is important not only to get things right for the consumer and the trade, but to ensure that we will have reasonably priced food in the future.

In the summer, 3,000 dairy farmers protested outside Westminster, and we had a huge meeting. It was absolutely right for the farmers to protest. They had some of the worst weather that I have seen in my lifetime, and the cost of producing milk went up while the price went down. However, is it right that those farmers with family farms have to march up the hill every time and show how desperate they are to make a fair living? Is it right that we have to use social media to name and shame supermarkets? Again, the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnorshire made that point. It is not right. There is something wrong with the process of trade in this country, and that is why the groceries code adjudicator is so important.

We set much store by the Bill. Other hon. Members referred to the common agricultural policy and the single farm payments. All Members want farmers to get more money and more of their income. Farmers would much rather have more of their income from the market—from what they produce—than from what they receive in the single farm payment. They would thus not be so vulnerable to the politics of not only Britain, but the European Union.

The rising population, the need to produce more food from the same amount of land throughout the world, global warming, and the fact that northern Europe and Britain will need to produce much more food, mean that we should be able to get a good price for that food. However, if we have not got the market right, the price of food will not go back to the producer, and we will not produce the amount of food that we need.

There is a need for food security, and a moral issue about producing food. Some people in the world cannot afford to eat and it is therefore important that we produce more food—sustainably, and in an environmentally and animal-welfare friendly way. That is what our consumers want: to be sure that, when they go to a supermarket or a small retailer, they get a fair deal, and that that also applies to the producer and the grower, not only in this country, but in developing countries. Our supermarkets often do not give producers throughout the world a fair deal. Let us hope that the groceries code adjudicator can do that.

We have rightly talked a lot about the retailer and the producer today, but we must remember that nearly 500,000 people in this country are involved in food processing, and 80% of the food that they process is grown and produced in this country. The Bill is therefore good not only for the producer but for the processor and I believe that, in the end, it will be good for our supermarkets.

Much as one would perhaps enjoy a major war with the supermarkets and the big retailers, it is ultimately not a war that we want because where do 70%, 80% or

even 90% of the population buy their food? They buy it in supermarkets—they want to shop there. We must be sure that, when they shop, the groceries code adjudicator will have enough teeth to ensure that the consumer, the producer and the processor—everyone in the food chain—get a fair deal.

Mr Spencer: Does my hon. Friend acknowledge that farmers need to bear some of the responsibility? Many dairy farmers, instead of selling to a co-operative, decided to trade direct. If they stuck together, they would be much stronger. Some farmers almost pay gate money to obtain those direct contracts, and steal contracts from other farmers, thereby contributing to their own downfall.

Neil Parish: I welcome my hon. Friend's intervention. I often say that farmers' great strength is their independence, although that can also be their great weakness. I welcome the deal between Milk Link and Arla Foods because this country now has a co-operative that controls some 25% of the milk, giving it real clout in the marketplace. It is right for farmers to come together and co-operate, and the Bill will help such co-operation within the farming, processing and retail sectors. As I said, no retailer has anything to fear from the groceries code adjudicator if they have the correct practices, and that is right. Finally, I say again that the Government welcome this Bill, but the Business, Innovation and Skills Committee and the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee must look to put real fines in place so that those who abuse the grocery trade can be brought to book, and not only named and shamed, but properly fined.

8.56 pm

Mr William Bain (Glasgow North East) (Lab): I seem to be falling into the rather pleasant habit, in both this Chamber and Westminster Hall, of following the hon. Member for Tiverton and Honiton (Neil Parish) in debates on food policy. That is agreeable because he speaks with a great deal of authority and good sense, and I broadly concur with his remarks.

I represent one of the most urban constituencies of all Members who have contributed to the debate so far. There is farm land in the northern tip of my constituency, along the boundary that I share with the Minister, but the contribution made by my constituency to the food industry comes primarily from the major fruit trading market in Blochairn, two major bakers and bread makers in Lambhill and Sighthill, two major supermarkets in Sighthill and Robroyston, and the hundreds of constituents who work in the food retail, manufacturing and processing industries on modest, if not relatively low, wages. They make a huge contribution to the food that ends up on our plates.

I was struck by a point made by the hon. Member for South Down (Ms Ritchie) who reminded the House that in the past, weak regulation and regulators with insufficient powers have created problems in the markets. She emphasised the problems that have emerged in the energy markets—we all hear from constituents who are struggling with soaring electricity and gas bills—and the same may prove true in the media sector. This debate has shown that parties across the House do not want the same thing to happen in the food production and retail sectors, and I hope that Ministers will pick up on the need for the groceries code adjudicator to have proper powers, including the power to fine. We have

seen in the home of capitalism—the United States—that in markets where there has been price fixing, the primary sanction used to bring companies engaged in that to account has been the use and imposition of fines.

With rapidly rising food prices becoming one of the biggest pressures on the living standards of millions of people across the country, our consideration of this long-overdue Bill to introduce a groceries code adjudicator is not before time. It is important that we continue to bear down on anti-competitive practices within the large food retail sector and food supply chains, which were so clearly identified in the Competition Commission's 2008 report.

The Bill matters because food is the largest part of the UK's manufacturing sector. It has a turnover of £76 billion a year and accounts for 16% of all manufacturing output. However, the grocery market is dominated by four major retailers, the sales of which totalled 85% of the £143 billion industry turnover in 2009; Asda, Morrisons, Tesco and Sainsbury's accounted for two thirds of the total.

As the hon. Member for Tiverton and Honiton and other hon. Members have said, the economics of sustainable food production will be crucial in resolving the problem of increasing food prices and ensuring that producers and consumers get a fairer deal. In 2008, the Competition Commission said that

“the transfer of excessive risk and unexpected costs by grocery retailers to their suppliers through various supply chain practices if unchecked will have an adverse effect on investment and innovation in the supply chain, and ultimately on consumers”.

I agree. On the impact that that has on food prices, Office for National Statistics data published last week show that, since 2005, the price of fruit has risen 28%; the price of vegetables is up by more than 40%; and the cost of fish has increased by 56%. Real wages are falling at around 4% a year, but food costs are going up by much more than the headline consumer prices index of inflation, so action to make supply chains more efficient to bear down on rapidly rising bills will be a key indicator of the success of the new adjudicator. Big supermarket chains have expanded into the convenience store market and compete directly with smaller chains and independent stores. It is important that the new adjudicator roots out any anti-competitive practices.

The purpose of the Bill is welcome. Its provisions owe a great deal to the work of my right hon. Friend the Member for Leeds Central (Hilary Benn) and his team from their period in government, and my hon. Friend the Member for Ynys Môn (Albert Owen), who spoke earlier in the debate. However, as has been said, both Back-Bench Members and Opposition Front Benchers have concerns about the details, which we believe should be amended in Committee. The major concern is the lack of an independent power for the adjudicator to fine from day one for serious breaches of the code—a step that was recommended by the Competition Commission in 2008. In its report of that year and in its 2000 report, the commission identified two major breaches of the code by large retailers, but the Bill permits the adjudicator to levy fines only with the consent of the Secretary of State following an order, and further consultation and review. As many hon. Members have noted, there might be a delay of a year or 18 months before the power to fine is activated. What other public official in the nature of an ombudsman, which the office

[Mr William Bain]

of groceries code adjudicator surely is, has such weak powers of enforcement and such a lack of independence from Ministers?

The code of practice applies only to supply contracts between individual suppliers and major retailers with a turnover in excess of £1 billion a year. It does not deal with supply chain abuses at more intermediate levels, such as regional wholesalers and processors. The Bill should be amended to allow the adjudicator to monitor fair dealing throughout the supply chain, and ensure that suppliers are protected from the threat of retaliation if they produce evidence of unfair practices.

Hon. Members have referred in the debate to the practice of below-cost selling—my hon. Friend the Member for Hayes and Harlington (John McDonnell) referred to it in an intervention, and I suspect he might do so again in his speech proper. The practice involves a retailer selling an item for less than its input costs, as illustrated by the notorious example of supermarkets selling loaves of white sliced bread for 7p. The practice, which has been prohibited in France, Germany, Spain and Portugal, can force suppliers out of business, and has also caused huge pressures in other sectors, such as the dairy industry.

The Select Committee on Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and the Select Committee on Business, Innovation and Skills have called on the Government to increase the powers available to the adjudicator, to widen the range of those who can bring forward complaints, such as trade associations, trade unions and pressure groups—I welcome the clarification we have received on that point—and to put more detail in the Bill on the power to fine. Those are all reasonable and constructive suggestions by two influential Select Committees. I do not believe I have heard a single hon. Member from the Back Benches, or from the Opposition Front Bench, who has dissented from those views, so I hope that the Government will reflect on the unified outcome of the debate and announce that when the Bill goes to the Committee stage they will accept and table amendments that reflect the will of the House as expressed tonight.

Although clause 7 affords the adjudicator the power to recommend changes to retailers, there are no powers for the adjudicator to compel action by retailers who do not take remedial steps at first instance. Similarly, clause 11 permits, but does not require, the adjudicator to provide advice to suppliers and large retailers on matters relating to the code. It seems somewhat counter-productive for the adjudicator, as part of his or her statutory duties, not to be required to published guidance on how retailers can best comply with the terms implicit within the code.

Providing sufficient protection of anonymity for those bringing complaints before the adjudicator will be crucial to enforceability. National Farmers Union Scotland has argued that the code has so far proven ineffective because of the fear that complainants may be identified. Its view, therefore, is that complaints should be capable of investigation on the basis of credible evidence, whatever its source. I hope the Ministers, in winding up, will respond to the views that NFU Scotland has put forward in its submissions on the Bill.

I hope the Bill will secure an improvement in the living standards of our dairy farmers, which have been under such pressure in recent years, particularly in Scotland.

Although one of the major processors, Müller-Wiseman, has recently increased standard farm-gate milk prices to just over 30p per litre during this winter period, given the increased costs facing dairy farmers that is not far from the absolute minimum that farmers in Scotland need to make ends meet. I hope that the adjudicator, when set up with sufficient powers, will be able to deal with the pressures that cause significant hardship to dairy farmers in Scotland and, as we have heard, in every part of the United Kingdom.

This is a good Bill. As hon. Members have said, we wish it well in Committee. I hope, in conclusion, that Ministers will reflect on what has been a good-tempered and consensual debate, take the positive suggestions offered by the House and provide a system that allows abuses in the market to be tackled and rooted out at source. That leads to one conclusion: the ability of the adjudicator to fine, without an order from the Secretary of State—an ability that must be in the Bill.

9.8 pm

John McDonnell (Hayes and Harlington) (Lab): I chair the Bakers, Food and Allied Workers Union parliamentary group. The group supports the Bill, because we hope that it will address the issue, mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow North East (Mr Bain), of below-cost selling. We have been campaigning on this issue for a number of years by tabling parliamentary questions and early-day motions, and meeting Ministers, yet the problem continues. As my hon. Friend said, below-cost selling is when a retailer sells an item for less than its input cost—what is described as being sold with a negative gross margin. When the Competition Commission conducted an inquiry into items of known value, it identified that bread was a particular issue, as he said. It was not just one supermarket selling white sliced loaves for 7p—many others were selling bread at extremely low prices and low margins. As he said, other countries addressed the issue at the same time by introducing legislation to prevent the resale of goods at a loss. This area is regulated in several European countries.

My hon. Friend also quoted the Competition Commission. In the passage that he quoted, however, the commission went on to say that if the practice went unchecked,

“we conclude that this will ultimately have a detrimental effect on consumers, by leading to low-quality goods, less choice of goods, or less product innovation.”

That is exactly what has happened to the supply of bread. The loss of bread quality should worry all concerned—in many instances, it is now little more than water—and is contributing to the nation’s unhealthy diet. Price pressures are also having an impact on the working processes, so we are concerned about health and safety, particularly in relation to the preponderance of Baker’s asthma among workers producing bread for supermarket chains. As has been said elsewhere, the price pressures obviously result in firms closing, the loss of jobs and pressure on overall pay and conditions.

I want to refer to the three main points raised so far. The first concerns fines. The Bakers, Food and Allied Workers Union has been involved in campaigns to name and shame. As I mentioned earlier, however, not only have they not worked but they have had the contradictory result of giving publicity to companies providing products at extremely low prices. In some ways, naming and shaming actually boosts supermarkets’

sales, as we saw with the Competition Commission's inquiry into the 7p loaf. Our experience is thus not only that large conglomerates can ride out a naming and shaming campaign but that some actually benefit from it.

From my reading of the Bill, it looks as though the fines order will be brought into play only on a case-by-case basis. *[Interruption.]* No, the Minister says it will be on a general basis. If that is so, it will still be left to the Secretary of State to designate in the order the size of the fine to be levied. I would welcome more information. Will a tariff system be established? Will the recommendation on a tariff system come from the adjudicator? The House could usefully discuss whether a tariff system would prove effective and have an impact on companies' practices.

The second issue concerns third party reporting. We have all welcomed that provision and put on record the fact that it will include trade unions. That is incredibly useful, and I congratulate the Government. Having said that, trade unions are anxious that companies might take retaliatory measures against a union or individual members. That is a concern, given past victimisation and blacklisting, so I would welcome the Government's revisiting the blacklisting regulations to ensure adequate protection for trade unions, trade unionists and individual workers who blow the whistle on some of the practices of the supermarkets, as they put pressure on individual companies.

I am extremely worried by clause 15(10). I have never seen such a thing in legislation before. I have seen clauses that allow for a review of the implementation of legislation, and for that review to bring forward recommendations that the House can discuss and on the basis of which we frame further legislation. That is the rational process. I have never before seen in legislation, however, the actual proposed new clause to be introduced. That flies in the face of the rational process of review, assessment and recommendation, after which the House comes to a view. It would help if we could hear why the Government feel they need the draft clause on the shelf, within the Bill itself, to introduce readily. It smacks of defeatism over the effectiveness of the legislation. May I also have some clarity on the process for the order? Will it be the affirmative process or the super-affirmative process—or whatever other process—that the Government recommend? There would need to be quite a heated exchange in this Chamber if we felt that the Government were reverting to type and removing those provisions from the Bill.

Thirdly, the appointment of the adjudicator is very important. I am therefore keen that the Government should concede that there ought to be some form of pre-appointment process via the relevant Select Committee, but I worry sometimes about the timidity of this House. Other Select Committees now have the right to approve appointments, so why not in this instance?

Ian Murray: My hon. Friend is making an incredibly powerful speech. As he is talking about giving this House some input in the appointment to an important post, does he agree that we should go down the route outlined in the Conservative party manifesto from the general election, which said that the Conservatives would “give Select Committees the right to hold confirmation hearings for major public appointments, including the heads of quangos”?

John McDonnell: This point coincides with a private Member's Bill in my name on the appointment of the Governor of the Bank of England. I can understand that the Government—or rather, the Chancellor of the Exchequer—might have some anxieties about that, but I cannot see why anybody should have any anxieties about the adjudicator being appointed with the approval of the relevant Select Committee. In fact, that is exactly what happened with the Office for Budget Responsibility. The appointment of the chair—in fact, the members were there too—was subject to the approval of the Treasury Committee. The post of adjudicator needs to be given sufficient authority, which often stems from the process of appointment. If the appointment was subject not only to pre-examination and review and so on, but to approval by the relevant Select Committee, that would send a message to the supermarkets and anybody else that the Government were serious about this job, and the individual concerned would have the full authority of this House to do as he or she saw fit in implementing the legislation. That is not an awful lot to concede, really.

It is rare to find such unanimity on the Back Benches across all parties. I genuinely do not understand why the issue of fines has arisen. In the old days, an influential figure in a sector of industry would phone No. 10 and the Prime Minister would drag in the Secretary of State and say, “We're not having it, so you'd better amend it.” I hope none of that has gone on. I hope we will get a rational process in Committee, an acknowledgement of the unanimous view on the Back Benches and a Government amendment on fines that we can all agree on. If the Government strengthened the role of the new body—with the unanimous approval of this House, which they would get, because they have had it so far, apart from on this one issue—they could put down a marker to show that the Government mean business on this issue, and so do all legislators in this House.

In that way, the proposal will prove to be effective; otherwise, I make this prediction. There will be rows. The adjudicator will come forward, there will be publicity about a particular instance, the supermarket might pull back for a few months, or maybe a year, then it will return to its practices and we will end up going round the cycle yet again, most probably in two years' time. We will be kicking ourselves and asking, “Why didn't we give the adjudicator powers to fine?” Rather than waiting and revisiting the issue, why not do that now?

As for the order being in place and the choice being between fines in the Bill and fines in a statutory instrument that would take six months, there are people here with more experience than I, but getting a statutory instrument through this House can be quite difficult to say the least. If there is a civil servant out there or someone lobbying, the fastest I have seen it happen is 18 months to two years, so I have some scepticism about getting an SI through in that time. There will be lots of vying for parliamentary time in discussions with the Leader of the House and something could crop up that sends this issue to the back of the queue. It is not just a matter of saying, “Well, if it doesn't work, we'll bring forward an order in six months.” Instead, we could be waiting beyond the next Parliament. Some elements in the industry could play on and exploit that as part of their lobbying practices.

Ultimately, if the ability to fine were put in the Bill and a fine were imposed that the supermarkets, or whoever, were unhappy with, they would resort to a

[John McDonnell]

court of law anyway. If they felt that there was something wrong with the process, they could ask for a judicial review of the Government or the adjudicator. They have all the facilities to do that anyway, so I am not completely sure what the Government are arguing about on that point. I am hoping that we can have a rational process, and that the Government will see reason and table the appropriate amendments in Committee. I also hope that the work that has been done over the years by all those hon. Members who have been congratulated today will come to fruition in an effective piece of legislation.

9.20 pm

Huw Irranca-Davies (Ogmore) (Lab): It is a great pleasure to follow my hon. Friend the Member for Hayes and Harlington (John McDonnell) and his appeal for listening, for unanimity and for constructive work in Committee. This very good debate has revealed common themes and shared aims on both sides of the House. It has also shown that there is a real will, which we share, to get the Bill on to the statute book as soon as possible in a form that is fit and proper and that will enable it to do the job that we and Ministers want it to do. We do not want to miss this golden opportunity to get this absolutely right.

I have a radical suggestion. Perhaps we should dispense with the need to find the names for a Committee, and simply keep on sitting here now until we have put the Bill to bed. With such high levels of experience in the Chamber today, and such clarity on what is required of the Bill, we ought to strike while the iron is hot. I am not sure whether all right hon. and hon. Members would welcome my suggestion, but I shall go on to pull out some of the themes that have been raised in the debate. We often struggle to discern any themes coming out of a debate, as Members put forward different—sometimes very different—viewpoints, and it can be impossible to pull any sort of consensus out of the morass. Today, however, there has been utter clarity, complete consistency and even—dare I say it?—a striking degree of unanimity.

That unanimity centres on two specific issues. First, real congratulations have been offered to the Ministers on bringing forward the Bill, and I offer the ministerial team my own congratulations as well. There has been some criticism over delays, some of which has been knocked back to us for causing delays while we were in government, but the fact is that we are now here and we need to get this right. That is one area of consensus: we all want to see the Bill reach the statute book as soon as possible.

The second area on which there is consensus is that the Bill is not yet fully formed. It is not far off, but it is not fully formed. To extend the metaphor that many others have used today, it is something of a pup that is showing great potential, but it is not yet a watchdog. It is all bark—in the naming and shaming—but there is little bite. As the Under-Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills, the hon. Member for East Dunbartonshire (Jo Swinson) suggested earlier, it is something of a fluffy and likeable little toy, rather than a trusty hound that can bare its teeth when needed and give the occasional nasty nip to the sensitive parts of a miscreant.

Let me turn to the one matter on which I have heard not one dissenting voice throughout the whole debate from any Member in any party, except during the opening remarks. I hope that the Ministers will be open to what they have heard about fines, because there was a remarkable level of consistency and agreement around the Chamber on that point. The Under-Secretary opened the debate with some well-balanced comments, saying that the arguments were finely balanced. She went on to say that financial penalties should initially be a reserve power. I do not think that the arguments are that finely balanced; I believe that there is compelling evidence to the contrary, and I shall say more about that in a moment. If they are so finely balanced, however, I would urge her to listen to the voices that we have heard in the House today. One after another, Labour, Conservative, Liberal Democrat and Unionist colleagues from across the water have stood up to say, “Put those fines on the face the Bill.” Putting them somewhere else in the back pocket or leaving them at home to get them when they are needed means that the message going out to major retailers will be quite different.

Quite honestly—my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh South (Ian Murray) and I have discussed this—should we ever soon be back in government, we would not want to have to go to look for the tools that have been carefully hidden somewhere; we would want them to be right in our hands so that we can use them if they are required—not as a first resort and perhaps not at all, but we want them there as an option. That brings me to the first point about the question being finely balanced. We need all the tools in the toolbox from the off—not one tool left at home or not even yet purchased from the shop, because a reserve power is one that risks not being used.

Secondly, naming and shaming can indeed be powerful on occasions, but it is not always the most appropriate tool for the job. If it is the only tool available, I guarantee to Ministers that it will fail. One after the other, Members of all parties have raised instances where name and shame has been completely ineffective. Name and shame was not a rip-roaring success this spring and summer in respect of the dairy crisis. [Interruption.] The Minister says it was, but no; I can tell him that it played a part, but it was not effective. There was plenty of naming and shaming from February, March and April onwards. It was in the newspapers and in our postbags—day in, day out—so we knew who was being named and shamed, but they did not move, adjust or go backwards. What made the difference was not the pure act of naming and shaming, but protests—protests that were painful and unwanted, such as blockading dairies. Thousands of farmers confronted a Minister across the road from here. He was doing his job by facing up to it, but he was confronted by angry farmers demanding action. The Minister then went away and banged heads together. It was not naming and shaming in the local papers or even naming and shaming every day on the front pages of *The Daily Telegraph* or the *Daily Mail* that made a difference. What worked was farmers coming together to say, “This is not working; we have got to do more”. We should not have to resort to that, which is why I say in all honesty to Ministers, “Please do not rely on the single tool of naming and shaming. The message going out to the retailers is that you are not serious. You must have the tool in the back pocket ready to use in case it is needed.”

The third aspect is the need to put the power to fine on the face of the Bill. This is supported not only by Members on both sides of the House, as we have said, and by many in the other place who debated the issue and argued strongly for it. I shall not read them all out, but the need for the power to fine is also supported by War on Want, Traidcraft, the world development unit, the Country Land and Business Association, the National Farmers Union, NFU Scotland, the Farmers Union of Wales, the Ulster Farmers Union, the Association of Convenience Stores—the voice of local shops—Fair Deal Food, Action Aid, Banana Link, CAFOD—the Catholic Agency for Overseas Development—the Campaign to Protect Rural England, the Church of England and the Women’s Institute. For goodness’ sake, work with us on this one. We will help Ministers to become heroes if they listen to those voices, as they cannot all be wrong. Even if I am, they cannot all be wrong. Those organisations represent people right across the supply chain. They include the Federation of Small Businesses for goodness’ sake; it is everybody.

I will not read out the early-day motion that the Minister signed once upon a time. [HON. MEMBERS: “Go on!”] No, I will not; it would be unfair. I know, however, that in his heart of hearts, the Minister believes that this is the right course of action, as we have had this discussion before in debating chambers. When we talk about teeth, it does not mean the beast in front of us at the moment. It means having those penalties on the face of the Bill.

Let me move on to the excellent contributions to the debate, as I think the case for having financial penalties is overwhelming, clear, compelling and unarguable. We began with the contribution by my shadow ministerial colleague, my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh South (Ian Murray). It was an excellent opening to the debate. In welcoming the Bill, he was consensual, but his speech was also challenging where it needed to be, which is what we as the Opposition should do.

The hon. Member for Thirsk and Malton (Miss McIntosh), the Chair of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee, delivered a powerful and, as usual, forensic analysis of the Bill. Like all of us she welcomed it, but she also drew attention to shortcomings which I hope we shall be able to explore in detail during the Committee stage.

My hon. Friend the Member for Clwyd South (Susan Elan Jones) pointed out that if we got the Bill right, it would be good for consumers. The Minister will agree with her observation that it would promote best practice and fairness throughout the management of the supply chain, would allow for investment in the boosting of productivity and innovation, and, in so doing, would provide an opportunity to reduce costs for both producers and consumers.

We heard an excellent speech from the hon. Member for Camborne and Redruth (George Eustice), who has spoken about this and similar issues in other debates. Today, he spoke eloquently and with great experience about the need for the Bill to be strengthened. He has made that point consistently, not least when interviewed by the *Daily Mail* for an article published on 16 November. I commend him on that, although the *Daily Mail* is not my regularly reading material.

The headline above that article was

“Supermarkets that bully small suppliers will NOT face fines after ministers cave in to pressure”,

but I do not believe that Ministers are caving into pressure. I believe that they want to do the right thing, and to listen to what the hon. Gentleman and others have said today. I hope that they are open to his argument, and that the Government Whips will enable him to serve on the Committee, where his experience and insight will be welcomed. I loved his observation that naming and shaming was the preferred stand-alone option of the British Retail Consortium. He wondered, as we did, why that might be.

The hon. Member for North Antrim (Ian Paisley) spoke powerfully—as he always does—for food production and processing industries throughout Northern Ireland. He called for the payment of a living wage in agriculture, and we thoroughly agree with him about that, as we do about much else that he said tonight. He noted the strong support of the Ulster Farmers Union, and the individual support of its president, Harry Sinclair, for a significant strengthening of the Bill. He said that if the price-fixing by major supermarkets was occurring because they were a cartel, they should be—I think that these were his words—kicked where it hurts, which I am sure, in his mind, is right in the adjudicator’s office.

The hon. Member for Carmarthen West and South Pembrokeshire (Simon Hart) said that the position of Government Members on regulation was often misquoted, and that they were not against regulation but in favour of better regulation. That, he said, was exactly what was required in this instance. Poor regulation was the problem, he said, but the Bill represented good regulation and—again—should be strengthened. The ability to make a living in the countryside must be preserved, and that included the living made by the small farmers in his area. He said that he had received only one piece of correspondence saying no to fines, but dozens expressing the opposite view, so why should fines not be levied?

My hon. Friend the Member for West Bromwich West (Mr Bailey), the Chair of the Business, Innovation and Skills Committee, welcomed the Bill and the fact that the Government had adopted about 80% of the Committee’s recommendations. However, he focused on the shortcomings of the Bill and the need for it to be strengthened further. He clearly felt that naming and shaming on its own, without additional penalties in the Bill, would be insufficient.

The hon. Member for St Ives (Andrew George), who has done so much in supporting the Bill’s progress and in marshalling a grand coalition of partner organisations throughout the supply chain both in the United Kingdom and internationally, rightly acknowledged those organisations in a roll of honour, but also acknowledged the many parliamentarians in all parts of the House who have brought us to this point. I think that that consensus-led approach should continue in Committee, but that we should aim not simply to let the Bill roll forward and accept whatever is presented, but to improve it so that we get it right this time.

My hon. Friend the Member for Ynys Môn (Albert Owen) had a private Member’s Bill that tried to introduce precisely this position, and he reminded us that his preference, as expressed in his Bill, is for the term “ombudsman” rather than “adjudicator”. He welcomed the Bill, but bemoaned the delay. He alleges that was fashioned by Government Whips; I am sure that is not true. He called for penalties to be stated in the Bill and for Ministers to name and shame those who have lobbied against strengthening its provisions. The Minister who

[Huw Irranca-Davies]

opened the debate declined to try out the excellent mechanism of naming and shaming, however. The Minister who will conclude the debate can take the opportunity to try that out, and we will then see tomorrow morning whether it has any effect. Who is against strengthening the Bill? What are the names of those who oppose strengthening it? I would like to know, as I am not getting any letters to that effect. Instead, I am receiving calls from a wide coalition of people, including Members of this House, for us to work together and strengthen the provisions. I am convinced the Minister who will conclude the debate wants that as well, and I am trying to help him. Indeed, I am trying to help both Ministers.

My hon. Friend the Member for Ynys Môn highlighted the possibility of the entire supply chain being open to investigation and possible sanctions, and asked how we would handle that. Will the Bill result in that happening? After all, these issues involve not only the relationship between the big retailers and the individual producers, but a wide and complex distribution network across the supply chain.

I chatted briefly at the side of the Chamber with my hon. Friend about this evening's very disappointing breaking news about Vion, and another hon. Member has raised that, too. It is a major employer and economic force in many constituencies, including that of my hon. Friend. I hope the Minister will be able to give us some assurances as to what role the Government can play in trying to protect these jobs at Vion and the economic benefits they bring to many constituencies.

The hon. Member for Carlisle (John Stevenson) chairs the all-party group on food and drink manufacturing. He saw the Bill as a positive encouragement for the supply chain, recognising good practice—of which there is, indeed, a lot. He made a forensic contribution. Interestingly, I noted that he supported the proposal that penalties should be stated in the Bill, and he agreed that the adjudicator should report on its success in respect of the code and whether changes to its scope and remit might be needed. I hope the hon. Gentleman finds himself serving on the Committee—although I do not know whether he shares that aspiration.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bristol East (Kerry McCarthy) reminded us about the new farming Minister's previous stalwart support for an adjudicator with real teeth. The farming Minister, who will conclude this debate, was right then, as I have told him before, and he can help us strengthen the Bill to get the right policy now as well. My hon. Friend also talked about the important issues of food waste and food poverty, and explained how those topics tie in with the Bill. She made a worthy contribution.

The hon. Member for York Outer (Julian Sturdy) said the Bill would be undermined if the adjudicator lacked the teeth it needed, and he described it as a referee without a whistle or a red card in his—or, I should point out, her—pocket. He is absolutely right. He said an adjudicator will have little impact without the metaphorical red card in its metaphorical pocket, and he rightly raised the spectre of the dairy crisis. He encouraged Ministers to show strength and to strengthen the Bill.

The hon. Member for South Down (Ms Ritchie) said that the Bill needed to produce lasting reform, and that it must redress the imbalance in the supply chain so that there is long-term sustainability and a real economic

boost throughout the supply chain. She called for statutory teeth as being a necessity. She spoke, too, of the need for robust powers of investigation and enforcement, and the ability to receive representations without fear of reprisal. Indeed, the issue of anonymity and people being able to come forward without fear of reprisal was another common theme in the debate. The hon. Lady also commended the idea of fines for serious breaches of the code. She said naming and shaming alone was not good enough because it was not strong enough. She called for an emboldened Government who will strengthen the Bill.

The hon. Member for Ceredigion (Mr Williams) has great experience in one of the great farming areas of Wales, and he raised the Ceredigion test, asking whether the Bill was robust enough. His answer was, "We like the fact the Bill is here, but it doesn't yet pass the Ceredigion test." I suggest to him that if we work together, we can make it pass that test. He cited the Women's Institute's support for strengthening the Bill; it is about not just jam and Jerusalem, but adjudication.

The hon. Gentleman made a good point about accessibility and the adjudicator's remit, and I look forward to amendments being tabled on the subject in Committee. He called for "Chwarae Teg"—fair play. My hon. Friend the Member for Llanelli (Nia Griffith) said that supermarkets had nothing to fear from a levelling of the playing field, and she rightly criticised the retrospective varying of supply agreements. What is that all about? It is the idea that a retailer or an intermediary can go back to a producer and say, "I'm sorry, you have to find some cost-cutting measures after the event."

The hon. Members for Sherwood (Mr Spencer) and for Banff and Buchan (Dr Whiteford) are particularly affected by the Vion decision, and I hope that the Minister will respond on that. I am afraid that I do not have time to respond to all the comments that were made. The hon. Member for Tiverton and Honiton (Neil Parish) welcomed the Bill, as did my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow North East (Mr Bain). My hon. Friend the Member for Hayes and Harlington (John McDonnell) spoke up for people working in these sectors. The common theme that emerged time and time again was a welcome for the Bill but the fact that it would not be quite right until we strengthened it.

The Bill is good, but it is not yet quite good enough. It has cross-party support to get it on the statute book as soon as possible but, as we have heard, it needs cross-party support to go further and give it real teeth. It was rightly noted in the other place that Labour's fingerprints are all over the Bill, but so are the fingerprints of hon. Members who serve on the Select Committees on Business, Innovation and Skills and on Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, as well as the fingerprints of Back-Bench champions such as the hon. Member for St Ives, my hon. Friend the Member for Ynys Môn and many others. I say to Ministers and to all hon. Members, not least those who might serve on the Bill Committee, let us take the opportunity to make this not just a good Bill but a great Bill, and work together to make it so.

9.41 pm

The Minister of State, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Mr David Heath): It is a pleasant and, for me, unprecedented experience to speak at the Dispatch Box on a Bill that has received a welcome

from Members from all parts of the House without exception, and I am very pleased that that is the case. I think it is because Members from all parts of the House share, to paraphrase the hon. Member for Tiverton and Honiton (Neil Parish), a desire to see a system in the supply chain that is fair to the producer, fair to the processor, fair to the retailer, and fair to the consumer. That is what we are trying to achieve in the legislation.

There is ample evidence, not least in the Competition Commission report that, in some ways, provides the origins of the legislation, of an imperfect market in the grocery trade. The hon. Member for Edinburgh South (Ian Murray) said that that there was a monopoly position for the big supermarkets. Strictly speaking, it is not a monopoly. Classical economics requires us to call it an oligopsony, but that term is not used very often. There are powerful players in the retail sector: there are a few buyers and many sellers, which produces an imbalance in the terms of trade. That is why I am pleased to introduce the Bill with the Under-Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills, my hon. Friend the Member for East Dunbartonshire (Jo Swinson), from our sister Department. It is wonderful to have two Departments thinking and acting as one in government in introducing legislation of this kind, not least, as the hon. Members for Ogmore (Huw Irranca-Davies) and for Bristol East (Kerry McCarthy), and many others said, because I campaigned personally for the provision for a long time. Other Members who have spoken have been equally assiduous, or more so, in arguing that case, particularly my hon. Friend the Member for St Ives (Andrew George), who has worked very hard on the issue, and the hon. Member for Ynys Môn (Albert Owen). I loved his contribution: it was amusing, and most of what he said was well founded.

The measure has united—this, too, is unprecedented—the Chairs of the Select Committees on Business, Innovation and Skills and on Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. Select Committees do not always agree on absolutely everything, but both those Committees have had an opportunity to look at the measure in pre-legislative scrutiny. The hon. Member for West Bromwich West (Mr Bailey) kindly said that the Government listened to what his Committee said, and that they accepted 80% of its suggestions to improve the measure. That is how it should be; that is the whole point of pre-legislative scrutiny.

Let me make one point to those who have criticised the timing of the Bill. As far as this Administration are concerned, I reject that accusation. The Bill was introduced as a draft Bill in the first Session of this Parliament, as we promised, and it was introduced as a substantive Bill as the very first Bill after the Queen's Speech in this second Session of Parliament. I find it difficult to understand how we could have been more urgent in our approach. There was fair criticism of the time it took for nothing to appear under the previous Government, but I do not want to be partisan in my approach. It is important to maintain the coalition of interests on both sides of the House in support of the Bill.

The Chair of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee, the hon. Member for Thirsk and Malton (Miss McIntosh), mentioned a few significant points, some of which were picked up by others. The most important initially was the business of indirect complaints and the capacity for anyone to bring forward

a complaint. Let me make it absolutely clear that the Bill provides for any party to complain. It does not have to be the producer who is involved; it could be trade organisations or non-governmental organisations. Anybody who has information to put before the adjudicator should do so. Those complaints will be treated with anonymity, because it is part of the job of the adjudicator to ensure that that is the case. Yes, the adjudicator can take forward proactive investigations. If there is good reason to believe that an abuse of the code is going on, the adjudicator can take forward a proactive investigation.

The hon. Lady also asked about the recovery of costs and clause 10 makes that clear. She asked a perfectly proper question about the provisions for the transfer of functions or abolition, which she thought were slightly peculiar, but they are part of the Government's normal process of inserting sunset clauses so that bodies do not persist simply because they were set up in primary legislation with no opportunity to repeal it at some stage in the future. There might need to be a significant change, a renaming, a merging of functions or any of the many other things considered as part of the Public Bodies Act 2011, so that is a perfectly proper provision.

The hon. Lady asked what the list of designated retailers was and it might be helpful to the House if I simply say who the 10 are. They are Asda Stores Ltd, the Co-operative Group Ltd, Marks and Spencer plc, Wm Morrison Supermarkets plc, J Sainsbury plc, Tesco plc, Waitrose Ltd, Aldi Stores Ltd, Iceland Foods Ltd and Lidl UK—[*Interruption.*] I cannot quite catch what the hon. Member for Ogmore is saying from a sedentary position, but I thought it was helpful to give the list of retailers included in the proposals.

I thought that the hon. Member for North Antrim (Ian Paisley) made a very thoughtful speech.

Miss McIntosh: Now that peace and unanimity is breaking out, will my hon. Friend return to the vexed issue of fines being imposed? We are a little envious that the Business, Innovation and Skills Committee has had its amendments incorporated and we would like 80% of our amendments to be incorporated at the same time.

Mr Heath: I will inevitably return to that point a little later, as it was raised by so many Members. Let me first, however, cover the other specific points mentioned in the debate.

The hon. Member for Carmarthen West and South Pembrokeshire (Simon Hart) asked about companies outside the big 10. He is absolutely right that they are not specifically included in the Bill as levy payers, but let us recognise that the big 10 represents 95% of the grocery trade. If we are successful in the application of the adjudicator in improving standards of contract compliance, that will feed through to the rest of the sector by competition alone, if nothing else. The hon. Gentleman also mentioned length of contracts. That is not specific to the code of conduct, but the matter can be properly investigated in the context of an abusive relationship. Where such a relationship exists, that will be laid bare by the process.

The hon. Member for Bristol East made some good points about food waste. She knows that we have engaged with her on that issue and will continue to do so. I think I have a meeting with her in the near future to talk about that.

[Mr Heath]

A number of Members spoke with a great deal of experience of the sector from having worked on the producer side. The hon. Members for Camborne and Redruth (George Eustice), for York Outer (Julian Sturdy) and for Sherwood (Mr Spencer), my hon. Friend the Member for Brecon and Radnorshire (Roger Williams), and the hon. Member for Tiverton and Honiton all have direct experience of working in agriculture and could tell us about the sort of downward pressures that they know suppliers regularly experience. The hon. Member for South Down (Ms Ritchie) spoke about trade associations. I hope I have been able to put her mind at rest about that.

My hon. Friend the Member for Ceredigion (Mr Williams) raised a number of important points. He spoke about access to the code and, as I said, I hope I have given him some reassurance on that. He talked about changes to the code. That is an important point. According to the process set out in the Bill, the adjudicator can put forward for consideration changes to the code, but that proposal goes back to the Competition Commission for consideration before being put before the House. It is important that we maintain that linkage because fundamental to the Bill is the abuse that the Competition Commission identified between major retailers and their suppliers. It would be a great mistake for the House to substitute our opinion for the evidence adduced by the Competition Commission.

My hon. Friend also mentioned retrospectivity. Let me underline the point again. If an abuse is continuing at the time that the adjudicator is appointed, it is proper that he or she should investigate that abuse, but we have a strong principle in British legislation that we do not apply retrospectivity to something that occurred before the date that a particular statute comes into effect. Therefore it would not be entirely proper for the adjudicator to look at complaints within the terms of the code that pre-dated that appointment if they no longer continue.

Andrew George: My hon. Friend says that the code would not apply retrospectively, relative to the date of the statute. Of course, the statute came in on 4 February 2010. The Bill merely provides for the referee to enforce the code. Retrospectivity in respect of the statute therefore does not apply.

Mr Heath: I understand the point that my hon. Friend makes. If he would care to engage with Government lawyers on that point of law, I am sure we would be happy to engage with him. We can return to the subject in Committee or on Report.

The hon. Member for Llanelli (Nia Griffith) queried clause 15(10), and the hon. Member for Hayes and Harlington (John McDonnell) also thought it was a bit odd. Let us debate that in Committee. What is proposed there is a safeguard which we hope will not be used. It is designed to deal with the circumstances in which the adjudicator was swamped with spurious complaints which hindered him or her from doing their work. The adjudicator would be required to pare those complaints down to the categories set out there. It would not stop them taking information from any source, but it would stop them taking complaints from any source. As I have said, I do not envisage that that will be necessary and

hope that it will not be, so it is a reserve power, but I completely understand the point made by the hon. Member for Hayes and Harlington that it is in some ways an unusual provision. It is certainly something we can discuss properly in Committee.

John McDonnell: The point I was trying to make is that if we have to amend the legislation in due course by statutory instrument, it would be better to design the new clause on the basis of the experience and recommendations of the review, rather than just reverting to type.

Mr Heath: I understand the hon. Gentleman's point, and that is clearly something we can discuss.

The hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Dr Whiteford) mentioned the very bad news about Vion UK, which I understand will affect not only her constituents in Strath of Brydock, but many others in Livingston, Portlethen and Broxburn, and my hon. Friend the Member for Brecon and Radnorshire mentioned the situation in St Merryn in Merthyr Tydfil. I can certainly give an assurance today that we will happily engage with colleagues in the devolved Administrations—most of those jobs are situated in Scotland or Wales—to see whether there is anything we can do to assist them in dealing with what will be a very significant event in the local economy. If there is anything we can do, I can give an assurance that we will do our best.

My hon. Friend the Member for Brecon and Radnorshire also talked about—

Huw Irranca-Davies: I would not want the hon. Gentleman to miss the opportunity to respond to the 20 Members who spoke in succession about strengthening the Bill by introducing fines, which was also referred to the hon. Member for Thirsk and Malton (Miss McIntosh), who chairs the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee.

Mr Heath: I was about to move on to that, and it is a great shame that the hon. Gentleman took up some of the time I was going to devote to it.

Mr Bailey *rose*—

Mr Heath: No, I will not give way.

I want to talk very briefly about the voluntary code in the milk supply chain, which I think is an important development. It would not be policed directly by the adjudicator, and I do not want to give the impression that it would.

Let us talk about sanctions. This is clearly a serious conversation we need to have in Committee and on Report. My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary set out the Government's position on naming and shaming. I do not entirely agree with the hon. Member for Ogmere, because I think that naming and shaming played a significant part in events over the summer relating to the dairy industry. I think that several of the large retailers were directly shamed by consumers into changing their tune about their intended reductions in the price of milk.

However, I accept that many Members have indicated that they would prefer to see fines from the start. There are arguments about why that should not be the case,

including the fact that it would introduce a new legal process of appeal that would not be there if it was not introduced ab initio. I want to make it absolutely plain that only one thing has to be done by order, which is for the Secretary of State to bring in a tariff system on the advice of the adjudicator, so it is not a separate process for each infringement.

Mr Bailey rose—

Mr Heath: I am sorry, but I really cannot give way at 9.58 pm.

Let us discuss what the effective sanctions are and make sure that we have got them right. The Government believe that we have got it right at the moment, but of course we will listen to what every Member has to say on the issue and ensure that we have legislation that is fit for purpose.

In closing, I think that we have had a very important debate. It means that we can go forward, perhaps not as heroes, as the hon. Member for Ogmores suggested, or as characters from grocery folklore, as the hon. Member for Ynys Môn said, but with something that will contribute to the well-being of our farming and retail industries. I believe that is right and commend the Bill to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a Second time.

GROCERIES CODE ADJUDICATOR BILL [LORDS] (PROGRAMME)

Motion made, and Question put forthwith (Standing Order No. 83A(7)),

That the following provisions shall apply to the Groceries Code Adjudicator Bill [Lords]:

Committee

1. The Bill shall be committed to a Public Bill Committee.

Proceedings in Public Bill Committee

2. Proceedings in the Public Bill Committee shall (so far as not previously concluded) be brought to a conclusion on Thursday 6 December 2012.

3. The Public Bill Committee shall have leave to sit twice on the first day on which it meets.

Consideration and Third Reading

4. Proceedings on Consideration shall (so far as not previously concluded) be brought to a conclusion one hour before the moment of interruption on the day on which those proceedings are commenced.

5. Proceedings on Third Reading shall (so far as not previously concluded) be brought to a conclusion at the moment of interruption on that day.

6. Standing Order No. 83B (Programming committees) shall not apply to proceedings on Consideration and Third Reading.

Other proceedings

7. Any other proceedings on the Bill (including any proceedings on consideration of any message from the Lords) may be programmed.—*(Greg Hands.)*

Question agreed to.

GROCERIES CODE ADJUDICATOR BILL [LORDS] (MONEY)

Queen's recommendation signified.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith (Standing Order No. 52(1)(a)),

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Groceries Code Adjudicator Bill [Lords], it is expedient to authorise the payment out of money provided by Parliament of—

(1) any expenditure incurred under the Act by the Secretary of State, and

(2) any increase attributable to the Act in the sums payable under any other Act out of money provided by Parliament.—*(Greg Hands.)*

Question agreed to.

GROCERIES CODE ADJUDICATOR BILL [LORDS] (WAYS AND MEANS)

Motion made, and Question put forthwith (Standing Order No. 52(1)(a)),

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Groceries Code Adjudicator Bill [Lords], it is expedient to authorise—

(1) the imposition of a levy on large retailers to fund the Groceries Code Adjudicator, and

(2) the payment of sums into the Consolidated Fund.—*(Greg Hands.)*

Question agreed to.

Business without Debate

DELEGATED LEGISLATION

Motion made, and Question put forthwith (Standing Order No. 118(6)),

CONTRACTING OUT

That the draft Contracting Out (Local Authorities Social Services Functions) (England) (Amendment) Order 2012, which was laid before this House on 15 October, be approved.—*(Greg Hands.)*

Question agreed to.

DRAFT CARE AND SUPPORT BILL (JOINT COMMITTEE)

Resolved,

That this House concurs with the Lords Message of 8 November 2012, that it is expedient that a Joint Committee of Lords and Commons be appointed to consider the draft Care and Support Bill presented to both Houses on 11 July 2012 (Cm 8386).

Ordered,

That a Select Committee of six Members be appointed to join with the Committee appointed by the Lords to consider the draft Care and Support Bill presented to both Houses on 11 July 2012 (Cm 8386).

That the Committee should report on the draft Bill by 7 March 2013.

That the Committee shall have power—

(i) to send for persons, papers and records;

(ii) to sit notwithstanding any adjournment of the House;

(iii) to report from time to time;

(iv) to appoint specialist advisers; and

(v) to adjourn from place to place within the United Kingdom.

That Harriett Baldwin, Mr Paul Burstow, Margot James, Barbara Keeley, Grahame M. Morris and Dr Sarah Wollaston be members of the Committee.—*(Mr Lansley.)*

PETITIONS

Arpley Landfill Site

10 pm

David Mowat (Warrington South) (Con): I rise to present a petition on behalf of the people of Warrington in respect of our objection to the proposal to potentially continue the licence at Arpley tip beyond 2013. Working with community leaders and councillors from all political parties in Warrington, we have collected 6,206 signatures from residents, many of whose homes and lives have been blighted by their proximity to Arpley tip, whose side effects have been felt for more than 20 years.

The petition states:

The Petition of residents of Warrington,

Declares that the people of Warrington have put up with the Arpley landfill site and the traffic, smells and other undesirable side effects which it causes for long enough.

The Petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons urges the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs to take all reasonable steps to ensure that the site's licence is not extended.

And the Petitioners remain, etc.

[P001128]

Treatment for Gastroparesis

10.2 pm

Jacob Rees-Mogg (North East Somerset) (Con): I have a petition signed by more than 4,000 residents of North East Somerset to the honourable House of Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Parliament assembled.

The petition states:

The Humble Petition of residents of North East Somerset, Sheweth,

That the Petitioners are concerned about the wellbeing of Alison Jukes, who was diagnosed with Gastroparesis in January 2012; further that the Petitioners believe that a possible treatment exists for this condition—gastric electrical stimulation—and a number of Gastroparesis sufferers in Britain have successfully received it; further that Alison has been denied the operation and her appeal has also been turned down; further that the Petitioners believe without this operation, Alison will be fed via a tube every day for the rest of her life and the Petitioners believe that eligibility for this treatment should not vary by location.

Wherefore your Petitioners pray that your Honourable House urges the Department of Health to look into the consistency of the availability of gastric electrical stimulation across different Primary Care Trusts.

And your Petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray, &c.

[P001132]

Telford Rail Services

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—(*Greg Hands.*)

10.3 pm

David Wright (Telford) (Lab): I welcome this opportunity to raise issues relating to Telford rail services. May I begin by asking you, Mr Deputy Speaker, to pass on my thanks to Mr Speaker, who visited Telford on Friday? I am sure that you will pass on my regards to him. He visited a couple of local schools and did a parliamentary event, which I believe went very well indeed.

I will cover three big issues this evening. The first is the lack of a direct link from Telford to London. That issue is embroiled in what can only be described as the fiasco of the west coast franchise process. The second is the need for speedy and regular services at a reasonable price into the west midlands conurbation and across to Shrewsbury, with improved availability of seats. The third is the ongoing improvements to station infrastructure and the current investment at Telford Central station.

Ian Austin (Dudley North) (Lab): I congratulate my hon. Friend on securing this important debate, and especially on his second point about the link between Telford and the rest of the conurbation. Does he agree that that is especially important because it would allow his constituents to visit Dudley, which is, as he would concede, the birthplace of the industrial revolution, and the truly world-class Black Country living museum?

David Wright: It would give my constituents that opportunity, although, of course, we have the birthplace of industry in Telford. I will touch on that a bit later, because the Ironbridge gorge is designated as a world heritage site. Dudley does not have a world heritage site, as I keep telling my hon. Friend, but he does not seem to want to accept the views of the United Nations and UNESCO.

Telford sits on the railway line that runs from Wolverhampton to Shrewsbury. We have strong connections to the west midlands conurbation, due to our new town history. In fairness to my hon. Friend, many people moved out of the west midlands conurbation, from areas such as Dudley, to Telford when it became a new town and we welcomed them. There is a significant flow of local passenger traffic, including commuters and leisure users, into Wolverhampton and the local stations through to Birmingham New Street. On a serious note, rapid access to Birmingham New Street is crucial to the local economy, as is rapid access to Birmingham International, with its links to the regional airport. If High Speed 2 does come about—I certainly hope that it does, as it is a significant infrastructure project—connectivity with the west midlands conurbation will be increasingly important for commuters and business users in the Telford area.

At present, the local services are run by Arriva Trains Wales and London Midland. A service from Telford Central runs about every 20 to 30 minutes, depending on the time of day. Those services run to Shrewsbury and across into the conurbation. I will return to the local service issues a little later. First, I will spend some

time talking about the lack of a direct rail service to London from Telford, and indeed from Shropshire and mid-Wales.

Direct services to and from the capital have a chequered history in our area. The line from Wolverhampton is not electrified, which has been a problem historically. With the advent of faster, more efficient diesel units, that is not such a problem now. In the past, services to and from London had to stop at Wolverhampton, where a diesel unit was attached or removed. The regular London service ceased in the early 1990s, with a brief return and cancellation later in the 1990s. The old service ran to and from Euston up to Shrewsbury, calling at Telford Central and Wellington, which is in the Wrekin constituency. At that time, the diesel change, which I have mentioned, caused a time delay and platform blockages at Wolverhampton. It is no surprise, therefore, that the service was cancelled. However, I am assured that due to the efficiency of the new diesel units—the Voyager-type trains—our services could be integrated into the wider timetable and into the electric routes, so that there are direct services to London.

After the abandonment of the service, there was an attempt to run an open-access service by the Wrexham, Shropshire and Marylebone railway. The Minister will be aware of that. Local MPs fought hard to get that service in the teeth of opposition from other rail companies, which tried consistently to block access to the lines. The service picked up passengers at Telford Central and was recognised as one of the best in the country for the passenger experience. The problem was that the length of the journey into Marylebone and the unsustainably low ticket price meant that it made a significant loss. The last service ran in January 2011. The service folded with the loss of more than 50 jobs.

Following that, colleagues from constituencies across Shropshire and mid-Wales and I lobbied hard for the inclusion of a direct service as part of the west coast franchise. We met all the main potential bidders, along with the former Secretary of State and the former rail Minister. We managed to get the main bidders to include services to Telford and Shropshire in their proposals, but now we are in limbo because of the £40 million debacle surrounding the west coast franchise.

The Secretary of State has told us that, when the current franchise ends on 9 December, services will continue for up to 14 months with Virgin, and then a competition will be run for an interim agreement—that is what he called it. That means that a short contract could follow the interim service from Virgin—we do not know for how long it will be. That could leave us without a direct service to and from Telford for several years, and possibly with a complete lack of service. That is frankly a mess, and companies are unlikely to invest in rolling stock to deliver a service to Telford, Shropshire and mid-Wales unless the Government give a clear commitment to include a service to our areas as part of a shortened contract or a future longer-term franchise.

That is extremely frustrating for commuters, businesses and local leisure service providers. We want to expand rail use and further promote Telford as an attractive location for business investment. As my hon. Friend the Member for Dudley North (Ian Austin) knows, we have a world heritage site in the Ironbridge gorge and numerous major tourist attractions across our area. We want

increased visitor numbers. It is about making Telford a place that people want to visit and locate their businesses in, our getting to London more efficiently and, crucially, getting people from London to Telford and the midlands. It is not all one way—down to London; it is also about getting people out into the midlands from London to invest.

Will the Minister clarify exactly what is happening? Will he give the House an assurance that a direct service to Telford is a priority for him and the Department? Will he confirm a timetable—excuse the pun—for the arrival of services at the Telford platforms?

The second theme that I want to pursue is the provision of local services, which I mentioned briefly earlier. There has been a major increase in the use of local services. A fast, reliable, comfortable and reasonably priced local service is the central concern of most rail users from Telford. The Passenger Focus national passenger survey in 2011—the results of the 2012 survey will be out next January—shows broadly high satisfaction with local service providers. However, if we drill down further into local issues, hard evidence shows problems of overcrowding and the inability to get a seat, service delays and concerns about the cost of travel.

In the current readers' survey in the *Shropshire Star*, most people who had a view said that the train service was satisfactory or good, but nearly 20% said that it was poor or very poor. That is not good enough. There is overall satisfaction with the main providers, but there are problems with the service locally. That is not new. I do not suggest that the difficulty started two and a half years ago. It is a long-term problem, which we must tackle. One constituent who spoke to me today after reading that I was holding the debate said that his recent experience as a leisure traveller on the service was poor and that, as a pensioner, he did not want to stand from Birmingham to Telford. He also said that that discouraged him from using the service in future. That is sad—people not wanting to use the service because they are not comfortable using it.

The general view is that we can do better. We clearly need to increase capacity at peak times and I would welcome the Minister's thoughts. We want a regular service with trains that turn up on time, and people want a seat. It is not rocket science, but simple stuff, and we need to get it right.

My third point is about station infrastructure. There is some positive news. Telford central station is undergoing improvements. That involves providing better facilities in and around the main building, along with improvements to platform shelters. That is good news, which is really welcome. The station was looking pretty tired. It is not old—it is quite new—but it was looking tired because of its construction type. I welcome the investment.

There has also been better integration of bus and rail services. For example, the area outside the station is being used as a coach pick-up point following lobbying by me, local resident Ricky Jones and the senior citizens forum, which keeps me on my toes.

In closing, I make a plea for the retention of services at smaller stations. My constituency has a small station at Oakengates. I grew up in St Georges and Oakengates, and I am fond of that station, which gets a regular service and is not under threat. However, I want to flag up that alongside major services and infrastructure

[David Wright]

debates, little gems such as Oakengates station provide a valuable service to local people. I hope we can keep it that way.

I look forward to the Minister's reply. If we were in American politics we would be in the same party, being fundamentally supporters of the Democratic party. I know he is a big fan of Hillary Clinton—as am I—and I hope he will demonstrate tonight that he is also a big fan of Telford.

10.15 pm

The Minister of State, Department for Transport (Mr Simon Burns): I congratulate the hon. Member for Telford (David Wright), not only on securing this debate but on the courteous and inimitable way in which he has made his case. He raised a number of important issues, and I will do my best to respond to them in the time available.

The hon. Gentleman is correct to say that Shropshire no longer has a direct service to London. Wrexham, Shropshire and Marylebone Railway provided a direct service from Shropshire to London and was—as the hon. Gentleman said—an open-access operator run as a commercial entity. Many of WSMR's passengers were disappointed when Deutsche Bahn decided to stop those services. That was, of course, entirely a commercial decision for Deutsche Bahn, and not something in which the Government could intervene. I understand, however, that the decision was made on the basis that the service could not provide a return on investment, and that the operator had made considerable losses since it was launched in April 2008.

WSMR held track access rights to run services from Marylebone to Wrexham until December 2014. Once it stopped running those services, any operator—either passenger or freight—could have applied to the Office of Rail Regulation for the rights to run trains on those routes. Alternative services are provided by other rail companies, such as Virgin West Coast, London Midland and Chiltern Railways, which is also owned by Deutsche Bahn. It is worth noting that even with a change at Birmingham International, existing services on Virgin and Arriva Trains are up to half an hour quicker than WSMR services from London to Shrewsbury.

As I am sure the hon. Gentleman will appreciate, the cancelled west coast main line rail franchise is our top departmental priority at the moment, and I am truly grateful for the hon. Gentleman's input to the wider debate. Clearly, serious mistakes have been made. I understand that the cancellation of the west coast competition came as a great disappointment to many passengers, and particularly to his constituents in Telford, given that First Group had stated publicly that it would introduce the direct services between Telford and London that the hon. Gentleman has spoken about.

As part of the two consultation exercises that the Department held on the intercity west coast service, we received a number of representations about reintroducing direct services to Shropshire from London in the future. Although the Department did not specify a requirement for a direct service from Telford in the invitation to tender, we expected bidders to take account of consultation responses when developing their service proposals. All bidders therefore had the opportunity to propose enhanced

services to Telford. However, the contents of bids are commercially confidential, and some bidders have chosen not to put details of their proposals in the public domain. I am therefore not in a position to confirm whether or not that was the case for the other shortlisted bidders, as it would be inappropriate and wrong for me to disclose what was in the confidential bids.

As the House knows, the Secretary of State has asked for two reviews of the west coast main line franchise process. The first, led by Sam Laidlaw, is examining the events that led to the cancellation of the ICWC franchise on 3 October. An interim report from Mr Laidlaw setting out what went wrong, and his initial thinking on why it went wrong, was published on 29 October. His final report is due at the end of this month.

The second review of the wider rail franchising programme—by Eurostar chairman Richard Brown—is due by the end of this year. Decisions on the timing and nature of competitions for future franchises will be taken once we receive Richard Brown's report, so it would be wrong to speculate on his findings at this stage, including the implications for any services to and from Telford.

Obviously, we must learn lessons from the reviews and will need to run a new competition for the west coast franchise. The Government are fully committed to a franchising system that delivers for both the taxpayer and the fare payer, with private sector investment and innovation helping to drive the improvements and value that passengers deserve. We want that to happen as quickly as possible, but we want to get it right, which will take some time. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will therefore forgive me for not speculating about the Laidlaw and Brown reviews today, but I should like to reassure him that we will continue to keep the House informed of all developments, as we have done so far.

As I have said, although the cancelled ICWC competition did not have a direct service to Shropshire included in the specification, I can assure the hon. Gentleman that, when we are in a position to restart the bid, he will have an opportunity to make the case on behalf of his constituents.

A future west coast operator would also need to consider rolling stock for services. Unlike the majority of the network covered by the west coast franchise, the line to Shrewsbury via Telford is not electrified, meaning that any direct services would need to use more expensive diesel trains rather than today's Pendolino trains. The House will recall that the coalition Government reconfirmed our commitment to a rolling programme of electrification of the rail network when we announced the latest phase of our investment programme in the summer, which will see more than £9.4 billion invested from 2014 to 2019 to deliver a greener, more cost-efficient railway that is better for freight and for passengers. This comprehensive investment programme represents the largest and most ambitious modernisation of our railways since the Victorian era. It includes an electric spine route running from the south coast to the east midlands, and a massive improvement of services in south Wales. I expect future phases of the programme to extend electrification even further. The lines serving Telford and Shropshire might well be a route that is considered.

Telford currently has two services an hour to Wolverhampton and Birmingham—there are slightly more in the peak hours—one of which is the fast service

travelling direct to Wolverhampton before calling at Smethwick Galton Bridge for the interchange with Snow Hill line services, which go on to Birmingham New Street. The other service is the stopping service. I am aware that the existing services are very popular, although I am afraid I cannot promise to mandate new services at the moment. That said, nothing in the franchise agreements prevents operators from putting on additional services if there is sufficient passenger demand. The Department would be happy to look at any proposal that would mean that that happened. However, operators would want to reassure themselves that any new services were commercially viable, and that appropriate rolling stock was available, before they considered implementing new services. As with direct services to London, I expect that bidders for the next west coast franchise will want to look carefully at that to see whether such an opportunity exists.

The hon. Gentleman mentioned existing services and cited the example of an elderly gentleman who had to stand on his journey to Telford. I have considerable sympathy with him. I believe it is important that we have enough capacity on trains on the existing service to minimise such situations. I fully appreciate that travelling on a crowded train is not ideal, and I am sure the hon. Gentleman agrees. Clearly, in some places, railways are the victims of their own success, with more people travelling on the rail network than ever before—I am talking not just about the Telford line, but about the whole of England and Wales.

Although I am not able to promise more capacity in Telford, I can assure the hon. Gentleman that the Government are facing up to the issue of capacity across the network. For example, the west midlands will soon benefit from 40 new rail carriages that have been ordered and are expected to come into service in 2014, strengthening a number of different services on the London Midland network. Although the Shropshire line through Telford is not planned to be a direct recipient of that additional capacity in this phase, this is a rolling programme targeting the most crowded sections of the network. I give the hon. Gentleman the assurance that we will keep the train situation in his constituency under review.

It is important that existing services operate reliably, and I seek to reassure the hon. Gentleman. London Midland, for example, has faced driver shortages in recent weeks. That has affected passengers on its network, including on the Shropshire line. We take that problem very seriously indeed and are working closely with London Midland to address it so that we can reduce the sort of incidents and situations that have arisen on the line, causing problems for the hon. Gentleman's constituents and those of other hon. Members in recent weeks.

I thank the hon. Gentleman for his kind words on the investment at Telford station, which is being delivered as part of the national stations improvement programme. It is a reflection on the hon. Gentleman that he is prepared, in a debate of this nature, to be generous in recognising what is going on in his constituency, and the improvements that are being made to benefit his constituents. As he will appreciate, the national stations improvement programme has made a total of £150 million available over five years to improve passenger facilities at busy stations in England and Wales that the public have identified as not up to scratch.

The choice of schemes, as the hon. Gentleman will be aware, has been managed at a local level with Network Rail and train operating companies working together to agree the most efficient way to deliver the upgrades. As the hon. Gentleman alluded to in his comments, Telford was one of more than 240 stations to benefit from the programmes so far. It is now nearing completion and has been a good example of that co-operative work. It shows that through continued investment in stations across the network—nearly £1 million on the project in Telford alone—we can make a real difference to the passenger experience. Although the programme at Telford has suffered some setbacks during its course, I believe that when the work is completed and passengers are able to enjoy the new facilities, such as the new, refurbished waiting rooms, they will agree with both of us that this has been money well spent.

We remain committed to further station improvements across the country, and as the hon. Gentleman will be aware, the recent high-level output specification announcement included a further £100 million of funding for station improvements up to 2019, as well as another £100 million to extend the Access for All programme, delivering improvements for disabled people, also to 2019. The programme is of crucial importance, because there are still a number of stations where the facilities for access for disabled people are unacceptable and need to be improved. This investment will go a considerable way towards rectifying that problem in many stations.

The hon. Gentleman clearly feels that there is a lot of demand for services between Telford and London, and he has presented a strong case on behalf of his constituents in a reasonable and responsible way. I realise that I have not agreed that his points will be specified as a requirement in the next west coast franchise, but it is interesting to note that in the previous competition at least one bidder decided that there was a commercial case for running these services. As I said, he and other hon. Members will be able to contribute to the consultations prior to the franchise being drawn up, and they will have a chance, yet again, to express their views, and those of their constituents, on what is rightly for them an important issue—that of a direct service from Shrewsbury and Telford to London and back.

As I said, it is interesting to note that at least one bidder in the previous competition decided that there was a commercial case for running the services, which helps the hon. Gentleman and others hon. Members in making their case. As we prepare to re-launch the west coast pre-franchising process, the Department will need to examine a wide range of options.

I would like to thank the hon. Gentleman for giving me the opportunity to respond in the House, and to explain the current situation and some of the constraints on what I can and cannot say owing to commercial confidentiality. I recognise that we are in this unfortunate situation regarding the west coast main line, but I urge him to make his case during the consultation process prior to the franchise agreement being drawn up. I wish him well in his endeavours on behalf of his constituents.

Question put and agreed to.

10.32 pm

House adjourned.

Written Ministerial Statements

Monday 19 November 2012

BUSINESS, INNOVATION AND SKILLS

Regulation of Business

The Minister of State, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (Michael Fallon): I would like to inform the House that I am announcing today a doubling of the rate at which Whitehall Departments must cut the burdens their regulation places on business.

The Government are dedicated to enabling businesses to grow and create jobs, helping Britain compete globally. To achieve this, we must remove any unnecessary regulatory burdens that hold back growth and stifle enterprise.

Since January 2011, Whitehall Departments have been expected to avoid increases in regulation, under “one-in, one-out”. This ambition has not only been met but exceeded, reducing net costs on business by around £850 million. It has worked alongside the red tape challenge, which will identify 3,000 regulations to be scrapped or reduced, and the focus on enforcement initiative which is examining where inappropriate or excessive enforcement of regulation needs to be addressed. But even more is needed to remove red tape from business.

From January 2013, the current “one-in, one-out” constraint has required Government Departments to balance the costs of new regulation with deregulation that creates equivalent savings for business. This will be replaced with a “one-in, two-out” rule that whenever a regulation creates costs, twice as much saving must be found by scrapping or simplifying regulation. As under “one-in, one-out”, all cost and benefit calculations under “one-in, two-out” will continue to be validated by the independent Regulatory Policy Committee to ensure the credibility and robustness of the system.

“One-in, two-out” will be a new system, and Departments will not be able to use previous achievements to compensate for regulation introduced in the second half of the Parliament. This means that every Department, including those with good records to date, will have an even tougher constraint on new regulation. Additionally, the few Departments which have not met “one-in, one-out” to date will have to use the second half of the Parliament to make up lost ground. By the end of the Parliament, they will be expected both to have achieved “one-in, two-out” from January 2013 and to have introduced enough deregulation to balance out the cost of any regulation they introduced over the last two years.

This new approach is intended to ensure that regulation is the last resort for Government Departments. The pressure it creates on Whitehall Departments will mean that each new regulation is considered to ensure that it is necessary and delivered in a way which avoids unnecessary business burdens.

Balance of Competences Review

The Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills (Vince Cable): I wish to inform the House that, further to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs Office oral statement launching the review of the Balance of Competences in July and the written statement on the progress of the review in 23 October 2012, *Official Report*, column 46WS, the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills has published its call for evidence for the internal market synoptic report.

The internal market report will be completed by summer 2013 and will cover the overall application and effect of the EU internal market, often also known as the single market. The internal market of the EU is designed to ensure the free movement of goods, services, capital and persons: the so-called four freedoms. It will explore the current state of competence in the internal market as a whole and will assess the strength of arguments for the need for other areas of competence to enable the internal market to operate effectively.

The call for evidence period will last 12 weeks. The Department for Business, Innovation and Skills will draw together the evidence and policy analysis into a first draft, which will subsequently go through a process of scrutiny before publication in summer 2013.

The report will focus on the “classic” single market issues: the EU as an area without internal frontiers designed to ensure the free movement of goods, services, capital and persons (the “four freedoms”). It will look at articles 26 to 66 and 114 to 118 of the treaty of the functioning of the European Union (TFEU), using these articles and the jurisprudence emanating from them as a legal base.

The Department for Business, Innovation and Skills will take a rigorous approach to the collection and analysis of evidence. The call for evidence sets out the scope of the report and includes a series of broad questions on which contributors are asked to focus. Interested parties are invited to provide evidence with regard to political, economic, social and technological factors. The evidence received (subject to the provisions of the Data Protection Act) will be published alongside the final report in summer 2013 and will be available on the new Government website: www.gov.uk.

The Department will pursue an active engagement process, consulting widely across Parliament and its Committees, businesses, the devolved Administrations and civil society in order to obtain evidence to contribute to our analysis of the issues. Our EU partners and the EU institutions will also be invited to contribute evidence to the review. As the review is to be objective and evidence-based, encouraging a wide range of interested parties to contribute will ensure a high yield of valuable information.

The result of the report will be a comprehensive, thorough and detailed analysis of the wider functioning of the internal market. It will determine how the four freedoms operate together to create an effective single market and ultimately what this means for the United Kingdom. It will aid our understanding of the nature of our EU membership; and it will provide a constructive and serious contribution to the wider European debate about modernising, reforming and improving the EU. The report will not produce specific policy recommendations.

I am placing this document and the Call for Evidence in the Libraries of both Houses. They will also be published on the BIS website and accessible through the balance of competences review pages on the Foreign and Commonwealth Office website.

TREASURY

Public Service Pension Reform

The Chief Secretary to the Treasury (Danny Alexander): The Government have previously committed to reforming the Fair Deal policy and to delivery of this by offering access to public service pension schemes to staff who are compulsorily transferred out of the public sector.

The Government have today published a response to the consultation on the Fair Deal policy, which sets out further detail on the reformed Fair Deal policy for future staff transfers.

The document also contains some further questions for consultation, which will explore how Fair Deal should apply to those employees that have already been transferred out under existing Fair Deal when contracts are retendered. The publication also contains draft guidance setting out further details on how the policy will work in practice.

The Government welcome contributions from all interested groups.

The consultation document has been deposited in the Libraries of both Houses and can be found on the HM Treasury website at:

http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/consult_fair_deal_policy_pensions_publicsector.htm.

The consultation will close on 11 February 2013.

The Government have also published two policy papers which set out further detail on the Government's policy on actuarial valuation of public service pension schemes, and the operation of the employer cost-cap in the public service schemes. These documents have been deposited in the Libraries of both Houses and can be found on the HM Treasury website at:

http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/tax_pensions_resources.htm.

COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Parliamentary Written Question (Correction)

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government (Brandon Lewis): I wish to clarify a point on methodology used in an answer to a parliamentary question, made in the last Session.

In the answer of 24 October 2011, *Official Report*, column 59W given by my hon. Friend the Member for Bromley and Chislehurst (Robert Neill), the figure given for the average cost of processing the payment of an invoice, based on data for the last 12 months, was £2.62.

For clarity, this figure does not include staff costs.

ENERGY AND CLIMATE CHANGE

EU Environmental Council

The Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change (Mr Edward Davey): Lord de Mauley, Parliamentary Under-Secretary for Resource Management, the Local Environment and Environmental Science and I represented the UK at the Environment Council in Luxembourg on 25 October.

The Council held an orientation debate on ship recycling. The UK together with other member states said that close alignment with the Hong Kong convention was vital to ensure proportionality and enforceability. The majority of member states believed the issues of penalties and access to justice should be decided by member states in line with the subsidiarity principle.

Next, Ministers adopted conclusions on Rio+20: the outcome and follow-up to the United Nations conference on sustainable development 2012. A majority of member states, including the UK, backed the presidency text as drafted and following negotiations, a compromise was tabled. The European Commission tabled a declaration underlining its view that there is no need to review the sustainable development strategy as work is being taken forward under the Europe 2020 strategy but that it is open to plugging sectoral gaps in the 2020 strategy.

Following the morning session I attended a ministerial lunch hosted by the presidency. This lunch focused on climate change. Discussion included the outcome of the pre-COP 18/CMP 8 ministerial meeting on climate change held in Korea, which I also attended, and climate finance.

In the afternoon session Council conclusions were also adopted on the preparations for the 18th session of the conference of the parties to the United Nations framework convention on climate change. My ministerial colleagues and I focused our discussions on paragraphs 14 (on the EU QELRO—quantified emission limitation or reduction objectives); 16 (AAUs—assigned amount units); and 29 (climate finance).

Under paragraph 14 (EU QELRO), consistent with the coalition's commitment to work for an increase in the EU's CO₂ emissions reduction target, I suggested amending text to reflect the possibility of a QELRO that corresponds to an EU -30% target as well as the current one (which corresponds to an EU target of -20%). This would have sent a more positive signal on EU ambition ahead of COP18. However there was not a great deal of appetite for this inclusion among other member states, so I ceded the point, mindful that the EU's offer to move to a 30% target is stated clearly in paragraph 10 of the conclusions.

There was a great deal of discussion on how AAUs should be treated as the first commitment period of the Kyoto protocol comes to an end and the EU prepares to move into the second commitment period from 1 January 2013. I emphasised the need to ensure environmental integrity and, therefore, was not willing to cede that strict limits need to be applied in some manner across the carry-over of AAUs to, and the domestic use and trading of these carried-over AAUs in, the second commitment period. The presidency repeatedly proposed compromise texts aimed at bridging differences but these were rejected. As there was no consensus on any

new text on AAUs the presidency reverted to the text we agreed at the March Council, which emphasises the need for environmental integrity.

Several member states emphasised the importance of the EU having a strong position on climate finance before Doha. The UK supported inclusion of references to previous ECOFIN conclusions but clarified that we should not intrude on ECOFIN territory in these Doha conclusions. The presidency presented compromise text on this paragraph, which signalled our ongoing consideration of climate finance and the need for continuation of finance provision post-2012. The paragraph was adopted.

In other business, updates were provided on access to genetic resources and the benefits arising from their use; hazardous substances in textiles; the mutual acceptance of low emission zones vignettes and the exchange of best practices. On EU legislation for meeting environmental objectives—the example of air quality, the UK highlighted that new legislation was not necessarily the answer, a greater focus was needed on ensuring that current legislation was delivered.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE

Conflict Resources

The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr William Hague): I, together with my right hon. Friends the Secretary of State for International Development and the Secretary of State for Defence, wish to inform the House about our plans for funding conflict prevention, stabilisation and peacekeeping activities for financial years 2012-13 and 2014-15, via the tri-departmental conflict pool.

We intend that this funding be spent within the strategic context set out by the building stability overseas strategy (BSOS). We reported progress on implementing the BSOS in our written ministerial statement of 16 July 2012, *Official Report*, column 103 WS.

Delivering this strategy is an important priority for the Government. Enhancing genuine stability by supporting the development of societies with strong and legitimate institutions which can manage tensions peacefully is central to our national interests. We have improved our early warning analysis, to better identify instability risks upstream and develop effective interventions. We have also enhanced the UK's ability to provide a rapid response where that is needed. The co-ordinated use of our highly respected diplomatic, defence and development expertise is central to delivering these priorities. The National Security Council ensures we target our efforts, including our joint conflict resources, on the highest UK priorities. The Government's commitment is reflected in the increasing size of the conflict resources settlement for the remainder of the spending review period. We are under no illusions about the size of the challenges, for example in the middle east and in Africa. But we are equally clear that the UK can help make a difference, as we have done in Somalia.

Our written ministerial statement of 5 April 2011, *Official Report*, column 57WS, provided details of the total settlement for conflict resources for the spending review period, covering both the conflict pool and the peacekeeping budget. In financial year 2012-13, the overall settlement will increase to £644 million, rising

further during the remainder of the spending review period. The settlement continues to provide a mix of official development assistance (ODA) funding and non-ODA resources.

The peacekeeping budget—from which we meet our obligatory and assessed international peacekeeping costs—has first call on the settlement. The settlement provides £374 million for the peacekeeping budget each year. If costs exceed this figure, they are met from the conflict pool. For financial year 2012-13, we have estimated our obligatory peacekeeping costs to be some £435 million. An additional allocation of £61 million has been made, therefore, to the peacekeeping budget from the conflict pool. In-year monitoring allows us to make adjustments, when necessary, to the balance of resources among budgets.

An allocation of £435 million to peacekeeping leaves a balance of some £209 million available for the conflict pool for financial year 2012-13. The allocation round for this financial year has provided an important opportunity to align conflict pool resources with the BSOS aims of early warning, rapid crisis prevention and upstream conflict prevention. Programme allocations have been decided on their ability to deliver results on the ground against these objectives, with a tight focus on the highest priorities, where the risks are high, where UK interests are most at stake and where we know we can have an impact. Due to the unpredictability of conflict programming we have over-committed initial allocations to ensure we fully utilise the resources.

In the BSOS we said that the UK needed to be better able to respond rapidly to unexpected conflict risks. The new early action facility (EAF) helps us do that. The EAF provides a guaranteed, flexible funding resource of £20 million each year for the remainder of the spending review period to respond rapidly to early warnings of conflict and emerging opportunities to prevent conflict. Potential uses include funding a short-term surge in UK effort, support for peace negotiations or new peacebuilding opportunities. The EAF is already being used for projects in Syria, Libya and Somalia.

We have also introduced provision for sustained, multi-year funding. This is an important step forward, providing predictability to build long-term relationships where needed and to deliver greater value for money. For some programmes we have set firm multi-year allocations; in others, where medium-term perspectives are less clear, the allocations in the outer years of the spending review period are partial or indicative.

In line with priorities identified in the BSOS, we are aiming to increase the proportion of conflict pool activity focused on upstream prevention, including by supporting free, transparent and inclusive political settlements; working with Governments to develop effective and accountable security and justice systems; and building the capacity of communities, regional and international institutions to resolve conflicts.

Conflict Pool Allocations for Financial Years 2012-13 through to 2014-15

Programme	Financial Year	Financial Year	Financial Year
	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
	£m.	£m.	£m.
Afghanistan	69.4	53.9	37.05
South Asia	15.2	8.1 (20)	7.3 (30)
Middle East and North Africa	23.7	10 (24.1)	10 (26.8)

Conflict Pool Allocations for Financial Years 2012-13 through to 2014-15

<i>Programme</i>	<i>Financial Year 2012-13 £m.</i>	<i>Financial Year 2013-14 £m.</i>	<i>Financial Year 2014-15 £m.</i>
Africa	42.8	21.8 (40)	21.8 (39.2)
Wider Europe	36.3	28 (34.9)	28 (34.9)
Strengthening Alliances and Partnerships	8	8.5	9.4
Stabilisation Unit	10.2	(10)	(10)
Early Action Facility	20	20	20
<i>Total</i>	<i>210.1 (225.6)</i>	<i>142.2 (211.4)</i>	<i>133.25(207.35)</i>
<i>Overall Conflict Settlement</i>	<i>644</i>	<i>664</i>	<i>683</i>

Figures without brackets are firm allocations. Bracketed figures are indicative. The breakdown between peacekeeping and conflict pool is not yet determined for financial year 2013-14 and additional resources are expected to be transferred to the conflict pool in financial years 2013-14 and 2014-15.

In financial year 2012-13, Afghanistan will remain the single largest allocation at £69.4 million, as part of our continued contribution to achieve a stable, viable Afghan state. The allocation will subsequently reduce over the spending review period, in line with the UK's transition planning in Helmand province.

Funding for the south Asia programme will largely focus on Pakistan and its neighbours, including improving relations and border management between Afghanistan and Pakistan. This programme will increase significantly over the spending review period. The programme will also work to reduce the risk of renewed conflict in both Nepal and Sri Lanka and instability in the Maldives.

The Africa programme has been allocated £42.8 million in financial year 2012-13. This allows an increase in funds to support additional work in Somalia and Sudan and south Sudan. Partial allocations for the outer years at this stage will also focus on these priority countries and ongoing capacity building work in African institutions.

In response to the Arab spring, we intend to increase resources to the middle east and north Africa region over the remainder of the spending review period. We are allocating £23.7 million for financial year 2012-13, with increasing indicative allocations for both financial years 2013-14 and 2014-15. We will expand the range of countries where conflict pool activity takes place to include more activity in north Africa and the Gulf. Allocations for the outer years will be confirmed following further analysis. The early action facility will ensure we have the financial agility to respond to urgent needs as they emerge, including in Syria, but also elsewhere.

Allocations for wider Europe, covering the western Balkans, Caucasus and central Asia have been increased to reflect a stronger UK commitment to the EU-led military operation in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The allocation will remain broadly constant over the rest of the spending period. This programme also covers costs associated with the UK's military contribution to the UN peacekeeping mission in Cyprus, at £18.3 million a year.

In line with the importance highlighted in the BSOS of working with international partners to achieve our objectives, we are increasing funding for the strengthening alliances and partnerships programme to £8 million in

financial years 2012-13 with small further increases thereafter. Resources will help improve the performance of UN bodies and regional organisations and to support our work to prevent sexual violence in conflict.

The conflict pool also provides funding for the tri-departmentally owned stabilisation unit. The reduced allocation of £10.2 million for financial year 2012-13 reflects efficiency savings. Allocations for the remainder of the spending review period are indicative at this stage, pending work on restructuring and refocusing the unit, following a review earlier this year.

Our Departments will continue to improve the impact and efficiency of the pool, taking into account recent reviews by the National Audit Office and the Independent Commission on Aid Impact.

We will continue to update the House on our use of these resources.

JUSTICE

Judicial Review

The Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice (Chris Grayling): I am today announcing a review of the judicial review process.

Judicial review is a critical means of holding the Executive to account, ensuring that decisions are lawful. However, there has been a huge growth in the use of judicial review, which has expanded far beyond what was originally intended. In 1975 there were 160 applications for judicial review, but by 1998 this had grown to around 4,500 applications, and to around 11,000 by 2011. In 2011, for every application for permission to bring a judicial review that was granted, five were refused (a higher proportion was refused in immigration and asylum cases). In those cases where permission was granted, an even smaller proportion was successful.

Much of this growth is the result of an increase in applications to review decisions in immigration and asylum cases, but judicial review is also used as a means of challenging other types of decisions, for example, in planning matters, in large infrastructure projects, in procurement exercises and in other key reform programmes.

The Government are concerned about the burdens that this growth has placed on stretched public services. This can lead to unnecessary costs and lengthy delays, and may in some cases stifle innovation and frustrate much needed reforms, including those aimed at stimulating growth and promoting economic recovery.

The Government therefore intend to seek views on a package of options designed to tackle these problems. This package will include shortening time limits in certain cases, restricting the opportunities for an oral reconsideration of the application for permission in certain circumstances, and introducing new fees. The purpose of this is not to deny or restrict access to justice, but to provide for a more balanced and practicable approach, ensuring that weak, frivolous and unmeritorious cases are identified early, and that legitimate claims are brought quickly and efficiently to a resolution. In this way, we can ensure that the right balance is struck between reducing the burdens on public services, and protecting access to justice and the rule of law.

WALES

Commission on Devolution in Wales

The Secretary of State for Wales (Mr David Jones): The Government established the Commission on Devolution in Wales (the “Silk Commission”) in October 2011 with the support of the Welsh Government and all the parties in the National Assembly for Wales.

The Commission’s remit is divided into two parts. I can inform the House that the Commission has today published a report on part I of its remit. The report, “Empowerment and Responsibility: Financial Powers to Strengthen Wales”, makes recommendations on the devolution of fiscal powers to the National Assembly for Wales.

I welcome publication of the report and have placed copies in the Library of the House. The Government will carefully consider the Commission’s recommendations and respond in due course.

The Commission will now turn its attention to part II of its remit, in which it will review the powers of the National Assembly for Wales. I wish to inform the House of changes to the membership of the Commission for part II. I am making two new appointments to the Commission to replace commissioners who are standing down: Helen Molyneux, chief executive of New Law Solicitors, Cardiff, is joining the Commission as an independent member in place of Dyfrig John CBE, following a recommendation by the Commission, and Jane Davidson is the Welsh Labour party’s nominee in place of Sue Essex.

I have also appointed Trevor Glyn Jones CVO as an additional independent member to ensure representation on the Commission from north Wales for its part II work. Mr Jones recently retired as Lord Lieutenant of Clwyd, and all four party leaders in the Assembly have agreed his appointment.

WORK AND PENSIONS

Access to Work

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (Esther McVey): I wish to announce today measures to strengthen and improve the Access to Work scheme.

Access to Work helps over 30,000 disabled people each year retain and enter employment. It provides valuable support such as help with travel to work, purchase of specialist equipment and support workers. Last year the Government spent £93 million on this highly effective and well regarded programme.

Following Liz Sayce’s review of specialist disability employment programmes, “Getting in, staying in and getting on” the Government have already announced significant improvements to Access to Work, including an additional £15 million over this spending review period, availability of the scheme to young disabled people undertaking work experience under the Youth Contract, and a targeted marketing campaign. On 4 July we announced that we were establishing an expert panel, chaired by Mike Adams, to help us take forward some of the recommendations in Liz Sayce’s report, and to

provide advice on the further transformation of the programme. I am grateful to Mike Adams and the panel for their advice.

Today, I can announce that the panel has completed the first phase of its work, and that we will be implementing a number of changes between now and March 2013 aimed at further strengthening the programme.

I would like to announce a number of changes aimed at streamlining the application process for individuals who already have a good understanding of their needs, and experience of receiving this type of support:

We will introduce a fast-track assessment process so individuals who already know their support requirements will move swiftly through their application.

We will make it easier to transfer equipment so that individuals can move more easily between employers with their special aids and equipment.

We will allow individuals to use their disabled students allowance assessment information as part of the Access to Work assessment process.

Access to Work aims to increase levels of personalisation and to promote independence where ever possible and appropriate, so in line with this:

Access to Work will aim to find the most appropriate independent travel to work option to make each individual aware of all available options, such as travel buddies, travel training, or adaptations to a vehicle, where appropriate. I wish to make it clear that there will be no withdrawal of taxi support for individuals for whom this is the most appropriate and independent travel option.

Access to Work will strengthen the support agreement letter to place more emphasis on individually tailored travel plans so all individuals will have a personally tailored solution in their agreement letter taking account of all available travel options.

We will invite disabled people’s user-led organisations to produce innovative employment related peer support proposals to support disabled individuals using Access to Work. Any proposals will then be assessed before being taken forward. This will mean that individuals accessing Access to Work will have the opportunity to benefit from peer support alongside their standard package of support.

Access to Work has an important role to play in facilitating an open, constructive and productive relationship between employer and employee. In line with the expert panel’s advice, we will introduce changes that strengthen Access to Work’s ability to perform this role:

Access to Work will amend its guidance and products to ensure that employers are made aware of when and how they will play a part in the application process.

Access to Work will ensure that its advisers consistently act as a catalyst to encourage employers to think of creative, individually tailored adjustments for every disabled employee, for example, by using case studies with employers to bring potential solutions alive.

Access to Work will further up-skill advisers to work more constructively with employers to deliver the most appropriate adjustments in order to ensure that their disabled employees are supported as effectively as possible.

I would also like to announce two further changes aimed at facilitating the relationship between employer and employee. Access to Work has, since 2010, operated a list of standard equipment it would not normally expect to fund. The list has not, however, always operated as effectively as it might have done, and may have discouraged some applications. Consequently, we will cease

to operate this list and instead Access to Work advisers will work constructively with employer and employee to identify where Access to Work can assist.

I would also like to announce today that, whilst the principle of sharing costs of adjustments between employer and Access to Work will remain in place for medium-sized and large employers, we will remove cost share for those employing between 10 and 49 people. This brings these relatively small businesses in line with provisions that already exist for micro businesses.

I would like to emphasise that these changes are aimed at making Access to Work more responsive and easier to use, especially for small businesses. Under the Equality Act, employers are under a duty to make reasonable adjustments for disabled people. These changes will not mean that the tax payer picks up the bill for reasonable adjustments that others should be making.

Finally, I would like to announce further help for disabled people wishing to establish their own business through the new enterprise allowance (NEA), which provides valuable support for aspiring jobseekers wishing to start up their own business. From 3 December we will pilot extending Access to Work to eligible disabled people undertaking business start up activity on the NEA scheme in the Merseyside region.

Subject to effective operation in Merseyside, we will aim to roll out the measure nationally in the new year.

The Access to Work expert panel has already moved on to the second, wider phase of their work and are considering how the system can be further personalised, how the scheme could support young people who are moving from education into employment, and how it can work more effectively for employers of all sizes, and those who are self-employed.

Collectively these changes represent a significant step forward for this effective programme, and a step closer to our goal of delivering disability employment support fit for the 21st century. I now look forward to the next

phase of our work on this programme to further enhance the support that we can provide to help more disabled people get into, and remain in employment.

Measuring Child Poverty (Consultation)

The Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (Mr Iain Duncan Smith): On Thursday 15 November the Government laid before Parliament and published “Measuring Child Poverty: A consultation on better measures of child poverty”. The Command Paper is available online at:

www.education.gov.uk/aboutdfe/departmentalinformation/consultations/a00216896/measuring-child-poverty

The consultation will run until 15 February 2013.

The consultation is in three parts. It reaffirms the Government’s commitment to ending child poverty and makes the case for a better measure, examines what the dimensions of a new measure might be and explores a number of design questions.

The most recent statistics showed 300,000 children moved out of relative income poverty. However, this was largely due to a fall in the median income nationally that pushed the poverty line down; absolute poverty remained unchanged and children who were “moved out” of poverty were no better off than before.

Family income remains an important part of how we consider child poverty, but income alone is not enough. The intention is to design a multi-dimensional measure that includes but goes beyond income.

The consultation proposes eight dimensions; worklessness, unmanageable debt, poor housing, parental skills, access to quality education, family stability and parental health.

Once the consultation has closed, the Government will consider how to take forward multi-dimensional measurement of child poverty and will respond to the consultation in due course.

Petition

Monday 19 November 2012

OBSERVATIONS

DEFENCE

The Green Howards

The Petition of residents of Teesside and North Yorkshire,

Declares that the 2nd Battalion, The Yorkshire Regiment (Green Howards), who served this country loyally since 1688, is both a symbol of and major employer in both Teesside and North Yorkshire.

The Petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons urges the Secretary of State for Defence to safeguard the jobs of the battalion's soldiers, and that it further urges the Secretary of State to protect the battalion's name, badge and proud heritage.

And the Petitioners remain, etc.—[Presented by Tom Blenkinsop, *Official Report*, 24 October 2012; Vol. 551, c. 1036.]

[P001126]

Observations from the Secretary of State for Defence:

The Strategic Defence and Security Review (SDSR) set out a plan to reduce the overall size of the Armed Forces. This will reshape the Armed Forces for "Future Force 2020" while also addressing this country's financial deficit, which this Government inherited from the last. The Government would prefer not to have to make these reductions in the Armed Forces but a strong economy is a National Security imperative. It is fully understood that the decisions made have significant repercussions for the individuals concerned.

Reducing the size of the regular Army has required some units to be withdrawn from the Army Order of Battle or amalgamated. Against this requirement, following detailed work and very careful consideration, it was decided to remove the 2nd Battalion the Yorkshire Regiment (The Green Howards) from the Army Order of Battle and absorb them into the rest of the Yorkshire Regiment.

The Army took account of a number of criteria in reaching their decision about which battalions should be withdrawn. These were: maintaining a regimental system which is largely regionally aligned; demographic sustainability of regiments according to projected regional supply of recruits in the 2020 timeframe; proportionality of outcome, with no cap badge deletions and no regiment losing more than one battalion in a re-organisation; balancing the whole infantry structure to maintain variety of roles and parity of opportunity of experience for officers and soldiers; taking account of previous decisions on mergers and deletions; historical manning performance; and ensuring a solution that the Army would see as fair and equitable.

The importance of the affiliations, traditions and history of the 2nd Battalion the Yorkshire Regiment to Teesside and North Yorkshire is not underestimated, along with the importance placed on these by all those with connections to the battalion. It is a matter for the Yorkshire Regiment to determine how to keep the history and traditions alive for future generations.

While the Army recognises the disappointment that will be felt by those personnel currently serving with the 2nd Battalion, The Yorkshire Regiment, their families and veterans, these changes have been carefully structured to minimise the impact of the regular manpower reduction and to maximise the effectiveness of the Army. The future structure that has been announced has been designed by the Army to deliver military capability balanced against very challenging fiscal constraints.

The Secretary of State has said that those serving in units that are being withdrawn are no more or less likely than anyone else with similar skills and service record to be selected for redundancy. Clearly, however, as the Army reduces in size these reductions will be based on the future structure of the Army, and focused on where there are excesses of strength. It is therefore inevitable that as Infantry Battalions are amalgamated there will be an excess of infantry personnel. However, selection criteria will not include an individual's current unit or location.

The contribution to the defence of the United Kingdom made by all of the personnel affected by this decision, both past and present, is fully recognised and valued.

Written Answers to Questions

Monday 19 November 2012

TRANSPORT

Catering

Ms Abbott: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how much his Department has spent on refreshments since May 2010. [127102]

Norman Baker: The following table shows the decreasing spend on refreshments by the Department for Transport and its agencies, Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency, Highways Agency, Maritime and Coastguard Agency, Vehicle Certification Agency, Driving Standards Agency, Vehicle and Operator Services Agency, Government Car and Despatch Agency.

Department for Transport and agencies			£
2010-11	11 months from May		259,047.19
2011-12	12 months		114,119.84
2012-13	6 months to September		42,052.81
Total			415,219.84

By comparison, in financial year 2009-10, the Department and its agencies spent £525,762.84.

Dementia

Paul Burstow: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps his Department is taking to support the Prime Minister's dementia challenge and the work of each of the challenge groups; what resources he has committed; what timescales he has set for this work; and if he will make a statement. [129011]

Norman Baker: The Department for Transport will be publishing an Accessibility Action Plan in due course which will identify our priorities for improving access to the transport network. We will be working with transport operators to ensure that invisible disabilities are included in awareness training for staff. Among current initiatives, the Department provides grant funding to 12 mobility centres in England, to help them assess people's driving capabilities including cognitive skills. People with dementia may be eligible for concessionary bus travel if they are precluded from acquiring a driving licence on grounds of medical fitness.

Manufacturing Industries: Motor Vehicles

Rehman Chishti: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many grants his Department has paid out for the (a) Chevrolet Volt, (b) Citroen CZero, (c) Mia, (d) Mitsubishi i-MiEV, (e) Nissan Leaf, (f) Peugeot iOn, (g) Renault Fluence ZE, (h) Smart fortwo electric drive, (i) Toyota Prius Plug-in Hybrid, (j)

Vauxhall Ampera and (k) any other qualifying car since January 2011. [128633]

Norman Baker: The number of claims made for the Plug-in Car Grant, and validated for payment in the period January 2011 - October 2012 is broken down by vehicle type in the table below:

Manufacturer	Car	No. of Claims validated for payment to end October 2012
Mitsubishi	i-Miev	179
Mercedes-Benz	SMART fortwo	74
Renault	Fluence	22
Nissan	Leaf	1,044
Toyota	Plug-in Prius	279
Vauxhall	Ampera	323
Peugeot	iOn	152
Citroen	C-Zero	51
Chevrolet	Volt	55

The UK Launch date for (c) the Mia has still not yet been confirmed, consequently there are currently zero claims for that vehicle.

Railways: Capital Allowances

Mr Leech: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what discussions he has had with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on the possibility of including the rail industry in the Enhanced Capital Allowances scheme; [128270]

(2) if he will estimate the potential savings that would be accrued by the rail industry if that industry were to be included in the Enhanced Capital Allowances scheme. [128271]

Norman Baker: The Secretary of State for Transport regularly discusses a range of policy issues with the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

The potential savings that would be accrued by the rail industry if it were to be included in the Enhanced Capital Allowances scheme are difficult to quantify, and would depend on the amount of eligible capital expenditure incurred by the rail industry, and the rate of corporation tax. The savings may be offset by tax reliefs already available under other regimes.

I have, however, drawn this matter to the attention of the Chief Secretary to the Treasury.

Stagecoach Group and Go Ahead Group

Bridget Phillipson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport pursuant to the answer of 18 September 2012, *Official Report*, column 564W, on Stagecoach Group and Go Ahead Group, if he will place in the Library minutes of the meetings held by his Department from January 2012 to date. [126947]

Norman Baker: As the minutes of any meetings with Stagecoach Group and Go Ahead Group contain matters of a commercially sensitive nature, it would not be appropriate to place copies in the Library.

Streatham Common Station

Mr Umunna: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what reports he has received on (a) the engineering works being carried out at Streatham Common station and (b) any effects on the surrounding area; and if he will make a statement; [128746]

(2) what discussions his Department has had with Network Rail on (a) the engineering works being carried out at Streatham Common station and (b) any effects on surrounding area; [128747]

(3) if he will (a) request and (b) publish a full update from Network Rail on the engineering works being carried out at Streatham Common station to address the (i) effect on local businesses, (ii) work undertaken by Network Rail to mitigate the effect on traffic flow of the works and (iii) communications Network Rail undertook (A) prior to the start of the work and (B) since its commencement. [128748]

Mr Simon Burns: The Secretary of State for Transport, my right hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire Dales (Mr McLoughlin), has received no reports from Network Rail on the current engineering works at Streatham Common station. Network Rail is a private sector company limited by guarantee, and the scope and impact of its engineering works are operational matters for the company, in which Ministers have no power to intervene.

Network Rail carries out its responsibilities under the industry's national possessions planning regime which is overseen by the independent Office of Rail Regulation.

However the Secretary of State takes an interest in this issue, and Ministers and officials meet regularly with Network Rail to discuss a range of issues including its engineering works strategy.

As part of our general efforts to improve efficiency on the railways, we are encouraging Network Rail to work closely with train operators and other relevant stakeholders on planning possessions and completing them on time.

Tolls: Motorcycles

Simon Hart: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many toll bridges do not charge motorcycles. [128570]

Stephen Hammond: In England, the following toll bridges do not levy a charge for motorcycles using them: the Dartford Crossing, Humber Bridge, Severn Crossings, Tamar Bridge and the Tyne Tunnels.

The Department does not hold such data for tolled bridges and crossings in Wales. All toll charges on bridges in Scotland were abolished by the Scottish Parliament on 11 February 2008, under the Abolition of Bridge Tolls (Scotland) Act 2008.

Universal Credit

Mr McCann: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how the qualifying conditions for each passported benefit for which he is responsible will change under universal credit. [128331]

Norman Baker: The Department for Transport is not responsible for any passported benefits which will be affected by the move to universal credit. However, the move towards the personal independent payment (PIP), which will replace disability living allowance, may have an effect on the award of blue badges and concessionary fares, though we are seeking to keep this to a minimum.

WALES

Employment Agencies

Catherine McKinnell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what his policy is on the use of offshore employment companies in the supply of public sector workers in his Department. [128726]

Stephen Crabb: Staff in the Wales Office are generally supplied from other Government Departments. It is not our policy to use offshore employment companies for their supply.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Pay

Mr Raab: To ask the Attorney-General how many employees of the Law Officers' Departments are paid in excess of (a) £80,000 and (b) £100,000. [128486]

The Attorney-General: The information requested as of 31 October is contained in the following table.

	£80,000 to £100,000	£100,000 plus
Crown Prosecution Service	37	27
Serious Fraud Office	8	4
HM Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate	1	11
Attorney-General's Office	1	1
Treasury Solicitor's Department	21	5

¹ The individual paid in excess of £100,000 is a public appointment and not a civil servant.

LEADER OF THE HOUSE

Palace of Westminster: Repairs and Maintenance

Mr Winnick: To ask the Leader of the House if he plans to hold discussions with his counterpart in the House of Lords on the report entitled Restoration and Renewal of the Palace of Westminster: Pre-feasibility study and preliminary strategic business case, published in October 2012. [128528]

Mr Lansley: I have regular discussions with my counterpart in the House of Lords on a range of issues. The responsibility for consideration of the report entitled Restoration and Renewal of the Palace of Westminster: Pre-feasibility study and preliminary strategic business case, predominantly lies with the relevant bodies of the two Houses.

Mr Winnick: To ask the Leader of the House if he will make it his policy that the Government should respond to the report entitled Restoration and Renewal of the Palace of Westminster: Pre-feasibility study and preliminary strategic business case, published in October 2012. [128529]

Mr Lansley: No. The Government do not intend to respond directly to the report entitled Restoration and Renewal of the Palace of Westminster: Pre-feasibility study and preliminary business case.

HOUSE OF COMMONS COMMISSION

Palace of Westminster: Repairs and Maintenance

Mr Winnick: To ask the hon. Member for Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross, representing the House of Commons Commission, what the total expenditure on essential maintenance of the Palace of Westminster was in (a) 2009-10 and (b) 2010-11; what the Commons contribution was in each such year; and what estimate he has made of the likely percentage increase for the following two financial years. [128527]

John Thurso: Table 1 shows the total maintenance cost for the Palace of Westminster for 2009-10 to 2011-12, and Table 2 shows the Commons share. Maintenance can be defined in various ways: these figures are an updated version of those produced for the recently published study report on Restoration and Renewal of the Palace of Westminster. They include:

in-house staff costs and contract costs for planned maintenance and repair tasks;

the cost of minor projects as well as capital works;

relevant overheads; and

an allocation of estate-wide costs for lifts maintenance, asbestos management, water safety, pressure vessel testing and the upkeep of systems like fire safety equipment and security access control which are not allocated to a specific building.

The expected spend on routine maintenance of the Palace of Westminster in 2012-13 is broadly in line with that of 2011-12. However, the expected capital spend is likely to increase significantly (by about 50%) on previous years. This would suggest a total of some £33 million in 2012-13 (Commons share £20 million) but the final figures will be dependent on the progress of work. This increase in the capital spend is mainly due to pressing requirements for a number of key works, including the Medium Term Mechanical & Electrical Programme, fire safety improvements, Westminster Hall stone conservation, encaustic tile conservation, the Cast Iron Roof programme and security improvements to the perimeter, all of which commence on site this year. The Commons share of this expenditure will be 60%.

The work being undertaken under these projects, including the current M&E programme (designed to replace plant at highest risk of failure in the medium term), is necessary to ensure the continued safe occupation of the building and meet our conservation responsibilities. Every effort is being made to minimise the risk that this expenditure could turn out to be nugatory in the light of the long-term requirement for renewing Palace infrastructure.

Table 1: Total maintenance costs

Description	£000		
	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12
Routine maintenance ¹	17,751.7	15,325.5	13,841.4
Capital projects	11,528.0	11,457.6	12,996.1

Table 1: Total maintenance costs

Description	£000		
	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12
Total maintenance ²	29,279.7	26,873.1	26,837.5

¹ Routine maintenance cost: Direct staff costs of those involved in maintenance (excludes Director's Office, programme and planning, fire, safety and environment, project delivery); planned preventative and reactive maintenance costs; minor projects funded from resource rather than capital budgets; relevant overheads, and an allocation of estate-wide costs in these activities.

² Total maintenance cost: Routine maintenance cost plus capital projects (excluding staff), and an allocation of estate-wide costs for projects (excluding staff).

Table 2: Commons share

Description	£000		
	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12
Routine maintenance	10,651.0	9,195.3	8,304.8
Capital projects	6,916.8	6,928.6	7,797.7
Total maintenance	17,567.8	16,123.9	16,102.5

Select Committees

Mr Jenkin: To ask the hon. Member for Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross, representing the House of Commons Commission, if he will make it his policy that select committee staff should be given online access to *The Times*, *Sunday Times* and the *Financial Times*; for what reasons this is not currently the case; and if he will make a statement. [127964]

John Thurso: The Library maintained a corporate online subscription to the *Financial Times* for many years, on behalf of Members and staff of both Houses. However, the price of this subscription rose significantly above the rate of inflation: between 2005 and 2011 the cost of the service to the Library increased by over 250%. A further increase of 85% was proposed for 2012. The cost of the service was assessed to be no longer affordable within the Library's agreed budget without substantial cuts to other hardcopy and online resources provided by the Library for use by Members.

Access to *The Times* and *Sunday Times* was previously provided through an online news aggregation service. The Library's contract for this service came to an end in 2012 and the service was retendered in line with public sector procurement guidelines. The new service does not include content from News International titles as this content is currently exclusively licensed to a competing service provider. The quoted price of procuring an online subscription to News International titles for the parliamentary intranet was significantly more than the cost of access to all other titles and news content combined through the news aggregation service and, as a result, was unaffordable within the Library's budget.

The Library has a small number of single user accounts for individual members of its staff to *The Times*, *Sunday Times* and the *Financial Times* to carry out searches on behalf of Members. Single user accounts have also been procured for a very limited number of Committee Office staff working for the Treasury and Foreign Affairs Committees and in the media team. The Library and Committee Office will work together to resolve any issues affecting the hon. Gentleman's Committee.

The decisions to withdraw access to these publications was endorsed by the Administration Committee. The Library will continue to discuss arrangements with these suppliers in the hope that online access to this content can be provided again in the future at an affordable cost to the House.

DEFENCE

Afghanistan

Paul Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what estimate he has made of the cost of repatriating equipment from Afghanistan to the UK in the current and each of the next four years. [127966]

Mr Dunne [holding answer 12 November 2012]: The Ministry of Defence is currently determining what equipment we will repatriate from Afghanistan, how we will achieve this and what the likely cost will be.

Lindsay Roy: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many military personnel who have been seriously injured in Afghanistan have been returned to and been treated in Selly Oak Hospital. [128168]

Mr Francois: The number of very seriously injured and seriously injured service personnel aeromedically evacuated from operations in Afghanistan and treated at Selly Oak Hospital up to June 2010 and/or at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Birmingham at some point in their care pathway is 509. This covers a reporting period from 8 October 2007, the earliest date for which data are available, to 30 September 2012.

Selly Oak Hospital has now closed, and the Royal Centre for Defence Medicine and the military ward in the hospital have relocated to the new Queen Elizabeth Hospital.

Armed Forces: Children

Jim Shannon: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has received on school fees grants for serving soldiers. [128444]

Mr Francois: School fees for the children of serving soldiers are covered within the continuity of education allowance (CEA) package which forms an important element of our support to our service personnel and their families, providing a stable education environment for their children.

Our records indicate that there have been four representations on CEA since 1 January 2012. One of these was in regard to CEA policy and the other three concerned entitlement.

Armed Forces: Foreign Nationals

Mr Jim Murphy: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many foreign and commonwealth armed forces personnel there were in the UK armed forces, by country and service, in each year since 2000; and what proportion that figure represented of the total armed forces strength of each country in each year. [126683]

Mr Francois: Consolidated figures for all three services are only available from 2007 onwards. The following table sets out the position as at 1 April each year.

	<i>Services¹</i>					
	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
<i>Naval</i>						
Non-UK	1,310	1,010	990	990	900	800
Australian	20	20	20	20	20	20
Canadian	20	20	20	20	20	20
Citizen of Fiji	80	100	120	130	140	140
Dominican	—	10	10	10	10	10
Gambian	10	20	20	20	20	20
Ghanaian	—	10	10	10	10	10
Grenadian	—	—	10	10	10	10
Indian	10	10	10	10	10	—
Irish	60	60	60	60	70	60
Jamaican	30	30	30	30	30	30
Kenyan	10	10	20	20	20	20
Malawian	—	10	10	10	10	10
New Zealander	10	10	10	10	20	10
Nigerian	—	10	10	10	10	10
Saudi Arabian	10	—	—	—	—	—
South African	70	80	80	90	110	100
St Lucian	—	10	10	10	10	10
Trinidad and Tobago citizen	20	30	30	40	30	40
Vincentian	190	220	230	250	250	240
Zambian	—	—	10	10	10	10
Zimbabwean	20	20	20	20	20	20
<i>Army</i>						
Non-UK	7,320	9,690	11,210	8,940	8,180	8,210
Australian	70	70	70	80	70	60
Bangladeshi	10	10	10	10	—	10
Barbadian	10	10	10	10	10	10
Belizean	—	—	30	50	50	50
Botswanan	10	10	30	40	40	30
British Commonwealth	10	10	10	—	—	—
Cameroonian	30	50	70	70	70	80
Canadian	60	60	50	40	40	40
Citizen of Fiji	1,950	2,110	2,190	2,170	2,130	2,110
Citizen of Seychelles	10	10	10	20	20	20
Citizen of Sri Lanka	20	10	10	10	10	20
Dominican	20	20	20	30	30	30
Gambian	20	160	220	280	280	310
German	—	—	10	—	—	—
Ghanaian	780	870	920	940	890	890
Grenadian	50	60	120	140	130	140
Guyanese	20	20	30	30	30	20
Indian	60	90	100	110	110	130
Irish	210	230	240	290	340	390
Jamaican	910	720	600	540	460	420
Kenyan	130	140	180	200	220	240
Malawian	120	180	220	250	250	250
Maltese	—	—	—	—	10	10
Mauritian	30	40	50	60	60	60
Nepalese	30	50	310	440	460	530
New Zealander	60	60	70	70	70	60
Nigerian	90	130	160	190	200	220
Pakistani	10	10	10	20	20	20

	Services ¹					
	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Sierra Leonean	50	50	40	40	40	40
South African	810	840	900	930	870	810
St Helenian	20	20	20	20	10	10
St Lucian	230	210	240	300	280	270
Swazi	10	20	20	20	20	20
Tanzanian	—	—	10	10	10	10
Tongan	10	10	10	10	10	10
Trinidad and Tobago citizen	70	70	70	70	60	60
Ugandan	60	70	80	80	80	90
Vincetian	270	240	370	350	330	330
Zambian	20	20	30	40	40	40
Zimbabwean	580	510	470	440	380	330
<i>RAF</i>						
Non-UK	540	350	290	240	220	200
Australian	—	—	—	—	—	10
Canadian	—	—	—	10	—	—
Citizen of Fiji	10	10	10	10	10	10
Irish	20	30	30	30	30	20
Jamaican	10	10	10	10	10	10
New Zealander	—	—	—	—	10	10
South African	—	10	10	10	10	10
Trinidad and Tobago citizen	—	—	10	10	10	10
Zimbabwean	—	10	10	10	10	10

¹ Figures have been rounded to the nearest 10, except for numbers ending in '5' which are rounded to the nearest 20 in order to prevent systematic bias. Totals may not, therefore, equal the sums of their parts.

Note:

The tables exclude full-time reserve personnel, Gurkhas and volunteer reservists, and individuals for which no nationality is recorded.

Information on the armed forces of other countries is not held in a way which would enable us to make reliable calculations of what proportion these figures represent of the armed forces strength of each country in each year.

Armed Forces: Redundancy

Sammy Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) how many military personnel have been made redundant since 2010; [125359]

(2) how many military personnel will be made redundant by 2015. [125375]

Mr Francois: Between 1 January 2010 and 31 August 2012 some 2,300 regular military personnel left the armed forces under the current armed forces redundancy programme. A further 4,300 military personnel are due to depart by June 2013. This will complete tranches one and two of the programme. Tranche two is the last major tranche for the Royal Navy, Royal Marines and Royal Air Force, although a small number of redundancies may be required for senior officers (colonel and brigadier equivalents) and senior medical staff on completion of the Senior Liability Review and the Defence Medical Services 20 study.

With regard to the total number of military personnel who will be made redundant by 2015, there is likely to be a requirement for two further main tranches for the

Army, in order to achieve the reductions to a strength of around 82,000 by 2020. However, no decisions have yet been made.

These changes form part of the overall programme to restructure the armed forces and their capabilities by implementing the conclusions of the Strategic Defence and Security Review. Our goal of battle—winning armed forces, together with a smaller, more professional Ministry of Defence, also involves a reduction of 32,000 civilian personnel by 2020.

Mr Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether the proximity of pensionable age is taken into account when deciding which members of the armed forces to make redundant. [128046]

Mr Francois [holding answer 12 November 2012]: No. When selecting personnel of the armed forces for compulsory redundancy no consideration was given to the proximity of the immediate pension point. As we reduce the size of the armed forces, our priority is to ensure that the services maintain the correct balance of those skills and experience across the rank structures which are required to deliver operational capability now and in the future, and it is this which has determined the redundancy fields.

Armed Forces: Sexual Offences

Mrs Moon: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence pursuant to the answer of 26 October 2012, *Official Report*, column 1074W, on armed forces: sexual offences, what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the (a) Royal Navy and (b) Army campaign in relation to raising awareness of sexual assault; and if he will make a statement. [127979]

Mr Francois: Each of the single service police forces undertakes crime and incident analysis, including the reporting of sexual assault, as part of their annual strategic assessments. However, there has been no specific assessment of the effectiveness of either the Royal Navy or the Army poster campaigns, which began earlier this year.

Armed Forces: Vehicles

Andrew Rosindell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made of the operational benefits of the Vehicle Systems Information Exploitation Health and Usage Monitoring System; and if he will make a statement. [126583]

Mr Dunne: The Ministry of Defence (MOD) is undertaking work to develop vehicle and equipment sub-systems and exploit the information they provide on vehicle performance and reliability. This will ensure that operational benefits are gained through improved equipment availability, better fleet management and optimised through life support.

Specifically, the MOD is in the process of equipping over 500 combat vehicles in the Operational Training Fleet with a Health and Usage Monitoring System (HUMS). This project will connect information between vehicle platforms, MOD establishments and industry leading to improved fleet performance and availability.

Armoured Fighting Vehicles

Andrew Rosindell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what assessment he has made of the participation of small and medium-sized enterprises in the Combat Vehicle Reconnaissance upgrade; and if he will make a statement; [126567]

(2) what progress has been made towards completion of the Combat Vehicle Reconnaissance upgrade. [126574]

Mr Dunne: The Combat Vehicle Reconnaissance Tracked (CVR(T)) has received a number of upgrades since entering service in 1972. CVR(T) Mk2 in its upgraded form was fielded as an urgent operational requirement (UOR) to operations in Afghanistan in September 2011 and has achieved full operating capability.

BAE Systems, as the design authority, was contracted as the prime contractor, which provided greater risk assurance due to the timescales involved with fielding the UOR vehicle. It was the company's role to ensure that the chosen solution was compliant with the requirements set by the Ministry of Defence and to undertake sub-contract arrangements, including competition where appropriate, with a number of small and medium sized enterprises.

Andrew Rosindell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made of the effect that deployment of the upgraded Combat Vehicle Reconnaissance in theatre will have on UK military capability. [126568]

Mr Dunne: The Combat Vehicle Reconnaissance has had several upgrades since it originally deployed to Afghanistan. These upgrades, primarily to improve the performance and protection of the vehicle, have been in response to the evolving nature of the threat faced in theatre and have been specific to operations in Afghanistan. In terms of the UK's broader military capability, the upgrades do not affect the out of service date for the Combat Vehicle Reconnaissance family of vehicles, which is planned to be complete by 2026.

BAE Systems

Andrew Rosindell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made of the implications for his Department of the memorandum of understanding recently signed between MASS and BAE Systems. [126584]

Mr Dunne: This is a commercial matter between the companies concerned.

Canada

Jim Shannon: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has received on the costs to service personnel of gym membership at BATUS in Canada. [128438]

Mr Francois: The Secretary of State for Defence, my right hon. Friend the Member for Runnymede and Weybridge (Mr Hammond), has not received any representations on the costs to service personnel of gym membership at British Army Training Unit Suffield.

Service personnel are not required to pay for gym membership.

Jim Shannon: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what progress his Department has made on the provision of wi-fi networks at BATUS Canada. [128443]

Mr Francois: Wi-fi is provided in British Army Training Unit Suffield (BATUS) through non-public welfare funds. We continue to seek ways in which the service can be improved, including upgrades via the Canadian I-Net system.

Catering

Ms Abbott: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how much his Department has spent on refreshments since May 2010. [127110]

Mr Francois: The information is not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Civil Servants: Retirement

Mr Jim Murphy: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many senior civil servants have retired from his Department since 2010; and which such people have held meetings with (a) Ministers and (b) senior civil servants in his Department since retiring. [124297]

Mr Philip Hammond [*holding answer 22 October 2012*]: I refer the right hon. Member to the answer I gave on 13 November 2012, *Official Report*, columns 169-71W, to the hon. Member for North Durham (Mr Jones).

Defence Reform Review

Mr Jim Murphy: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence which recommendations of the Levene report on Defence reform: an independent report into the structure and management of the Ministry of Defence he has implemented. [126767]

Mr Philip Hammond [*holding answer 5 November 2012*]: We accepted all of Lord Levene's recommendations and will have implemented the majority of his recommendations by April 2013, although a small number of the changes will require longer to implement in full.

Recommendations in implementation of which is complete include: strengthening top level decision making; clarifying the roles of the Permanent Secretary and Chief of the Defence Staff; the roles of the Service Chiefs and how they provide their advice; creation of the Joint Forces Command and appointment of its first Commander; the role of the Cost Assurance and Analysis Service; disestablishment of the former Central Top Level Budget organisation; introduction of the new Joint Assured model for management of senior military officers; and arrangements for personal oversight of implementation by the Secretary of State.

We are making good progress on his other recommendations. We have published the new Head Office concept and senior structure setting out the role of a smaller, more strategic Head Office and we are implementing new command structures for the Navy, Army and Air Force, all delivering a significant reduction in senior posts; we are on course to introduce the new

delegated financial and military capability operating model with an effective process for holding TLB Holders to account; and we are on course to reach full operational capability for the new Joint Forces Command. We expect these changes to come into force from April 2013 as planned, with subsequent fine-tuning as necessary as they bed down. Work also continues to improve talent management, determine the future arrangements for Defence Equipment and Support and deliver further efficiencies in our enabling services through the development of Defence Business Services and the Defence Infrastructure Organisation, drawing on private sector expertise. This is all underpinned by a long-term programme to drive the right behaviours across defence: leadership at every level, everyone working together to make defence as a whole stronger, and modern, innovative ways of doing business.

As set out in his report, Lord Levene is currently conducting his first annual review of implementation. I will report on progress to Parliament in light of his conclusions when I have received them.

Defence: Procurement

Andrew Rosindell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent steps he has taken to ensure that equipment for the armed forces is procured in the UK. [126573]

Mr Dunne: The overall approach was set out in the National Security Through Technology White Paper (CM 8278) published in February 2012. This makes it clear that we will work to enable UK-based industry to be sufficiently competitive to provide best value for money in meeting our defence and security needs. This includes: sustaining the level of investment in defence science and technology at 1.2% of the defence budget; encouraging small and medium-sized enterprises to fulfil their potential in responding to defence requirements; and increasing support for defence exports. The Ministry of Defence is also working closely with the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills to support the Defence growth partnership announced by the Prime Minister at the Farnborough International Airshow in July.

Andrew Rosindell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent assessment he has made of the effectiveness of defence procurement; and what steps he is taking to ensure that the process is more robust. [126586]

Mr Dunne: A core element of Defence Transformation is to reform the acquisition system to drive better value for money from the defence budget. This includes the Materiel Strategy, involving a comprehensive analysis of defence acquisition activities. This has concluded that reforms are essential to address the legacy problems in defence acquisition that have led to cost and schedule overruns.

The Ministry of Defence is currently considering the value for money case for a government owned contractor operated (GOCO) entity for Defence Equipment and Support (DE&S). Subject to the outcome of this work, an investment appraisal will follow that will test the GOCO model against the alternative of an improved DE&S.

Alison Seabeck: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence pursuant to the answer of 30 October 2012, *Official Report*, column 166W, what proportion of contracts tendered were placed through the single source non-competitive process in each of the last three years. [127077]

Mr Dunne: Details of new contracts placed with the Ministry of Defence, including those placed through a non-competitive process, are published annually in the UK Defence Statistics, the most recent version of which is available at:

<http://www.dasa.mod.uk/modintranet/UKDS/UKDS2011/c1/table115.php>

Defence: Scotland

Mr Jim Murphy: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what estimate he has made of the number of jobs in Scotland linked (a) indirectly and (b) directly to the (i) Type 26 programme, (ii) carrier programme, (iii) Astute successor programme and (iv) nuclear deterrent programme; [127606]

(2) what estimate he has made of the number of jobs in Scotland linked (a) indirectly and (b) directly to the defence industry; [127607]

(3) in which Scottish towns and cities there are jobs (a) indirectly and (b) directly linked to the UK defence industry; [127957]

(4) how many people are employed in Scotland in jobs linked (a) indirectly and (b) directly to UK military aircraft manufacture; [128182]

(5) how many people are employed in Scotland in jobs linked (a) indirectly and (b) directly to UK military shipbuilding. [128183]

Mr Dunne [holding answers 9, 12 and 13 November 2012]: The Ministry of Defence (MOD) no longer compiles national or regional employment statistics, as they do not directly support policymaking or operations.

The MOD does not, therefore, hold information centrally about the number of jobs in Scotland linked to the programmes or sectors listed, or for the Scottish defence industry as a whole. The MOD, however, does hold some indicative figures which show that an estimated 5,500 jobs are directly linked to UK military shipbuilding in Scotland in general, including associated support staff working at the shipyards.

For the following specific programmes the MOD also has indicative figures relating to directly linked jobs. There are currently approximately 170 industry jobs in Scotland linked directly to the Type 26 Global Combat Ship programme at BAE Systems Maritime—Naval Ships' (BAE MNS) site in Scotstoun.

There are more than 2,000 industry jobs at BAE MNS's shipyards on the Clyde, and up to a further 2,000 at Babcock Marine's site in Rosyth, directly linked to the Queen Elizabeth Class Aircraft Carrier programme. However, the precise numbers at each location vary depending on the work being undertaken at the time.

Her Majesty's Naval Base Clyde sustains some 6,500 jobs, the majority of which play a role in supporting the UK's military nuclear programme including the nuclear deterrent and the Astute Class submarine. The MOD intends to base permanently the Astute and Trafalgar

Class submarines in the Clyde, creating an additional 1,500 jobs. There are also approximately 300 industry jobs linked directly to the programme at the Naval Reactor Test Establishment at Dounreay.

The MOD does not hold information about the numbers of jobs indirectly linked to these programmes.

DM Longtown

Alison Seabeck: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what reports he has received of the theft of munitions from DM Longtown; whether those reports will delay his final decision about its future; and if he will make a statement. [127756]

Mr Dunne [*holding answer 9 November 2012*]: On 25 October 2012, a number of bar mines were stolen from a munitions train near Warrington which was transporting them from the Defence Munitions (DM) site at Longtown. All of the mines have now been recovered and the police have made arrests in connection with this incident.

It is important that the circumstances surrounding this incident are fully understood. I have therefore deferred my decision on the future of explosive storage and processing at DM Longtown until ongoing investigations have been completed and any implications for munitions transport and storage have been properly taken into account.

Elbit Systems

Mr Godsiff: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what role Elbit Systems play in (a) the Joint Venture Company set up with Thales UK and (b) the overall development of Unmanned Air Systems in the UK. [126962]

Mr Dunne: The role of Elbit Systems in Unmanned Air Vehicle Tactical Systems Limited is a matter for the companies concerned.

With regards to Ministry of Defence unmanned air systems (UAS) programmes, Elbit Systems acts as a subcontractor to Thales UK and provides the air vehicles, related ground control technology and operator training for the in-service Hermes 450 UAS. The Watchkeeper UAS, which will replace Hermes, builds on technological expertise developed for the Hermes system, with Elbit Systems acting as subcontractor to Thales UK for the provision of the air vehicles and related ground control.

ELINT

Mrs Moon: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made of the personnel requirements of his Department for the analysis of ELINT data; what steps he is taking to ensure that the requirement is met in (a) 2012-13 and (b) subsequent years; and if he will make a statement. [127476]

Mr Dunne: The Ministry of Defence keeps under regular review the personnel requirements for staff with specialist electronic intelligence (ELINT) skills and continues to take the necessary steps to ensure that the requirement for future years will be met.

Fuels

Robert Halfon: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how much (a) the armed forces and (b) his Department spent on petrol and diesel in each of the last five years. [116543]

Mr Dunne: The majority of petrol and diesel consumed by the Ministry of Defence—90% during 2010-11—was purchased under the bulk fuel contracts managed by Defence Equipment and Support. Expenditure on petrol and diesel for road vehicles in each of the last three financial years is shown in the following table:

Financial year	£ million	
	Unleaded petrol	Diesel
2009-10	1.7	39
2010-11	1.2	52
2011-12	2.2	51

The combined expenditure on both unleaded petrol and diesel for road vehicles was £38.2 million in 2007-08 and £46.9 million in 2008-09.

Data on fuel purchased outside of these arrangements are not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

HMS Dragon

Mr Mike Hancock: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what reports he has received on problems with the gearbox on HMS Dragon; and how much longer she will remain in HM Naval Base Portsmouth before resuming full service. [128092]

Mr Dunne: A problem with HMS Dragon's engine was reported on 27 August 2012 when a defective bearing was identified in the ship's integrated propulsion system during a routine inspection. It has been established that the problem did not affect the auxiliary gearbox.

Following a successful repair, the ship has already resumed her planned operational programme.

ICT

Alison Seabeck: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what the cost to the public purse was of his Department's expenditure on the defence information infrastructure in each of the last five years; and what proportion of his Department's IT expenditure such expenditure represented. [127117]

Mr Dunne: The cost to the public purse of the Defence Information Infrastructure, from its approved funding, in each of the last five financial years was:

Financial year	Cost ex-VAT (£ million)
2007-08	487
2008-09	562
2009-10	651
2010-11	643
2011-12	633

The Ministry of Defence's central financial systems combine the costs of IT with telecommunications, which does not allow IT costs to be readily isolated. Therefore

proportionate information for each of the years above is not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Information and Communications Technology

Angus Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how much his Department spent on information technology in the last three financial years; and how much of this sum was spent on (a) software development and testing and (b) application including (i) staff training, (ii) the cost of new hardware and software and (iii) the cost of launching into the live environment. [126181]

Mr Dunne: Ministry of Defence (MOD) expenditure on IT and telecommunications for use across the armed services and MOD totalled £1.8 billion in 2009-10 and the same in 2010-11. This includes the costs of IT services, equipment purchases, telephone line, telephone rental charges and the service concession arrangements formerly known as the private finance initiative service charges. expenditure for 2011-12 has not yet been finalised.

A breakdown of this expenditure into the categories requested is not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Joint Strike Fighter Aircraft

Andrew Rosindell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what progress has been made on the procurement of the F-35 joint strike fighter jet; and if he will make a statement. [126569]

Mr Dunne: The UK is committed to the purchase of the short take off vertical landing variant of the Joint Strike Fighter and took delivery of its first two aircraft in July and October 2012, with both being used for initial operational test and evaluation. A third aircraft is on schedule for delivery in the second quarter of 2013. The UK will commence training for pilots and maintainers in December 2012 at Eglin Air Force Base in the US.

As announced in the Strategic Defence and Security Review (SDSR) we plan to deliver a carrier strike capability from around 2020 with embarked trials scheduled for 2018.

Andrew Rosindell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when the F-35 joint strike fighter jet will be battle-ready. [126580]

Mr Dunne: Under current planning assumptions, the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter has a provisional initial operating capability of 2018, with the aircraft's in-service date not due to be finalised until its next investment decision point. As stated in the 2010 Strategic Defence and Security Review, it is the UK's intention to have the Carrier Strike capability from 2020.

The first two test and evaluation aircraft were delivered this summer. The first production aircraft are expected to be delivered in 2016.

Andrew Rosindell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how the capabilities of the F-35 joint strike fighter will differ from those of the Harrier. [126581]

Mr Dunne: The F-35 Joint Strike Fighter is a fifth-generation aircraft that represents a step change in capability compared to the third generation Harrier. Unlike the Harrier, it is an all-weather stealth aircraft with an autonomous intelligence-gathering capability, and it has significantly greater range and speed. It can also carry a larger payload of more advanced weapons than the Harrier.

Maritime Collaborative Working Environment

Andrew Rosindell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) which industry partners are involved in the implementation of the maritime collaborative working environment; [126576]

(2) what assessment he has made of the operational benefits of the maritime collaborative working environment. [126582]

Mr Dunne: The maritime collaborative working environment (MCWE) is a secure collaborative workspace that allows the Ministry of Defence (MOD) to share classified information with industry partners in a protected manner. The MCWE also contains advanced information technology features, which underpin various business critical, design management and safety processes. These are used to support the operation of Royal Navy submarines and surface ships.

The MCWE service is provided by Babcock International Group, through its Maritime Technology division.

The MCWE service is used by the MOD and its industrial partners including:

- Babcock;
- BAE Systems;
- Rolls-Royce;
- Lockheed Martin;
- Ultra Electronics;
- QinetiQ;
- BMT Defence Services;
- SEA; and
- Xpedite.

Military Aircraft

Mr Carswell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what meetings former senior civil servants in his Department have had with Ministers or officials in the Department in relation to the procurement programmes for (a) Future Lynx, (b) Fire Shadow and (c) Merlin re-fit since June 2010. [123842]

Mr Dunne: The Ministry of Defence (MOD) does not maintain a central database recording the employment history of all former senior civil servants. The information requested is therefore not available or could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

However, within two years of leaving the civil service or the armed forces, former MOD personnel must obtain approval before taking up new employment if their roles within their former profession fell within a set of criteria (for instance access to commercially sensitive information of interest to their prospective employer). Employment applications by former MOD personnel at four star level or above, or that are deemed particularly controversial, would be referred to the Advisory Committee on Business Appointments.

NATO

Nicholas Soames: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what changes he plans to recommend to the disbursement arrangements for NATO's Common Funds. [127610]

Dr Murrison [*holding answer 9 November 2012*]: While we have no plans to recommend changes to the disbursement arrangements for common funds at present, we do support a wider review of how common funding may be used, particularly if a way can be found to support collective training and exercises, an activity highlighted in the strategic concept, and thus maintain levels of operability post-international security assistance force. However, it must be a genuine force-multiplier and not a subsidy for those allies who do not invest appropriately in acquiring defence capabilities.

Mr Gregory Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many UK armed forces personnel are serving overseas in NATO-led operations. [128127]

Mr Robathan [*holding answer 12 November 2012*]: UK armed forces personnel are currently serving overseas on four NATO-led operations. In Kosovo there are two personnel in Kosovo Force (KFOR) posts (one permanent and one temporary). One member of the UK armed forces is serving with Operation Ocean Shield. 45 UK personnel—the ship's company of a Sandown Class ship—are serving with the Standing Naval Mine Counter-Measures Group 2.

The only other NATO operation on which UK armed forces are currently serving overseas is Afghanistan. The precise number of personnel in Afghanistan fluctuates on a daily basis for a variety of reasons, including mid-tour rest and recuperation, temporary absence for training, evacuation for medical reasons, the roulement of forces, visits and a range of other factors.

We do not, therefore, publish actual figures for personnel deployed. I refer the hon. Member to the statement made by the Prime Minister on 6 July 2011, *Official Report*, columns 1511-4, and confirmed by the Secretary of State for Defence, my right hon. Friend the Member for Runnymede and Weybridge (Mr Hammond), on 26 April 2012, *Official Report*, column 1118, that we are in the process of reducing the number of military posts established in Afghanistan to 9,000, which will be achieved by 31 December 2012.

Nuclear Weapons

Paul Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) how many staff in his Department are employed on the Trident replacement design programme; [127785]

(2) how many new staff his Department expects to employ on the Trident replacement submarine design programme as a result of the announcements on spending in (a) May 2012 and (b) October 2012. [127790]

Mr Dunne: The number of Ministry of Defence staff employed solely on the Successor submarine programme is approximately 130, although others contribute to the programme. This figure will change as the programme progresses, but is not affected by either of the recent announcements.

Public Expenditure

Alison Sebeck: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent estimate he has made of his Department's likely level of expenditure in 2012-13. [128130]

Mr Philip Hammond [*holding answer 12 November 2012*]: This information is accessible on the Treasury website on pages 328 and 329 of the Ministry of Defence (MOD) Main Supply Estimates 2012-13 PDF at:

http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/main_supply_estimates_2012_13.htm

We shall update our forecast of this financial year's outturn in the MOD's 2012-13 Spring Supplementary Estimates which are planned to be laid before the House in February 2013.

Redundancy

Alison Sebeck: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many of the posts identified for redundancy within his Department in (a) 2011-12 and (b) 2012-13 were categorised as safety-critical. [125811]

Mr Francois: The Ministry of Defence (MOD) did not identify any specific posts for redundancy. Decisions on redundancy related to individuals within specified fields. The MOD remains committed to safety; and safety-critical roles will continue to be filled.

Reserve Forces

Jim Shannon: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many recruits joined the Royal Naval Reserve in each of the last three years. [128427]

Mr Francois: The number of entrants to the Royal Marine Reserve and the Royal Navy Reserve in the last three financial years (FY) are shown in the following table:

	<i>FY 2009-2010</i>	<i>FY 2010-2011</i>	<i>FY 2011-12</i>
Royal Marine Reserve	349	178	113
Royal Navy Reserve	339	313	198

Scotland

Mr Jim Murphy: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) which firms based in Scotland have contracts with his Department; [128180]

(2) how many contracts his Department has with firms based in Scotland. [128181]

Mr Dunne [*holding answer 13 November 2012*]: As at 1 November 2012 the Ministry of Defence held 474 live contracts where more than 50% of the work was being undertaken in Scotland. These contracts have been placed with 222 contractors. Due to the large amount of data that would be required to list these contractors, the information will take time to collate. I will write to the right hon. Member as soon as it is available.

Sea King Helicopters

Angus Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) when the Sea King ASaC.7 will be retired; and what airborne early warning asset will replace it; [126984]

(2) if he will estimate how much has been spent on the Crowsnest programme to date; and how much he plans to spend on that programme in each year to 2020; [126985]

(3) what assessment he has made of the ability to provide organic air surveillance and early warning after the retirement of the Sea King ASaC.7. [126986]

Mr Dunne: The Sea King Airborne Surveillance and Control (SKASaC) aircraft will be retired in 2016 when the Sea King fleet exits service in entirety. Crowsnest is the project that will provide a replacement for this capability.

Crowsnest is expected to enter its assessment phase in 2013. While there has been no direct spend on the project to date, approximately £18 million has been spent on relevant development work under predecessor projects. Crowsnest has not yet passed its main investment decision point. I am therefore unable to provide details of planned expenditure, as disclosure would prejudice commercial interests.

Surveillance and control capability is provided by a range of platforms and equipment that work together in a layered approach. If Crowsnest were not available immediately on retirement of SKASaC, other systems could provide a surveillance and control capability until such time as Crowsnest came into service.

Staff

Luciana Berger: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what proportion of his Department's staff are (a) male and (b) female. [126172]

Mr Francois: The most recent figures on the proportions of male and female staff in the Ministry of Defence, as at 1 July 2012, for civilian personnel is 62.6% male and 37.4% female. The figures for service personnel are 90.3% male and 9.7% female.

Stealth Technology

Andrew Rosindell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent steps he has taken to commission research into military stealth technology. [126572]

Mr Dunne: Analysis of stealth technology is routinely conducted on an on-going basis.

Submarines

Mr Jim Murphy: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) how many of those in employment linked (a) indirectly and (b) directly to the Astute successor programme are expected to work on the Vanguard replacement programme once the Astute is complete; [128477]

(2) how many jobs are linked (a) indirectly and (b) directly to the Astute successor programme; and where each such job is based in the UK. [128520]

Mr Dunne: It has been clarified that these questions are referring to the Astute submarine programme itself.

The Ministry of Defence does not hold information centrally about the number of jobs linked to the Astute programme.

Estimates are, however, that the Astute programme sustains around 5,000 BAE Systems Maritime and Submarines jobs across the UK, and thousands of jobs through roughly 400 suppliers across the UK submarine supply chain.

It is too early to comment on how many of these jobs will be required to support the successor submarine programme as this will depend on decisions to be made at Main Gate in 2016. It is clear, however, that as part of achieving a sustainable submarine industry, many of the highly skilled people across industry currently working on the Astute submarines are likely to be involved in delivering the successor submarines.

Mr Jim Murphy: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what the timescale is for the completion of the Astute successor programme, by vessel. [128513]

Mr Dunne: It has been clarified that this question is referring to the Astute submarine programme itself.

I refer the right hon. Member to the answer given by the then Minister for International Security Strategy, my hon. Friend the Member for Aldershot (Sir Gerald Howarth) on 3 September 2012, *Official Report*, column 45W, to the hon. Member for Hayes and Harlington (John McDonnell).

Trident Missiles

Caroline Lucas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what the cost was of the Trident missile test launch in the Atlantic ocean on 23 October 2012. [127546]

Mr Dunne: The test launch of a Trident missile in the Atlantic ocean on 23 October 2012 took place as part of the Demonstration and Shakedown Operation (DASO) for HMS Vigilant. The cost of the test launch cannot be disaggregated from the overall cost of the DASO.

A DASO is critical for demonstrating the effectiveness of the UK's nuclear deterrent. It comprises a comprehensive series of system and sub-system tests, and provides a period of intensive training for the submarine's crew. It evaluates the complete weapon system, including crew performance, and concludes with an unarmed Trident missile firing. The resultant data underwrites both UK and US system assurance. Following HMS Vigilant's long overhaul period (refuel), the DASO was conducted as a routine operation before the submarine re-enters service. Prior to the test firing from HMS Vigilant, the most recent UK DASO was completed by HMS Victorious in 2009.

Caroline Lucas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether it is his policy to inform other governments of Trident missile tests; whether any other governments were informed in advance of the test that took place on 23 October 2012; and if he will make a statement. [127547]

Mr Dunne: The UK is a signatory to The Hague Code of Conduct against Ballistic Missile Proliferation and is obliged to inform the 133 other signatories of ballistic missile and space-launch vehicle launches and test flights; this notification is carried out some days before the scheduled launch event. In addition, the UK issued direct, voluntary pre-launch notifications to Russia, China, France and Canada ahead of the launch.

Trident Submarines

Paul Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence with reference to his Department's press release of 29 October 2012 announcing £350 million for successor submarines, what methodology his Department used to estimate that funding would sustain 1,200 jobs. [126465]

Mr Dunne: The £350 million investment represents the second set of work packages on the assessment phase of the Successor submarine programme. Information on the number of jobs sustained by these work packages was provided by the relevant contractors: BAE Systems Maritime—Submarines (BAES) and Babcock Marine. The 1,200 figure consists of approximately 1,100 BAES personnel and 100 Babcock Marine personnel working on the Successor programme.

Caroline Lucas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects to make each further spending announcement during the Trident replacement submarine design phase; and if he will make a statement. [127545]

Mr Dunne: Announcements on spending on the assessment phase of the Successor submarine programme will be made as appropriate during the period leading up to the Main Gate investment decision in 2016.

UN Programme of Action On Small Arms and Light Weapons

Jeremy Lefroy: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether his Department has taken steps to support other countries in implementing the UN Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate Illicit Trafficking of Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects in each of the last five years. [127406]

Mr Dunne: Since its adoption by the United Nations (UN) in 2001, the Ministry of Defence (MOD) has consistently provided support to a number of states to build and strengthen their capacity to implement the UN Programme of Action, to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate Illicit Trafficking of Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects.

Over the past five years this support has included visits to states in Africa, the middle east and Asia where MOD personnel have provided technical assistance to improve physical security and stockpile management, ammunition and disposal procedures. In addition to this technical training the MOD has also assisted states physically to dispose of surplus small arms and light weapons (SALW). The MOD has also provided border security training to states and funded the acquisition of weapon-marking machines to assist them to combat illicit trafficking.

The MOD continues to support Her Majesty's Government efforts to secure a strong, legally binding Arms Trade treaty which will introduce common international standards for exports of conventional arms, including SALW, thereby reducing the opportunity for this equipment to reach the illicit market.

Unmanned Air Vehicles

Mr Watson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether (a) he and (b) his Department have had discussions on the development of drones by states outside the UK in the last 12 months; and if he will make a statement. [126295]

Mr Dunne: The Secretary of State for Defence, Defence Ministers and Ministry of Defence (MOD) officials regularly discuss a wide range of issues with international colleagues, including the development of Unmanned Air Systems (UAS).

The MOD monitors development of UAS in an international context. This includes those developed by allies, which may provide opportunities for collaborative procurement, as well as those developed by potential threat countries, so as to inform our own capability planning.

Veterans

Jim Shannon: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assistance his Department offers soldiers leaving the Army with job search skills and CV presentation. [128434]

Mr Francois: The Ministry of Defence, through its contracted partner Right Management, provides resettlement services, which include advice, workshops, training and job finding. This arrangement is known as the Career Transition Partnership (CTP).

The CTP provides career transition workshops, which specifically include CV writing and interview skills at regional resettlement centres in UK and Germany.

Westminster Connections

Mr Kevan Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether (a) Ministers, (b) civil servants and (c) senior military personnel have had any meetings with Scott Hamilton of Westminster Connections since May 2010; and what was discussed at each such meeting. [128921]

Mr Philip Hammond: There are no records of Defence Ministers having met with Scott Hamilton of Westminster Connections.

Information regarding meetings with civil servants or senior military personnel is not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Human Trafficking

15. **Fiona Mactaggart:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent steps she has taken to prevent human trafficking; and if she will make a statement. [128828]

Mr Harper: The Government are absolutely committed to tackling human trafficking and punishing the perpetrators of this terrible crime.

We published our human trafficking strategy in July 2011 and the Inter-Departmental Ministerial Group report, published on 18 October 2012, provides a current and full assessment of the Government's anti-trafficking efforts across the UK.

Jonathan Reynolds: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many police forces include anti-human trafficking measures in their strategic assessment; and how many police forces plan to include such measures in such assessments in 2013. [128951]

Damian Green: Data on local force strategic assessments are not collected centrally.

The Government are committed to combating human trafficking and we will work with police and crime commissioners, who will be responsible for setting local policing priorities in 2013, to ensure that the threat of human trafficking is tackled at a local, as well as a national and international, level.

Police Force Collaboration

16. **Mark Pawsey:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what estimate her Department has made of the potential savings police forces could make through collaboration with other forces. [128829]

Damian Green: Collaboration is a key tool by which forces can improve operational effectiveness and drive out savings. HMIC's report "Increasing Efficiency in the Police Service—The role of collaboration" sets out forces' estimate that they will save £132 million through force to force collaboration by March 2015.

20. **Iain Stewart:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what estimate her Department has made of the potential savings police forces could make through collaboration with other forces. [128835]

Damian Green: Collaboration is a key tool by which forces can improve operational effectiveness and drive out savings. HMIC's report "Increasing Efficiency in the Police Service—The role of collaboration" sets out forces' estimate that they will save £132 million through force to force collaboration by March 2015.

Police and Crime Commissioners

17. **Jessica Morden:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what estimate she has made of the cost to the public purse of the recent elections for police and crime commissioners. [128831]

Damian Green: We estimate that the elections have cost £75 million, and the full costs will be made public in due course. It should be noted that this money will not come from funds that would otherwise have gone to policing.

Mr Hanson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations she has received from the Electoral Commission on the police and crime commissioner elections since 1 September 2012. [128373]

Damian Green [*holding answer 13 November 2012*]: Home Office Ministers and officials receive representations from a wide variety of partners, as well as organisations and individuals in the public and private sectors, as part of the process of policy development and delivery. As was the case with previous administrations, it is not the Government's practice to provide details of all such representations.

Police Accountability

18. **Mr Rob Wilson:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent steps her Department has taken to improve the accountability of the police. [128832]

Glyn Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent steps her Department has taken to improve the accountability of the police. [128834]

Damian Green: The public voted in their millions last Thursday for their local police and crime commissioners. These directly elected individuals will ensure the police deal with the issues that really matter to the communities they serve, as the public will be holding them directly to account.

Antisocial Behaviour

19. **Andrea Leadsom:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps her Department has taken to reduce levels of antisocial behaviour. [128833]

Mr Jeremy Browne: Our reforms are putting victims and communities at the heart of the response to antisocial behaviour. We have worked with eight police forces to test new ways of dealing with repeat and vulnerable victims, and are trialling the new Community Trigger with several leading local areas. We will also give front line professionals faster, more effective powers to protect the public.

Migration Controls

21. **Mr Sheerman:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent assessment she has made of the potential effects on schools, housing and the NHS of the end of transitional controls on migration from Romania and Bulgaria. [128836]

Mr Harper: The Government do not routinely produce forecasts of levels of migration from individual countries.

The difficulty in producing a reliable forecast, which would need to take account of a variety of factors, is in this instance accentuated because we are not the only member state required to lift labour market restrictions in 2013.

Arrest Warrants: Extradition

Martin Horwood: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people have been extradited to the UK under a European arrest warrant for offences concerning (a) human trafficking, (b) child sex offences, (c) murder, (d) rape, (e) fraud, (f) grievous bodily harm, (g) robbery, (h) theft, (i) drug smuggling, (j) money laundering and (k) other offences to date; and if she will make a statement. [128830]

Mr Harper: It is not possible to break down by offence type the number of people who have been extradited to the UK under a European arrest warrant prior to 2009 due to the way data was recorded by the Serious Organised Crime Agency before this date. However, since April 2009 the figures are as follows:

Offence type	Persons extradited post April 2009
(a) Human trafficking	10
(b) Child sex offences	39
(c) Murder	26
(d) Rape	10
(e) Fraud	44
(f) Grievous bodily harm	17
(g) Robbery	9
(h) Theft	12
(i) Drug trafficking	59
(j) Money laundering	6
(k) Other offences (including)	59
Armed robbery	18
Kidnapping	3

Boarding Schools: Abuse

Tracey Crouch: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what measures exist to ensure that people who previously reported alleged incidents of sexual abuse at boarding schools will have their cases re-examined by the police, if requested. [127578]

Damian Green: Anyone with a complaint about the way their allegation was investigated by the police should contact the police force concerned, their police authority or the Independent Police Complaints Commission.

Boko Haram

Fiona Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether the Nigerian group Boko Haram, or associated groups, has a presence in the UK; what steps police forces are taking to monitor any such groups for illegal activity; and if she will make a statement. [127535]

James Brokenshire [holding answer 12 November 2012]: In relation to any presence by the organisation in the UK, I am unable to comment on intelligence matters.

We are confident the police have the appropriate powers to deal with terrorism or fundraising for illegal purposes in the UK.

Bovine Tuberculosis

Diana Johnson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what additional funding the Government has allocated to local police forces to help them meet costs associated with the proposed badger cull; what funding the Government has allocated for the same purpose in the next financial year; and if she will make a statement; [127064]

(2) what estimate she has made of the cost to each police force in England of policing the proposed badger cull; what proportion of such costs have already been borne by each force; and how much she expects each force to spend on costs associated with the badger cull in the next two financial years. [127078]

Damian Green: The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) recently announced that the badger cull has been postponed until summer 2013. The police forces involved with the cull will be making a Special Grant application to the Home Office in respect of the planning and operational costs of this operation. Applications will be considered by the Home Office, HM Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) and DEFRA. Any payments made by the Home Office will be reimbursed by DEFRA. We do not yet have estimated costs for the operation that will take place in 2013.

The police forces have made Special Grant applications in respect of the planning costs incurred by them before the cull was postponed. We have received claims from two of the four police forces that were involved in the planning process. The claims total £80,000. These claims are currently being considered by the Home Office, HMIC and DEFRA and a decision will be made in due course.

Counter-terrorism

Diana Johnson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what funding has been allocated to each local authority in England and Wales to support their work under the Prevent agenda. [128457]

James Brokenshire: Funding of up to £85,000 is allocated to 28 local authority Prevent priority areas to employ a Prevent co-ordinator.

In 2012-13 up to £3 million is available to priority areas to fund activities which address specific local risks and are designed to establish specific Prevent benefits. There is no automatic funding allocation and priority areas are invited to bid for funding to deliver these activities.

Crime: Merseyside

Mrs Ellman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what assessment she has made of the effect on crime levels in Merseyside of the reduction in Government funding for the Community Safety Fund. [127755]

Mr Jeremy Browne [holding answer 9 November 2012]: Community safety funding is paid to local authorities in England via the Local Services Support Grant issued by the Department for Communities and Local

Government. This funding is non-ringfenced to allow maximum flexibility in local management of resources.

The latest recorded crime statistics published on 18 October 2012 show a 6% reduction in crime for Merseyside (from June 2011 to June 2012). I am pleased that Merseyside, like many other areas, has risen to the challenge of cutting crime with reduced budgets.

Draft Communications Data Bill

Dr Huppert: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department which civil liberties organisations she has met to discuss her draft Communications Data Bill. [127414]

James Brokenshire [holding answer 8 November 2012]: Home Office Ministers and officials have meetings with a wide variety of partners, as well as organisations and individuals in the public and private sectors, as part of the process of policy development and delivery.

As was the case with previous Administrations, it is not the Government's practice to provide details of all such meetings.

Ecstasy

Jim Dobbin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what licences were held from her Department for the drugs used in the recent Channel 4 documentary on MDMA; what the process is for revoking such licences; and how the process of revocation would be initiated. [127941]

Mr Jeremy Browne: We do not publicly disclose the details of controlled drug licences that are issued.

Licences can be revoked if it is determined that a licence holder is acting outside the terms of their licence, or if it becomes apparent that a licence was either wrongly granted or fraudulently obtained.

Electoral Commission

Mr Hanson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when she last met representatives of the Electoral Commission. [128372]

Damian Green [holding answer 13 November 2012]: Home Office Ministers and officials have meetings with a wide variety of partners, as well as organisations and individuals in the public and private sectors, as part of the process of policy development and delivery. As was the case with previous Administrations, it is not the Government's practice to provide details of all such meetings.

Imitation Firearms

Mark Tami: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many replica weapons were recovered by the police in each of the last five years. [128339]

Damian Green: The requested information is not collected centrally by the Home Office.

However, the National Ballistics Intelligence Service (NABIS) manage the NABIS database which holds data on replica firearms recovered by the police. NABIS is funded through an agreement by an ACPO subscription arrangement from the 43 police forces of England and Wales. Scotland contributes through the Association of Chief Police Officer for Scotland (ACPOS).

The NABIS database has been in operation since January 2008 and available data for police forces in England and Wales (excluding British Transport police) and Scotland are provided in table A.

Information on other types of replica weapons recovered by the police is not collected centrally.

Table A: Replica firearms recovered by the police, 2008 to 2012^{1, 2}

Year ³	Number of replica firearms recovered by the police
2008	90
2009	202
2010	107
2011	40
2012	20
Total	459

¹ Data are provided by the National Ballistics Intelligence Service (NABIS), who manage the NABIS database on behalf of the Home Office.

² Data are provided by police forces in England and Wales (excluding British Transport Police). Data for Scottish police forces have been included since April 2011.

³ Data are in line with those held in the NABIS database as at 12 November 2012.

Islam

Andrew Stephenson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent representations she has received on recording Islamophobia as a separate category of hate crime; and if she will make a statement. [127686]

Mr Jeremy Browne: The Government is committed to improving the recording of all hate crimes. We recently published the first set of Official Statistics on hate crimes recorded by the police, which included those crimes motivated by religious hatred. Some police forces capture data on hate crimes against particular faith groups for intelligence purposes, and we would encourage this where it reflects local priorities. However, we also strive to strike the right balance between recording crime to the appropriate national level of detail and imposing new burdens on the police, and as a result have no current plans to mandate that forces have in place specific systems to separately record hate crimes against particular faith groups.

Mass Media

Ian Lavery: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department which proprietors, editors and senior executives of (a) newspapers and (b) other media organisations she has met since 1 July 2012. [127523]

James Brokenshire [holding answer 8 November 2012]: This information is routinely published on the Home Office website.

Details of meetings with external organisations including newspaper and other media proprietors, editors and senior executives for the period 1 July to 30 September 2012 is currently being collated and will be published in due course.

Police

Mr Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many police officers were in each basic command unit in each police force area in England and Wales on 31 March 2012. [127767]

Damian Green [holding answer 12 November 2012]: The requested information is not collected by the Home Office. The number of police officers at basic command unit level ceased to be collected from 2011-12.

Graeme Morrice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps she has taken to ensure that the police are rewarded appropriately. [128723]

Damian Green: The Government asked Tom Winsor to carry out an independent review of police officer and staff remuneration and conditions. This is providing the basis for constructive discussions about how to achieve a fair system of pay and conditions.

Police and Crime Commissioners: Elections

Nic Dakin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department pursuant to the answer of 25 October 2012, *Official Report*, column 1012W, on police and crime commissioners, whether she has set a target for the turnout for the elections for police and crime commissioners. [127375]

Damian Green [holding answer 8 November 2012]: No.

Police and Crime Commissioners: Wales

Jessica Morden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department pursuant to the answer of 23 October 2012, *Official Report*, column 764W, on police and crime commissioners: Wales, whether the £350,000 includes costs for staffing, new stationery and the disposal of unused ballot papers. [128362]

Damian Green [holding answer 13 November 2012]: The £350,000 figure is the full cost of the various contingencies taken by police area returning officers. The Home Office does not hold details beyond that set out in the previous answer to which the hon. Member refers.

Police Custody: Death

Mr Umunna: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many people died whilst in police custody in each calendar year (a) from 2001 to 2011 and (b) in 2012 to date; [127224]

(2) how many people died, by ethnic group, whilst in police custody in each calendar year (a) from 2001 to 2011 and (b) in 2012 to date; [127225]

(3) how many people died whilst in police custody in each police authority area in each calendar year (a) from 2001 to 2011 and (b) in 2012 to date. [127227]

Damian Green: The data is not available in the format requested by the hon. Member.

Statistics on deaths in custody are published by the Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC). Their report, deaths in or following custody: an examination of the cases 1998-99 to 2008-09, published in August 2011, contains a breakdown of figures by financial year as well as overall figures for the period, split by ethnicity and by police force area. The report is available on the IPCC website at:

<http://www.ipcc.gov.uk/en/Pages/deathscustodystudy.aspx>

The IPCC's annual reports into deaths in custody, deaths following or during police contact: statistics for England and Wales, are also available for the period 2004-05 to 2011-12 at:

http://www.ipcc.gov.uk/en/Pages/reports_polcustody.aspx

A copy of all of the above reports will be placed in the Library.

Police: Driving

Andrew Rosindell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what steps are being taken to ensure that police officers are provided with adequate driving training for high-speed pursuits; [128322]

(2) how many people have died in the London borough of Havering as a result of accidents caused by high-speed police pursuits in the last 10 years; [128323]

(3) how many people have died as a result of accidents caused by high-speed police pursuits in the last 10 years. [128324]

Damian Green: Last year, the Secretary of State for the Home Department issued a statutory code of practice on the management of police pursuits, including the need for appropriate training.

Chief officers are legally required to have regard to this code. It is an operational matter for chief officers how training is provided.

The Home Office does not collect information about the number of deaths as a result of accidents caused by high speed police pursuits.

Figures collected by the Independent Police Complaints Commission from 2004-05 until 2011-12 show that 156 fatalities occurred in England and Wales as a result of accidents caused by police pursuits. There are no figures recorded on a local area or borough basis.

Police: Ethnic Groups

Ms Abbott: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many black and minority ethnic police community support officers of each ethnicity have applied to become full police constables within the Metropolitan Police Service in the last five years; [127600]

(2) how many black and minority ethnic applicants of each ethnicity have passed police assessment centre tests to become full police constables in the Metropolitan Police Service in the last five years. [127601]

Damian Green: The requested information for the number of police community support officers who have applied to become full police constables is not collected by the Home Office.

The number of new entrants (police officers) appointed for black and minority ethnic applicants of each ethnicity in the Metropolitan Police Force in the last five years is provided within the following table. These applicants are assumed to have passed the police assessment centre tests to become full police constables.

New entrants (police officers) appointed to the Metropolitan Police Service, by black and minority ethnic groups, 2007-08 to 2011-12^{1, 2}

	Number			
	<i>Mixed</i>	<i>Black or Black British</i>	<i>Asian or Asian British</i>	<i>Chinese or Other</i>
2007-08	15	23	31	17
2008-09	82	62	135	44
2009-10	65	44	115	55
2010-11	11	15	16	10
2011-12	57	38	85	34

¹ Data have not undergone usual quality assurance practices (including validation with individual police forces) and are therefore supplied for information purposes only.

² The number of new entrants appointed is the number of people who actually started work for the police service within that financial year (i.e. went on the payroll). It excludes people who were offered a job but did not join.

Police: Job Satisfaction

Mr Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what assessment she has made of (a) morale and (b) job satisfaction levels among police officers and staff. [127588]

Damian Green [holding answer 8 November 2012]: I take a keen interest in police morale and, along with other Ministers, meet police officers of all ranks from forces across England and Wales on a regular basis. Police forces' recruitment and retention rates compare extremely favourably to other workforces. The police have the lowest voluntary wastage of any sector and where forces recruit, application numbers remain high.

Primates: Animal Experiments

Caroline Lucas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if she will make it her policy to revoke Noveprim's accreditation to supply primates to UK laboratories; and if she will make a statement. [127604]

Mr Jeremy Browne: The Home Office has no powers under the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 to approve or accredit overseas primate breeders. However, the use in regulated procedures of any non-human primate obtained from a source other than a United Kingdom based breeding or supplying establishment designated under the 1986 Act does require prior approval, which is only given if the conditions at the overseas breeding centre from which the animals originate are acceptable to the Home Office at the time of their supply.

Remembrance Day

Mr Hanson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if she will publish her correspondence with the Association of Chief Police Officers on the policing of Remembrance Day services in 2012. [126774]

Damian Green: There has been no correspondence between Home Office Ministers and the Association of Chief Police Officers about policing Remembrance Day services in 2012. The policing of Remembrance services is an operational matter for the police.

Sick Leave

Chris Ruane: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department for how many and what proportion of days, on average, staff of her Department at each pay grade were absent from work as a result of ill health in each of the last five years. [127177]

James Brokenshire: The following table provides the rolling year average working days lost (RYAWDL) to sick absence for each pay grade in the Home Department for the financial year 2009-12.

Grade	Average working days lost by grade 2009-12			
	Average working days lost (days) ¹			
	2009	2010	2011	2012
AA	12.55	11.22	9.76	10.24
AO	11.89	11.67	9.60	9.88
EO	9.57	9.12	8.26	8.35
HEO	6.99	6.34	6.49	5.87
SEO	5.26	5.74	4.69	4.65
Grade 7	3.54	4.10	3.66	3.80
Grade 6	1.84	2.68	1.74	3.33
SCS	1.64	1.23	0.90	3.40
Unknown ²	26.54	0.00	0.00	6.00
Total	9.34	8.80	7.83	7.88

¹ Figures are given on a staff year basis and are based on paid civil servants only, including current employees and those who left the Home Office during the financial year, in line with Cabinet Office reporting guidelines. Figures for all years include Home Office headquarters, the United Kingdom Border Agency, Identity and Passport Service and Criminal Records Bureau. Figures for 2012 additionally include the National Fraud Authority, which became an Executive agency of the Home Office on 1 April 2011.

Prior to February 2011, responses to requests for information relating to the 'Home Department' included information for headquarters employees only—Executive agencies were excluded from reported figures. Since February 2011, the Department has streamlined its reporting practices and departmental figures now include both headquarters and all Executive agencies. This means that it is not possible to make a direct comparison between information provided in this response and any responses made before February 2011.

² In 2009 and 2012 there were a small number of employees whose grade was not known at the date of data extraction; normally as a consequence of pending transfers into the Department where the exporting Department has only sent partial data. This is corrected in a subsequent month when the transfer action is completed.

Note:

Extract Date:

1 April of each year given. (Figures are given on a financial year basis and for each year stated include the period from 1 April to 31 March).

Source:

Galena, the Home Office's Oracle-based reporting solution, presenting Data View, the Department's single source of Office for National Statistics compliant monthly corporate Human Resources data.

UN Protocol on Illicit Manufacture and Trafficking Firearms

Jeremy Lefroy: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether she plans to bring forward legislative proposals to ratify the UN Protocol Against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Their Parts and Components and Ammunition. [127348]

Damian Green: The UK already has some of the toughest firearms controls in the world which meet most of the obligations imposed by the Protocol. The Government will consider the question of ratification and what further steps may be needed to achieve this once the European Commission, which is also a signatory, becomes party to the Protocol.

CABINET OFFICE

Job Creation: Private Sector

Kate Green: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office (1) what proportion of new jobs created in the private sector between August 2010 and August 2012 were part-time positions; [128604]

(2) what proportion of new jobs created in the private sector between August 2010 and August 2012 were permanent positions. [128605]

Mr Hurd: The information requested falls within the responsibility of the UK Statistics Authority. I have asked the authority to reply.

Letter from Glen Watson, dated November 2012:

As Director General for the Office for National Statistics, I have been asked to reply to your Parliamentary Questions.

Information regarding jobs created is not available. As an alternative, it is estimated using the Labour Force Survey (LFS) that of the increase in private sector employment between July-September 2010 and July-September 2012:

40% was in part-time employment; and

84% was in permanent employment.

In the LFS the distinction between public and private sector is based on respondents' views about the organisation for which they work.

The estimates are derived from the Labour Force Survey (LFS) and are not seasonally adjusted. As with any sample survey, estimates from the LFS are subject to a margin of uncertainty.

Minimum Wage

Kate Green: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office what proportion of new jobs created in the private sector between August 2010 and August 2012 have been paid at the national minimum wage. [128628]

Mr Hurd: The information requested falls within the responsibility of the UK Statistics Authority. I have asked the authority to reply.

Letter from Glen Watson, dated November 2012:

As Director General for the Office for National Statistics, I have been asked to reply to your recent Parliamentary Question asking the Chancellor of the Exchequer what proportion of new jobs created in the private sector between August 2010 and August 2012 have been paid at the national minimum wage. [128628]

From the available sources of information it is not possible to estimate the proportion of new jobs created in the private sector between August 2010 and August 2012 which have been paid at the national minimum wage.

A guide to measuring low pay and associated articles can be found on the National Statistics website at:

<http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/ashe/low-pay/april-2011--soc-2010-/index.html>

Part-time Employment

Jim Shannon: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office what estimate he has made of the number of part-time workers in England and Wales in each of the last three years. [128508]

Mr Hurd: The information requested falls within the responsibility of the UK Statistics Authority. I have asked the authority to reply.

Letter from Glen Watson, dated November 2012:

As Director General for the Office for National Statistics, I have been asked to reply to your Parliamentary Question.

The ONS compiles Labour Market Statistics on part-time employment for areas smaller than the UK following International Labour Organisation (ILO) definitions using the Annual Population Survey (APS).

Estimates of part-time workers resident in England and Wales have been produced for people aged 16 and over from the APS for:

the latest 12 month period ending June 2012

the 12 month periods ending December for 2009 to 2011.

As with any sample survey, estimates from the APS are subject to a margin of uncertainty. A guide to the quality of the estimates accompanies the estimates for the latest period.

These figures along with a wide range of other labour market data for parliamentary constituencies and local authorities are also published on the Office for National Statistics' Nomis website:

www.nomisweb.co.uk

<i>Number of people working part-time¹ in England and Wales</i>	
<i>12 months ending:</i>	<i>Part-time workers (thousand)</i>
December 2009	6,779
December 2010	6,900
December 2011	6,946
June 2012 ²	*6,972

¹ Part-time workers are those that declared they were in part-time paid work in the 7 days prior to interview.

² Coefficients of Variation have been calculated for the latest period as an indication of the quality of the estimates.

Guide to Quality:

The Coefficient of Variation (CV) indicates the quality of an estimate, the smaller the CV value the higher the quality. The true value is likely to lie within +/- twice the CV—for example, for an estimate of 200 with a CV of 5% we would expect the population total to be within the range 180-220.

Key:

* 0 ≤ CV < 5%—Statistical Robustness: Estimates are considered precise

** 5 ≤ CV < 10%—Statistical Robustness: Estimates are considered reasonably precise

*** 10 ≤ CV < 20%—Statistical Robustness: Estimates are considered acceptable

**** CV ≥ 20%—Statistical Robustness: Estimates are considered too unreliable for practical purposes

CV = Coefficient of Variation

Source:

Annual Population Survey

Pay

Mr Raab: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office how many employees of his Department are paid in excess of (a) £80,000 and (b) £100,000. [128488]

Mr Hurd: Information on paybill can be found in the Cabinet Office's annual accounts which are published online at:

<http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/resource-library/cabinet-office-annual-reports-and-accounts>

In addition, as part of this Government's transparency programme, further detailed information is published online including information on staffing numbers, pay for senior officials and departmental organograms.

Temporary Employment: Tax Avoidance

Catherine McKinnell: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office whether he will review Government procurement policy to ensure that money from the public purse does not support any suppliers who operate travel and subsistence schemes for the purpose of tax avoidance. [128743]

Miss Chloe Smith: The public procurement rules require suppliers to be excluded if they (or directors or other persons with control) have been convicted of various specific offences, which include "cheating the Revenue" and "fraudulent evasion".

There are further grounds for exclusion at the discretion of the procurement authority, including failure to fulfil obligations related to payment of tax.

In addition, HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC) and the Cabinet Office are examining how the Government can use the procurement process for Government contracts to deter the very small minority of companies and individuals which evade tax and use aggressive tax avoidance schemes.

Voluntary Work: Young People

Joan Walley: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office how many people from Stoke-on-Trent have taken part in each year of the National Citizen Service; and if he will make a statement. [128165]

Mr Hurd: 23 young people from Stoke-on-Trent participated in 2011. The 2012 pilots are still underway; the numbers participating will be made available with the publication of our independent evaluation report.

Working Mothers

Alex Cunningham: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office what the maternal employment rate is in each (a) region and (b) local authority. [128958]

Mr Hurd: The information requested falls within the responsibility of the UK Statistics Authority. I have asked the authority to reply.

Letter from Glen Watson, dated November 2012:

As Director General for the Office for National Statistics, I have been asked to reply to your Parliamentary Question asking what recent estimate there is of the maternal employment rate in each (a) region and (b) local authority area of the UK. 128958

The latest information available is from the Annual Population Survey household datasets for January to December 2011.

The estimates for each region of the UK can be found in the table.

It is not possible to provide reliable estimates of the maternal employment rates for all the local authority areas due to small sample sizes. The estimates for the local authority areas which do have large enough sample sizes are included in the tables. As the tables are quite large they will be placed in the House of Commons library.

SCOTLAND

Employment Agencies

Catherine McKinnell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what his policy is on the use of offshore employment companies in the supply of public sector workers in his Department. [128727]

David Mundell: The Scotland Office does not use offshore employment companies for the supply of public sector workers.

WORK AND PENSIONS

Consumer Prices Index

Shabana Mahmood: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what discussions he has had with (a) the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills and (b) the Chancellor of the Exchequer on the effect of changes in tuition fees on the consumer prices index; and what estimate he has made of the effect of such changes on his Department's pensions welfare budget at annual uprating in 2013. [128962]

Steve Webb: My Department discusses a number of issues with HM Treasury and the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills. The calculation of the consumer prices index (CPI) is a matter for the independent Office for National Statistics. Various Government policies impact on CPI inflation. The Office for Budget Responsibility takes account of the impact of Government policies on inflation and the Government's fiscal targets in their forecasts.

Decisions on uprating of state pensions and benefits will be announced at the time of the Chancellor's autumn statement.

Dementia

Paul Burstow: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what steps his Department is taking to support the Prime Minister's dementia challenge and the work of each of the challenge groups; what resources he has committed; what timescales he has set for this work; and if he will make a statement. [129010]

Esther McVey: We fully support the Prime Minister's Dementia Challenge. Our disability strategy—Fulfilling Potential—is exploring how we can help all disabled people, including people living with dementia, to realise their aspirations for life.

We have invited the Alzheimer's Society, to join a new disability action alliance, which will carry forward ideas proposed by disabled people, to help shape and deliver the outcomes disabled people want. One of the priorities the alliance will consider will be to promote inclusive communities and change attitudes and behaviours towards disabled people.

Housing Benefit

Sarah Teather: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what estimate he has made of the number of households previously affected by the changes to the local housing allowance who have also been identified as being potentially affected by the household benefit cap; and if he will make a statement. [129020]

Mr Hoban: The information requested is not available.

Industrial Health and Safety

Jason McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many unpaid court fines for breaches of the Control of Major Accident Hazards Regulations 1999 were recorded in (a) 2010-11 and (b) 2011-12. [128073]

Mrs Grant: I have been asked to reply on behalf of the Ministry of Justice.

HM Courts and Tribunals Service systems do not identify how many fines remain outstanding for specific offences and therefore this information could be provided only at disproportionate cost as it would require a manual search of all fine accounts.

Musculoskeletal Disorders

Nic Dakin: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what (a) information and (b) support is available to enable people with musculoskeletal conditions to remain in work. [127097]

Esther McVey: We are committed to ensuring that all disabled people, including those with musculoskeletal conditions, have the opportunities, chances and support that they need to get a job and remain in employment and there is a range of provision to help them.

We do not target our employment programmes exclusively at individuals with particular conditions such as musculoskeletal conditions. The Department's programmes aim to identify and meet the needs of the individual, including those with musculoskeletal conditions.

Access to Work provides additional support for individuals whose health or disability affects the way they do their job. It provides individuals and their employers with advice and support with extra costs which may arise because of an individual's needs. The type of support Access to Work provides can include awareness training for colleagues, support workers and specialist aids and equipment. Access to Work helped over 30,000 disabled people get or keep employment in 2011-12 and the Government is making an extra £15 million available for Access to Work over this Spending Review.

Work Choice provides tailored support to help disabled people who face the most complex barriers to employment, find and stay in work and ultimately help them progress into unsupported employment.

Information about the range of support available can be obtained from Jobcentre Plus disability employment advisers who can provide support and advice for disabled people who need help finding and retaining employment. They can also refer individuals to specialist programmes

and advocate with employers on the individual's behalf. Information is also available on the Government's recently launched website

www.gov.uk

Occupational Pensions

Steve Baker: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what assessment he has made of the conclusions of the recent report by the Pensions Institute, Caveat Venditor, on auto-enrolment. [128002]

Steve Webb: The Government welcomes contributions to the debate about how to ensure automatic enrolment meets its objectives. It is vitally important that people are enrolled in schemes that offer transparent and value for money charges. We continue to support the pensions industry to develop clear guidance. We are already seeing the positive effect that NEST is having on the industry. Workers are being enrolled into workplace pension schemes at much lower charges than in the past. I have also called for providers to guarantee not to enrol people into high cost legacy schemes and am pleased to see industry responding.

Gregg McClymont: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what steps he is taking to ensure that employees offered offshore contracts receive the employer contributions to the new workplace pensions. [128905]

Steve Webb: The workplace pension reforms apply to a worker who is working or ordinarily works in the UK. This is intended to be a broad test which ensures the scope of automatic enrolment covers the wide range of working arrangements in the UK. This includes both those that already exist, but also provides a degree of future proofing.

The primary issue to be considered in determining whether a worker ordinarily works in the UK is where the worker is based. The starting point for determining this is what the worker's contract says and how it is operated in practice. Employers will need to consider factors including: where the worker begins and ends their work; where their private residence is; where the worker's headquarters is; whether they pay UK national insurance; and what currency they are paid in.

The only exception to this rule is offshore workers (for example those working on oil rigs) who are treated as ordinarily working in the UK if they are working in the UK territorial sea, UK continental shelf or in the UK sector of a cross-boundary field.

Pension, Disability and Carers Service

Mr Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what the annual salary is of the chief operating officer of the Pension, Disability and Carers Service. [128921]

Mr Hoban: Since 1 October 2011 the Pensions, Disability and Carers Service ceased to exist as an Executive Agency. There is now a single chief operating officer responsible for the whole of DWP's operational delivery functions.

The Department's organisation and salaries of the most senior people are available on the data.gov.uk website, which is updated on a regular basis and can be accessed at:

<http://reference.data.gov.uk/gov-structure/organogram/?dept=dwp>

Mr Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions pursuant to the answer of 12 November 2012, *Official Report*, column 83W, on Pension, Disability and Carers Service, for what reasons the information is not available in the requested format. [128922]

Mr Hoban: The Department for Work and Pensions records the number of hon. Members' letters addressed to the chief operating officer. The total number of letters signed by the chief operating officer is also recorded but is not categorised by type of letter.

Social Security Benefits

Mike Weatherley: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what his policy is on regional benefit differentials; and if he will make a statement. [128485]

Mr Hoban: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to the hon. Member for South Down (Ms Ritchie) on 4 July 2012, *Official Report*, column 669W.

State Retirement Pensions

Mr Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what steps his Department is taking to ensure that women affected by changes in the state pension age are informed of such changes in sufficient time to allow them to rearrange their financial planning. [128953]

Steve Webb: We have written to over a million women whose state pension age was increased under the Pensions Acts of 1995 or 2011. These women were born between 6 April 1950 and 5 April 1955 inclusive. In addition we wrote to men born 6 December 1953 to 5 April 1955 whose pension age also increased under the 2011 Act.

We have now started to write to men and women born between 6 April 1955 and 5 April 1960 telling them their new state pension age will be 66.

These letters will be sent to around 4.6 million people over a period of two years. People can also find out their state pension age under current law by using the state pension calculator on the www.gov.uk website.

Vacancies

John Woodcock: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many (a) full-time and (b) part-time vacancies were advertised in Jobcentre Plus in (i) Barrow and Furness constituency, (ii) Cumbria and (iii) the UK on the most recent date for which figures are available. [128722]

Mr Hoban: The numbers requested are as follows:

September 2012	Full-time	Part-time
Barrow and Furness	181	78
Cumbria	2,329	790
Great Britain	421,950	125,508

Note:

Figures are provided for GB rather than UK, as relevant data for Northern Ireland are not available.

Source:

NOMIS

Vacancies: Cumbria

John Woodcock: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many new vacancies were listed in Jobcentre Plus in (a) Barrow and Furness constituency and (b) Cumbria in each month of the last three years. [128721]

Mr Hoban: The numbers requested are shown in the table (please note no data were published nor are available for September 2010, believed due to an IT problem).

The data provided are the total vacancies notified. We are unable to say how many vacancies were new each month.

	Total vacancies notified	
	Barrow and Furness	Number Cumbria
<i>2009</i>		
October	279	2,195
November	499	2,546
December	371	1,979
<i>2010</i>		
January	223	1,476
February	293	1,862
March	310	2,399
April	249	2,176
May	361	3,168
June	289	2,412
July	314	2,422
August	287	3,047
October	339	3,215
November	273	2,168
December	261	1,771
<i>2011</i>		
January	133	1,254
February	207	1,814
March	210	2,256
April	263	2,976
May	183	1,712
June	198	2,100
July	252	2,661
August	209	2,199
September	211	2,167
October	406	2,960
November	279	2,182
December	357	1,758
<i>2012</i>		
January	176	1,453
February	262	2,084
March	221	1,902
April	280	3,446
May	337	2,089

Total vacancies notified

	<i>Number</i>	
	<i>Barrow and Furness</i>	<i>Cumbria</i>
June	300	2,655
July	294	2,308
August	347	2,347
September	259	3,119

Data Source:
NOMIS.

ENERGY AND CLIMATE CHANGE**Electricity and Gas (Energy Company Obligation) Order 2012**

Toby Perkins: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change what discussions he had with industry representatives prior to the introduction of section 16(5) of the Electricity and Gas (Energy Company Obligation) Order 2012. [128461]

Mr Hayes: The Department has had a number of discussions with industry representatives over the development of the energy company obligation (ECO) policy. We consulted on the proposal that the ECO carbon saving obligation should focus primarily on promoting and installing solid wall insulation. Following views received during consultation, we ensured that the final design allowed certain other measures to be delivered as part of packages of work, including glazing measures where they meet the criteria in what is now section 16(8) of the revised draft Order. We also proposed that any measure should be allowed under the affordable warmth obligation provided it allows eligible households to heat homes more affordably, which includes glazing measures where they meet the criteria in section 16(8).

The hon. Member may wish to know that the revised Order, now entitled the 'Energy Companies Obligation' Order 2012, was laid in Parliament on 30 October. Section 16(5) of the previous draft Order has now been renamed 16(8) in the revised draft Order.

Employment Agencies

Catherine McKinnell: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change what his policy is on the use of offshore employment companies in the supply of public sector workers in his Department and its associated public bodies. [128733]

Gregory Barker: The Department of Energy and Climate Change policy on the use of offshore employment companies in the supply of public sector workers is consistent with the new rules for central Government Departments to ensure that contractors are meeting their tax obligations following the Chief Secretary to the Treasury Review of Tax Arrangements of Public Sector Appointees on 23 May 2012.

The Department of Energy and Climate Change does not distinguish between UK and overseas-based companies. DECC's standard terms and conditions requires contractors and their subcontractors, agents and personnel to comply with other applicable law. Clause 31 also specifically sets out payment of taxes requirements for contractors. Link:

<http://www.decc.gov.uk/assets/decc/11/about-us/6466-decc-standard-terms-and-conditions-for-services-p.pdf>

Energy

Mr Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change what the domestic market share was of each of the six major energy suppliers for (a) gas and (b) electricity in each of the last 10 years. [129090]

Mr Hayes: The information requested is a matter for Ofgem. The Chief Executive of Ofgem will write to the right hon. Member directly, and a copy of the letter will be placed in the Libraries of the House.

Energy: Housing

Toby Perkins: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change what estimate he has made of the subsidy that will be available for energy efficient glazing following the introduction of section 16(5) of The Electricity and Gas (Energy Company Obligation) Order 2012. [128912]

Gregory Barker: The Government published its estimate of the impact of glazing measures under the Green Deal and energy company obligation (ECO) in its "Final Stage Impact Assessment for the Green Deal and ECO": <http://www.decc.gov.uk/assets/decc/11/consultation/green-deal/5533-final-stage-impact-assessment-for-the-green-deal-a.pdf>

Exhaust Emissions: Transport

Mrs Moon: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change with reference to section 30 of the Climate Change Act 2008, if he will bring forward proposals for regulations to reduce emissions from aviation and shipping; and if he will make a statement. [128616]

Gregory Barker: Emissions from domestic aviation and shipping are already included within the UK's carbon budgets. International aviation and shipping emissions are not yet included within this framework. The Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change, the right hon. Member for Kingston and Surbiton (Mr Davey), is taking into account the advice provided by the Committee on Climate Change and will respond by the end of 2012 as required by section 30 of the Climate Change Act 2008.

Fuel Poverty

Mrs Moon: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change if he will bring forward proposals to allocate funds raised through the (a) Emissions Trading Scheme and (b) carbon floor price to programmes designed to reduce fuel poverty; and if he will make a statement. [128904]

Gregory Barker: The Government has no plans to bring forward proposals to allocate funds raised from the EU Emissions Trading System or the carbon price floor to fund specific projects.

It has been the view of successive UK governments that spending priorities should not, in general, be determined by the way in which revenue is raised as this is an inefficient means of allocating public

funds. The Government already spends substantial amounts of money on climate adaptation and mitigation measures, both at home and abroad.

Garages and Petrol Stations: Closures

Simon Hart: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change what information his Department holds on the number of petrol forecourts that have closed in the last 12 months. [128607]

Mr Hayes: In August 2012 there were 8,599 petrol filling stations open in the UK, compared to 8,763 sites in August 2011, according to Experian Catalist reports held by the Department.

DECC has commissioned a report on the retail market for road fuels to develop the evidence base on the impact of structural changes to the market over recent years. I have committed to write to all Members of Parliament with its findings later this year.

Glass: Recycling

Joan Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change what steps his Department is taking to encourage re-use of glass jam jars. [126127]

Anna Soubry: I have been asked to reply on behalf of the Department of Health.

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave her on 31 October 2012, *Official Report*, column 255W.

The Food Standards Agency is unaware of any programme initiated by itself or another Government Department to actively encourage or discourage the re-use of jam jars.

Petrol

Simon Hart: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change how much petrol is currently kept as a strategic reserve; and for how many days that reserve is expected to last. [128608]

Mr Hayes: We place obligations on companies supplying petroleum products in the inland market requiring them to hold stocks of crude oil and its products equivalent to a minimum of 67.5 days of annual daily inland consumption, using powers under the Energy Act 1976. In August 2012, the latest period for which data are available, the UK held over 3 million tonnes of petrol, the equivalent of over 80 days of consumption.

From January 2013, companies will be required to meet a third of their individual obligation in finished products for petrol, diesel and aviation fuel. DECC is working with industry to ensure these obligations are efficiently met.

Universal Credit

Mr McCann: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change how the qualifying conditions for each passported benefit for which he is responsible will change under universal credit. [128497]

Gregory Barker: The energy company obligation (ECO) and Warm Home Discount (WHD) scheme will overlap with the introduction of universal credit.

Under the elements of the energy company obligation which are designed to provide support to low income households, energy suppliers will be required to meet heating cost saving and carbon saving targets through providing energy efficiency measures to households in receipt of specified means tested benefits. The draft ECO order has been laid before Parliament and is subject to its approval. The benefits listed in the order as eligibility criteria include working age benefits and therefore will be amended to include reference to universal credit.

The Warm Home Discount scheme regulations include a range of working age means-tested benefits which energy suppliers may choose to use as eligibility criteria for the Broader Group—subject to Ofgem's approval. The scheme regulations on the Broader Group require energy suppliers to provide energy bill rebates to a wider group of low income households beyond those low income pensioners assisted under the Core Group of the scheme. This list of working age benefits will be amended to include reference to universal credit.

We are working closely with DWP to ensure the introduction of universal credit works smoothly with our schemes and continues to target the support available at those most in need while reflecting the eligibility criteria currently within the schemes' legislation.

Wind Power

Caroline Flint: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change pursuant to the oral answer to the hon. Member for South Northamptonshire, of 1 November 2012, *Official Report*, column 369, on onshore wind farms, what target he has set for the capacity of onshore wind to be installed after 2020. [127696]

Mr Hayes: The ambition for renewable energy up to 2020 are set out in the renewables roadmap.

After 2020, our aim is that technologies will compete to meet our low carbon energy ambitions in the new market framework.

TREASURY

Apprentices

Mr Marsden: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer with reference to the speech of 29 October 2012, on delivering the regional renaissance, what the breakdown of the 34,000 apprenticeships he expects to be created in the first wave of City Deals is by City Deal. [126799]

Greg Clark [*holding answer 5 November 2012*]: I am responding as the Minister responsible for City Deals.

I am pleased to say that the core cities—the eight largest cities in England outside of London—have told us that the first wave of City Deals will create an estimated 38,560 new apprenticeships.

This means new opportunities for young people and small businesses across the country in our great cities.

The first wave of City Deals will support 3,560 new apprenticeships in Greater Birmingham and Solihull, 17,500 new apprenticeships in the Leeds area, 6,000

new apprenticeships in the Liverpool area, 6,000 new apprenticeships in Greater Manchester, 500 new apprenticeships in Newcastle, 1,000 new apprenticeships in Nottingham, and 4,000 new apprenticeships in the Sheffield area.

In addition to this, Bristol and the West of England has committed to a 5% rise in apprenticeships.

Banks: Loans

Justin Tomlinson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of how his funding for lending scheme will benefit consumers; and what steps he has put in place to measure the success of the scheme. [127862]

Greg Clark: The Funding for Lending Scheme provides strong incentives to banks to make loans cheaper and more easily available for businesses and households. The Bank of England will publish quarterly data from 3 December 2012 showing, for each participating institution, the amount borrowed from the Bank and the net quarterly flows of lending to UK households and firms.

Justin Tomlinson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will take steps to ensure that banks and building societies publish the details of their mortgage lending made using his Funding for Lending scheme. [127871]

Greg Clark: The Bank of England will publish, for each institution participating in the Funding for Lending Scheme, the amount borrowed from the Bank and the net quarterly flows of lending to UK households and firms and the stock of loans as at 30 June 2012. The first publication will be on 3 December 2012. The Bank of England also publishes data on aggregate mortgage lending on a monthly basis.

Child Benefit

Mr Gregory Campbell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what the cost of child benefit was in 2011; and if he will estimate the cost of child benefit in 2015,

if such benefit were restricted to two children at the current rate and assuming the continuance of current demographic trends for family size. [128125]

Mr Gauke: In 2010-11 the total spend on child benefit was £12.0 billion (rounded to the nearest £100 million).

If child benefit was restricted to two children in 2015-16, the estimate of total spend is £10.0 billion (rounded to the nearest £100 million). Government policy is that child benefit is paid to all families with children unless the highest earner in a household earns in excess of £50,000 per annum.

Cathy Jamieson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the number of families in each parliamentary constituency who would be effected if child benefit were to be capped at two children per family. [128265]

Sajid Javid: Estimates at the parliamentary constituency level are not available.

Corporation Tax

Chi Onwurah: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer pursuant to the answer of 26 October 2012, *Official Report*, columns 1092-3W, on capital gains tax, how many companies in (a) the UK, (b) England and (c) the north-east paid each rate of corporation tax for each of the last three years for which figures are available; and how many such companies were small and medium-sized enterprises. [126795]

Mr Gauke [*holding answer 5 November 2012*]: The figures provided in the following tables show the number of companies with liabilities at each rate of corporation tax for accounting periods ending in 2007-08, 2008-09 and 2009-10. The table shows the numbers of these that are estimated to be small and medium-sized companies. The figures for England and the north-east are based on the location of the companies' registered office. This may be different to the location where the companies' activity takes place. This is the latest information available at reasonable cost with the requested level of breakdown.

Number of companies with liabilities at each rate of corporation tax and those with a registered office in England and the north-east

<i>For accounting periods ending in 2007-08</i>			
	<i>Small profits rate</i>	<i>Marginal rate</i>	<i>Main rate</i>
UK (all)	832,000	43,000	48,000
UK (small and medium-sized companies—see note 3)	831,000	43,000	41,000
England (all)	752,000	38,000	43,000
England (small and medium-sized companies—see note 3)	751,000	38,000	37,000
North-east (all)	18,000	1,000	1,000
North-east (small and medium-sized companies—see note 3)	18,000	1,000	1,000
<i>For accounting periods ending in 2008-09</i>			
	<i>Small profits rate</i>	<i>Marginal rate</i>	<i>Main rate</i>
UK (all)	808,000	39,000	47,000
UK (small and medium-sized companies—see note 3)	807,000	39,000	40,000
England (all)	743,000	36,000	44,000
England (small and medium-sized companies—see note 3)	742,000	36,000	38,000
North-east (all)	18,000	1,000	1,000
North-east (small and medium-sized companies—see note 3)	18,000	1,000	1,000

	For accounting periods ending in 2009-10		
	Small profits rate	Marginal rate	Main rate
UK (all)	799,000	37,000	40,000
UK (small and medium-sized companies—see note 3)	798,000	36,000	34,000
England (all)	719,000	33,000	37,000
England (small and medium-sized companies—see note 3)	718,000	32,000	31,000
North-east (all)	19,000	1,000	1,000
North-east (small and medium-sized companies—see note 3)	18,000	1,000	1,000

Small Profits Rate = 21% and Main Rate = 28%

Notes:

- For the purpose of allocating a company to a country/region, the postcode of the company's registered office has been used. This may not relate to where all of a company's activity takes place.
- UK totals include a small proportion of companies whose postcodes are unknown. The amount of companies assigned to England and the north-east include a small amount of unknown postcodes (where the postcode is unknown, the companies have been given the same distribution across the regions as where the data are complete).
- For the purpose of this analysis, a small or medium-sized enterprise has been defined as having less than 250 employees and at least one of a trading turnover of less than or equal to 50 million Euros, or balance sheet total of less than or equal to 43 million Euros in their accounting period (appropriate exchange rates have been used for each year). Companies where this information is not readily available have been apportioned to the size categories in line with the distribution for companies where the size can be ascertained.
- For the purpose of this analysis, HMRC define the terms as follows:
 - CT liabilities are considered to be accrued in the financial year of the end date of the company's accounting period.
 - Small Profits Rate: Since April 2010, the lower rate of corporation tax has been called the Small Profits Rate (SPR) rather than Small Companies' Rate (SCR). This makes clear that it is the size of the profits, rather than the size of the company, which determines the tax rate to be applied.
 - Marginal Relief: This can be claimed by companies with taxable profits between the lower and upper limits, to enable a smooth transition between the small profits rate and the main rate of CT.
 - Main Rate: The rate of corporation tax paid by companies with profits above the lower limit. Companies with profits between the lower and upper limit are taxed at main rate but can usually claim Marginal Relief.
- Figures are based on companies only and exclude unincorporated businesses. Figures are rounded to the nearest 1,000.

Stephen Barclay: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many appeals against HM Revenue and Customs decisions on corporation tax have been made to the First-tier Tribunal (Tax) or its predecessor in each year since 2004. [129017]

Mr Gauke: Appeals relating to corporation tax received by the First-tier Tax Tribunal which began on 1 April 2009:

	Total	Penalty cases	other
2009-10	484	126	358
2010-11	785	249	536
2011-12	700	332	368
2012 (to date)	399	166	233

Reliable figures for corporation tax cases dealt with by the General and Special Commissioners of Income Tax, the predecessors of the First-tier Tax Tribunal are not available.

Economic Situation: Forecasts

Graham Jones: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what discussions he has had with the Bank of England on the full publication of the details of the Compass forecasting model. [127977]

Greg Clark: The Chancellor of the Exchequer regularly meets with the Governor of the Bank of England to discuss a wide range of issues.

The Compass forecasting model and publication of details about it is the responsibility of the Bank of England.

Excise Duties: Fuels

George Freeman: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) how much revenue he raised from fuel duty from (a) rural and (b) urban areas in each of the last five years; [128420]

(2) what estimate he has made on the effect of rising fuel prices on the average disposable income for people in (a) rural and (b) urban areas in each of the last five years; and if he will make a statement. [128422]

Sajid Javid: The Treasury does not hold rural and urban disaggregated information on tax receipts from fuel duty.

The Office for National Statistics routinely publishes data on household expenditure. This includes data series CSSC on transport fuel expenditure, contained in the Office's 'Consumer Trends Excel Dataset, Current Price, Seasonally Adjusted, Q2 2012', which is available online through the Office's website at:

www.ons.gov.uk

The Office also publishes information on Household Disposable Income Across the UK. The Office's most recent data release of 13 July 2012 is available through its website.

Gift Aid

Jack Lopresti: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) if the Government will support efforts to ensure that claiming Gift Aid on donations made either online or by text message to multiple charities can be covered by one single Gift Aid claim; [128081]

(2) if he will review the system for making Gift Aid declarations for text donations; and whether he plans to make any announcement in 2012 on legislative changes that will allow the process of claiming for multiple charities to be streamlined. [128082]

Sajid Javid: The Government is keen to make Gift Aid as easy and as accessible as possible to donors and charities. Gift Aid is already available on text donations and on other forms of digital giving, subject to the right infrastructure being in place.

As Gift Aid is a tax relief, it is necessary to ensure that Gift Aid declarations are correctly collected and recorded and donors understand what they are signing

up to. Donors remain liable for any tax reclaimed by the charity if they have not paid enough tax to cover the claim on their donation.

HM Revenue and Customs has been discussing with charity representatives how the sector might set up a Gift Aid database for participating donors and charities to use to eliminate the need for donors to make a Gift Aid declaration to each charity they support.

Gift Aid: Schools

Cathy Jamieson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) which schools in Scotland (*a*) are registered for Gift Aid and (*b*) have received gift aid payments in each of the last three years for which figures are available; [128261]

(2) what the total value of gift aid payments claimed by schools in Scotland is in each of the last three years for which figures are available; [128262]

(3) he will publish the value of gift aid payments made to each individual school in Scotland claiming such payments in each of the last three years for which figures are available. [128263]

Sajid Javid: HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) does not separately identify Gift Aid claims by reference to the types of organisations that make the claims or by reference to the location of the organisations within the UK.

For reasons of taxpayer confidentiality, HMRC is not able to disclose details of Gift Aid income received by individual charities. Amounts of tax repaid to charities in the UK on donations under Gift Aid are published in Table 10.3 on the HMRC website at:

www.hmrc.gov.uk/stats/charities/menu.htm

In 2011-12 a total of £1,057 million (provisional figure) was repaid to UK charities under Gift Aid.

Government Departments: Procurement

Jon Trickett: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether his Department monitors whether Government contractors that win Government contracts pay the

appropriate amount of tax in the UK; and whether any sanctions exist if Government contractors fail to pay the appropriate amount of tax in the UK. [128253]

Mr Gauke: Consideration of what tax compliance checks to carry out is a matter for each individual Department when procuring Government contracts. The Chief Secretary to the Treasury, the right hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn, Badenoch and Strathspey (Danny Alexander), announced on 25 September that HMRC and the Cabinet Office had been tasked with looking into how the Government as a whole can use the procurement process for government contracts to deter the very small minority of companies and individuals that do so from evading tax and from using aggressive tax avoidance schemes. More details will be made available later in the year.

Government Securities

Mark Reckless: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether paying interest coupons on gilts to the Bank of England's Asset Purchase Facility causes the Public Sector Net Cash Requirement to be lower than would be the case if those gilts were still held by the private sector. [128481]

Greg Clark: As the Bank of England's Asset Purchase Facility is part of the public sector, the coupon income that it receives reduces the public sector net cash requirement.

Imports: Eggs

Neil Parish: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether dried whole egg, dried egg albumin, dried egg yolk, special dried egg powder mixes and other types of dried egg imports are included in HM Revenue and Customs' commodity code groups. [129055]

Mr Gauke: HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) confirm that all goods imported into the European Union are covered by a commodity code listed in the customs tariff. If the dried egg yolk and dried egg albumin do not contain other ingredients the commodity codes are likely to be:

	<i>Commodity code</i>
Dried egg yolk unfit for human consumption	0408 11 20 00
Dried egg yolk fit for human consumption	0408 11 80 00
Dried egg albumin unfit, or rendered to be unfit, for human consumption	3502 11 10 00
Other dried egg albumin in crystals	3502 11 90 10
Other dried egg albumin other than in crystals	3502 11 90 90

HMRC advise me that the classification of the other egg powder products listed may not be straightforward. The following commodity codes may be appropriate:

	<i>Commodity code</i>
Other dried egg unfit for human consumption	0408 91 20 00
Other dried egg fit for human consumption	0408 91 80 00

However, it is important to note that these two commodity codes only include egg powder products where they do not contain additional ingredients such as salt.

As the exact composition of the products is not known and their classification may not be straightforward, HMRC tell me that they provide verbal classification advice via the Tariff Classification Helpline on 01702 366077.

Mortgages

Andrew Rosindell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what information his Department holds on how many mortgages have been taken out in the London borough of Havering in each of the last five years; [128221]

(2) how many people have (a) applied for and (b) been granted a buy-to-let mortgage in each of the last five years. [128215]

Sajid Javid: The Government does not collect or publish data on mortgage applications and approvals. A number of organisations including the Bank of England and the Council of Mortgage Lenders collect data on mortgages, which they make available publically.

National Insurance Contributions: Musicians

Kelvin Hopkins: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received on the liability of self-employed musicians for Class 1 national insurance contributions since the judgment of the Upper Tribunal in the case of *ITV Services Ltd v. Commissioners for HM Revenue and Customs* [2012] UKVT 47 (7CC); and if he will make a statement. [128680]

Mr Gauke: The Government has received a small number of representations from musicians regarding the application of Class 1 national insurance contributions to self-employed musicians. This follows meetings between HM Revenue and Customs and the Musicians Union in which the consequences for musicians of the Upper Tribunal judgment in the case of *ITV Services Ltd v. HM Revenue and Customs* were explained.

The Government is acutely aware of the concerns of self-employed musicians regarding the application of Class 1 national insurance contributions. An appeal by *ITV Services* is due to be heard by the Court of Appeal in December. Once the Court hands down its judgment, the Government will be better able to consider fully the position of self-employed musicians and the application of Class 1 national insurance contributions.

Offshore Industry

Caroline Flint: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what fiscal measures are in place to encourage oil and gas exploration. [128469]

Sajid Javid: The Government is committed to a fiscal regime for oil and gas that encourages investment and innovation while ensuring a fair return for the Exchequer.

This year, the Government has announced a range of measures to encourage oil and gas investment, to help maximise the economic production of the UK's oil and

gas reserves and unlock billions of pounds of new oil and gas investment. These include extensions to the field allowance regime to encourage investment in commercially marginal fields and projects, and a commitment to provide greater certainty on decommissioning relief. Together with existing field allowances and enhanced capital allowances, these measures will help ensure that the oil and gas tax regime continues to encourage both exploration and development.

Personal Income

Mr Jim Cunningham: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) how many people in each region have an annual income in excess of (a) £1 million and (b) £2 million; [128655]

(2) what estimate his Department has made of the number of people living in London who earn more than £1 million a year. [128656]

Mr Gauke: Numbers of UK taxpayers with total income of £1 million and £2 million and over are published in Table 2.5 'Income tax liabilities, by Income Range, 2009-10 to 2012-13' available on the HMRC website at:

http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/stats/income_tax/table2-5.pdf

These estimates are based on Survey of Personal Incomes (SPI) data for 2009-10.

A regional breakdown of these figures is not published, due to small sample sizes.

Regional breakdowns of taxpayer numbers by marginal rate of tax, gender and age are available in Table 2.2 'Number of individual income taxpayers by marginal rate, gender and age, by country and region':

http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/stats/income_tax/table2-2.pdf

Public Sector Debt

Mr Raab: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what steps he is taking to address UK net debt. [126520]

Greg Clark [*holding answer 6 November 2012*]: The Government has set out a comprehensive plan to set debt on a downward trajectory. The Budget sets out a total consolidation of £155 billion per year by 2016-17, with 81% of this coming from spending reductions.

Regional Planning and Development

Tom Blenkinsop: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much funding the Government plans to award to successful applicants for the second wave of City Deals. [126701]

Greg Clark [*holding answer 5 November 2012*]: I am responding as the Minister responsible for City Deals.

The second wave of City Deals will build on the first, giving more cities and their wider areas the tools to power their own growth.

City Deals aim to decentralise powers and budgets currently held centrally to help drive economic growth in our cities.

Tom Blenkinsop: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimate he has made of the likely cost of the bidding process for the second wave of City Deals to (a) central Government, (b) local government and (c) local enterprise partnerships. [126702]

Greg Clark: I am responding as the Minister responsible for City Deals.

The Government have invited 20 cities and their wider areas to put forward initial proposals for a Wave 2 City Deal. This opportunity is optional and it will be up to local areas to decide how they approach it and what resources they put into it.

My officials in the Cities Policy Unit, working with BIS Local, will provide support to all 20 cities and their wider areas to develop their initial proposals.

Initial proposals submitted by cities and their wider areas will be considered by a cross-Whitehall panel of officials and then by Ministers during the normal course of business, therefore there will be no additional cost to central Government.

Tom Blenkinsop: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what discussions (a) he and (b) Ministers in his Department have had with local government leaders in the Tees Valley on the submission of a wave two City Deal bid. [126703]

Greg Clark [holding answer 5 November 2012]: I am responding as the Minister responsible for City Deals.

Tees Valley leaders were invited to submit an expression of interest for a Wave 2 City Deal on 29 October. The Government are committed to support Tees Valley along with the other 19 cities and their wider areas to submit proposals that will deliver growth and jobs for their communities. Throughout this process there will be an open dialogue with local leaders and conversations are ongoing.

Revenue and Customs: Cumbernauld

Gregg McClymont: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many staff were employed at HM Revenue and Customs Cumbernauld on (a) 13 November 2012 and (b) 6 May 2010. [128906]

Mr Gauke: HMRC staff in post data is taken at the last day of the month. There were 1,273 staff employed in Cumbernauld on 31 October 2012 and 1,498 on 30 April 2010.

Social Enterprises

Chris White: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what steps he has taken to include social enterprise in the Government's growth agenda; and if he will make a statement. [127886]

Sajid Javid: The Treasury is conducting an internal review of the financial barriers to social enterprise, as announced at Budget 2012. The review will report to Ministers in due course.

The Government supports the diversification of non-bank finance for businesses, particularly SMEs—including social enterprises. The Regional Growth Fund has co-funded a £60 million wholesale fund for community

development finance institutions, and the Business Finance Taskforce has introduced a pilot network for the referral of businesses that are declined finance to the Community Development Finance Association.

Staff

Mike Freer: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much his Department spent on (a) recruitment agency fees, (b) outplacement agency fees for displaced or redundant staff and (c) staff training in each of the last 12 months. [125758]

Sajid Javid: The Department's accounting system does not separately identify the recruitment agency fee element of an invoice, and this information could not be extracted within the disproportionate cost threshold.

Spending on outplacement agency fees for displaced or redundant staff and staff training during 2011-12 can be found in the following table; this also includes the equivalent figure for 2009-10.

	Staff training	Outplacement agency fees	£
2011			
April	26,723	—	
May	48,726	—	
June	35,644	—	
July	39,263	—	
August	45,279	—	
September	36,753	1,008	
October	56,970	5,184	
November	96,144	144	
December	63,341	288	
2012			
January	82,537	288	
February	59,426	—	
March	212,549	—	
2011-12 total	803,175	6,912	
2009-10 equivalent spending	2,252,065	14,023	

Taxation: Fraud

Steve McCabe: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimate he has made of the cost to the Exchequer arising from organised fraud in relation to (a) income tax, (b) value added tax and (c) corporation tax, in each of the last five years. [128202]

Mr Gauke: The breakdown of the tax gap by behaviour is not available for the last five years.

The most recent tax gap estimates were published in October 2012 in 'Measuring Tax Gaps 2012', which can be found at the following link:

<http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/stats/mtg-2012.pdf>

HMRC has only produced an illustrative breakdown of the tax gap by behaviour for 2007-08, 2009-10 and 2010-11. HMRC's current tax gap estimate is that a total of £5 billion was lost in 2010-11 to criminal attacks. Previous estimates of criminal attacks were £5 billion for 2007-08 and £6 billion for 2009-10.

A detailed breakdown of criminal attacks for each tax is not published.

Temporary Employment: Tax Avoidance

Catherine McKinnell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) if he will take steps to tackle travel and subsistence schemes being used by some temporary labour providers for the purpose of tax avoidance; [128744]

(2) if he will take steps to ensure employers who operate travel and subsistence schemes are fully compliant with national minimum wage legislation; [128745]

(3) what steps he is taking to ensure that temporary and agency workers are not exploited by temporary labour providers operating travel and subsistence schemes for the purpose of tax avoidance. [128749]

Mr Gauke: The Government is committed to tackling all forms of tax avoidance and a number of steps have been taken to address non-compliance in this area.

Following the 2008 consultation "Tax Relief for Travel Expenses: Temporary Workers and Overarching Employment Contracts," HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) has changed the way it issues dispensations to ensure greater consistency. Additionally, HMRC has set up specialist teams to ensure that businesses operating these types of schemes are complying with the rules.

To protect the lowest paid workers from exploitation, the Government tightened the national minimum wage regulations from 1 January 2011 to make it clear that expenses paid for travel to a temporary workplace could not count as payment towards NMW. This change protects low paid temporary employees working through agencies and other types of labour providers.

HMRC works closely with, among others, BIS and the GLA to ensure that temporary workers are not exploited through the use of these schemes.

Venture Capital

Chi Onwurah: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what steps he has taken to promote investment in venture capital trusts. [128041]

Mr Gauke [*holding answer 12 November 2012*]: The Government has increased the qualifying company limits so that Venture Capital Trusts (VCT) can now invest in companies with fewer than 250 employees and gross assets of £15 million. The Government has also more than doubled the annual investment limit for qualifying companies to £5 million and removed the £1 million limit on investment by a VCT in a single company. These changes took effect from April this year.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Bombings: Omagh

Jim Shannon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many detectives are currently engaged in the police investigation into the Omagh bombing. [128920]

Mike Penning: The allocation of police resources is an operational matter for the Chief Constable.

Employment Agencies

Catherine McKinnell: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what her policy is on the use of offshore employment companies in the supply of public sector workers in her Department and its associated public bodies. [128741]

Mike Penning: Neither my Department nor its arm's length bodies employ staff supplied by offshore employment companies.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE

Algeria

Mr Buckland: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent discussions he has had with his counterparts in Algeria and Morocco about the repatriation of those living in refugee camps in Tindouf province in Algeria. [128277]

Alistair Burt: During my visit to Algeria on 24-26 June and to Morocco on 26-28 June, I discussed with Mr Abdelkader Messahel, the Algerian Minister Delegate for Maghreb and African Affairs, and Moroccan Minister Delegate for Foreign Affairs, Youssef Amrani, developments in the UN-led process on Western Sahara. While there has been no specific discussion regarding the repatriation of those living in refugee camps in Tindouf, I have continued to re-emphasise the UK's support for the UN-led process and our call on all parties to show political will and a spirit of compromise in negotiations.

Mr Buckland: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent reports he has received on the security situation in refugee camps in Tindouf province in Algeria. [128278]

Alistair Burt: The security situation in the Tindouf camps is discussed as part of the ongoing dialogue between the British and Algerian governments. Representatives of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office last visited the Tindouf camps in the second quarter of 2011, and expect to visit them again shortly. The British ambassador to Algeria attended a briefing by the UN Secretary-General's Personal Envoy for Western Sahara, Christopher Ross, on 8 November 2012 in Algiers. Ambassador Ross is undertaking an extensive visit of the region and we expect him to report back to the UN Security Council in due course, including on the security situation.

Mr Buckland: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent reports he has received on the humanitarian situation in refugee camps in Tindouf province in Algeria. [128279]

Alistair Burt: The humanitarian situation in the Tindouf camps is discussed as part of the ongoing dialogue between the British and Algerian governments. Representatives of the Foreign and Commonwealth

Office last visited the Tindouf camps in April 2011, and expect to visit them again shortly. The British ambassador to Algeria attended a briefing by the UN Secretary-General's Personal Envoy for Western Sahara, Christopher Ross, on 8 November 2012 in Algiers. Ambassador Ross is undertaking an extensive visit of the region and we expect him to report back to the UN Security Council in due course, including on the humanitarian situation.

China

Mr Graham Stuart: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment his Department has made of the potential for the (a) UK and (b) EU, to develop a low carbon strategic partnership with China with particular reference to the establishment of joint standards in the manufacturing and industrial sectors. [128789]

Mark Simmonds: Developing low carbon strategic partnerships with China at UK and EU levels is an important element of the British Government's strategy for working with China on Climate change and low carbon. We support the EU-China Partnership on Climate Change which was established in 2005 and provides a high-level political framework for collaboration; and the UK has memoranda of understanding with China on climate change and low-carbon co-operation which frame our bilateral relations in these areas. These partnerships cover a range of policy areas and we will be working with Chinese colleagues to build on the existing collaboration in the future. This could include work on standards.

Dalai Lama

Tim Loughton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs pursuant to the answer of 12 November 2012, *Official Report*, column 23W, on Dalai Lama, what advice was given to Ministers on meeting His Holiness The Dalai Lama. [128914]

Mr Swire: I refer the hon. Member to my answer of 12 November 2012, *Official Report*, column 23W. As the hon. Member will be aware it is not the normal practice to disclose detailed departmental advice given to Ministers, as to do so would inhibit the frankness and candour of such advice.

EU Defence Policy

Mark Reckless: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what his policy is on plans to establish an EU military operations headquarters. [129066]

Mr Lidington: The UK has made very clear that we will not agree to the establishment of a permanent EU military operational headquarters. This remains the case.

EU Law

Mr Robin Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what fines were levied on the UK Government for non-compliance with EU directives from (a) 1997 to 2010 and (b) 2010 to date. [128984]

Mr Lidington: No fines have ever been levied on the UK Government for non-compliance with EU directives.

Mauritania

Andrew Rosindell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent assessment he has made of the UK's relationship with Mauritania. [128396]

Alistair Burt: Following the visit last October 2011 of the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, my right hon. Friend the Member for Richmond (Yorks) (Mr Hague), the relationship between the UK and Mauritania continues to deepen. We have an active dialogue in a number of areas of mutual interest including the Sahel, security, trade, and greater regional co-operation. We welcome Mauritania's decision to reopen its embassy in London; this reflects the importance of the growing co-operation between our two countries. We will continue our dialogue through ministerial contact and through our ambassador to Morocco, who is accredited also to Mauritania.

Slovak Roma

Mr Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent discussions he has had with (a) his European counterparts and (b) the European Commission on the distribution of Slovak Roma in Europe; and what representations he has made to the European Commission on future budgetary requirements to support programmes related to the incidence of Slovak Roma in the English regions. [128482]

Mr Lidington: The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, my right hon. Friend the Member for Richmond (Yorks) (Mr Hague), has not had any discussions with European counterparts or the European Commission on the distribution of Slovak Roma in Europe. Nor has the Government held any specific discussions with the European Commission on budgetary requirements to support the integration of Roma in England. However, the UK is playing an active role in discussions at EU level with the European Commission and other member states on issues relating to Roma integration in the European Union, including general funding pressures.

Trade Agreements

Michael Fabricant: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will initiate contingency planning including exploratory multilateral or bilateral trade talks with the US, Canada, Australia and New Zealand to (a) strengthen existing trade agreements and (b) examine future possible trading agreements were the UK to change its terms of membership of the EU; and if he will make a statement. [127429]

Mr Lidington: The Government is committed to strengthening trade links with its partners across the world. In a bilateral context, UK Trade & Investment is helping strengthen these links and is now represented in over 100 markets throughout the world, including the US, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. In Europe,

we are encouraging the EU to conclude free trade agreements with Canada, India and Singapore, as well as to launch negotiations with the US and Japan; this would tackle the remaining barriers to almost half the world's trade flow.

The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, my right hon. Friend the Member for Richmond (Yorks) (Mr Hague), discussed issues around the EU and trade in a recent speech he gave in Berlin on 23 October 2012. The full text of the speech is at:

www.fco.gov.uk/en/news/speeches/foreign-secretary/

Turks and Caicos Islands

Mr Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of the Government's management of the Turks and Caicos Islands during the period in which self-governance was suspended. [127961]

Mark Simmonds: UK Ministers have made a series of written ministerial statements updating the House on progress against the eight milestones for elections and a return to democratic government. I would refer the hon. Gentleman to the last written ministerial statement issued by the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, my right hon. Friend the Member for Richmond (Yorks) (Mr Hague), and the former Secretary of State for International Development, my right hon. Friend the Member for Sutton Coldfield (Mr Mitchell), on 12 June.

Mr Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will allow the Government of the Turks and Caicos Islands to delay the introduction of VAT if it wishes to do so. [127993]

Mark Simmonds: The Interim Government in Turks and Caicos Islands decided to introduce VAT. Consequently the VAT Bill was signed into law on 18 July 2012 and will come into force on 1 April 2013. Any delay would require a change in legislation. Before giving assent to such legislation, the Governor would need to consider if it was consistent with the Constitution and the Statement of Governance Principles in force. This requires the new Turks and Caicos Islands Government to formulate and conduct macro-economic and fiscal policy for the sustained long-term prosperity of the people of the islands, and to manage public funds according to established principles of value for money, affordability and regularity and in the interests of long-term financial stability.

A framework document has also been agreed that sets out the key principles of good financial management and the debt threshold targets agreed by the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, my right hon. Friend the Member for Richmond (Yorks) (Mr Hague). Within this framework the new Government will need to agree a medium-term strategic plan that includes revenue and expenditure forecasts for at least the next three financial years. It is important that TCI demonstrates its ability to run a credible and sustainable fiscal policy, including reducing its debt levels, so that it can refinance itself independently by the time the UK Government debt guarantee expires at the end of 2015-16. UK agreement to the budget and fiscal plans will be contingent on TCIG formulating credible policies to meet these key objectives.

Ukraine

Jim Shannon: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent discussions he has had with the Government of Ukraine on the arrest and detention of Yulia Tymoshenko. [128510]

Mr Lidington: I refer the hon. Member to the statement made by the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, my right hon. Friend the Member for Richmond (Yorks) (Mr Hague), to the House on 15 May 2012, *Official Report*, column 420, and to the answer given on 13 June 2012, *Official Report*, column 488W, to the right hon. Member for Paisley and Renfrewshire South (Mr Alexander). We have continually made clear representations to the Government of Ukraine about cases of selective justice, including that of Yulia Tymoshenko. On 29 August, I issued a statement expressing disappointment at the High Specialised Court's denial of Mrs Tymoshenko's appeal against her conviction. Following Ukraine's parliamentary election on 28 October, I issued a further statement criticising the way that selective justice had led to the abuse of leading opposition candidates from the campaign. The handling of cases against opposition figures has exposed the extent to which Ukraine is lagging behind EU standards and expectations in areas of democracy and the rule of law. We, together with EU partners, continue to make clear to Ukraine that selective justice and politically motivated trials are a backward step for democracy and will jeopardise prospects for ratification of the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement by the European Parliament and all EU member states.

Unmanned Air Vehicles

Mr Anderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information his Department holds on how many British citizens were killed by unmanned aerial vehicle strikes in each of the last three years; and in which countries any such fatalities occurred. [128145]

Alistair Burt: The Foreign and Commonwealth Office does not keep detailed records of deaths of British nationals overseas who may have been killed by unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) strikes. We are aware, of public reporting in relation to a small number of individuals alleged to have been killed by UAV strikes overseas, but cannot comment on specific cases.

Visits Abroad

Mr Graham Stuart: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last visited (a) China, (b) Brazil and (c) the US. [128088]

Mr Swire: The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, my right hon. Friend the Member for Richmond (Yorks) (Mr Hague), last visited China on 14 to 15 July 2010 (and also Hong Kong on 16 to 17 January 2011), Brazil on 18 to 19 January 2012, and the USA on 24 to 29 September 2012.

As Minister responsible for our relations with Brazil, I visited Brazil on 27 to 28 September 2012. I also attended the UN General Assembly in New York on 28 to 29 September.

Western Sahara

Katy Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs pursuant to the answer of 17 September 2012, *Official Report*, column 470W, on Western Sahara, whether the right to self-determination includes an option of independence. [128564]

Alistair Burt: The UK is strongly supportive of the UN-led process which aims to encourage the parties to the Western Sahara dispute to reach a lasting and mutually acceptable political solution that provides for the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara. The exact nature of this solution will need to be agreed by the parties themselves.

Katy Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether any funding under the Arab Partnership Fund is being used to support programmes in Western Sahara. [128565]

Alistair Burt: The Arab Partnership does not fund any programme activity in Western Sahara. It currently funds programme activity in Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Occupied Palestinian Territories, Syria, Tunisia, the United Arab Emirates and Yemen.

We regard the status of Western Sahara as undetermined and support the UN Secretary-General and his Personal Envoy in their efforts to resolve the dispute through a negotiated settlement, providing for the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara.

Yemen

Andrew Rosindell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what his policy is on the application of Yemen for membership of the Commonwealth. [128407]

Alistair Burt: As a sovereign state with historical links to the United Kingdom, Yemen qualifies to join if it meets the criteria as set out in various documents, notably the Harare Declaration of 1991. All prospective members must abide by certain political principles, including democracy and respect for human rights. The Commonwealth Heads of Government have previously considered an application by Yemen. It was agreed it would be kept under review in light of the agreed criteria. The British Government welcomes action by the Yemeni Government to take all necessary measures to enable it to qualify.

JUSTICE

Billing

Mike Freer: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice what the average cost to his Department was of processing the payment of an invoice in the latest period for which figures are available; and what proportion of invoices settled in that period his Department paid (a) electronically and (b) by cheque. [125659]

Jeremy Wright: The following shows the information requested split between National Offender Management Service (NOMS), and the wider Ministry of Justice

(MOJ). Invoices are paid through different processes for each organisation, and the data have not been aggregated as they are extracted from separate databases and so the cost per invoice processed cannot be considered comparable between the two organisations:

NOMS

Invoice processing is completed by an in-house (civil servant) team based in Newport, South Wales.

Cost per accounts payable transaction between 1 September 2012 and 30 September 2012 was £2.83.

In September 2012 proportion of invoices settled:

electronically = 99.98%

by cheque = 0.02%

MOJ

Invoice processing is completed via an outsourced contract by a commercial company (Liberata).

Cost per accounts payable transaction between 1 September 2012 and 30 September 2012 was £5.03.

In September 2012 proportion of invoices settled:

electronically = 88.61%

by cheque = 11.39%

Catering

Ms Abbott: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice how much his Department has spent on refreshments since May 2010. [127109]

Mrs Grant: The Department does not hold central records for expenditure on refreshments. However, the following restrictions apply to all staff with effect from August 2010:

No lunches, tea or coffees can be ordered for any internal meeting (ie a meeting between MOJ staff). Water and jugs are freely available in most of our offices.

For all external meetings (ie a meeting between MOJ staff and external stakeholders), lunch, tea and coffee purchases require director-level sign-off and are only allowed in exceptional circumstances.

To provide information on departmental expenditure on refreshments would involve disproportionate cost.

Crime and Courts Bill

Ian Lavery: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice what definition of a requirement for the purpose of punishment the Government proposes to use when issuing guidance on the implementation of the provisions of part 1 of the new Schedule to the Crime and Courts Bill moved by Lord Taylor of Holbeach and Lord McNally in Committee in the House of Lords on 26 October 2012. [128690]

Jeremy Wright: The Government has not defined the meaning of "punishment", in the proposed legislation. The expectation however is that it would generally cover restrictions of liberty or some requirement that represents a recognisable sanction to the public (such as curfew, exclusion, or community payback). The court will be assisted in determining what is punitive in each individual case by pre-sentence reports from probation staff and guidance to probation staff will be issued in advance of implementation of these provisions. Any sentencing guidelines to the courts would be issued by the independent Sentencing Council.

Debt Collection

Mr Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice whether the Government will examine (a) multiple fee-charging for a single visit and (b) adherence to vulnerable person guidelines by private bailiff firms as part of its ongoing bailiff reforms.

[129003]

Mrs Grant: The “Transforming Bailiff Action” consultation considered the fees charged by bailiffs for enforcement action and the treatment of vulnerable persons during enforcement action.

My officials continue to examine these issues as part of the ongoing reforms.

Drugs: Birmingham

Steve McCabe: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice how many people have been found guilty of offences of drug (a) possession and (b) dealing in Birmingham in each year since 1997.

[128204]

Jeremy Wright: The number of offenders found guilty at all courts in the Birmingham local justice area for relevant offences under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971, for the years 1997 to 2011 (the latest available), can be found in the following table.

Table 1: Defendants found guilty at all courts for relevant offences under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971, Birmingham¹, 1997 to 2011².³ England and Wales

Defendants	Offence		Supply ⁶
	Possession of a controlled drug ⁴	Possession with intent to supply a controlled drug ⁵	
1997	408	135	59
1998	666	124	71
1999	724	131	62
2000	914	114	87
2001	1,017	130	62
2002	1,067	123	49
2003	1,125	141	85
2004	833	166	79
2005	595	136	75
2006	677	136	62
2007	824	144	95
2008	928	120	66
2009	1,007	136	52
2010	735	132	62
2011	897	109	140

¹ Refers to Birmingham local justice area and Birmingham Crown court only.

² The figures given in the table on court proceedings relate to persons for whom these offences were the principal offences for which they were dealt with. When a defendant has been found guilty of two or more offences it is the offence for which the heaviest penalty is imposed. Where the same disposal is imposed for two or more offences, the offence selected is the offence for which the statutory maximum penalty is the most severe.

³ Every effort is made to ensure that the figures presented are accurate and complete. However, it is important to note that these data have been extracted from large administrative data systems generated by the courts and police forces. As a consequence, care should be taken to ensure data collection processes and their inevitable limitations are taken into account when those data are used.

⁴ An offence under S.5(2) Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 as amended by Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994.

⁵ An offence under S.5(3) Misuse of Drugs Act 1971.

⁶ An offence under S.4(3) Misuse of Drugs Act 1971.

Source:

Ministry of Justice, Justice Statistics Analytical Services.

Electronic Tagging

Ian Lavery: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice what estimate he has made of the potential cost to the public purse of increasing the number of offenders tagged to (a) 70,000, (b) 100,000 and (c) 130,000.

[128618]

Jeremy Wright: We have no plans to set a target for the number of offenders subject to electronic monitoring.

The Ministry of Justice is putting out to competition new contracts for the delivery of electronic monitoring services. The new contracts will allow us to introduce the most advanced technology, improving delivery and providing better value for taxpayers. We are unable to disclose detailed cost information while the competition is in progress.

Landlords: Prosecutions

Graham Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice (1) how many landlords have been (a) prosecuted and (b) convicted under the Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1998 for failing to arrange an annual gas safety check or issuing a copy certificate in each local authority area in each year since 2004;

[128929]

(2) how many landlords have been (a) prosecuted and (b) convicted under the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985 for failing to keep in repair and proper working order the installations in the dwelling house for the supply of water, gas and electricity in each local authority area in each year since 2004;

[128930]

(3) how many landlords have been (a) prosecuted and (b) convicted for (i) tenant harassment and (ii) illegal eviction under the Protection from Eviction Act 1977 in each local authority area in each year since 2004;

[128931]

(4) how many landlords have been (a) prosecuted and (b) convicted for failing to maintain their property under the Housing Health and Safety Rating System in respect of (i) excess cold and dampness, (ii) leaking roofs, (iii) dangerous or unstable structures, (iv) dangerous electrical installations, (v) general disrepair issues, (vi) overcrowding and (vii) fire hazards in the latest period for which figures are available.

[128932]

Jeremy Wright: The number of defendants proceeded against at magistrates courts and found guilty at all courts for the unlawful eviction of an occupier and the unlawful harassment of an occupier under the Protection from Eviction Act 1977 in England and Wales from 2004 to 2011 (latest available) is given in the tables. Figures are provided by police force area as the Ministry of Justice court proceedings database does not hold details of offences by local authority area.

Court proceedings data held centrally in an aggregated format do not separately identify individual offences under the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985. Similarly it is not possible to separately identify the specified offences under the Housing Health and Safety Rating System.

Information on offences under the Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1998 is not collated centrally by the Ministry of Justice.

<i>Police force area</i>	2008 ¹		2009		2010		2011	
	<i>Proceeded against</i>	<i>Found guilty</i>	<i>Proceeded against</i>	<i>Found guilty</i>	<i>Proceeded against</i>	<i>Found guilty</i>	<i>Proceeded against</i>	<i>Found guilty</i>
Essex	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Gloucestershire	0	0	0	0	2	1	0	0
Greater Manchester	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
Gwent	0	0	2	1	0	0	0	0
Hampshire	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2
Hertfordshire	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Humberside	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	1
Kent	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Lancashire	0	0	2	1	3	2	0	0
Leicestershire	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Lincolnshire	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Merseyside	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Metropolitan Police	1	2	6	1	5	3	5	3
Norfolk	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
North Wales	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
North Yorkshire	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
Northamptonshire	1	1	0	0	2	2	1	1
Northumbria	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Nottinghamshire	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0
South Wales ⁴	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
South Yorkshire	1	0	3	2	2	1	1	1
Staffordshire	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Suffolk	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Surrey	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Sussex	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Thames Valley	0	0	2	0	4	4	1	1
Warwickshire	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
West Mercia	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
West Midlands	1	1	4	2	3	2	1	1
West Yorkshire	0	0	2	3	0	0	1	0
Wiltshire	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
England and Wales	14	6	26	15	22	15	23	13

¹ Offences under S.1(2) Protection from Eviction Act 1977.

² The figures given in the table on court proceedings relate to persons for whom these offences were the principal offences for which they were dealt with. When a defendant has been found guilty of two or more offences it is the offence for which the heaviest penalty is imposed. Where the same disposal is imposed for two or more offences, the offence selected is the offence for which the statutory maximum penalty is the most severe.

⁴ Every effort is made to ensure that the figures presented are accurate and complete. However, it is important to note that these data have been extracted from large administrative data systems generated by the courts and police forces. As a consequence, care should be taken to ensure data collection processes and their inevitable limitations are taken into account when those data are used.

⁴ Excludes Cardiff magistrates court records for June, July and August 2008.

Source:

Ministry of Justice—Justice Statistics Analytical Services

Table 2: Defendants proceeded against at magistrates courts and found guilty at all courts for 'unlawful harassment of occupier'¹ by police force area, England and Wales, 2004-11^{2,3}

<i>Police force area</i>	2004		2005		2006		2007	
	<i>Proceeded against</i>	<i>Found guilty</i>	<i>Proceeded against</i>	<i>Found guilty</i>	<i>Proceeded against</i>	<i>Found guilty</i>	<i>Proceeded against</i>	<i>Found guilty</i>
Avon and Somerset	2	0	1	0	4	2	0	0
Bedfordshire	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Cambridgeshire	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Cheshire	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
City of London	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Cleveland	0	0	0	0	3	1	0	2
Cumbria	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Derbyshire	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Devon and Cornwall	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	0
Dorset	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Durham	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Dyfed Powys	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Essex	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Gloucestershire	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Greater Manchester	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0
Gwent	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Hampshire	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0

Police force area	2008 ¹		2009		2010		2011	
	Proceeded against	Found guilty	Proceeded against	Found guilty	Proceeded against	Found guilty	Proceeded against	Found guilty
Northumbria	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
Nottinghamshire	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
South Wales ⁴	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
South Yorkshire	0	0	0	0	1	0	3	2
Staffordshire	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Suffolk	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Surrey	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Sussex	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
Thames Valley	0	0	2	1	0	0	2	1
Warwickshire	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
West Mercia	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
West Midlands	2	1	1	0	0	2	0	0
West Yorkshire	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Wiltshire	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0
England and Wales	13	8	15	9	9	6	15	7

¹ Offences under S.1(3) Protection from Eviction Act 1977.

² The figures given in the table on court proceedings relate to persons for whom these offences were the principal offences for which they were dealt with. When a defendant has been found guilty of two or more offences it is the offence for which the heaviest penalty is imposed. Where the same disposal is imposed for two or more offences, the offence selected is the offence for which the statutory maximum penalty is the most severe.

³ Every effort is made to ensure that the figures presented are accurate and complete. However, it is important to note that these data have been extracted from large administrative data systems generated by the courts and police forces. As a consequence, care should be taken to ensure data collection processes and their inevitable limitations are taken into account when those data are used.

⁴ Excludes Cardiff magistrates court records for June, July and August 2008.

Source:

Ministry of Justice—Justice Statistics Analytical Services

Leasehold Valuation Tribunal

Sir Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice (1) for what reason costs ordered by the Leaseholder Valuation Tribunal are limited to £500; where he advertises that limit; what exceptions there are; and if he will make a statement; [128524]

(2) on how many occasions the Leaseholder Valuation Tribunal has made a costs order above £500 in the last two years; and what the highest costs order was. [128525]

Mrs Grant: Costs ordered by the Leasehold Valuation Tribunal (LVT) are limited by statute to £500. Their function is to provide a potential sanction where a tribunal determines that a party has behaved in a frivolous or vexatious manner or abused the tribunal process. The limit is set out in the Department for Communities and Local Government publication “Residential Long Leaseholders—A guide to your rights and responsibilities” and the Leasehold Advisory Service publication “Applying

to a Leasehold Valuation Tribunal”. There are no exceptions to the costs limits. For this reason the LVT has not awarded costs above £500 in the last two years.

Methamphetamine

Andrew Rosindell: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice how many people have been convicted of (a) manufacturing and (b) using methamphetamine in (i) the London Borough of Havering and (ii) the UK in the last 12 months. [127674]

Jeremy Wright: The Ministry of Justice Court Proceedings Database holds information on defendants proceeded against, found guilty and sentenced for criminal offences in England and Wales.

The number of defendants found guilty at all courts for selected offences under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 relating to methylamphetamine (Crystal meth) and amphetamines, within the Havering local justice area and England and Wales in 2011, can be viewed in the following table.

Defendants found guilty at all courts for selected offences under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971¹ relating to methylamphetamine (Crystal meth) and amphetamines, within the Havering local justice area and England and Wales, 2011^{2,3}

Area	Offence description	Total guilty
Havering local justice area	Having possession of amphetamines	6
England and Wales	Production of or being concerned in the production of amphetamines	1
	Having possession of amphetamines	2,389
	Production of or being concerned in the production of methylamphetamine (Crystal meth)	1
	Having possession of methylamphetamine (Crystal meth)	19
	Having possession of methylamphetamine (Crystal meth) with intent to supply	3
	Permitting premises to be used for unlawful purposes relating to methylamphetamine (Crystal meth)	0

Defendants found guilty at all courts for selected offences under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971¹ relating to methylamphetamine (Crystal meth) and amphetamines, within the Havering local justice area and England and Wales, 2011^{2,3}

Area	Offence description	Total guilty
Total		2,419

¹ Includes the following offences relating to the controlled drugs methylamphetamine (Crystal meth) and amphetamines: Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 S.4(2)—Production of or being concerned in the production of a controlled drug, Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 S.5(2) as amended by Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 S.157 Sch.8—Having possession of a controlled drug, Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 S.5(3)—Having possession of a controlled drug with intent to supply, Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 S.8 & Sch.2 as amended by Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 S.157 & Sch.8 Part II—Permitting premises to be used for unlawful purposes.

² The figures given in the table relate to persons for whom these offences were the principal offences for which they were dealt with. When a defendant has been found guilty of two or more offences it is the offence for which the heaviest penalty is imposed. Where the same disposal is imposed for two or more offences, the offence selected is the offence for which the statutory maximum penalty is the most severe.

³ Every effort is made to ensure that the figures presented are accurate and complete. However, it is important to note that these data have been extracted from large administrative data systems generated by the courts and police forces. As a consequence, care should be taken to ensure data collection processes and their inevitable limitations are taken into account when those data are used.

Source:

Justice Statistics Analytical Services—Ministry of Justice.

Offenders: Rehabilitation

Pete Wishart: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice whether he proposes that the changes in England and Wales to rehabilitation periods in the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 as amended by the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012 should also apply to recruited service personnel from Scotland. [127731]

Jeremy Wright: The reforms to the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act (ROA) apply to convictions within the jurisdiction of the England and Wales. It is for the Scottish Parliament to decide whether or not it wants to introduce similar reforms to the Scottish legislation dealing with convictions in that jurisdiction.

Policing and Crime Act 2009

Gavin Shuker: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice (1) how many convictions there were under section 14 of the Policing and Crime Act 2009 in (a) 2011 and (b) 2012; [127827]

(2) how many offenders have received the maximum penalty under section 14 of the Policing and Crime Act 2009. [128111]

Jeremy Wright: The Ministry of Justice are aware that there were issues in the central recording of the data relating to this offence in 2011. These issues are being investigated and revised information for 2011 and 2012 figures will be included in the next annual Criminal Justice Statistics publication, planned for release in May 2013.

The number of defendants found guilty and sentenced at all courts, with sentence breakdown, for offences under section 14 of the Policing and Crime Act 2009, in England and Wales for 2010, can be viewed in the following table.

The maximum sentence available for offences under section 14 of the Policing and Crime Act 2009 is a £1,000 fine. Zero offenders received this maximum sentence in 2010.

Defendants found guilty and sentenced at all courts, with sentence breakdown, for offences under section 14 of the Policing and Crime Act 2009¹, England and Wales, 2010^{2, 3, 4}

Offence	Outcome	Number
Paying or promising to pay a person to provide sexual services, where that person is subject to exploitative conduct to induce or encourage them to provide those services	Found guilty	43
	Sentenced	43
	Other sentences	14
	Fine	29
<i>Of which:</i>		
	Maximum available fine (£1,000)	—
Soliciting another for the purpose of obtaining their sexual services as a prostitute in a street or public place	Found guilty	64
	Sentenced	64
	Other sentences	13
	Fine	51
<i>Of which:</i>		
	Maximum available fine (£1,000)	—

¹ Sexual Offences Act 2003 S51a and S53a, as added by the Policing and Crime Act 2009 section 14.

² The figures given in the table on court proceedings relate to persons for whom these offences were the principal offences for which they were dealt with. When a defendant has been found guilty of two or more offences, it is the offence for which the heaviest penalty is imposed. Where the same disposal is imposed for two or more offences, the offence selected is the offence for which the statutory maximum penalty is the most severe.

³ Every effort is made to ensure that the figures presented are accurate and complete. However, it is important to note that these data have been extracted from large administrative data systems generated by the courts and police forces. As a consequence, care should be taken to ensure data collection processes and their inevitable limitations are taken into account when those data are used.

⁴ It is known that central recording issues relating to this offence will have impacted on data provided for 2011. These issues are being investigated and revised figures will be published in the next annual Criminal Justice Statistics bulletin in May 2013.

Prisoners: Repatriation

Dr Offord: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice how many prisoners have been returned to the UK under the Convention on the Transfer of Sentenced Persons from (a) the US, (b) European Union countries and (c) the rest of the world in each of the last 10 years.

[128465]

Jeremy Wright: The following table gives the information requested for each of the last five years. Information relating to the transfer of prisoners prior to 2007 is not available.

	USA	EU	Rest of world
2007	10	34	19
2008	8	17	24
2009	4	38	10
2010	5	52	17
2011	2	45	11
Total	29	186	81

The figures given in the table relate to England and Wales only. The transfer of prisoners to Scotland and to Northern Ireland is a devolved matter, and is therefore the responsibility of the relevant Minister.

The numbers reported here are drawn from a Prison Service Case Tracking System. Care is taken when processing these cases but the figures may be subject to inaccuracies associated with any recording system.

Dr Offord: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice how long on average a prisoner waiting to be returned to the UK under the Convention on the Transfer of Sentenced Persons has to wait to be removed from (a) the US and (b) European Union countries. [128492]

Jeremy Wright: The date on which a foreign jurisdiction notifies the National Offender Management Service (NOMS) that arrangements can be made for the collection of an individual following agreement for repatriation is not recorded on NOMS IT systems. In order to obtain the information required an examination of each of the individual case files for the 215 prisoners returned since 2007 would have to be made and a calculation made. This could be done only at disproportionate cost.

NOMS is not routinely informed of the date on which a prisoner submits an application to the relevant authorities of a foreign jurisdiction to be transferred to England and Wales, and therefore cannot undertake a calculation on the length of time an application takes from submission through to conclusion.

The transfer of prisoners from other countries to Scotland and Northern Ireland is a devolved matter and is the responsibility of the relevant Minister.

Prisons: Finance

Sadiq Khan: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice how much funding each prison will receive in the current financial year; and what funding is budgeted for 2013-14. [128231]

Jeremy Wright: The latest resource budget allocations for each public sector and private prison for the financial year 2012-13 is given in the following tables.

Public sector prison budgets 2012-13

Establishment name	£ million
Askham Grange	3.234
Aylesbury	11.814
Bedford	10.757
Belmarsh	38.251
Blantyre House	2.850
Blundeston	11.632
Brinsford	14.382
Bristol	13.788
Brixton	18.042
Buckley Hall	9.036
Bullingdon	19.708
Bullwood Hall	6.124
Bure	11.812
Canterbury	7.082
Cardiff	15.907
Channings Wood	14.307
Chelmsford	16.327
Coldingley	13.126
Cookham Wood	9.476
Dartmoor	14.964
Deerbolt	13.196
Dorchester	6.785
Downview	9.454
Drake Hall	7.314
Durham	19.049
East Sutton Park	2.591
Eastwood Park	10.027
Erlestoke and Shepton Mallet	15.699
Everthorpe	12.503
Exeter	11.678
Featherstone	13.377
Feltham	31.411
Ford	8.057
Foston Hall	8.079
Frankland	37.343
Full Sutton	27.810
Garth	18.189
Gartree	15.229
Glen Parva	17.536
Gloucester	8.089
Grendon	9.325
Guys Marsh	10.852
Haverigg	12.939
Hewell	23.320
Highdown	22.001
Highpoint	23.949
Hindley	18.044
HMP Kennet	9.671
Hollesley Bay	6.947
Holloway	16.805
Holme House	22.038
Hull	20.235
Huntercombe	10.287
Isis	15.906
Isle of Wight	34.644
Kingston	5.494
Kirkham	10.393
Kirkclevington Grange	5.301
Lancaster Farms	12.540
Leeds	22.351
Leicester	8.805
Lewes	13.900
Leyhill	9.356

Public sector prison budgets 2012-13

Establishment name	£ million
Lincoln	14.117
Lindholme	10.988
Littlehey	21.190
Liverpool	23.517
Long Lartin	28.024
Low Newton	10.585
Maidstone	10.555
Manchester	34.736
Moorland	31.077
Mount (The)	15.295
New Hall	14.381
North Sea Camp	6.194
Northallerton	6.054
Northumberland	29.539
Norwich	15.399
Nottingham	21.642
Onley	14.525
Pentonville	26.737
Portland	13.105
Preston	17.388
Ranby	19.423
Reading	8.036
Risley	18.610
Rochester	15.784
Send	8.162
Sheppey Clustered Services	48.605
Shrewsbury	7.941
Springhill	4.855
Stafford	13.608
Stocken	16.249
Stoke Heath	15.634
Styal	13.235
Sudbury	7.829
Swansea	9.352
Swinfen Hall	13.692
Thorn Cross	7.535
Usk	7.657
Verne (The)	10.783
Wakefield	27.322
Wandsworth	30.146
Warren Hill	10.033
Wayland	16.265
Wealstun	17.829
Wellingborough	9.474
Werrington	7.736
Wetherby	16.704
Whatton	16.110
Whitmoor	29.133
Winchester	13.076
Woodhill	30.771
Wormwood Scrubs	25.620
Wymott	21.372

Public sector prison budgets 2012-13

Establishment name	£ million
Total	1,784.765

Notes:

- All figures in £ million and subject to rounding.
- Figures are the current (as at October 2012) resource budget allocations for 2012-13 for public sector prisons. These are the local establishment budgets and do not include expenditure/income managed centrally at regional or national level.
- Budget figures may be subject to change during the year to reflect operational business decisions.
- Data for Elmley, Standford Hill and Swaleside prisons included under Isle of Sheppey Cluster.
- Data for Blakenhurst and Hewell Grange prisons included under Hewell Cluster.
- Data for Albany, Camp Hill and Parkhurst prisons included under Isle of Wight Cluster.
- Edmunds Hill prison is clustered with Highpoint prison.
- Castington prison is clustered with Acklington prison, and known as Northumberland.
- Dover, Haslar and Morton Hall not included as they are immigration removal centres.
- Figures are not directly comparable as a number of factors can cause differences between prison budgets such as size and security category, mix of prisoners (including gender and age), and internal regime and rehabilitation work provided.

Private prison budgets 2012-13

Establishment name	£ million
Altcourse	47.842
Ashfield	28.057
Bronzeville	29.269
Doncaster	19.115
Dovegate	40.340
Forest Bank	36.832
G4S Birmingham	30.372
Lowdham Grange	28.279
Oakwood	18.674
Parc	60.666
Peterborough	34.079
Rye Hill	19.739
Thameside	28.140
Wolds	8.890
Total	430.295

Notes:

- Figures subject to rounding.
- Figures are the current resource budget allocations for 2012-13 for private prisons.
- Budget figures may be subject to change during the year to reflect operational business decisions.
- Ashfield and Parc figures include funds provided by the Youth Justice Board in respect of sentenced under-18 offenders.
- Figures for contracted prisons are not directly comparable with public sector prisons because of differences in scope, type of prisoner and financing method.

The Department has not set prison budgets for 2013-14. Budgets will be set as part of the Department's regular annual budget allocation process. Allocations will be made on the basis of need and according to departmental priorities.

Prisons: Procurement

Sadiq Khan: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice how many full time equivalent staff of his Department are involved in the prison marketisation process. [128548]

Jeremy Wright: There are 15 staff in the dedicated programme team and a further 2.5 staff in the Procurement Group. These numbers will be supplemented as necessary by staff from other areas as the programme progresses through the remaining negotiations and then into contract mobilisation.

Sadiq Khan: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice (1) when officials in his Department sought approval from Ministers in his Department for the outcome of the recent marketisation of prisons process; [129056]

(2) when Ministers in his Department approved the outcome of the recent marketisation of prisons process. [129057]

Jeremy Wright: Officials provided advice to Ministers once the evaluation of the competition to manage the prisons had been completed. Once Ministers had considered this advice, the Secretary of State for Justice then made an announcement at the earliest opportunity.

Sadiq Khan: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice what plans he has for further market testing of prisons up to 2015. [129058]

Jeremy Wright: As the Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice, my right hon. Friend the Member for Epsom and Ewell (Chris Grayling), set out in his written ministerial statement to the House on 8 November 2012, *Official Report*, column 44WS, we will apply to all public sector prisons a new benchmark for running prisons to maximise savings over the next two spending review periods. This involves retaining core custodial functions within the public sector, but delivering them at lower cost while providing ancillary and “through the gate” resettlement services through market competition. We have not ruled out further individual prison by prison competitions but if the public sector rises to the challenge to deliver the improvements and savings required from the new public sector benchmark we do not anticipate a need to launch further market tests for individual prisons in this Parliament.

Richard III

Jonathan Ashworth: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice pursuant to the answer to the hon. Member for Burnley Central of 25 October 2012, *Official Report*, column 997W, on Richard III, whether it is still the intention that should DNA show that the remains found in Leicester are that of Richard III, that they will be reinterred at Leicester Cathedral. [128174]

Mrs Grant: This is a matter for the university of Leicester archaeologists who were granted the licence to exhume remains which may be those of Richard III. Should the remains be found to be those of Richard III, the archaeologists' current plan is to reinter in Leicester Cathedral.

Risley Prison

Helen Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice what steps he is taking to reduce the number of illegal drugs and mobile telephones being smuggled into HM Prison Risley; and if he will make a statement. [129013]

Jeremy Wright: NOMS remains committed to tackling the supply of illegal drugs and mobile phones within prisons and deploys a comprehensive range of security measures to do so.

These measures include drug detection dogs, procedures to tackle visitors who seek to smuggle drugs and phones into prisons, and mobile phone detection technology. NOMS is also increasing the number of drug free wings in prisons, where increased security measures prevent access to drugs.

The Government has given its full support to the Prisons (Interference with Wireless Telegraphy) Bill being taken forward by Sir Paul Beresford and Lord Laming, which will create clear statutory powers for HMP Risley and other institutions to employ signal denial technology to suppress the use of mobile phones being illegally used within prisons.

HMP Risley has seen a significant decrease in the number of prisoners testing positive for drugs and the rate of positive random mandatory drug results has fallen from 11.5% in 2007-08 to 3.9% in 2011-12. Recently, the prison governor has introduced a drug recovery unit and has referred prisoners in possession of a mobile phone to the police, resulting in three recent convictions

Helen Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice how many assaults on staff have taken place at HM Prison Risley in each of the last five years. [129014]

Jeremy Wright: The number of assaults on staff at individual establishments can be found in Table 3.15 of the Safety in Custody Statistics. This can be found at:

<http://www.justice.gov.uk/statistics/prisons-and-probation/safety-in-custody>

For the last five years the number of assaults on staff at HMP Risley are shown in the following table.

<i>Assaults on staff at HMP Risley 2007 to 2011</i>	
	<i>Number of assaults on staff</i>
2007	26
2008	24
2009	9
2010	17
2011	12

Helen Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice what consideration he has given to the recent report of the Independent Monitoring Board on HM Prison Risley; and if he will make a statement. [129015]

Jeremy Wright: I will be sending a full written response to the Chair of the Independent Monitoring Board (IMB) at Risley, addressing the concerns raised in the Board's Annual Report, as soon as the issues have been fully considered. I will forward you a copy of my reply in due course.

Sentencing

Mr Slaughter: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice how many convictions for offences of (a) murder, (b) rape, (c) unlawful sexual intercourse with a minor, (d) robbery, (e) burglary, (f) arson and criminal damage, (g) section 18 offences under the Offences Against the Person Act 1861, (h) section 20 offences under the Offences Against the Person Act 1861 and (i) sexual assaults there have been in each year since 1997; what proportion of people convicted for such offences received a custodial sentence in each year since 1997; and what the average length of such sentences was in each year since 1997. [128389]

Jeremy Wright: The number of defendants found guilty and sentenced at all courts, with immediate custody rate and average custodial sentence length (months), for

selected offences, in England and Wales, from 1997 to 2011, can be viewed in the following tables.

Defendants found guilty and sentenced at all courts, with immediate custody rate and average custodial sentence length (months)¹, for selected offences, England and Wales, 1997 to 2011^{2, 3, 4, 5}

<i>Offence and outcome</i>	<i>1997</i>	<i>1998</i>	<i>1999</i>	<i>2000</i>	<i>2001</i>	<i>2002</i>	<i>2003</i>	<i>2004</i>
<i>Murder⁷</i>								
Guilty (Number)	275	256	252	261	285	324	277	361
Sentenced (Number)	275	256	252	261	285	324	277	361
Immediate custody (Number)	275	256	252	261	282	324	277	361
Custody rate (Percentage) ⁸	100	100	100	100	99	100	100	100
Average custodial sentence length (Months)	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
<i>Rape and attempted rape⁹</i>								
Guilty (Number)	615	673	652	593	567	644	670	742
Sentenced (Number)	614	673	649	591	566	644	670	742
Immediate custody (Number)	599	654	627	572	547	628	651	713
Custody rate (Percentage)	98	97	97	97	97	98	97	96
Average custodial sentence length (Months)	79.1	79.9	80.4	83.4	81.8	84.2	86.8	85.1
<i>Sexual intercourse with a minor¹⁰</i>								
Guilty (Number)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	104
Sentenced (Number)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	103
Immediate custody (Number)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	53
Custody rate (Percentage)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	51
Average custodial sentence length (Months)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	23.6
<i>Robbery¹¹</i>								
Guilty (Number)	5,589	5,542	5,626	5,891	6,822	7,711	7,303	7,481
Sentenced (Number)	5,597	5,562	5,652	5,944	6,846	7,731	7,339	7,513
Immediate custody (Number)	4,008	3,962	4,085	4,341	4,775	5,881	5,150	5,063
Custody rate (Percentage)	72	71	72	73	70	76	70	67
Average custodial sentence length (Months)	39.1	35.3	35.7	36.1	35.4	38.9	39.3	38.4
<i>Burglary¹²</i>								
Guilty (Number)	31,703	30,769	29,261	26,222	24,802	26,691	25,726	24,252
Sentenced (Number)	31,656	31,087	29,329	26,694	24,655	26,376	25,360	24,133
Immediate custody (Number)	14,338	14,547	14,345	13,677	12,476	13,350	11,820	10,814
Custody rate (Percentage)	45	47	49	51	51	51	47	45
Average custodial sentence length (Months)	15.8	15.5	15.7	15.9	16.6	17.5	17.1	17.5
<i>Arson and criminal damage¹³</i>								
Guilty (Number)	35,257	37,445	38,736	38,216	37,545	39,279	41,013	43,231
Sentenced (Number)	35,140	37,127	38,512	38,057	37,351	39,059	40,828	43,028
Immediate custody (Number)	1,699	1,805	2,008	1,979	1,987	1,954	2,006	2,157
Custody rate (Percentage)	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
Average custodial sentence length (Months)	13.4	10.7	10.2	9.9	10.2	10.6	10.5	10.4
<i>Offences Against the Person Act 1861, S18</i>								
Guilty (Number)	1,544	1,464	1,402	1,357	1,413	1,527	1,497	1,698

Defendants found guilty and sentenced at all courts, with immediate custody rate and average custodial sentence length (months)¹, for selected offences, England and Wales, 1997 to 2011^{2, 3, 4, 5}

<i>Offence and outcome</i>	<i>1997</i>	<i>1998</i>	<i>1999</i>	<i>2000</i>	<i>2001</i>	<i>2002</i>	<i>2003</i>	<i>2004</i>
Sentenced (Number)	1,550	1,471	1,409	1,361	1,418	1,525	1,496	1,697
Immediate custody (Number)	1,359	1,317	1,275	1,235	1,279	1,369	1,361	1,542
Custody rate (Percentage)	88	90	90	91	90	90	91	91
Average custodial sentence length (Months)	44.1	43.9	45.8	45	48	46.5	50.3	48.6

Offences Against the Person Act 1861, S20

Guilty (Number)	4,582	4,933	4,615	4,443	4,390	4,629	4,500	4,373
Sentenced (Number)	4,562	4,966	4,666	4,511	4,424	4,655	4,487	4,363
Immediate custody (Number)	2,208	2,467	2,298	2,346	2,411	2,427	2,253	2,296
Custody rate (Percentage)	48	50	49	52	54	52	50	53
Average custodial sentence length (Months)	15.3	15.1	15.5	15.6	16.1	17	17.7	17.7

Sexual assaults¹⁴

Guilty (Number)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	233
Sentenced (Number)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	223
Immediate custody (Number)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	79
Custody rate (Percentage)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	35
Average custodial sentence length (Months)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	30.2

<i>Offence and outcome</i>	<i>2005</i>	<i>2006</i>	<i>2007</i>	<i>2008⁶</i>	<i>2009</i>	<i>2010</i>	<i>2011</i>
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Murder⁷

Guilty (Number)	394	372	369	439	376	346	343
Sentenced (Number)	395	372	369	439	376	346	343
Immediate custody (Number)	395	372	369	439	376	346	343
Custody rate (Percentage) ⁸	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Average custodial sentence length (Months)	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

Rape and attempted rape⁹

Guilty (Number)	795	862	872	921	997	1,058	1,153
Sentenced (Number)	794	862	871	918	999	1,058	1,153
Immediate custody (Number)	746	803	821	865	941	984	1,098
Custody rate (Percentage)	94	93	94	94	94	93	95
Average custodial sentence length (Months)	81.8	81.2	85.4	90.3	95.7	97.2	102.5

Sexual intercourse with a minor¹⁰

Guilty (Number)	579	825	826	904	944	1,069	1,051
Sentenced (Number)	577	820	829	901	927	1,060	1,041
Immediate custody (Number)	304	471	449	551	540	639	597
Custody rate (Percentage)	53	57	54	61	58	60	57
Average custodial sentence length (Months)	25.4	26	27.8	28.2	30.9	31.2	32.1

Robbery¹¹

Guilty (Number)	7,083	8,105	8,829	8,475	8,645	8,499	9,265
Sentenced (Number)	7,139	8,169	8,862	8,495	8,664	8,514	9,271
Immediate custody (Number)	4,407	4,802	4,772	5,095	5,155	4,946	5,561
Custody rate (Percentage)	62	59	54	60	59	58	60
Average custodial sentence length (Months)	35	32.3	31.3	32.5	33.6	34.5	35.6

Burglary¹²

Guilty (Number)	22,951	22,955	23,821	23,882	22,983	23,909	25,103
Sentenced (Number)	22,652	22,675	23,549	23,651	22,765	23,599	24,870

<i>Offence and outcome</i>	2005	2006	2007	2008 ⁶	2009	2010	2011
Immediate custody (Number)	9,550	9,229	9,237	9,960	10,028	10,447	11,986
Custody rate (Percentage)	42	41	39	42	44	44	48
Average custodial sentence length (Months)	17.4	17.1	16.7	17.4	18.4	18.7	18.8
<i>Arson and criminal damage¹³</i>							
Guilty (Number)	42,813	42,890	44,620	42,901	41,037	40,192	36,965
Sentenced (Number)	42,543	42,669	44,353	42,731	40,971	40,136	36,898
Immediate custody (Number)	2,229	2,407	2,440	2,410	2,351	2,437	2,497
Custody rate (Percentage)	5	6	6	6	6	6	7
Average custodial sentence length (Months)	9.3	7.6	7.4	7.6	8.9	8.7	9.4
<i>Offences Against the Person Act 1861, S18</i>							
Guilty (Number)	1,664	1,553	1,733	1,661	1,676	1,737	1,779
Sentenced (Number)	1,673	1,559	1,734	1,664	1,674	1,734	1,777
Immediate custody (Number)	1,516	1,445	1,548	1,548	1,553	1,604	1,652
Custody rate (Percentage)	91	93	89	93	93	93	93
Average custodial sentence length (Months)	48.6	46.5	43.7	49.4	52.1	54.2	59.8
<i>Offences Against the Person Act 1861, S20</i>							
Guilty (Number)	4,274	4,338	4,515	4,415	4,789	5,000	4,475
Sentenced (Number)	4,265	4,371	4,547	4,409	4,768	4,975	4,454
Immediate custody (Number)	2,199	2,140	2,184	2,224	2,594	2,487	2,428
Custody rate (Percentage)	52	49	48	50	54	50	55
Average custodial sentence length (Months)	18.1	18.5	18.8	18.1	18.2	18	19.4
<i>Sexual assaults¹⁴</i>							
Guilty (Number)	1,273	1,565	1,647	1,718	1,711	2,003	2,098
Sentenced (Number)	1,255	1,562	1,617	1,701	1,689	1,983	2,070
Immediate custody (Number)	546	698	699	789	732	867	897
Custody rate (Percentage)	44	45	43	46	43	44	43
Average custodial sentence length (Months)	24.7	23.3	22.7	24.4	27.8	27.5	29.1

n/a = Not applicable.

¹ Excludes life and indeterminate sentences.

² The Sexual Offences Act 2003 came into force on 1 May 2004.

³ The figures given in the table on court proceedings relate to persons for whom these offences were the principal offences for which they were dealt with. When a defendant has been found guilty of two or more offences, it is the offence for which the heaviest penalty is imposed. Where the same disposal is imposed for two or more offences, the offence selected is the offence for which the statutory maximum penalty is the most severe.

⁴ Every effort is made to ensure that the figures presented are accurate and complete. However, it is important to note that these data have been extracted from large administrative data systems generated by the courts and police forces. As a consequence, care should be taken to ensure data collection processes and their inevitable limitations are taken into account when those data are used.

⁵ The number of offenders sentenced can differ from those found guilty as it may be the case that a defendant found guilty in a particular year, and committed for sentence at the Crown court, may be sentenced in the following year.

⁶ Excludes data for Cardiff magistrates court for April, July and August 2008.

⁷ Murder has a mandatory life sentence.

⁸ The custody rate is calculated based on persons receiving a custodial sentence as a proportion of all persons sentenced at all courts in a given year for selected offences.

⁹ Offences under Sexual Offences Act 2003, s1 and s5.

¹⁰ Offences under Sexual Offences Act 2003, s8, 9, 11 and 12.

¹¹ Offences under Theft Act 1968, s8.

¹² Offences under Theft Act 1968, s9 and s10.

¹³ Offences under Criminal Damage Act 1971 s1-s3, Malicious Damage Act 1861 ss.35, 36, 47 and 48, Explosive Substances Act 1883 s2-s4, Offences against the Person Act 1861 s64 and Allotments Act 1922 s19.

¹⁴ Offences under Sexual Offences Act 2003, s2, 3, 6 and 7.

Source:

Justice Statistics Analytical Services: Ministry of Justice.

Universal Credit

benefit for which he is responsible will change under universal credit.

[128412]

Mr McCann: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice how the qualifying conditions for each passported

Damian Green: There are three distinct areas of the Ministry of Justice (MOJ) that use qualifying benefits as an administrative marker to passport claimants to MOJ services. These are:

- Legal Aid
- Fees Remissions
- Assisted Prison Visits Scheme

We are currently considering how to accommodate the introduction of universal credit in each of these areas.

Wandsworth Prison

Sadiq Khan: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice what proposed changes at HMP Wandsworth will be implemented following the 2011-12 annual report from the Chief Inspector of Prisons. [128229]

Jeremy Wright: HM chief inspector of prisons' (HMCIP) annual report for 2011-12 was published on 17 October 2012. This report referred to findings from the unannounced prison inspection of HMP Wandsworth undertaken between 28 February and 4 March 2011. The chief inspector's report of this inspection was published on 10 August 2011. The report made a number of

recommendations and the governor of Wandsworth prepared an action plan in response to each of the recommendations which was submitted to the chief inspector early this year.

Since the inspection was undertaken in early 2011, Wandsworth prison has made significant progress in implementing the chief inspector's recommendations. The management team has been strengthened and measures have been taken, for example, to improve induction and first night provision, increase access to purposeful activity and improve provision of showering facilities and access to telephones. I will write to the right hon. Member separately to provide him with a more detailed update on progress with the recommendations.

Sadiq Khan: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice what funding HMP Wandsworth received from the Government in (a) 2009-10, (b) 2010-11 and (c) 2011-12; and what the budget for 2012-13 is. [128230]

Jeremy Wright: The figures in the following table show the direct resource outturn expenditure for HMP Wandsworth for financial years 2009-10, 2010-11 and 2011-12 and the latest allocated resource budget for 2012-13.

	2009-10 ¹	2010-11 ¹	2011-12 ¹	£ million 2012-13 ²
HMP Wandsworth	36.151	32.524	34.059	30.146

¹ Outturn

² Budget

Notes:

1. Figures are subject to rounding.

2. Figure for 2012-13 is the current (October 2012) direct resource budget allocated to the prison.

3. Figures are the local direct resource outturn expenditure published with the Management Information Addendum to the NOMS Annual Accounts and resource budget allocated to the prison. This does not include expenditure / income managed centrally at regional or national level.

4. Budget figures may be subject to change during the year to reflect operational business decisions.

5. The figures are not directly comparable between years due to a number of factors, including:

i) The 2009-10 figure is restated to exclude Cost of Capital, which was included in the 2009-10 accounts but was no longer included in expenditure from 2010-11 onwards due to a change in accounting treatment.

ii) The 2009-10 figure includes expenditure on non-clinical substance misuse, but the 2010-11 figure is restated to make it more comparable with the 2011-12 figure, by excluding this expenditure, as responsibility for this transferred to the Department of Health in 2011-12.

iii) The budget for 2012-13 includes a withdrawal of funding of £2.2million due to the temporary closure of the Onslow Unit at the prison for refurbishment work.

Sadiq Khan: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice how many prisoners were in HMP Wandsworth on 1 April and 1 October in (a) 2009, (b) 2010, (c) 2011 and (d) 2012. [128343]

Jeremy Wright: Data are held centrally on the prison population on the last day of each month, so figures are not available for 1 April and 1 October of each year. Additionally, annual trends are typically compared using the 30 June figures for each year.

The following table shows figures as at 31 March and 30 September of 2010, 2011 and 2012. Due to changes in the data collection, figures for September 2009 refer to the last Friday of the month.

Population in prison on specific dates at HMP Wandsworth	
	Number of prisoners
31 March 2009	1,664
25 September 2009	1,654
31 March 2010	1,631
30 September 2010	1,625
31 March 2011	1,632
30 September 2011	1,680
31 March 2012	1,232

Population in prison on specific dates at HMP Wandsworth

	Number of prisoners
30 September 2012	1,193

Note:

Due to changes in data collection, the figures for September 2009 refer to the last Friday of the month. All other figures refer to the last day of the month.

These figures have been drawn from administrative IT systems which, as with any large scale recording system, are subject to possible errors with data entry and processing.

Work Capability Assessment

Mike Crockart: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice what the average length of time was for an appeal to be heard in respect of employment and support allowance in the latest period for which figures are available; and how many appeals were heard in that period. [128624]

Mrs Grant: Appeals against decisions made by the Department for Work and Pensions on an individual's entitlement to employment and support allowance (ESA)

are heard by the First-tier Tribunal—Social Security and Child Support (SSCS), administered by Her Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service (HMCTS).

During the period 1 April to 30 June 2012 (the latest period for which data has been published) the average time taken from receipt of an ESA appeal by the SSCS Tribunal to disposal was 19 weeks, down from 21 weeks at the end of March. Data are taken from management information and include appeals disposed of without the need for a tribunal hearing.

A total of 52,300 employment and support appeals were disposed of by the Tribunal during the same period.

HMCTS is working hard at a national level to increase the capacity of the SSCS Tribunal and reduce waiting times. It has implemented a range of measures which include recruiting more judges and medical panel members; increasing administrative resources and streamlining processes; securing additional hearing venues across the country; increasing the number of cases listed in each Tribunal session; running double shifts in its largest processing centre; running Saturday sittings in some of the busiest venues; and establishing a customer contact centre to deal with telephone inquiries.

All of this is having a positive effect. The total number of disposals has increased significantly from 279,000 in 2009-10 to 380,000 in 2010-11, and 433,600 appeals in 2011-12 and the average waiting time has fallen nationally.

Written Questions

Chris Ruane: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice (1) how many written parliamentary questions to his Department received a substantive answer (*a*) within five working days, (*b*) between six and 10 working days and (*c*) after more than 10 working days in the last 12 months for which figures are available; [127277]

(2) how many and what proportion of written parliamentary questions to his Department received holding responses in the last 12 months for which figures are available. [127278]

Jeremy Wright: From November 2011 to November 2012 the Ministry of Justice received 3,025 parliamentary questions. 2,554 were answered within five working days, 308 were answered between six and 10 days, and 163 were answered after 10 days.

Out of the total number of parliamentary questions received, 684 were named day questions. 152 of these received holding responses.

The Government has committed to providing the Procedure Committee with information relating to written parliamentary question performance on a sessional basis and will provide full information to the Committee at the end of the current Session. Statistics relating to performance for the 2010-12 parliamentary Session are available on the Parliament website as follows:

http://www.parliament.uk/documents/commons-committees/procedure/P35_Memorandum_Leader_of_the_House_Monitoring_PQs.pdf

BUSINESS, INNOVATION AND SKILLS

Agriculture: Education

Tim Farron: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills how many people have graduated from an agricultural college in the UK in each of the last 10 years. [128368]

Mr Willetts [*holding answer 13 November 2012*]: The number of qualifiers from Agricultural Higher Education Institutions by subject of study in the academic years 2002/03 to 2010/11 will be placed in the Libraries of the House. Figures on qualifiers by subject of study in 2001/02 are not available on a comparable basis with later years.

Information for the 2011/12 academic year will become available from the Higher Education Statistics Agency in January 2013.

Antidumping Duties

Joan Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills if his Department will support the introduction of anti-dumping import duties. [128156]

Michael Fallon: The UK Government examines each anti-dumping case on its merits, based on evidence presented by the Commission and representations received from interested parties, including producers, importers, retailers and consumers.

In the recent case against imports of ceramic tableware and kitchenware from China, which is of concern to the hon. Member, we considered the Commission proposal for provisional measures very carefully and took account of the views of a range of interested parties. After a full analysis, we decided to oppose the imposition of provisional measures.

We will continue to engage with all interested parties as the investigation continues over the next six months.

Employment: Rural Areas

Tim Farron: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills what assessment his Department has made of the effect on rural communities of a lack of well-paid jobs; and what steps he is taking to promote such jobs in rural areas. [128185]

Richard Benyon [*holding answer 13 November 2012*]: I have been asked to reply on behalf of the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.

DEFRA, through the Rural Statistics Digest, regularly monitors outcomes for rural areas, and earnings in rural and urban areas, both workplace and resident-based, are included.

The recently published Rural Statement sets out the Government's vision of successful rural businesses and thriving rural communities in a living, working countryside. This builds on the 2011 Rural Economy Growth Review that embedded rural interests within its overall strategy for growth. As a result, Rural Growth Network pilots have been established covering Cumbria, Swindon and Wiltshire, Durham and Northumberland, Devon and Somerset and Coventry and Warwickshire. These will

support rural businesses to reach their full potential by breaking down barriers to economic growth, such as a shortage of work premises and slow internet connectivity, with lessons disseminated to support and encourage wider rural local enterprise partnerships in growing private sector jobs.

Engineering: Young People

Peter Luff: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills what discussions he has had with the Bloodhound world land speed record team on the role of the project in encouraging young people to pursue careers in engineering; and if he will make a statement. [128147]

Mr Willetts: BIS Ministers have had ongoing discussions with representatives of the Bloodhound project over the last few years. The Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills, the right hon. Member for Twickenham (Vince Cable), visited the Bloodhound stand at the Big Bang Fair in March last year and I have met Richard Noble to discuss the project, most recently in May 2012. I am sure that this inspiring project will encourage many young people to find out more about engineering.

EU Grants and Loans

Mr Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills what steps he has taken to ensure that grants made from the Regional Development Fund support his industrial policy. [126264]

Michael Fallon [*holding answer 2 November 2012*]: Bids for Regional Growth Fund funding were assessed against the criteria's set out in Local Growth White Paper—sustainable private sector growth, rebalancing the economy, additionality, value for money and state aid compliance. These criteria do not contain sector specific weightings but they align with the principles set out in "Industrial Strategy: UK Sector Analysis" (September 2012) and in particular the section on "Barriers to growth and scope for government action".

Export Credit Guarantees

Mr Umunna: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills how much he has spent on advertising and marketing for the Export Enterprise Finance Guarantee Scheme. [124624]

Michael Fallon [*holding answer 24 October 2012*]: The Department for Business, Innovation and Skills incurred no direct expenditure in advertising the pilot Export Enterprise Finance Scheme, as this initiative was covered by the cross-government freeze on marketing. We did however work closely with the participating banks and business representative organisations to raise its awareness amongst small and medium-sized enterprises, including its promotion at a series of United Kingdom Trade & Investment hosted events across the country.

Further Education: West Midlands

Steve McCabe: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills how many further education colleges have received funding for either new buildings or refurbishments from his Department in (a) Birmingham and (b) the West Midlands in each financial year since 2008; and what funding he expects to allocate for each financial year up to 2015-16. [128201]

Matthew Hancock: The following table sets out the number of colleges in Birmingham and the West Midlands that have received capital funding for either new buildings or refurbishments from this Department since 2008.

Approval year (April to March)	Number of colleges	
	West Midlands	Birmingham and Solihull
2008-09	3	1
2009-10	2	1
2010-11	30	4
2011-12	31	5
2012-13	17	1

The further education capital budget is a national budget and is therefore not allocated at a local level.

Higher Education: Blackpool

Paul Maynard: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills how many pupils in receipt of free school meals entered higher education in Blackpool North and Cleveleys constituency in the last two years for which figures are available. [128638]

Mr Willetts: The information requested is not available by parliamentary constituency. The estimated number of pupils from Blackpool local authority with free school meals who progressed to higher education by age 19 is shown in the following table.

Estimated number of pupils from maintained schools in Blackpool local authority with free school meals at age 15, who progressed to Higher Education by age 19, UK Higher Education Institutions and English Further Education Colleges

Academic year	Former FSM pupils in HE by age 19 ¹
2008/09	45
2009/10	40

¹ Student numbers are rounded to the nearest 5.

Source:

Matched data from the DFE National Pupil Database, the HESA Student Record and the SFA ILR

Information on progression of pupils with free school meals to higher education is available from the BIS Widening Participation statistical release of August 2012.

<http://www.bis.gov.uk/analysis/statistics/higher-education/official-statistics-releases/widening-participation-in-higher-education/widening-participation-in-higher-education-2012>

Kidneys: Diseases

Andrew Stephenson: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills what research his Department is undertaking to determine the causes of polycystic kidney disease. [128155]

Mr Willetts: The Medical Research Council (MRC) is one of the main agencies through which the Government support medical and clinical research. It is an independent research funding body which receives its grant in aid from the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills.

In 2011/12, the MRC spent £4.9 million on research relating to kidney disease. The MRC are currently supporting four programmes of underpinning research which aim to improve the understanding of polycystic kidney disease, enable earlier diagnosis and more successful transplantation following kidney failure.

Current MRC-funded research relating to polycystic kidney disease includes the following programmes:

Dr D Long, University College London, The role of podocyte thymosin-beta4 in the healthy and diseased glomerulus. (£484,000 for a three-year grant);

Dr G McKay, Queen's University of Belfast, Retinal vascular calibre—a potential biomarker for early renal and retinal diseases? (£321,000 for a three-year grant);

Professor J Davies, university of Edinburgh, functional testing of kidneys tissue-engineered from renogenic stem cells. (£365,000 for a three-year grant);

Dr D Norris, MRC Mammalian Genetics Unit, Left right patterning. Further information can be found at:

<http://www.mrc.ac.uk/ResearchPortfolio/Grant/Record.htm?RecType=Unit&AgreementId=93114&CaselId=24689>

Local Enterprise Partnerships

Mr Marsden: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills pursuant to the Minister of State for Business and Enterprise's contribution of 16 October 2012 in oral evidence to the Business, Innovation and Skills Committee, Q107, how many full-time civil servants he plans will form the single contact point in Whitehall for the local enterprise partnerships; and what grade those civil servants will be. [128751]

Michael Fallon: A Senior Civil Servant at Director or Director General level is being allocated to each local enterprise partnership (LEP) as senior sponsor. These are drawn from Departments with significant local growth policy interests. Some individuals will have responsibility for more than one LEP. Acting as senior sponsor for LEPs will not be a full time responsibility. This will give LEPs a key point of contact to act as champion across Whitehall and ensure that place is factored in to policy making. The amount of time spent on the role will depend on the needs of the LEP. This will be in addition to the well established relationship management of LEPs by BIS Local and the Department for Communities and Local Government.

Manufacturing Industries: Tees Valley

Tom Blenkinsop: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills what steps UK Trade and Investment has taken to (a) promote and (b) encourage investment in manufacturing industries on Teesside. [128038]

Michael Fallon [holding answer 12 November 2012]: UK Trade and Investment (UKTI) works closely with the Tees Valley Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) to bring new investment in manufacturing by foreign direct investors to Teesside.

UKTI has a memorandum of understanding with the LEP. This enables the Tees Valley LEP to work closely with UKTI's team in London and across the globe, maximising the LEP's opportunity to attract potential investment internationally. UKTI also works with the local team to put in a bid for a project where Teesside has strong potential to win it.

In addition, to strengthen further Teesside's offer to potential investors, UKTI works with the LEP to present in a compelling way detailed information on local strengths and capabilities to attract investors to Teesside.

In 2011/12 UKTI supported 13 projects on Teesside, creating or safeguarding 2,170 jobs (although not all of these may have been in manufacturing). One such project was an investment by the Dutch firm Heerema, to engineer and fabricate large and complex structures for the offshore oil and gas sector. This investment created 290 new jobs in Hartlepool.

In addition to UKTI, the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills is helping promote manufacturing on Teesside through the support the BIS Local teams provides to the LEP to help secure economic growth. Teesside has also benefitted from the Regional Growth Fund where it has been quite successful.

Nuclear Physics

Chi Onwurah: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills what assessment he has made of the Review of UK Nuclear Physics Research published by the Institute of Physics; and what steps he is taking to increase skills in nuclear physics. [127015]

Mr Willetts [holding answer 6 November 2012]: The Government recognises the importance of science and the significant contribution it makes to the UK economy and growth, as reflected in the protection of the science budget.

The review recognises the excellence of UK nuclear physics research, which delivers a high volume of quality research.

The Science and Technology Facilities Council (STFC) will consider the conclusions in the review and the level of funding and future priority areas within nuclear physics as part of a review it is undertaking of its science programmes. The Government awaits with interest the outcome of this work.

Overseas Trade: Somalia

Andrew Rosindell: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills what the value was of UK (a) imports from and (b) exports to Somalia in each of the last five years. [128409]

Michael Fallon: The value of UK exports and imports of goods, to and from Somalia, in the last five years is given in the table. The data are sourced from Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC) Overseas Trade Statistics database and are publicly available on the UK Trade Info website:

www.uktradeinfo.com

	<i>UK imports of goods from Somalia</i>	<i>UK exports of goods to Somalia</i>	<i>£ million</i>
2011	0.01		4.41
2010	0.02		1.87
2009	0.03		1.15
2008	0.04		1.38
2007	0.18		0.87

Source:
HMRC Overseas Trade Statistics.

Pay

Mr Raab: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills how many employees of his Department are paid in excess of (a) £80,000 and (b) £100,000. [128487]

Jo Swinson: From a total of 2,580 employees, core BIS (excluding UKTI and Agencies) currently has 34 individuals who earn between £80,000 and £99,999 and 24 individuals who earn more than £100,000¹.

¹ Data is at 1 November 2012.

Regional Assistance

John Woodcock: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills on what date a Minister of his Department last met European Commission officials to discuss the 2014-2020 Regional Aid Guidelines. [128720]

Michael Fallon: The Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills, the right hon. Member for Twickenham (Vince Cable), discussed the Regional Aid Guidelines when he met with Commissioner Almunia on 14 May and will be doing so again at a meeting today.

Satellite Communications

Stephen McPartland: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills what assessment has been made of the opportunities for growth in the UK space sector arising from expenditure on the European Space Agency (ESA) ARTES satellite telecommunications development programme to be proposed at the forthcoming ESA ministerial council meeting at Caserta. [128785]

Mr Willetts: In the preparation for the ministerial meeting officials have prepared a full business plan of the opportunities that will arise from any proposed investment at the ministerial. This analysis has been shared with HM Treasury. The analysis has been comprehensive and covered science, public policy, and economic growth issues. With respect to the European Space Agency (ESA) ARTES opportunities these have focussed primarily on supporting the growth agenda. A specific example is the development of the European Next Generation telecommunications satellite Platform (NGP). This is an investment that not only supports the prime contractors but also enables early engagement and development of the full supply chain, including new opportunities for small and medium-sized enterprises wishing to enter the market. The return on this programme could be worth up to £4.25 billion to UK companies between 2018 and 2030. Another possibility is the

development of space-based economic services and applications using data from space integrated with other data sets, and investment in technologies that enable UK industry to develop innovative new products that maintain the UK's competitive industrial position.

South East

Mr Mike Hancock: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills what recent steps he has taken to increase the number of apprenticeships in the south-east. [128471]

Matthew Hancock: The National Apprenticeship Service (NAS) is working closely with local businesses, local authorities, colleges, training providers and schools arranging events and providing material to promote apprenticeships in the south-east.

In addition to these local efforts, we have introduced grants for smaller employers, boosted the efforts of the NAS to promote and market apprenticeships and are implementing the Holt review to boost demand from small and medium-sized enterprise (SME) employers.

Provisional data for the full 2011/12 academic year (August 2011 to April 2012) show that there were 65,260 apprenticeship starts in the south-east region. Provisional data should not be compared against data from earlier academic years and will change as further data returns are received from further education colleges and providers.

Final data for the 2010/11 academic year show that there were 58,340 apprenticeship starts in the south-east, up by 49.1% on 2009/10.

Mr Mike Hancock: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills what steps he is taking to promote private sector employment in the south-east. [128472]

Michael Fallon: The Plan for Growth, published alongside Budget 2011, set out the Government's plan to put the UK on a path to sustainable, long-term economic growth. We are creating the right conditions for businesses to start up, invest, grow and create jobs.

The Government has a range of policies to support growth. For example, the Regional Growth Fund supports areas currently reliant on the public sector in their transition to sustainable private sector-led growth and prosperity. 19 awards have been made to projects and programmes in the south-east since the launch of the Regional Growth Fund which will help create thousands of direct and indirect jobs.

Four areas in the south-east have been chosen as locations for an enterprise zone. These are Science Vale (Oxfordshire), Daedalus (Solent), Royal Docks (London) and Harlow/Sandwich (South East). Enterprise zones are giving a real shot in the arm to the private sector through a combination of fiscal incentives and simplified planning to generate both businesses and jobs, helping to rebalance the economy and drive local and national growth.

Mr Mike Hancock: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills what recent steps he has taken to encourage business start-ups in the South East; and if he will make a statement. [128473]

Michael Fallon: We want to make the UK the best place in the world to start and grow a business, and for the next decade to be the most entrepreneurial and dynamic in Britain's history. That is why, in January, the Prime Minister launched "Business in You", a major campaign to inspire people to realise their business ambitions and to highlight the range of support available for start-ups and growing businesses.

We have introduced a range of measures that support start-ups and growing small and medium sized enterprise (SMEs) across the UK:

Ensuring SMEs can access the support and advice they need to start and grow

We have changed the way that we help people access the information, guidance and advice they need to start and grow a business. We have put in place a range of services including:

www.gov.uk

the new home for Government services and information online. www.gov.uk has been built to make it simpler and faster for people to find what they need from Government. To help those that cannot use internet services, we will continue to offer support through the Business Link helpline (on 0845 6009006).

A mentoring portal

www.mentorsme.co.uk

providing an easy route to find experienced business mentors.

A new three-year "GrowthAccelerator" programme which will provide high quality coaching support for up to 26,000 small businesses with high growth potential.

Ensuring SMEs can access the finance they need

In September, we announced a new Government-backed business bank, including new Government funding of £1 billion. It will aim to attract private sector funding so that, when fully operational, it could support up to £10 billion of new and additional business lending. More detail on the design of the bank and the types of interventions it will support will be provided later in the autumn.

In July, the Government and Bank of England launched the funding for lending scheme (FLS), which allows banks and building societies to borrow at cheaper rates from the Bank of England for periods of up to four years. The FLS creates strong incentives for banks to increase lending to UK households and businesses by lowering interest rates and increasing access to credit.

In May we launched a new £10 million start-up loan scheme aimed at 18 to 24-year-olds.

We have increased the funds available to invest through the Business Finance Partnership (BFP) to £1.2 billion. Government will allocate £100 million of the BFP to invest through non-traditional lending channels that can reach smaller businesses.

The Enterprise Finance Guarantee (EFG) scheme will continue until 2014/15, providing, subject to demand, over £2 billion of additional lending.

We have established a £50 million Business Angel Co-Investment Fund to encourage Business Angel investment.

We are increasing our commitment to our Enterprise Capital Funds programme by £200 million, providing for more than £300 million of venture capital investment to address the equity gap for early stage innovative SMEs.

Encouraging Entrepreneurship

Unemployed people who want to start a business can apply for the New Enterprise Allowance (NEA), administered by the Department for Work and Pensions, which is available to people aged 18 and over. It provides access to business mentoring and offers financial support of around £2,000. By 2013 it is hoped that the NEA will have helped up to 40,000 unemployed people start up a business.

Be the Boss is a £5 million scheme, administered by the Royal British Legion, to help ex-service personnel to set up and grow businesses by reducing the costs and barriers associated with self-employment and start-ups, including mentoring support.

The Prime Minister has appointed Lord Young of Graffham to advise on small business and enterprise issues. A key message of Lord Young's work is that this is a great time to start a business, with record numbers of people becoming their own boss, supported by a wide range of help and encouragement to entrepreneurs from all ages and backgrounds.

Mr Mike Hancock: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills what support his Department has provided to university and business research partnerships in the South East in the last 12 months. [128474]

Mr Willetts: The Department for Business, Innovation and Skills provides a range of support to encourage universities and businesses to work together. This includes funding from the Research Councils, the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) and the Technology Strategy Board.

In Budget 2012, we provided £100 million for the UK Research Partnership Investment Fund, and announced a further £200 million in October. This will secure at least £1 billion investment in research facilities and collaborations between universities, businesses and charities. 14 projects, securing £220 million from the fund, have been announced involving universities across the UK. This includes £116.6 million for six projects in London and the south-east of England:

a new collaborative international research centre to support the development of 5th generation cellular communications—more than £35 million partnership between the university of Surrey and many of the mobile communications global industry leaders;

a new centre for targeted cancer research—£138 million partnership between the university of Oxford and a consortium including Synergy Health, Cancer Research UK, Roche Diagnostics, GE Healthcare and the Oxford University Hospitals NHS Trust;

a new Centre for Children's Rare Disease Research—an £85 million partnership between University College London and the Great Ormond Street hospital;

a new National Research Centre for Structural Integrity—£60 million partnership between Brunel university, TWI and other companies;

a research and translation hub—£150 million partnership between Imperial College London and Voreda at the Imperial West Technology Campus; and

a new centre for drug target discovery and for research based on medical data sets—£32 million partnership of the university of Oxford and a consortium including UCB Pharma, Ludwig Institute for Cancer Research, Janssen Pharmaceutica NV, Boehringer Ingelheim and Takeda.

HEFCE will announce a further call for the remaining £80 million funding for new and reworked proposals shortly.

Students: Loans

Dr Huppert: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills how many graduates had their student loan debt recovered by the Student Loans Company through EU Regulation 44/2001 in 2010-11. [126504]

Mr Willetts [*holding answer 2 November 2012*]: EU students were entitled to receive tuition fee loans from 2006/07, with the first full cohort due to start repaying in April 2010. As at 30 April 2010 there were 11,000 borrowers liable to repay, of which 6,100 became liable to repay in April 2010, and 1,000 had already repaid in full. It was still therefore very early in the process for the Student Loans Company (SLC) to take court action in 2010-11.

However, during 2009, the SLC carried out a pilot litigation exercise, selecting nine borrowers to take to court. Two of those borrowers contacted the SLC before going to court, and provided the necessary details. Money was recovered from two of the remaining seven borrowers in financial year 2009-10, and from one borrower in financial year 2010-11.

Universal Credit

Andrew Rosindell: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills what steps he has taken to ensure that small and medium-sized enterprises are aware of the implications of the introduction of universal credit for the payment of staff. [127670]

Mr Hoban: I have been asked to reply on behalf of the Department for Work and Pensions.

DWP are working up a communication strategy for employers about the benefits that UC will bring to both employers and their employees. The Department has a programme of research to understand the employer perspective to inform this strategy. In addition DWP officials are in regular contact with HMRC, employers' representatives, payroll software providers and employers about the use of payroll data provided to HMRC in UC calculation and this will inform the communication with employers.

CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT**Arts**

Dan Jarvis: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Olympics, Media and Sport how much Government funding has been allocated to private art projects in each year since 1997. [122471]

Mr Vaizey: Government funding for the arts is distributed by Arts Council England (ACE). Any of the following were eligible to apply for national portfolio funding:

Limited companies registered at Companies House (including individuals trading as a limited company)

Community interest companies registered with the CIC regulator

Charities or trusts registered with the Charity Commission

Limited liability partnerships registered at Companies House

Partnerships established under a deed of partnership

Industrial and provident societies or community benefit societies subject to regulation by the FSA

Royal charter companies

Statutory bodies

The total of such funding is shown in the following table.

	<i>Funding for regularly funded organisations (RFOs)</i>	<i>Funding for national portfolio organisations (NPOs)</i>
		£
2001-02	198,180,371	—
2002-03	230,960,086	—
2003-04	255,408,987	—
2004-05	281,273,878	—
2005-06	303,105,942	—
2006-07	316,393,851	—
2007-08	327,907,446	—
2008-09	332,383,036	—
2009-10	344,773,180	—
2010-11	350,907,956	—
2011-12	324,787,163	—
2012-13	—	310,500.00

All NPOs, and previously RFOs, are funded through grant in aid. ACE also distributes national lottery funding to the arts. Lottery funding has not been included in the above figures.

ACE do not hold national figures on arts funding in an accessible format before 2001. These figures are contained in the records inherited from the regional arts boards, but which are not all formulated in the same way, or available to be amalgamated into a national figure.

Ms Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Olympics, Media and Sport what the name is of each arts and cultural organisation funded or sponsored directly by her Department; how much funding each was paid from the public purse in (a) 2009-10, (b) 2010-11 and (c) 2011-12; and how much each is expected to be paid in (i) 2012-13, (ii) 2013-14 and (iii) 2014-15. [127517]

Mr Vaizey: The name of each arts and cultural organisation sponsored by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), and the funding they have received, and are expected to receive, from DCMS, can be found in the following table.

<i>Art/cultural organisation</i>	<i>2009-10</i>	<i>2010-11</i>	<i>2011-12</i>	<i>2012-13</i>	<i>2013-14</i>	<i>2014-15</i>
Arts Council England ^{1, 2}	452,964	438,523	393,602	473,753	472,851	458,870
Museums, Libraries & Archives Council ²	4,015	15,218	12,237	6,714	—	—
Renaissance and other regional funds ²	26,180	46,336	44,267	—	—	—
English Heritage	131,072	129,854	113,653	97,970	93,670	91,584
UK Film Council ³	37,034	45,563	—	—	—	—
British Film Institute	—	—	33,589	19,152	22,689	22,756

<i>Art/cultural organisation</i>	<i>2009-10</i>	<i>2010-11</i>	<i>2011-12</i>	<i>2012-13</i>	<i>2013-14</i>	<i>2014-15</i>
British Library	109,464	105,847	105,617	110,439	109,055	109,281
Tate	55,987	54,729	45,105	34,912	25,037	33,441
Natural History Museum	51,186	48,586	46,480	45,760	45,204	45,172
British Museum	48,348	46,343	56,051	45,378	44,735	44,590
Victoria and Albert Museum	44,761	44,318	41,355	40,705	40,203	40,167
Science Museum Group ⁴	40,608	40,153	37,588	43,610	43,089	43,064
National Gallery	27,287	28,201	26,744	26,320	25,980	25,911
Imperial War Museum	24,163	23,910	21,961	21,436	21,239	21,273
National Museums Liverpool	23,463	23,712	21,875	21,561	21,323	21,327
National Heritage Memorial Fund	20,000	—	—	5,000	10,000	5,000
National Maritime Museum	19,240	19,002	17,258	16,848	16,693	16,723
Royal Household for maintenance of the occupied Royal Palaces ⁵	16,107	15,624	15,414	470	464	472
Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment ⁶	13,463	16,127	5,515	—	—	—
Royal Armouries	8,474	8,389	7,901	7,773	7,673	7,662
National Portrait Gallery	7,744	7,577	7,398	7,277	7,183	7,172
Public Lending Right	7,582	7,451	7,206	7,084	6,977	6,956
Cutty Sark Trust	—	—	5,000	—	—	—
Museum of Science and Industry, Manchester (MOSI) ⁷	4,987	4,882	3,998	—	—	—
Horniman Museum	4,566	4,518	4,385	4,199	4,139	4,127
Wallace Collection	4,301	4,212	2,983	2,946	2,918	2,922
Churches Conservation Trust	3,162	3,067	2,926	2,828	2,743	2,695
National Coal Mining Museum for England ⁴	2,805	2,794	2,707	—	—	—
Tyne and Wear Archives and Museums ¹	2,399	2,848	1,918	—	—	—
DCMS/Wolfson Museums and Galleries Improvement Fund	2,329	2,954	—	2,000	—	2,000
Geffrye Museum	1,791	1,773	1,674	1,645	1,621	1,616
Royal Naval College Greenwich	1,500	1,455	1,388	1,342	1,301	1,278
Sir John Soane's Museum	1,181	1,169	1,130	1,111	1,096	1,094
Chatham Historic Dockyard	850	291	278	268	260	256
Design Museum	425	437	828	257	202	163
People's History Museum	373	151	168	164	162	162
National Football Museum ⁷	105	105	—	—	—	—

¹ From 2012-13, Tyne & Wear Archives & Museums have been funded by Arts Council England.

² Responsibility for museums and libraries passed from the Museums, Libraries & Archives Council (MLA) on 1 October 2011. MLA is currently in voluntary liquidation.

³ The UK Film Council closed in June 2011, and remaining responsibilities transferred to BFI.

⁴ The Museum of Science & Industry in Manchester (MOSI) merged with the Science Museum Group in January 2012. From April 2012, the National Coal Mining Museum for England has received an annual grant from the Science Museum Group.

⁵ Responsibility for all bodies within the Royal Household transferred to HM Treasury in April 2012, apart from Marlborough House which remains with DCMS.

⁶ CABE closed in January 2012.

⁷ DCMS ceased providing funding for the National Football Museum from 2011-12.

Arts Council England

Ms Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Olympics, Media and Sport (1) what assessment she has made of the likely effect of the restructuring of Arts Council England announced on 30 October 2012 on the arts (a) in general and (b) in each region of England;

[127518]

(2) what assessment she has made of the likely effect of the restructuring of Arts Council England announced on 30 October 2012 on (a) dance organisations, (b) theatre organisations, (c) visual arts organisations, (d) museums, (e) libraries and archives and (f) music organisations in (i) London and (ii) each other region of England.

[127519]

Mr Vaizey [*holding answer 8 November 2012*]: Arts Council England (ACE) is an independent public body that has its own governance and management structures in place. It is for the Arts Council to ensure that delivering the reductions in administrative costs is done in a way which is not detrimental to the arts in England,

in any region. In difficult financial circumstances, reducing administrative costs means that ACE can protect frontline organisations, in all the sectors it funds, and in all regions in England. The Department is assured that ACE will maintain a functional organisation that serves the culture sector and delivers against its strategy set out in 'Achieving Great Art for Everyone'.

Gun Sports

Jim Shannon: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Olympics, Media and Sport what steps she is taking to encourage and support people presently involved and interested in being involved in shooting sports disciplines.

[128530]

Hugh Robertson: Sport England funds national governing bodies to sustain and grow participation in their sports, and provides additional support to help them achieve this. In 2009-13, Sport England invested £750,000 into shooting sports, via British Shooting, and they are currently in the process of determining investment levels for 2013-17.

Investment from British Shooting into the three main participation discipline governing bodies, has helped to develop the sport, namely:

Via the Clay Pigeon Shooting Association, a development officer has been employed who has supported the development of more local events (county leagues), as well as supporting clubs and grounds to develop.

Via the National Rifle Association, a significant number of new range officers are being trained to ensure ranges can be made available more often.

Via the National Small-Bore Rifle Association, a number of local development officers are supporting clubs in key regions, to develop and provide more opportunities.

Furthermore, British Shooting is also developing disability shooting provision and increasing the number of events and opportunities for disabled people to take part in shooting. In addition, the physical legacy from the London 2012 Olympics is currently being determined, as British Shooting is working with the Government Olympic Executive to tender for the use of the enclosures. This process is well under way.

International Broadcasting

Helen Goodman: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Olympics, Media and Sport what assessments have been conducted by Ofcom in relation to international broadcasting in the last three years. [128112]

Mr Vaizey: Ofcom conducts an annual review of the international broadcasting market. Reports covering the last three years can be found at:

<http://stakeholders.ofcom.org.uk/market-data-research/market-data/communications-market-reports/icmr09/>

http://stakeholders.ofcom.org.uk/binaries/research/cmr/753567/icmr/ICMR_2010.pdf

<http://stakeholders.ofcom.org.uk/binaries/research/cmr/cmr11/icmr/ICMR2011.pdf>

In 2012, Ofcom published the PSB annual report, providing information on the provision of international content by UK public service broadcasters. A summary of this report can be found at:

<http://stakeholders.ofcom.org.uk/binaries/broadcast/reviews-investigations/psb-review/psb2012/section-b.pdf>

Internet: Gillingham

Rehman Chishti: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Olympics, Media and Sport what estimate she has made of the number of (a) people and (b) households in Gillingham and Rainham constituency who do not have access to the internet. [128247]

Mr Vaizey: Tables 4A and 4B of the Office for National Statistics release “Internet Access Quarterly Update, 2012 Q2” included the figure that 41,000 adults (aged 16 or over) in the Medway council area had never used the internet, corresponding to 20.1% of the total. Further details are available at:

<http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/rdit2/internet-access-quarterly-update/2012-q2/index.html>

Leisure: Surveys

Sir Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Olympics, Media and Sport what the cost of the Taking Part survey was in each year since its introduction. [128287]

Hugh Robertson: The following table sets out how much the Department for Culture, Media and Sport has spent on the Taking Part survey in each completed year since its introduction. These figures are net of any recoverable VAT (and include contributions from Sport England, Arts Council England and English Heritage).

The cost of the survey has varied over different years according to the measurement needs and strategy used. Initially a larger sample was used but was reduced after the first three years. 2009-10 was an interim year with a smaller sample and shorter survey to provide headline results between the more detailed surveys of 2008-09 and 2010-11.

Survey year		Final costs (main survey, including pilots and other development work) (£)
2005-06	Y1	2,627,088
2006-07	Y2	2,572,595
2007-08	Y3	3,121,211
2008-09	Y4	1,719,650
2009-10	Y5	381,310
2010-11	Y6	1,986,536
April-June 2011	Y6 ¹	217,933
2011-12	Y7	1,046,241

¹ Y6 extension—The Year 6 extension was an interim payment to continue the survey in Year 7 (2011-12) while the new contract was being finalised for the period 2011-12 to 2014-15.

Pay

Mr Raab: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Olympics, Media and Sport how many employees of her Department are paid in excess of (a) £80,000 and (b) £100,000. [128491]

Hugh Robertson: The number of employees in the Department who are currently paid in excess of (a) £80,000 and (b) £100,00 are shown in the following table:

	Number
In excess of £80,000	7
In excess of £100,000	1

Social Networking: Advertising

Robert Halfon: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Olympics, Media and Sport what recent assessment she has made of the case for better regulations relating to the marketing of high fat, sugar or salt foods to children through social media. [127945]

Mr Vaizey: No recent assessment has been made. The rules on advertising content standards are the responsibility of the independent regulators—the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA). It is for those regulators to assess the sort of material that is appropriate for different audiences.

The ASA continues to conduct monitoring and research on a range of advertising issues as part of its responsibility for ensuring that the advertising codes continue to provide suitable consumer protection.

Robert Halfon: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Olympics, Media and Sport what recent representations she has received from parents for stronger regulations and restrictions in respect of the marketing of high fat, sugar or salt foods to children through social media. [127946]

Mr Vaizey: The Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, my right hon. Friend the Member for Basingstoke (Maria Miller), regularly receives correspondence on a range of issues relating to marketing and advertising. The Department does not record whether or not these are from parents.

The rules on advertising content standards are the responsibility of the independent regulators—the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA). It is for those regulators to assess the sort of material that is appropriate for different audiences. The ASA continues to conduct monitoring and research on a range of advertising issues as part of its responsibility for ensuring that the advertising codes continue to provide suitable consumer protection.

Sports: Public Participation

Andrew Rosindell: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Olympics, Media and Sport what steps the Government is taking to encourage young people to be involved in competitive sport. [127668]

Hugh Robertson: The School games, an Olympic and Paralympic style competition, is giving every school and child in England the opportunity to participate in competitive sport, including meaningful opportunities for disabled children. In addition, the Prime Minister announced in August that competitive sport in primary schools will be made compulsory.

As part of the wider Youth and Community Sports Strategy, which has a particular focus on increasing participation in sport among 14 to 25-year-olds, £450 million will be invested by national governing bodies of sport. Their whole sport plans are required to deliver an increase in participation as part of a new ‘payment-by-results’ process.

Also in the strategy is a new £45 million improvement fund which will be targeted at medium-sized facilities development projects (such as artificial pitches and changing rooms). This will complement the existing ‘iconic’ and ‘inspired’ funds, which, as part of the £150 million Places, People, Play legacy programme, will ensure that the development of a wide range of community facilities continues across the country, providing young people with the necessary places to take part in competitive sport.

Universal Credit

Mr McCann: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Olympics, Media and Sport how the qualifying conditions for each passported benefit for which she is responsible will change under universal credit. [128494]

Hugh Robertson: The Department for Culture, Media and Sport has not set any conditions by which people should qualify for passported benefits. However, the Department for Work and Pensions is leading in the Government’s work to ensure that universal credit is introduced in a way that works smoothly with all passported benefits, while ensuring that these benefits continue to be available to the families that need them most.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

Agriculture: Subsidies

Robert Ffello: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what progress he has made on setting up producer organisations; what assessment he has made of the adequacy of his £50 million fund for that purpose; and for what reason he decided to concentrate on producer organisations rather than co-operatives. [127944]

Mr Heath: We are moving through the clearance processes towards public consultation on the domestic implementation of the EU dairy package. We still intend to launch the consultation this year and implement as early as possible in spring 2013.

The £5 million (not £50 million) fund is not for the purpose of setting-up producer organisations, nor are co-operatives outside of its scope. This fund will be open to applications from any farmer or group(s) of farmers to develop co-operation activities where the central objective is to enable dairy farmers to explore and develop new market opportunities and improve competitiveness, and may be used to support capital infrastructure projects if applicable. DEFRA has worked with the dairy industry in developing the objectives for this fund.

Air Pollution

Mr Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs how many air quality management areas there are. [128681]

Richard Benyon: 255 local authorities have declared air quality management areas (AQMAs) across the UK. There are 600 AGMAs in total.

Animals: Exports

Huw Irranca-Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what the remit of the review on live exports is. [128293]

Mr Heath: I assume the question refers to the review, which I requested, of events on 12 September at Ramsgate. It included an examination of the following:

the Animal Health and Veterinary Laboratories Agency’s (AHVLA) handling of this incident;

the AHVLA’s procedures for managing inspections at Ramsgate port and how they should work alongside other bodies and organisations present at the port during inspection activity;

the contingency arrangements for premises and the availability of vehicles, both those required of the industry and any that the AHVLA may need as the regulator;

clearly identifying and reiterating the responsibilities of the exporter and transporter for ensuring that their own contingency plans are realistic and can be relied upon in an emergency;

the procedures for the issuing of journey logs and the measures needed to ensure that any changes to the details of the approved journey log are communicated to the AHVLA before any sailing;

the arrangements for welfare checks prior to loading; and

how the AHVLA identifies high risk operators and communicates intelligence throughout the regulatory and enforcement chain.

In addition, I asked the AHVLA to look at options for introducing a maximum period of time in which a transporter can take action to introduce his own contingency arrangements before the AHVLA introduces its own plans. The AHVLA will also produce a new regulatory statement, so that all transporters and organisations with a presence at any GB port handling live exports for slaughter, will know what to expect in the event of such emergency situations arising again in the future.

Huw Irranca-Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs how many prosecutions there have been for animal welfare exploitation within the live export trade in each of the last five years.

[128297]

Mr Heath: A company called Agneaux Bv Onderwater pleaded guilty at Folkestone magistrates court on 5 July 2010 to six offences of not clearly or visibly displaying any mark on its vehicles indicating the presence of live animals in contravention of article 6(c) of The Welfare of Animals (Transport) (England) Order 2006 and article 6.3 of Council Regulation (EC) No 1/2005. The prosecution was brought by the Trading Standards Department of Kent county council. (Fuller details can be found in *Hansard* on 1 December 2011, *Official Report*, column 73WS.)

Because it is a tightly regulated trade, there have been no other prosecutions for animal welfare offences in relation to those involved in the export trade of animals for slaughter or production since live exports commenced from Dover in late 2010. There have been criminal investigations conducted by the Trading Standards Department of Kent county council which did not result in a prosecution. Additionally, there have been a number of technical infringements of the legislation referred to above, all of which have involved transporters authorised in other member states. Under the EU legislation, DEFRA is required to notify such infringements to the relevant competent authority in the country granting the authorisation. It is the responsibility of the competent authority in that country to take proportionate enforcement action against the transporter.

Ash Dieback Disease

Grahame M. Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs with reference to the COBRA meeting of 2 November 2012 on Chalara fraxinea, what steps he is taking to limit the spread of the disease; what practical advice his Department has given to landowners; and what his policy is on the payment of compensation to growers and others affected by Chalara fraxinea.

[127716]

Mr Heath: The Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs recently introduced a ban on ash imports and movements from infected areas in response to the outcome of a rapid consultation on a pest risk assessment on this issue and the results of surveillance to date. Plant health authorities stepped up the response and re-deployed additional inspection capability with over 500 people per day carrying out a rapid survey during the first week of November to give a picture of where “Chalara” is present across GB. They are also continuing to inspect material traced forward from the infected nurseries and to monitor ash trees in the wider environment in the vicinity of infected sites.

On 7 November the Government brought together scientists, campaigners, charitable groups and woodland agencies to discuss what action should be taken to address the disease. The Secretary of State set out an immediate plan of action that was agreed on Friday 9 November at the COBR meeting. Over the coming weeks the Government will work with scientific experts and other interested groups to further develop and implement the measures in the plan, and to set a longer term approach to tackling “Chalara”.

Newly-planted diseased trees and diseased trees in nurseries will be traced and destroyed, as once young trees are infected they succumb quickly.

Mature trees will not currently be removed, as they are valuable to wildlife, take longer to die and can help us learn more about genetic strains that might be resistant to the disease. Infection does not occur directly from tree to tree.

Better understanding of the disease will be built through research and surveys, which will look not only for diseased trees but for those that show signs of genetic resistance to “Chalara”, to help identify genetic strains resistant to the disease.

The search for the disease will include trees in towns and cities as well as the countryside, building partnerships with a range of organisations beyond Government.

Foresters, land managers, environment groups and the general public will be informed about how to identify diseased trees and those likely to be resistant to the disease, and know what to do if they find a diseased tree.

Advice to landowners and anyone with ash trees is set out on the Forestry Commission website, which is regularly updated and includes a question and answer section, a symptoms video, pictorial guide and a “Chalara” helpline number and e-mail address.

With regard to compensation, at a time when our trees face increasing threat from a range of harmful diseases and when we are seeking to maintain tight controls on spending and reduce the deficit, it is our view that resources are best spent on surveillance and other preventative disease management activities to limit the potential damage from ash dieback and other diseases.

Graham Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs when his Department wrote to local authorities to warn them of ash dieback disease.

[128032]

Mr Heath [*holding answer 13 November 2012*]: A pest alert on the situation regarding ‘Chalara fraxinea’ was posted on the Forestry Commission website on 16 May. Senior officials from the Department for Communities and Local Government and the Local

Government Association have been regularly updated on progress in managing the disease and attended meetings of COBR on 2 and 9 November.

Cathy Jamieson: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs on what date his Department first notified the Scottish Government about the discovery of *Chalara fraxinea*. [128268]

Mr Heath: The devolved Administrations were informed by the Forestry Commission and the Food and Environment Research Agency about the first UK finding of *Chalara fraxinea* disease at a meeting on 22 March 2012.

Mary Creagh: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs in which locations cases of ash dieback have been discovered. [128519]

Mr Heath: The Forestry Commission website is being regularly updated with the latest information on the spread of the disease. A map (Map 2b) detailing “*Chalara fraxinea*” confirmed infection sites can be viewed at:

<http://www.forestry.gov.uk/chalara>

Beaches: Saltburn

Tom Blenkinsop: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what assessment the Environment Agency has made of the reasons why Saltburn failed to reach the mandatory minimum standard for quality of bathing water. [127990]

Richard Benyon: Saltburn has met European bathing water requirements for eight of the last 10 years. The Environment Agency has assessed that Saltburn failed to meet the requirements in 2012 due to the exceptionally wet weather, with this summer being the wettest recorded for over 100 years. The high rainfall has increased run-off from land spread with farm waste and has increased storm sewage overflows. This has raised bacteria levels in the bathing water, thus causing the failure to reach the mandatory minimum standards. The situation is not unique to Saltburn, as the exceptional weather has affected many other bathing waters around the UK this year.

Tom Blenkinsop: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what recent discussions (a) he, (b) his Ministerial colleagues, (c) his Department and (d) the Environment Agency have had with (i) Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council and (ii) Northumbrian Water on the quality of bathing water at Saltburn. [127991]

Richard Benyon: Neither the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, nor myself as the Minister responsible for this policy area, or officials at DEFRA have had any discussions recently regarding bathing water quality at Saltburn.

In 2011, the Environment Agency established a working group with Northumbrian Water Ltd and Redcar and Cleveland borough council to address bathing water quality at Saltburn. The group meets regularly to share knowledge of the catchment, so helping to identify and reduce pollution from the sewerage system, agricultural run off and other sources. Northumbrian Water Ltd is

carrying out a study into the impact of its sewerage systems, and a report is expected early in 2013 to inform any solutions required. The Environment Agency has an ongoing agricultural campaign in the catchment to promote best farming practices and to reduce pollution from agricultural run-off.

Northumbrian Water carried out major improvements to the sewerage system in the 1990s, as this was the main source of pollution at that time. The sources of the current pollution are generally smaller and often discharge intermittently which makes them difficult to trace. In normal weather conditions these sources are unlikely to cause bathing water problems. The Environment Agency believes the investigations and actions currently being undertaken will give the best possible chance of meeting bathing water directive requirements at Saltburn well into the future.

Bovine Tuberculosis

Bridget Phillipson: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what estimate he has made of the costs incurred by (a) farmers and (b) his Department in preparation for this year’s previously planned cull of badgers. [126946]

Mr Heath: A note on Bovine Tuberculosis and Badger Control, outlining, the cost to Government to date of the preparations for the two planned badger control pilots, will be deposited shortly in the Libraries of both Houses. DEFRA does not hold estimates of the costs incurred by farmers.

Huw Irranca-Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what proportion of farms in potential badger cull licence areas are inspected by Natural England to ensure that they are operating biosecurity arrangements to the level required by the licence conditions; and what level his Department considers to be adequate. [128316]

Mr Heath: Natural England has visited 10% of farms in each pilot area. The guidance to Natural England states that applicants for culling licences must meet the criterion:

Reasonable bio-security measures are being, and for the duration of any licence will continue to be, implemented by participating farmers on their land. For this purpose “reasonable measures” means measures that in the particular circumstances are practicable, proportionate and appropriate.

There are common sense, precautionary measures that can be taken to help protect herds from possible TB infection from both badgers and cattle. These include:

- keeping badgers away from stored cattle feed;
- making the farmyard less attractive to badgers;
- being aware of main badger latrines and active setts at pasture;
- keeping cattle away from neighbouring cattle herds; and
- protecting the herd.

More detailed information on bio-security advice is available on DEFRA’s website at:

<http://www.defra.gov.uk/animal-diseases/a-z/bovine-tb/animal-keepers/biosecurity/>

Catering

Ms Abbott: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs how much his Department has spent on refreshments since May 2010. [127103]

Richard Benyon: Core DEFRA spent £90,937 on refreshments in the period May 2010 to October 2012.

Cider

Mr Bradshaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (1) what discussions (a) he and (b) other Ministers in his Department have had with West Country cider makers on the potential effect of minimum alcohol pricing on their industry; [126678]

(2) what discussions (a) he and (b) other Ministers in his Department have had with West Country cider makers about the potential effect of minimum alcohol pricing on farm-gate sales of real cider; [126679]

(3) what discussions (a) he and (b) other Ministers in his Department had with cider makers about the possibility of (i) exemptions and (ii) concessions for cider makers from any minimum alcohol price regime. [126680]

Richard Benyon: Neither the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, my right hon. Friend the Member for North Shropshire (Mr Paterson), nor any other of my colleagues has held discussions on the issues you mention. The Government will be consulting shortly on its Alcohol Strategy, which encompasses minimum unit pricing. Stakeholders will then have the opportunity to express their views.

DEFRA officials are investigating what impact minimum unit pricing will have on cider producers, along with all other sectors of the alcoholic drinks industry.

Common Land

George Freeman: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs how many town and village green applications were made in the last year; what proportion were successful; what the average length of time taken was to process an application; and if he will make a statement. [128421]

Richard Benyon: DEFRA is responsible for collecting this information and does so on a biennial basis. The last survey was conducted in September 2011 so no data are held on activity between November 2011 and 2012. However the data from years 2009, 2010 and 2011 (until September) are provided in the following table. The figures are estimates based on the actual figures provided by local authorities (23% return rate), which were extrapolated.

	2009	2010	2011
Number of applications submitted	194	134	103
Number granted	25	38	27

	2009	2010	2011
Average number of months taken to process applications	9	11	16

Floods: Insurance

Harriett Baldwin: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs pursuant to his Oral Answer of 25 October 2012, *Official Report*, columns 1056-7, on flood insurance, what further progress he has made on flood insurance negotiations with the insurance industry. [128084]

Richard Benyon: As the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, my right hon. Friend the Member for North Shropshire (Mr Paterson), said in his oral answer of 25 October 2012, *Official Report*, columns 1056-7, the availability and affordability of insurance in flood risk areas is an important issue for this Government.

We remain committed to agreeing a new approach with the insurance industry and others about what will follow when the Statement of Principles agreement expires in June next year. Ministers are continuing to have constructive discussions with the Association of British Insurers as well as other interested parties. It is not the Government's practice to provide details of such meetings. Further announcements will be made in due course.

Gavin Shaker: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs how many full time equivalent officials of his Department worked on flood insurance in each year from 2007 to date. [128577]

Richard Benyon: There are currently 28 full-time equivalent officials in the Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Team in core DEFRA. The team includes policy responsibility for flood insurance as well as other issues such as oversight of the floods investment programme, emergency preparedness and response, and implementing the Flood and Water Management Act 2010.

The number of officials working on flood insurance varies over time as we continually keep staffing on policy areas under review to ensure adequate resourcing in line with ministerial priorities. We do not hold records of the number of officials working on this issue for past years.

Gangmasters Licensing Authority

Huw Irranca-Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs under what budget headings reductions on expenditure have been made by the Gangmasters Licensing Authority since 2010. [128289]

Mr Heath: The following table provides a breakdown into Admin and Programme headings:

	<i>Grant in aid (Admin)</i>	<i>Enforcement (Programme)</i>	<i>£ million Total</i>
2010-11	1.4	2.6	4.0
2011-12	1.6	2.6	4.2
2012-13	1.4	2.6	4.0
2013-14	1.4	2.6	4.0
2014-15	1.3	2.6	3.9

Himalayan Balsam

Jason McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what steps his Department is taking to combat the spread of Himalayan balsam. [128233]

Richard Benyon: Himalayan balsam is listed on schedule 9 and subject to section 14 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, which makes it an offence to plant, or cause this species to grow, in the wild.

Through water framework directive funding, the Government is assisting with the setting up of local action groups throughout England to manage Himalayan balsam and other invasive species on the ground at a local level.

We are also supporting research into finding a highly specific natural biological control agent to help control Himalayan balsam. Early findings are encouraging and, if successful, an agent would check the plant's spread and vigour, and render it easier to manage, although it would not eradicate Himalayan balsam.

Livestock: Exports

Mr Watts: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs if he will consider implementing a ban on live animal exports. [128541]

Gregg McClymont: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what steps he is taking to end the export of live animals from the UK. [128547]

Mr Heath: While the Government would prefer a trade in meat and germ plasm to a trade in live animals, it cannot ban a legal trade. This has been demonstrated in the courts (both here and in Brussels) on a number of occasions during the 1990s. A key High Court judgment was that of Lord Justice Simon Brown in the 1995 joined cases of *R v. Dover Harbour Board (ex parte Gilder)*, *R v. Associated British Ports ex parte Plymouth City Council* and the European Court of Justice case C - 1/96 *R v. MAFF ex parte CIWF*.

Gordon Birtwistle: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what measures he is considering implementing to improve the welfare standards of animals exported live from the UK. [128620]

Mr Heath: The Animal Health and Veterinary Laboratories Agency (AHVLA), which is responsible for implementation of the EU rules on the protection of animals during transport (Council Regulation (EC)

1/2005), has taken a number of recent measures, including an increase in the inspection of animals and vehicles at the point of loading.

The checks at the point of loading, undertaken by AHVLA inspectors, include consignment details, transporter/driver details, journey details and a separate checklist of 33 questions on the suitability of the vehicle and the welfare of the animals being transported. Any non-compliance is recorded and the necessary action taken by AHVLA inspectors.

Livestock: Transport

Mr Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what steps he is taking to prevent the unnecessary suffering of livestock during transport. [128959]

Mr Heath: Rules on the welfare of animals during transport are set out in EU legislation (Council Regulation (EC) 1/2005). Under this legislation no person shall transport or cause animals to be transported in a way likely to cause injury or undue suffering to them. In Great Britain, the Animal Health and Veterinary Laboratories Agency is responsible for implementing this legislation. They will refer any serious infringement of the EU legislation to the relevant local authority for investigation with a view to prosecution.

Mr Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs if he will take steps to encourage the slaughter of animals on site in order to prevent the unnecessary suffering of livestock transported live across the UK. [128982]

Mr Heath: The Government would prefer animals to be slaughtered as close as practicable to their point of production; a trade in meat and meat products is preferable to the long distance transport of animals to slaughter. Any trade in the live export of animals must meet the relevant legal requirements in terms of their welfare during transport (Council Regulation (EC) 1/2005). Any breaches of this legislation will be followed up by the Animal Health Veterinary Laboratory Agency (AHVLA). This may result in them taking their own regulatory action against the transporter or, in the case of transporters authorised in another member state, notification of the breach to the relevant competent authority for follow-up action. In serious cases, whether the transporter is authorised here or abroad, AHVLA will notify the local authority so that they can investigate the incident with a view to prosecution.

Marine Conservation Zones

Mr Tom Harris: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs whether he plans to put in place interim measures to prevent any potential damage to conservation features in the proposed marine conservation zones before those zones are designated. [127897]

Richard Benyon: The Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 sets out the provisions and responsibilities in relation to the protection of marine conservation zones (MCZs). Section 125 of the Act places a duty on public authorities to exercise their functions in a manner that

best furthers (or least hinders) the conservation objective of MCZs. Under section 132 of the Act, the Marine Management Organisation has powers to introduce interim byelaws for the purposes of protecting any feature where there are or may be reasons for the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, my right hon. Friend the Member for North Shropshire (Mr Paterson), to consider whether to designate the area as an MCZ, and there is an urgent need to protect the feature.

Joan Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what steps he is taking to ensure that the forthcoming designation of the marine conservation zone network in English waters is compliant with international requirements to deliver an ecologically coherent network. [128164]

Richard Benyon: The Government will begin a consultation on the designation of marine conservation zones (MCZs) shortly. MCZs, along with other conservation sites will contribute to the network of protected areas in the UK marine area required by the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009. In forming this network the Government and devolved Administrations are working together to ensure that the UK meets its international commitments regarding an ecologically coherent network.

Jim Shannon: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what discussions he has had with wildfowling agents on how they will continue their sporting activities in proposals for the marine conservation zones. [128507]

Richard Benyon: DEFRA will shortly be launching a three month public consultation on marine conservation zones. This will be the opportunity for the public to review, comment and feedback to Government on the proposed designation decisions before they are finalised. DEFRA officials have discussed the issues with the British Association for Shooting and Conservation and we expect to engage with key stakeholder groups, including wildfowling, during the consultation.

Nappies: Waste Disposal

Caroline Lucas: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs if he will make it his policy to include (a) measures to reduce disposable nappy waste going to landfill and (b) opportunities to reduce waste through reusable nappies in the forthcoming Waste Prevention Programme; when he plans to publish the Waste Prevention Programme; and if he will make a statement. [128480]

Richard Benyon: The Government do not take a specific policy position on nappy waste. However, landfill should be the last resort for biodegradable waste and the landfill tax remains the key driver to divert waste from landfill.

The UK also has EU landfill directive targets to meet to reduce the amount of biodegradable municipal waste that goes to landfill. We met the 2010 target and are on course to meet the 2013 one.

There are interventions under way to divert disposable nappies from landfill; for example, last year the first nappy recycling facility opened in the west midlands.

Early next year we will launch a 'Call for Evidence' to inform the Waste Prevention Programme for England and we will publish the programme by the end of that year. In developing it, we will consider which product categories and waste streams represent key areas for action for reducing waste generation.

National Wildlife Crime Unit

Mr Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what plans he has for the future of the National Wildlife Crime Unit after March 2013. [127794]

Richard Benyon: The Government take the matter of wildlife crime very seriously and very much appreciate the contribution the work of the National Wildlife Crime Unit (NWCU) has made in tackling wildlife crime. Decisions on NWCU funding beyond 2012-13 will be taken as soon as possible.

Cathy Jamieson: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what discussions he has had with the Scottish Government on the future of the National Wildlife Crime Unit after 2012, with specific reference to tackling cross-border crimes. [128266]

Richard Benyon: The Government takes the matter of wildlife crime very seriously and works closely with the Scottish Government on these matters. Both Governments appreciate the contribution made by the National Wildlife Crime Unit (NWCU) including in supporting action to tackle cross-border crimes. Decisions on the NWCU beyond March 2013 will be taken as soon as possible by all the parties concerned.

Gordon Birtwistle: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what recent discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for the Home Department regarding the future of the National Wildlife Crime Unit. [128621]

Richard Benyon: The Government take the matter of wildlife crime very seriously and appreciate the contribution made by the National Wildlife Crime Unit (NWCU) in tackling these crimes. We are working closely with the Home Office and all the parties concerned and decisions on the NWCU beyond March 2013 will be taken as soon as possible.

Nature Conservation

Michael Connarty: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs how much (a) Natural England, (b) the Marine Management Organisation and (c) the Joint Nature Conservation Committee has spent in (i) 2010-11 and (ii) 2011-12; and what each is forecast to spend in (A) 2012-13, (B) 2013-14 and (C) 2014-15. [126757]

Richard Benyon: The information requested is as follows.

Natural England

Natural England's expenditure is funded largely by GIA provided through DEFRA. In addition to expenditure spent through GIA, Natural England are the main

delivery body for the Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE). The costs associated with delivering the RDPE are included within our expenditure but the funding provided to agreement holders is accounted for by DEFRA.

The following table includes Natural England's GIA expenditure and the value of the RDPE delivered to agreement holders.

	£ million				
	Actual		Budget	Projected	
	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
Grant in aid (GIA)	204.0	194.2	172.1	162.6	153.1
Other non GIA funding	17.6	19.3	21.9	24.6	23.5
Capital funding	3.0	4.2	5.0	0	0
NE expenditure/funding	224.6	217.7	199.0	187.2	176.6
RDPE	405	415	467.7	451.9	451.9
Total expenditure/funding	629.6	632.7	666.7	639.1	628.5

Notes:

- DEFRA confirms Capital Expenditure on an annual basis and the 2013-14 and 2014-15 budgets have not yet been agreed.
- The 2010-11 and 2011-12 figures are taken from Natural England's Annual Report and Accounts.
- The 2012-13, 2013-14 and 2014-15 projections are taken from Natural England's Corporate Plan 2012-15, with the addition of Capital Expenditure for 2012-13 which is taken from current allocations. DEFRA confirms Capital Expenditure on an annual basis and the 2013-14 and 2014-15 budgets have not yet been agreed.
- RDPE figures for 2012-13 and beyond are based on current understanding of likely transitional arrangements for the ending of the programme.

Marine Management Organisation

The following table sets out Marine Management Organisation spend in 2010-11 and 2011-12 and forecast spend in 2012-13, 2013-14 and 2014-15.

	£ million				
	Actual		Budget	Projected	
	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
MMO grant in aid/net expenditure	29.1	30.7	31.1	29.7	26.5

Notes:

- The 2010-11 and 2011-12 figures are taken from the MMO's Annual Report and Accounts.
- The 2012-13 figures are taken from operational forecasts as at the end of September 2012.
- The 2013-14 and 2014-15 figures are taken from the MMO's Corporate Plan 2012-15.

JNCC

The expenditure for the Joint Nature Conservation Committee is given in the following table:

	£000				
	Actual		Budget	Projected	
	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
Grant in aid	9,455	9,349	9,739	10,466	10,092
Income from other sources	1,210	1,371	1,071	647	569
Gross Expenditure	10,665	10,720	10,810	11,113	10,661

Notes:

- Grant in aid includes funds provided by DEFRA and the devolved Administrations in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.
- Expenditure in 2010-11 and 2011-12 is taken from JNCC's annual report and accounts.
- Projected expenditure for 2012-13, 2013-14 and 2014-15 is taken from the JNCC Business Plan 2012-13 and Forward Look 2013-15
- Grant in aid figures for 2013-14 and 2014-15 include provision for funds (amounts not yet agreed) that will be provided directly to the Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science (CEFAS) by DEFRA rather than being received as grant in aid by JNCC.

Plants: Disease Control

Ian Murray: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs if he has considered introducing quarantine measures for soil samples to prevent plant pathogen diseases. [128367]

is banned under the EU Plant Health Directive (2000/29/EC), with the exception of some countries in the Mediterranean basin. Commission Directive 2008/61/EC provides the possibility for material to be imported under licence for trial or scientific purposes. The UK is working with other member states to address the risks presented by soil movements within the EU.

Richard Benyon [*holding answer 13 November 2012*]: The import of soil from most countries outside Europe

Ragwort

Jim Shannon: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what steps he is taking to eradicate ragwort. [128506]

Mr Heath: It is not the Government's policy to eradicate ragwort. Where it poses no threat to horses and other livestock, ragwort makes an important contribution to the biodiversity of the countryside, supporting many species of wildlife and providing an important habitat for a wide range of invertebrates. Notwithstanding this, where it does pose a threat we are committed to working with land owners and occupiers to ensure reasonable action is taken. When necessary we will use our statutory powers under the Weeds Act 1959. These powers allow us to serve an enforcement notice requiring action to be taken. We also have the power to arrange for the clearance of the plant and to recover the cost from the land occupier, should such action be warranted.

Sick Leave

Chris Ruane: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs pursuant to the answer of 7 November 2012, *Official Report*, columns 647-48W, on sick leave, what assessment he has made of the difference in proportion of working days lost due to ill health between officers at AA grade and SCS grade; and what assessment he has made of the use of mindfulness-based therapies in reducing the proportion of working days lost in his Department. [128172]

Richard Benyon: Absence levels in core DEFRA are kept under review by management and action taken either on a departmental basis or by individual units, where appropriate, including action to improve health and well-being.

No assessment has been made of the use of mindfulness-based therapies in reducing the proportion of working days lost in core DEFRA.

Sky Lanterns

Guto Bebb: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs pursuant to the answer of 26 October 2012, *Official Report*, column 1081W, on sky lanterns, whether he has yet determined the level of resources that will be allocated; what recent policy developments there have been on this matter; and if he will make a statement. [128179]

Mr Heath: The independent study which DEFRA is commissioning to examine the scale of the risks associated with the use of sky lanterns, and their impact on livestock, plants and the environment, is due to be completed by 31 March 2013. The project is currently going through our procurement processes, and at this stage, I am unable to confirm the exact level of resources that will be allocated to it.

The results of this study will help to determine whether any future Government action may be required.

Trees: Diseases

Grahame M. Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs which tree species are likely to be affected by *Phytophthora* pathogens; and what steps he is taking to prevent further epidemics affecting trees. [127714]

Mr Heath: *Phytophthora* species are a large group of pathogens that cause diseases in a wide range of plants, including many species of tree. While over 100 species have been described, some of these are damaging to plants rather than always fatal. There are likely to be many more and many species are present in the UK.

There are a number of long-established *Phytophthora* root diseases that commonly affect many broadleaves and certain conifers like yew and cypresses. Other newly established *Phytophthora* diseases are more specific to certain species like alder, Lawson cypress and native juniper. "*Phytophthora kernoviae*" has been found to cause damage to some tree species, including beech and pedunculate or 'English' oak. "*Phytophthora ramorum*" has caused major damage to larch trees and given favourable circumstances can affect a range of tree species, including oak, beech, sweet chestnut and Douglas fir.

The five-year, DEFRA-funded, *Phytophthora* Management Programme implemented by the Food and Environment Research Agency and the Forestry Commission was launched in April 2009 and addresses the risks from "*Phytophthora ramorum*" and "*Phytophthora kernoviae*".

The Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs recently announced the establishment of an expert taskforce to review our strategic approach to plant health and to prevent pests and diseases from entering the country. We are also urgently bringing forward those actions in the Tree Health and Plant Biosecurity Action Plan particularly aimed at keeping out serious pests and pathogens not currently present in the UK.

Water

Gavin Shuker: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (1) what projections his Department has made of the demand for water in each water company area in each year from 2012 to 2020; [127482]

(2) what the demand for water was in each water company area in each year from 2008 to 2012. [127483]

Richard Benyon: The total consumption for water in 2008 to 2012 has been broken down for each water company in the following table (table 1). The data have been taken from individual water companies' Water Resources Management Plan Annual Review.

The projected consumption figures for 2012 to 2020 have been taken from individual water companies' final Water Resources Management Plan. The trend in the total consumption figures does not appear to show much variation and even though per capita consumption is decreasing, population continues to increase. The consumption figure is the sum of household and non-household consumption.

Table 1

<i>Data type and units:</i>		<i>Actual data (MI/d)</i>				
<i>Water company</i>	<i>2007-08</i>	<i>2008-09</i>	<i>2009-10</i>	<i>2010-11</i>	<i>2011-12</i>	
Anglian Water	925	918	904	923	921	
Sembcorp Bournemouth Water	83	84	83	86	83	
Bristol Water	227	225	222	224	219	
Cambridge Water	59	60	61	62	62	
Cholderton Water	0	0	0	0	0	
Dee Valley Water	55	54	55	56	54	
Dwr Cymru Welsh Water	617	615	604	610	620	
Essex and Suffolk Water	382	375	375	379	372	
Veolia Water South East	36	36	34	33	33	
Northumbrian Water	540	517	522	531	527	
Portsmouth Water	145	144	148	147	143	
Severn Trent Water	1,370	1,332	1,303	1,326	1,324	
South East Water	430	443	449	456	443	
South Staffs Water	243	231	232	227	224	
South West Water	328	316	316	321	311	
Southern Water	468	458	453	473	455	
Sutton and East Surrey Water	127	128	133	137	134	
Veolia Water East	24	25	25	24	24	
Thames Water	1,816	1,834	1,867	1,876	1,872	
Veolia Water Three Valleys	685	676	673	673	662	
United Utilities	1,353	1,323	1,300	1,293	1,262	
Wessex Water	273	267	264	262	259	
Yorkshire Water	948	934	953	951	928	
Total consumption in MI/d for England and Wales	11,561	11,436	10,973	11,070	10,931	

<i>Data type and units:</i>		<i>Forecast data (MI/d)</i>							
<i>Water company</i>	<i>2012-13</i>	<i>2013-14</i>	<i>2014-15</i>	<i>2015-16</i>	<i>2016-17</i>	<i>2017-18</i>	<i>2018-19</i>	<i>2019-20</i>	<i>2020-21</i>
Anglian Water	933	937	958	964	969	995	997	1003	1006
Sembcorp Bournemouth Water	95	95	95	94	94	94	93	93	93
Bristol Water	235	234	235	235	236	237	238	239	240
Cambridge Water	66	66	67	67	68	68	69	70	70
Cholderton Water	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Dee Valley Water	56	56	56	56	57	57	57	57	57
Dwr Cymru Welsh Water	630	626	622	618	615	613	612	610	609
Essex and Suffolk Water	382	381	380	379	378	378	377	377	376
Veolia Water South East	35	34	34	33	33	33	32	32	31
Northumbrian Water	541	541	540	540	540	541	541	541	543
Portsmouth Water	151	152	151	152	152	153	153	153	153
Severn Trent Water	1,368	1,363	1,358	1,354	1,350	1,349	1,348	1,348	1,348
South East Water	460	462	464	467	469	472	474	476	480
South Staffs Water	243	242	241	242	243	244	245	246	247
South West Water	330	328	327	320	319	319	319	320	321
Southern Water	490	483	479	478	479	480	481	483	485
Sutton and East Surrey Water	147	148	148	148	148	148	148	148	148
Veolia Water East	25	25	24	24	24	24	24	25	25
Thames Water	1,828	1,828	1,830	1,833	1,840	1,817	1,824	1,831	1,837
Veolia Water Three Valleys	691	690	689	687	685	683	682	681	680
United Utilities	1,365	1,360	1,357	1,352	1,350	1,349	1,349	1,350	1,351
Wessex Water	280	280	280	280	280	279	279	279	279
Yorkshire Water	1,002	995	989	984	979	975	972	970	969
Total consumption in MI/d for England and Wales	11,355	11,326	11,324	11,309	11,309	11,309	11,318	11,333	11,348

Water Charges

Gavin Shuker: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (1) what estimate his Department has made of the proportion of households that will spend more than (a) three per cent and (b) five per cent of their disposable income on household water bills in each year between 2012 and 2016; [127360]

(2) what proportion of households spent more than (a) three per cent and (b) five per cent of their disposable income on household water bills in each year between 2007 and 2011. [127361]

Richard Benyon: In 2010, Ofwat reported that 23% of households in England and Wales spent more than 3% of their disposable income on water and sewerage bills;

11% spent more than 5%. This was published in Ofwat's 'Affordability and Debt 2009-10—Current Evidence' report, which can be found online at:

http://www.ofwat.gov.uk/future/customers/metering/affordability/pap_tec201105affevid.pdf

For 2007-08, 22% of households were spending more than 3% of income, and 10% of households were spending more than 5%. These figures are from 'Ofwat's Analysis of Family Resource Survey, 2007-2009', and were not published.

Every five years Ofwat sets price limits for the water and sewerage companies at its price review. The most recent, in 2009, set price limits for 2010-15. The next price review will take place in 2014, and Ofwat will publish its methodology for setting price caps post-2014. All companies have a charges scheme, which must be approved by Ofwat on an annual basis. Therefore, data for future years are unavailable.

While water and sewerage services are relatively cheap and good value, costing on average £1 per day, some households struggle to pay their water bill, either because they are on a low income or because they live in an area where bills are higher than average.

The Government wants everybody to have access to an affordable water supply. We have published guidance to companies on the introduction of social tariffs, which enable water companies to offer more support to customers at risk of affordability problems. Companies will need to work closely with their customers in designing social tariffs so that they reflect local circumstances and local views. Companies will be able to introduce social tariffs from April 2013.

PRIME MINISTER

Middle East

Paul Flynn: To ask the Prime Minister with which Governments he specifically raised concerns over human rights violations in states they govern during his recent visit to the middle east; and in each case what response he received. [128531]

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Bristol East (Kerry McCarthy) on 13 November 2012, *Official Report*, column 143.

WOMEN AND EQUALITIES

Equality and Human Rights Commission

Sandra Osborne: To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities how many staff working for the Equality and Human Rights Commission are employed through off-payroll arrangements; and how many such staff were recruited in each year since 2007. [128936]

Mrs Grant: The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) is an arm's length body. The following is based on information it has provided.

(i) At 14 November 2012, the EHRC had 16 individuals employed through off-payroll arrangements. All 16 are

working either on time limited projects to support the EHRC's Change Programme, or filling business critical posts.

In line with the Government's clear aim to improve the value for taxpayers' money delivered by the EHRC, the EHRC continues to reduce its use of interim staff. This has already delivered a significant reduction year on year, which will reduce further once the current change programme is completed.

(ii) The following table provides the number of individuals recruited since 2007 and employed through off-payroll arrangements:

Financial year	Number of individuals ¹
2007-08	16
2008-09	78
2009-10	116
2010-11	17
2011-12	2
2012-13 (to 14 November 2012)	9

¹ Where an individual's contract has been renewed, that individual is included only in the period during which they first took up post.

The table above excludes support workers (for example, those providing support to a disabled staff member) where the EHRC funds less than 50% of the total cost.

COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Fire Services

Chris Williamson: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government pursuant to the oral answer of the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State of 12 November 2012, *Official Report*, column 15, on metropolitan fire services, how the figure of 0.5 per cent was calculated; and where it is published. [128667]

Brandon Lewis: Overall fire and rescue authorities have a reduction in their estimated revenue spending power of 0.5% in 2012-13. Information on the spending power calculations for 2011-12 and 2012-13, which includes data and definitions, are available on our website at:

<http://www.local.communities.gov.uk/finance/1112/grant.htm>

Affordable Housing

Andrew Rosindell: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government what assessment his Department has made of the use of sustainable materials for future affordable housing; and which such materials are under consideration for such use. [128222]

Mr Foster: The Code for Sustainable Homes is the national standard for the sustainable design and construction of new homes. Where the building of new affordable housing has been funded by the Homes and Communities Agency, these homes are required to be built to Code Level 3. The code covers the use of sustainable materials and awards points which contribute to an overall rating according to the Building Research Establishment Green Guide to Specification.

Affordable Housing: Havering

Andrew Rosindell: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government how much affordable housing has been built in Havering in each of the last five years. [128217]

Mr Prisk: Statistics on additional affordable housing provided in each local authority are published in the Department's live tables 1006, 1007 and 1008, which are available at the following link:

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/housing/housingresearch/housingstatistics/housingstatisticsby/affordablehousing/livetables/>

These figures include both newly built housing, which accounts for around 85% of additional affordable housing over the last five years, and acquisitions from the private sector.

From the 1 April 2012, the Mayor of London has had strategic oversight of housing, regeneration and economic development in London.

Bookmakers

Mr Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government what recent assessment he has made of the potential effect of the increase in the number of bookmakers on local communities. [127729]

Nick Boles: My Department has made no specific assessment of the number of betting shops by locality. Gambling policy is the responsibility of the Department for Culture, Media and Sport and the Gambling Commission.

In relation to the cumulative impact of development and the planning system, I refer the hon. Member to my answer of 29 October 2012, *Official Report*, column 47W.

Broadband

Vernon Coaker: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government what progress has been made on Nottinghamshire county council's application for a grant from his Department towards business broadband connectivity in eligible parts of the county; and if he will make a statement. [128916]

Brandon Lewis: Nottinghamshire county council submitted a European regional development fund priority axis 2 application in eligible parts of Nottinghamshire. However, the East Midlands operational programme currently does not allow broadband infrastructure investment. The DCLG East Midlands programme delivery team and East Midlands councils have been working jointly on a rationale to implement a technical change to the operational programme to allow broadband investment across all of Nottinghamshire and the East Midlands under priority axis 1. This change request will be submitted to the European Commission in November.

The programme delivery team has spoken to Nottinghamshire county council about submitting an eligible broadband outline application under priority axis 1 before the call for activity closes on 30 November 2012.

Vernon Coaker: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government what recent assessment he has made of the availability of European regional development fund funds for business broadband connectivity purposes; and if he will make a statement. [128917]

Brandon Lewis: I strongly support the use of European regional development fund for the roll-out of broadband for small and medium enterprises.

As announced in November 2011's national infrastructure plan, this Government has taken the initiative of using the current European regional development fund programme to support actively the roll-out of superfast broadband in areas which do not have wide broadband coverage. Broadband was not a priority under the last Administration.

Eight of the 10 2007-13 operational programmes in England have either already approved projects supporting broadband or are putting themselves in a position to do so. The use of the European regional development fund to support the roll-out of superfast broadband has been implemented in eight of the 10 English operational programmes. The two exceptions, London and the south-east, already have wide broadband coverage so they do not consider it a priority to use the fund for this purpose.

Vernon Coaker: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government what his policy is on the extension of eligibility for grants from his Department for the purposes of business broadband connectivity to Gedling borough council; and if he will make a statement. [128918]

Brandon Lewis: Under the last Administration, broadband investment was not considered a key priority for the European regional development programme. By contrast, as announced in November 2011's national infrastructure plan, this Government has taken the initiative of using the current programme to support actively the roll-out of superfast broadband.

The East Midlands Local Monitoring Committee has confirmed support for European regional development fund investment in local broadband infrastructure through its Operational Programme. The East Midlands Councils Programme and Delivery Team have been working jointly on a rationale to implement a technical change to the Operational Programme to allow European regional development fund broadband investment across all of Nottinghamshire and the east midlands. Gedling borough council would be eligible for support once the European Commission approves the change to the East Midlands Operational Programme.

Council Tax

Dr Thérèse Coffey: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government what assessment he has made of whether there is any reason why local authorities should not collect council tax by 12 equal payments per year rather than 10. [128189]

Brandon Lewis: In its "Technical Reforms to Council Tax—Summary of Responses Report" published on 28 May 2012, the Government confirmed that from

1 April 2013 council taxpayers will have the right to pay their bills in 12 monthly instalments. This will provide council taxpayers' with greater flexibility to manage their finances and may be particularly helpful to those on low or fixed incomes, such as pensioners.

We will be taking steps to highlight these new rights for taxpayers in due course.

Family Intervention Projects

Andrew Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government what powers of oversight and direction the Government has over the Troubled Families programmes operated by local authorities. [128011]

Brandon Lewis: In March 2012 the Government published the financial framework for the Troubled Families programme. This set out the criteria that local authorities should use in identifying families eligible for central funding, and what results they would need to achieve in order to claim the results-based payment. All top tier local authorities voluntarily signed up to the programme by June 2012.

Andrew Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government pursuant to the answer of 8 October 2012, *Official Report*, column 654W, on children: protection, by what date he expects to have developed plans to evaluate the Troubled Families programme. [128012]

Brandon Lewis: We have worked closely with local authorities and other Government Departments to develop our evaluation plans and expect to commission an external evaluation through open market competition before the end of the year.

Andrew Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government how many Troubled Families co-ordinators there are in each local authority area. [128013]

Brandon Lewis: As part of signing up to the Troubled Families programme, all top-tier authorities in England except the Isles of Scilly agreed to appoint a co-ordinator to run the programme locally. There is a named person performing this role and in contact with my Department in every local authority area. Troubled Families co-ordinators have a strategic role in local authorities to plan, develop and co-ordinate services for troubled families and lever in resources from other organisations.

Government Procurement Card

Mr Marcus Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government if he will place in the Library a copy of the Homes and Community Agency's Government Procurement Card transaction data, including value, date, merchant and merchant type for each item of expenditure incurred since the agency's inception. [118195]

Mr Prisk [*holding answer 3 September 2012*]: A breakdown of expenditure by the Homes and Communities Agency using Government Procurement Cards since its establishment in December 2008 up to September 2012

has been placed in the Library of the House. (Data covering the period between 1 December 2008 and 31 March 2010 was provided in response to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Burton (Andrew Griffiths) on 6 July 2011, *Official Report*, column 1232W.)

I note that the agency's card spending has been reducing from £2,251,595 in 2009-10 to £840,169 for the full year (2011-12). This historic spending data shows there is clear scope to save taxpayers' money by reducing wasteful spending, and it reinforces Ministers' view on the need for greater transparency and tougher checks on spending on government charge cards.

Homelessness: Plymouth

Alison Seabeck: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government if he will estimate the number of homeless young people in Plymouth in each year since 2007. [R] [129070]

Mr Prisk: The information requested is provided in the following table:

<i>Homeless young people in Plymouth</i>			
	<i>(b) Homelessness acceptances for priority need categories relating to young people</i>		
	<i>(a) Homelessness acceptances with applicant aged 16 to 24</i>	<i>(i) Applicant 16 or 17 years old</i>	<i>(ii) Applicant formerly in care and 18 to 20 years old</i>
2007	146	32	2
2008	180	48	7
2009	138	28	1
2010	118	11	2
2011	82	5	4
Q1 and Q2 2012	37	0	5
Total	701	124	21

Note:

Figures from category (a) above cannot be added to those from category (b) to give an overall total because they are the results of breaking down the same total number of homelessness acceptances in two different ways.

Source:

PIE returns from local authorities.

A robust homelessness safety net remains in place for young homeless people. Local authorities have a statutory duty to house 16 and 17-year-olds, care leavers under the age of 21, and people over 21 who are vulnerable as a result of being in care.

The Ministerial Working Group on Homelessness published their second report in August 2012, which stresses the importance of supporting vulnerable young people to make a successful transition to adulthood. It champions a model of a 'positive youth accommodation pathway' for those who cannot stay within the family network or are leaving care. The report can be obtained from the Department's website at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/making-every-contact-count-a-joint-approach-to-preventing-homelessness>

We secured an additional £70 million last year to help local agencies prevent and tackle rough sleeping and single homelessness. This is on top of the £400 million we are investing for homelessness prevention over four years (2011-12 to 2014-15) which includes £10.8 million to help single people access private rented sector accommodation.

Housing: Construction

Roberta Blackman-Woods: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government how the decision was reached that the group reviewing building standards will comprise a membership of four. [127199]

Mr Foster: I would draw a distinction between the Housing Standards Review group which will be led by my Department, and by the separate Independent Challenge Panel which will feed their comments as a 'critical friend' into the Housing Standard Review.

The Standards Review is also being assisted by a broader group of external partners, as outlined in the public terms of reference. More information is outlined in the press notice available on my Department's website:

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/news/newsroom/22249851>

The members of the Independent Challenge Panel were selected to provide a balanced range of viewpoints, and comprise an independent and experienced set of professionals to provide an external perspective, made up of an architect, a building control professional, a developer and a planner. The size of the panel allows it to work in a fast and flexible way.

Housing: Havering

Andrew Rosindell: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government how many people are waiting for housing in the London borough of Havering. [128225]

Mr Prisk: The number of households on local authority waiting lists for each local authority is published in the Department's live tables 600, which is available at the following link:

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/corporate/statistics/lahousing201011>

Through the Localism Act, we have given back to councils the freedom to manage their own waiting lists. They are now able to decide who should qualify for social housing in their area, and to develop solutions which make best use of finite social housing stock.

Leasehold Valuation Tribunal

Sir Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government when he last met people connected with improving the operation of the law relating to leaseholder disputes and access to the Leaseholder Valuation Tribunal. [128523]

Mr Prisk: Details of Ministers' meetings with external organisations can be found online at:

https://www.gov.uk/government/publications?departments%5B%5D=department-for-communities-and-local-government&publication_type=transparency-data

I look forward to meeting shortly with my hon. Friend and individuals from the sector to discuss residential leasehold.

Local Government

Jacob Rees-Mogg: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government if he will not implement the proposals in Lord Heseltine's report to allow local enterprise partnerships to become unitary authorities. [128580]

Brandon Lewis: I refer my hon. Friend to my answer of 5 November 2012, *Official Report*, column 473W.

Jacob Rees-Mogg: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government (1) if he will take steps to protect the historic and ancient county of Somerset from any encroachment by its neighbours as part of any response by his Department to Lord Heseltine's report; [128581]

(2) if he will ensure the county of Avon is not recreated in any form as part of his response to Lord Heseltine's report. [128582]

Brandon Lewis: As the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, my right hon. Friend the Member for Brentwood and Ongar (Mr Pickles), informed the House on 12 November 2012, *Official Report*, columns 7-9, we are opposed to any imposition on local authorities of costly reorganisations, nor are we in the business of imposing boundary changes, whoever might be seeking them, on the councils concerned.

England's counties continue to form an important part of our cultural and local identity in this country and people remain deeply attached to their home county. The historic English counties are one of the oldest forms of local government in western Europe, and Somerset itself dates back to both Anglo-Saxon and Norman times. This sense of pride and shared identity is one of the things that binds communities, and indeed our nation, together. Last year, my Department flew the Somerset flag alongside the Union flag to show our support for the county.

Members: Correspondence

Peter Luff: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government when he intends to reply to the letter of 30 August 2012 from Wychavon district council on the implication for local decision making of government planning policies, a copy of which was sent to him by the hon. Member for Mid Worcestershire on 2 September 2012. [128579]

Nick Boles: A reply was sent to Wychavon district council on 14 November.

The response was delayed because it raised a number of important and relatively complex issues.

Non-domestic Rates

Mr Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government when he plans to introduce regulations to give effect to the provisions of the Business Rate Supplement Act 2009 which allow for landlord contributions to business improvement districts in areas where a business rate supplement is being levied. [128252]

Brandon Lewis: Business improvement districts are an important tool for growth and this is already recognised by landlords who are voluntarily contributing to individual projects. In our response to the Portas review we committed to explore with industry experts how a formal property owner business improvement district scheme may be delivered within the provisions of the Act. Further to that work we are now aiming to issue a consultation paper on how a scheme may work early next year.

Pay

Mr Raab: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government how many employees of his Department are paid in excess of (a) £80,000 and (b) £100,000. [128490]

Brandon Lewis: As at 31 October 2012, the Department for Communities and Local Government had 28 staff being paid in excess of £80,000. Of these, 14 staff are being paid in excess of £100,000. All of the above staff are senior civil servants, the total number of staff in the Department being 1,722.

Details of senior salaries in the Department are published on the Department's website at the following address:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/senior-dclg-employee-salaries>

Planning Permission

Roberta Blackman-Woods: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government with reference to the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State's answer to Question 65 of the Communities and Local Government Select Committee's evidence session on 15 October 2012, what discussions (a) he and (b) other Ministers in his Department have had with developers that led them to conclude that developers do not apply for costs for risk of jeopardising their relationship with local authorities. [127123]

Nick Boles: Details of Ministers' meetings with external organisations can be found online at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-communities-and-local-government/series/dclg-ministerial-data>

The rationale for Clause 2 of the Growth and Infrastructure Bill can be found in the Impact Assessment to the Bill, a copy of which is in the Library of the House.

The broad policy objective is to support development by encouraging all parties in the planning process to behave reasonably; for example by refusing applications only where there are sound reasons to do so; pursuing appeals only where there are good arguments why the council's decision should be overturned; and providing adequate information and/or evidence in line with appeal deadlines.

Roberta Blackman-Woods: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government which local authority in England had the largest number of major planning applications in respect of which a decision was made after 13 weeks in the 12 months to June 2012. [127999]

Nick Boles: The authority with the highest number of major planning applications in respect of which a decision was made after 13 weeks in the 12 months to June 2012 was Cornwall, which decided 85 of its 175 major decisions in more than 13 weeks. This excludes planning performance agreements.

However, this absolute figure is a reflection of the size of the local planning authority, as Cornwall is the third largest local authority in England. What is more important is the proportion of major planning applications which are determined after longer than 13 weeks, not the absolute number.

Research

Chris Kelly: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government what external policy research his Department has commissioned in each of the last six years; which organisation was commissioned to provide each such piece of research; and what the cost of each such piece of research was. [122364]

Brandon Lewis: The information can be accurately collated only at disproportionate costs.

Notwithstanding, published research reports can be found on my Department's website:

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/corporate/researchandstatistics/research1/>

This includes a significant amount of research commissioned by the last administration that was otherwise unpublished, but which this Government have published in the interests of transparency.

Universal Credit

Mr McCann: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government how the qualifying conditions for each passported benefit for which he is responsible will change under universal credit. [128411]

Brandon Lewis: The administration of passported benefits is the responsibility of a number of Government Departments and the devolved Administrations. We are currently working across Government to ensure that we introduce universal credit in a way that works smoothly with all passported benefits while ensuring that these benefits continue to be available to the families that need them most.

We will announce our eligibility criteria in due course.

EDUCATION

Academies

Mr Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Education whether the Church of England can be a sponsor for a school transitioning to academy status. [127796]

Elizabeth Truss: Church of England dioceses are able to sponsor academies, as are other faith organisations. All potential sponsors are subject to an assessment of their capacity and capability before they are approved to sponsor an academy. The assessment includes:

The educational aims and objectives of the organisation;

Their understanding of the role of an academy sponsor as a leader, accountable for sustainable improvement;

Evidence of their capacity and capability to deliver their aims and objectives, including any previous experience of working with an underperforming school/schools

The track record of success in their sector.

Children in Care

Tim Loughton: To ask the Secretary of State for Education when he expects to publish findings and recommendations from the task and finish groups on (a) data sharing around children's residential homes and (b) out of area placements, commissioned to report at the end of September. [127592]

Mr Timpson [holding answer 8 November 2012]: The Expert Data Group has been considering how to safeguard looked after children who go missing, or are at risk of going missing, by developing improved local and national data collection arrangements, and strengthening practice among carers, children's homes, local authorities and the police. Chaired by the Department, the group includes representatives from the Association of Directors of Children's Services, police organisations, The Children's Society and Ofsted. It has met frequently since July and is in the final stages of its work.

The Out of Area Placements Task and Finish Group has been focusing on how to improve arrangements, and the quality of care and support, for looked after children placed 'out of area' by their local authorities. Chaired by the Department, the group has comprised senior expert representation from children's services, local authorities, providers, Ofsted and others. The Task and Finish Group has met frequently since July. We will consider the proposals from both groups and announce the actions we intend to take in due course.

Work is also under way to fulfil Ministers' commitment to change regulations to allow Ofsted to share information about the location of children's homes with the police and other relevant bodies in their areas. Sharing this information is key to ensuring children in care are properly protected. We intend to run a formal consultation on amended regulations later in the autumn.

Children: Custody

Tim Loughton: To ask the Secretary of State for Education when he expects to publish draft clauses relating to changes to shared parenting to be proposed in the forthcoming Children Bill. [125282]

Mr Timpson [holding answer 29 October 2012]: The Government published clauses which aim to promote shared parenting on the Department for Education

website on Monday 5 November. A copy of the clauses and explanatory notes has been placed in the House Libraries.

Children: Malnutrition

Mr Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what assessment his Department has made of the prevalence of undernourishment among children attending school; and what steps he is taking to maximise the availability of free school breakfasts to children affected by undernourishment. [128034]

Elizabeth Truss [holding answer 12 November 2012]: The Department has made no assessment of the prevalence of undernourishment among children attending school.

I understand the importance of children having a healthy breakfast, but it is for schools to decide what, if any, extended services to provide. Many schools already provide breakfast clubs, which parents and pupils can choose to use if they wish.

The requirements on the provision of free school meals only apply to food served at lunchtime. Although we have no plans to extend provision to food served outside of the school day, at breakfast clubs for example, local authorities and schools do have the freedom to provide additional free meals.

Children's Play

Mrs Hodgson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what assessment he has made of changes in the level of spending on children's play and recreation services by local authorities since May 2010. [128764]

Mr Laws: Provision of children's play and recreation services is a matter for local government. While the coalition Government recognises how important it is that children have safe, free and local places to play, we do not monitor local play provision or collect information on local levels of spending.

Class Sizes

Steve McCabe: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what the teacher-pupil ratio was in (a) England, (b) the west midlands and (c) Birmingham in each of the last five years. [127985]

Mr Laws: The following table provides the publicly funded pupil-teacher ratios in England, the west midlands region and Birmingham local authority in January 2006 to 2009 and November 2010 and 2011.

Local authority maintained¹ pupil-teacher ratios^{2, 3}, January 2006 to 2009 and November 2010 to 2011, England, west midlands region and Birmingham local authority

	PTR		
	England	West midlands	Birmingham
November 2011	17.2	16.7	16.9
November 2010	17.1	16.7	16.3
2009	16.9	16.8	16.3
2008	16.9	16.7	15.7
2007	17.1	17.0	16.3

Local authority maintained¹ pupil-teacher ratios^{2, 3}, January 2006 to 2009 and November 2010 to 2011, England, west midlands region and Birmingham local authority

	PTR		
	England	West midlands	Birmingham
2006	17.2	17.3	17.1

¹ The PTR is based on the total FTE number of pupils on roll in local authority maintained nursery, primary and secondary schools and the FTE of all teachers in these schools (including: centrally employed; occasional teachers; those on employment-based routes to QTS; others without QTS, those on paid absence and any replacements).

² For statistical purposes only, pupils who do not attend both morning and afternoon at least five days a week are regarded as part-time. Each part-time pupil is treated as 0.5 FTE.

³ November 2011 figures are calculated using the latest available figures e.g. January 2012 pupil numbers and November 2011 teacher numbers.

Sources:

School census for FTE pupils (January 2006 to 2009, 2011 and 2012), for FTE teachers school census and 618g up to and including 2009, school workforce census November 2010 and 2011.

Education: Qualifications

Andrew Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education at how many and which mainstream secondary schools 10 per cent or more pupils at the end of key stage 4 achieved (a) no GCSEs at grade A* to C, excluding equivalents and (b) no qualifications in each local authority area in the most recent year for which figures are available. [128019]

Elizabeth Truss: In 2011, there were 2,177 state-funded mainstream secondary schools with more than five pupils¹ where 10% or more of their pupils at the end of key stage 4 achieved no GCSEs² at grade A* to C (excluding equivalents). There were no state-funded mainstream secondary schools with more than five pupils where 10% or more of their pupils at the end of key stage 4 achieved no qualifications.

Lists of these schools and their local authority area have been placed in the House Libraries.

Data for 2012 are not yet available; they will be published in late January 2013.

¹ Schools with five or fewer pupils at the end of key stage 4 have been excluded from this analysis to protect individual confidentiality.

² GCSEs include short-course, full-course and double award GCSEs and accredited iGCSEs and international certificates. Pupils who have achieved at least grade C in a full-course GCSE or iGCSE, a grade CD in a double award or two grade Cs in short courses are deemed to have a GCSE at grade A*-C.

Engineering: Young People

Peter Luff: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what assessment he has made of the value of the Bloodhound world land speed recent project in encouraging schools to stimulate their pupils to consider careers in engineering; and if he will make a statement. [128146]

Elizabeth Truss: The Bloodhound SSC Programme is one of a number of enhancement and enrichment activities that schools can use to encourage more pupils to study maths and science subjects and to consider a career in engineering. It provides a unique opportunity for schools to help solve some of the design problems in building the car that I very much hope will enable the British team to beat the world land speed record.

Free School Meals

Andrew Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education at how many and which (a) primary and (b) secondary schools which fell below the Government's floor targets, fewer than (i) 15, (ii) five and (iii) one per

cent of pupils were eligible for free school meals, by local authority area, in the most recent year for which figures are available. [126283]

Elizabeth Truss: In 2011, there were 1,310 primary schools that fell below the Government's floor standard:

210 out of those 1,310 schools had fewer than 15% of pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM);

20 schools had fewer than 5% of pupils eligible for FSM;

three schools had fewer than 1% of pupils eligible for FSM.

In 2011, there were 107 secondary schools that fell below the Government's floor standard:

eight out of those 107 schools had fewer than 15% of pupils eligible for FSM;

two schools had fewer than 5% of pupils eligible for FSM;

no schools had fewer than 1% of pupils eligible for FSM.

Lists of these schools and their local authority area have been placed in the House Libraries.

Data for 2012 is not yet available; it will be published in late January 2013.

Mrs Hodgson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education when he expects to publish his Department's consultation on eligibility for free school meals under universal credit; and what the reasons are for the time taken to publish the consultation. [128783]

Mr Laws: Given the significant number and complexity of passported benefits across Government—most of which have different eligibility criteria—we are working with the Department for Work and Pensions to simplify free school meals criteria under universal credit, while ensuring that free school meals continue to be available to the families who need them most. Our discussions with the Department for Work and Pensions include discussions about the timetable for introducing new criteria. We want to allow good time to enable schools, local authorities and children's charities to comment on our proposals before we introduce new criteria.

Further Education: Free School Meals

Andrew Stephenson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) what assessment he has made of the effect on take-up of places at further education and sixth form colleges of making students at such colleges eligible for free school meals; [127719]

(2) what representations he has received on extending free school meals to further education and sixth form college students aged 16 to 18 years old; and if he will make a statement. [127721]

Mr Laws: The Secretary of State for Education, the right hon. Member for Surrey Heath (Michael Gove), has not assessed the effect on take-up of places at further education and sixth form colleges of making students eligible for free school meals, but we have received representations on their eligibility.

The then Minister for Schools, the hon. Member for Bognor Regis and Littlehampton (Mr Gibb), responded to a Westminster Hall debate on 13 June 2012, *Official Report*, column 94WH, called by the right hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside and Hillsborough (Mr Blunkett) on this issue. It was also raised during Education Questions on 18 June 2012, *Official Report*, column 595. We have received representations from the chief executive of the Association of Colleges and college principals. We have also responded to correspondence and parliamentary questions from a number of hon. Members.

As I explained in my response on 15 October 2012, *Official Report*, column 190W, to the right hon. Members

for Birkenhead (Mr Field) and Kingston upon Hull West and Hessle (Alan Johnson), the hon. Member for Bognor Regis and Littlehampton has fulfilled the commitment he made during the debate to raise the issue with his ministerial colleagues, and we are now working through the available options.

Andrew Stephenson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many further education and sixth form college students aged 16 to 18-years-old would be eligible for free school meals if they were attending a school sixth form in (a) Pendle constituency, (b) the North West and (c) nationally. [127720]

Mr Laws: It is not possible to determine whether learners in colleges would meet the current free school meals criteria. However, we can estimate how many 16 to 18-year-olds in FE colleges and sixth form colleges were eligible for free school meals (FSM) when they were in year 11 and this is shown in the following table.

16 to 18-year-olds in further education colleges and sixth form colleges in Pendle, the north west and England, 2010/11 by FSM status at age 15

	Full-time/part-time status in post-16 study	Pendle	North West	England
Eligible for FSM at 15	Full-time education	185	18,410	92,365
	Part-time education	40	2,570	13,800
	Total	230	20,980	106,165
Not eligible for FSM at 15	Full-time education	1,015	89,050	530,510
	Part-time education	185	7,580	57,990
	Total	1,200	96,630	588,500
Unknown FSM status at 15	Full-time education	90	8,470	65,720
	Part-time education	30	3,235	19,205
	Total	115	11,700	84,925
All	Full-time education	1,290	115,930	688,595
	Part-time education	255	13,385	90,995
	Total	1,545	129,315	779,590

Note:

Data are rounded to the nearest 5 students. The components of each table may not sum to the total due to independent rounding

Grammar Schools: Free School Meals

Andrew Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many and what proportion of pupils at each state grammar school were eligible for free school meals in each local authority area in the most recent year for which figures are available. [128096]

Mr Laws: The information requested is shown in the following table.

The latest information on the number of pupils known to be eligible for and claiming free school meals (including school level data) has been published as part of the "Schools, Pupils and their Characteristics, January 2012" Statistical First Release at

<http://www.education.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s001071/index.shtml>

Selective schools^{1, 2}: Number and percentage of pupils known to be eligible for and claiming free school meals. January 2012. By local authority area in England

Unique Reference Number (URN)	LA code	LA name	School number	School name	Number on roll ^{3, 4}	Number of pupils known to be eligible for and claiming free school meals ^{3, 4}	Percentage of pupils known to be eligible for and claiming free school meals
101354	302	Barnet	4752	The Henrietta Barnett School	466	12	2.6
136290	302	Barnet	5401	Queen Elizabeth's School, Barnet	893	16	1.8
101361	302	Barnet	5404	St Michael's Catholic Grammar School	476	19	4.0
136369	303	Bexley	4000	Bexley Grammar School	991	28	2.8

Selective schools^{1, 2}: Number and percentage of pupils known to be eligible for and claiming free school meals. January 2012. By local authority area in England

<i>Unique Reference Number (URN)</i>	<i>LA code</i>	<i>LA name</i>	<i>School number</i>	<i>School name</i>	<i>Number on roll^{3, 4}</i>	<i>Number of pupils known to be eligible for and claiming free school meals^{3, 4}</i>	<i>Percentage of pupils known to be eligible for and claiming free school meals</i>
137769	303	Bexley	4001	Townley Grammar School for Girls	1,032	32	3.1
137423	303	Bexley	4009	Chislehurst and Sidcup Grammar School	959	21	2.2
136334	303	Bexley	5403	Beths Grammar School	801	13	1.6
136551	305	Bromley	5405	Newstead Wood School	676	7	1.0
101676	305	Bromley	5410	St Olave's and St Saviour's Grammar School	594	3	0.5
102055	308	Enfield	5400	The Latymer School	901	38	4.2
136615	314	Kingston upon Thames	4010	The Tiffin Girls' School	601	12	2.0
136910	314	Kingston upon Thames	5400	Tiffin School	715	19	2.7
102850	317	Redbridge	4007	Ilford County High School	600	23	3.8
102852	317	Redbridge	4025	Woodford County High School	600	29	4.8
136621	319	Sutton	5400	Wilson's School	751	14	1.9
136795	319	Sutton	5401	Nonsuch High School for Girls	901	16	1.8
136787	319	Sutton	5404	Sutton Grammar School	601	10	1.7
136789	319	Sutton	5405	Wallington High School for Girls	898	23	2.6
136798	319	Sutton	5407	Wallington County Grammar School	621	11	1.8
136778	330	Birmingham	4300	Sutton Coldfield Grammar School for Girls	753	31	4.1
103535	330	Birmingham	4660	Bishop Vesey's Grammar School	618	37	6.0
103549	330	Birmingham	5402	Handsworth Grammar School	719	104	14.5
137047	330	Birmingham	5404	King Edward VI Handsworth School	641	44	6.9
137046	330	Birmingham	5405	King Edward VI Five Ways School	784	22	2.8
137044	330	Birmingham	5406	King Edward VI Camp Hill School for Girls	605	34	5.6
137045	330	Birmingham	5407	King Edward VI Camp Hill School for Boys	464	11	2.4
137043	330	Birmingham	5408	King Edward VI Aston School	522	67	12.8
136777	335	Walsall	5403	Queen Mary's High School	481	31	6.4
136773	335	Walsall	5404	Queen Mary's Grammar School	479	15	3.1
104402	336	Wolverhampton	5400	Wolverhampton Girls' High School	535	10	1.9
104704	341	Liverpool	5404	The Blue Coat School	611	33	5.4
137171	344	Wirral	4052	Wirral Grammar School for Girls	806	24	3.0
137243	344	Wirral	4056	West Kirby Grammar School	848	21	2.5
105112	344	Wirral	5400	Caldy Grange Grammar School	917	30	3.3
137476	344	Wirral	5401	Wirral Grammar School for Boys	774	33	4.3
136780	344	Wirral	5900	St Anselm's College	650	35	5.4
105115	344	Wirral	5901	Upton Hall School FCJ	722	30	4.2
106368	358	Trafford	4025	Stretford Grammar School	638	64	10.0
136498	358	Trafford	4029	Sale Grammar School	914	18	2.0
136458	358	Trafford	5404	Altrincham Grammar School for Boys	937	5	0.5
136297	358	Trafford	5405	Urmston Grammar Academy	642	17	2.6
137289	358	Trafford	5407	Altrincham Grammar School for Girls	946	19	2.0
131315	358	Trafford	5900	St Ambrose College	724	20	2.8

Selective schools^{1, 2}: Number and percentage of pupils known to be eligible for and claiming free school meals, January 2012. By local authority area in England

Unique Reference Number (URN)	LA code	LA name	School number	School name	Number on roll ^{3, 4}	Number of pupils known to be eligible for and claiming free school meals ^{3, 4}	Percentage of pupils known to be eligible for and claiming free school meals
106378	358	Trafford	5901	Loreto Grammar School	780	14	1.8
136788	381	Calderdale	5400	The North Halifax Grammar School	781	13	1.7
107575	381	Calderdale	5401	The Crossley Heath School	779	18	2.3
136283	382	Kirklees	5401	Heckmondwike Grammar School	785	28	3.6
121694	815	North Yorkshire	4215	Ripon Grammar School	598	6	1.0
136664	815	North Yorkshire	4518	Skipton Girls' High School	566	9	1.6
121716	815	North Yorkshire	4608	Ermysted's Grammar School	557	11	2.0
136771	825	Buckinghamshire	4009	John Hampden Grammar School	778	7	0.9
137564	825	Buckinghamshire	4051	Burnham Grammar School	687	25	3.6
136846	825	Buckinghamshire	4058	Aylesbury High School	891	6	0.7
137219	825	Buckinghamshire	4061	Dr Challoner's High School	753	6	0.8
136845	825	Buckinghamshire	4065	Sir Henry Floyd Grammar School	758	20	2.6
137091	825	Buckinghamshire	4079	Chesham Grammar School	847	7	0.8
136884	825	Buckinghamshire	4500	Aylesbury Grammar School	911	3	0.3
137344	825	Buckinghamshire	4501	Royal Latin School	877	13	1.5
136723	825	Buckinghamshire	4503	Wycombe High School	916	25	2.7
136419	825	Buckinghamshire	4504	Dr Challoner's Grammar School	905	4	0.4
136781	825	Buckinghamshire	4505	Sir William Borlase's Grammar School	656	x	x
110528	825	Buckinghamshire	5402	Beaconsfield High School	745	4	0.5
136484	825	Buckinghamshire	5404	The Royal Grammar School, High Wycombe	971	9	0.9
136368	836	Poole	5403	Parkstone Grammar School	749	20	2.7
136850	836	Poole	5409	Poole Grammar School	704	24	3.4
137452	837	Bournemouth	5400	Bournemouth School	747	23	3.1
136996	837	Bournemouth	5405	Bournemouth School for Girls	799	18	2.3
136460	861	Stoke-on-Trent	5901	St Joseph's College	660	11	1.7
136391	865	Wiltshire	5412	South Wilts Grammar School for Girls	645	8	1.2
136500	865	Wiltshire	5413	Bishop Wordsworth's Grammar School	604	3	0.5
136449	870	Reading	5401	Reading School	597	5	0.8
136448	870	Reading	5413	Kendrick School	474	7	1.5
110084	871	Slough	4700	St Bernard's Catholic Grammar School	626	5	0.8
136521	871	Slough	5405	Langley Grammar School	752	17	2.3
110103	871	Slough	5407	Herschel Grammar School	619	21	3.4
136420	871	Slough	5408	Slough Grammar School	794	36	4.5
136366	878	Devon	5400	Colyton Grammar School	599	17	2.8
136588	879	Plymouth	4152	Devonport High School for Girls	602	23	3.8
113532	879	Plymouth	4155	Plymouth High School for Girls	600	24	4.0
136496	879	Plymouth	5406	Devonport High School for Boys	863	18	2.1
136506	880	Torbay	4114	Torquay Girls Grammar School	602	18	3.0
136388	880	Torbay	4116	Churston Ferrers Grammar School Academy	651	31	4.8

Selective schools^{1, 2}: Number and percentage of pupils known to be eligible for and claiming free school meals, January 2012. By local authority area in England

<i>Unique Reference Number (URN)</i>	<i>LA code</i>	<i>LA name</i>	<i>School number</i>	<i>School name</i>	<i>Number on roll^{3, 4}</i>	<i>Number of pupils known to be eligible for and claiming free school meals^{3, 4}</i>	<i>Percentage of pupils known to be eligible for and claiming free school meals</i>
136321	880	Torbay	5401	Torquay Boys' Grammar School	774	19	2.5
136412	881	Essex	5410	Chelmsford County High School for Girls	600	5	0.8
136642	881	Essex	5411	King Edward VI Grammar School, Chelmsford	561	5	0.9
137814	881	Essex	5443	Colchester Royal Grammar School	495	8	1.6
137515	881	Essex	5454	Colchester County High School for Girls	560	6	1.1
136272	882	Southend-on-Sea	5401	Westcliff High School for Boys Academy	769	10	1.3
136490	882	Southend-on-Sea	5423	Westcliff High School for Girls	762	25	3.3
136444	882	Southend-on-Sea	5428	Southend High School for Girls	745	23	3.1
136443	882	Southend-on-Sea	5446	Southend High School for Boys	742	12	1.6
118789	886	Kent	4043	Tunbridge Wells Girls' Grammar School	723	13	1.8
118790	886	Kent	4045	Tunbridge Wells Grammar School for Boys	923	22	2.4
136455	886	Kent	4046	Weald of Kent Grammar School	797	10	1.3
136582	886	Kent	4058	Invicta Grammar School	890	30	3.4
136305	886	Kent	4080	Highsted Grammar School	649	21	3.2
136379	886	Kent	4092	Highworth Grammar School for Girls	920	25	2.7
118805	886	Kent	4101	The Harvey Grammar School	673	49	7.3
118806	886	Kent	4109	Dover Grammar School for Girls	603	28	4.6
136385	886	Kent	4118	The Chatham and Clarendon Grammar School Federation	470	23	4.9
118835	886	Kent	4522	Maidstone Grammar School	910	23	2.5
118836	886	Kent	4523	Maidstone Grammar School for Girls	900	14	1.6
137800	886	Kent	4527	Borden Grammar School	577	27	4.7
118838	886	Kent	4528	The Norton Knatchbull School	739	25	3.4
118840	886	Kent	4534	Simon Langton Girls' Grammar School	807	16	2.0
118843	886	Kent	4622	The Judd School	647	10	1.5
137250	886	Kent	5400	Wilmington Grammar School for Girls	616	14	2.3
137227	886	Kent	5403	Wilmington Grammar School for Boys	648	15	2.3
136359	886	Kent	5406	Dartford Grammar School	768	13	1.7
118883	886	Kent	5411	Dartford Grammar School for Girls	806	22	2.7
118884	886	Kent	5412	Simon Langton Grammar School for Boys	640	20	3.1
137739	886	Kent	5416	Cranbrook School	456	x	x
118890	886	Kent	5418	The Skinners' School	596	3	0.5
136727	886	Kent	5422	Oakwood Park Grammar School	741	26	3.5
136501	886	Kent	5428	Sir Roger Manwood's School	627	19	3.0
118909	886	Kent	5437	The Folkestone School for Girls	775	48	6.2
136417	886	Kent	5443	Tonbridge Grammar School	749	4	0.5

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<i>Unique Reference Number (URN)</i>	<i>LA code</i>	<i>LA name</i>	<i>School number</i>	<i>School name</i>	<i>Number on roll^{3, 4}</i>	<i>Number of pupils known to be eligible for and claiming free school meals^{3, 4}</i>	<i>Percentage of pupils known to be eligible for and claiming free school meals</i>
137474	886	Kent	5444	Barton Court Grammar School	637	25	3.9
136570	886	Kent	5449	Queen Elizabeth's Grammar School	654	16	2.4
118931	886	Kent	5459	Dover Grammar School for Boys	605	41	6.8
136585	886	Kent	5460	Dane Court Grammar School	862	52	6.0
136382	886	Kent	5462	The Chatham and Clarendon Grammar School Federation	538	27	5.0
137099	886	Kent	5465	Gravesend Grammar School	779	26	3.3
118787	886	Kent	5467	Mayfield Grammar School, Gravesend	728	29	4.0
136594	887	Medway	4068	Chatham Grammar School for Boys	595	31	5.2
136337	887	Medway	4069	Fort Pitt Grammar School	592	34	5.7
136662	887	Medway	4530	Sir Joseph Williamson's Mathematical School	868	32	3.7
136864	887	Medway	5420	Rainham Mark Grammar School	889	34	3.8
137389	887	Medway	5429	Chatham Grammar School for Girls	576	29	5.0
136313	887	Medway	5445	The Rochester Grammar School	847	30	3.5
119809	888	Lancashire	5400	Bacup and Rawtenstall Grammar School	749	15	2.0
136742	888	Lancashire	5401	Lancaster Royal Grammar School	713	15	2.1
136381	888	Lancashire	5402	Lancaster Girls' Grammar School	565	12	2.1
136390	888	Lancashire	5403	Clitheroe Royal Grammar School	597	7	1.2
136516	894	Telford and Wrekin	4364	Newport Girls' High School	280	4	1.4
137446	894	Telford and Wrekin	5400	Adams' Grammar School	531	4	0.8
136732	909	Cumbria	5401	Queen Elizabeth Grammar School	603	5	0.8
136306	916	Gloucestershire	4001	Sir Thomas Rich's School	574	7	1.2
136666	916	Gloucestershire	4002	High School for Girls	620	9	1.5
136767	916	Gloucestershire	5400	Ribston Hall High School	569	16	2.8
137123	916	Gloucestershire	5401	Marling School	618	17	2.8
136874	916	Gloucestershire	5402	Stroud High School	629	8	1.3
136353	916	Gloucestershire	5403	Pate's Grammar School	628	5	0.8
136578	916	Gloucestershire	5404	The Crypt School	583	28	4.8
120632	925	Lincolnshire	4004	Kesteven and Grantham Girls' School	870	15	1.7
137667	925	Lincolnshire	4005	Kesteven and Sleaford High School Selective Academy	626	14	2.2
120640	925	Lincolnshire	4022	Boston High School	436	7	1.6
120642	925	Lincolnshire	4027	Spalding High School	735	25	3.4
120655	925	Lincolnshire	4065	The Queen Elizabeth's High School, Gainsborough	907	30	3.3
137793	925	Lincolnshire	4501	Bourne Grammar School	754	10	1.3
120665	925	Lincolnshire	4603	Spalding Grammar School	664	17	2.6
120696	925	Lincolnshire	5400	The Skegness Grammar School	497	16	3.2
136315	925	Lincolnshire	5401	Queen Elizabeth's Grammar Alford—A Selective Academy	439	19	4.3

Selective schools^{1, 2}: Number and percentage of pupils known to be eligible for and claiming free school meals. January 2012. By local authority area in England

Unique Reference Number (URN)	LA code	LA name	School number	School name	Number on roll ^{3, 4}	Number of pupils known to be eligible for and claiming free school meals ^{3, 4}	Percentage of pupils known to be eligible for and claiming free school meals
137166	925	Lincolnshire	5402	The King's School, Grantham	738	19	2.6
137213	925	Lincolnshire	5403	Carre's Grammar School	573	18	3.1
120701	925	Lincolnshire	5405	The King Edward VI Grammar School, Louth	607	6	1.0
136350	925	Lincolnshire	5406	Caistor Grammar School	474	7	1.5
120707	925	Lincolnshire	5411	Queen Elizabeth's Grammar School, Horncastle	595	11	1.8
120720	925	Lincolnshire	5424	The Boston Grammar School	353	17	4.8
137235	937	Warwickshire	4002	Stratford-Upon-Avon Grammar School for Girls	372	5	1.3
137302	937	Warwickshire	4601	King Edward VI School	399	4	1.0
125753	937	Warwickshire	4620	Lawrence Sheriff School	579	5	0.9
136595	937	Warwickshire	5406	Rugby High School	471	10	2.1
136622	937	Warwickshire	5407	Alcester Grammar School	464	5	1.1

x = 1 or 2 pupils, or a percentage based on 1 or 2 pupils.

¹ Includes middle schools as deemed.

² Includes secondary academies.

³ Includes full time and part time pupils who are sole or dual main registrations. Includes boarders.

⁴ Pupils who have full time attendance and are aged 15 or under, or pupils who have part time attendance and are aged between 5 and 15.

Source:

School Census

Health Education: Sex

Dr Huppert: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what steps he is taking to ensure that schools provide young people with clear information regarding consent and domestic violence during the course of sex and relationships education. [127420]

Elizabeth Truss [holding answer 8 November 2012]: Sexual consent is an important issue and the Department is committed to making the cross-government Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Action Plan as powerful and effective as possible.

We encourage all schools to address the topic of sexual consent in personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education. When teaching sex education and related issues, schools must have regard to the Secretary of State's Guidance on Sex and Relationship Education.

The document makes clear that schools should ensure young people develop positive values and a moral framework that will guide their decisions, judgments and behaviour. Specifically, all young people should understand how the law applies to sexual relationships.

Home Education

Daniel Kawczynski: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what his policy is on home-schooling. [127527]

Elizabeth Truss [holding answer 8 November 2012]: The Department for Education respects the right of parents to educate their children at home. The current arrangements strike the right balance between the responsibilities of the parent and the state. We have no

plans to change that position, however, the Education Select Committee is inquiring into support for home education and we will consider the Committee's report in due course.

Daniel Kawczynski: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what recent assessment he has made of the benefits of home-schooling for children. [127528]

Elizabeth Truss [holding answer 8 November 2012]: The Secretary of State for Education, my right hon. Friend the Member for Surrey Heath (Michael Gove), has made no assessment of the benefits of home education. Parents are responsible for ensuring their child receives an education that is suitable to their age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs they may have.

Languages: GCSE

Andrew Rosindell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) what steps he is taking to encourage the study of Spanish at GCSE; [128327]

(2) how many students studied Spanish at GCSE in 2011-12. [128328]

Elizabeth Truss: We are encouraging the study of modern foreign languages, including Spanish, in a number of ways. We have made a modern or ancient language part of the English Baccalaureate. We also believe that an early start to language learning will benefit pupils' education in secondary school and have proposed that a foreign language be statutory at Key Stage 2 from 2014 as part of the new national curriculum. DFE-commissioned research published in 2009 showed that 25% of primary schools were teaching Spanish and the language continues to be very popular at this level.

While the Department cannot provide figures on those studying GCSE Spanish, the Statistical First Release “GCSE and Equivalent Results (Provisional) and National Curriculum Teacher Assessments at Key Stage 3 in England, 2011/12” provides information on the number of pupils at the end of Key Stage 4 attempting GCSEs in a range of subjects. This publication is available from the Department’s website here:

<http://www.education.gov.uk/researchandstatistics/statistics/recentreleases/a00214981/gcse-national-curriculum-teacher-assessment-ks3-england>

Table 7 shows that the number of pupils at the end of Key Stage 4 in the 2011/12 academic year who attempted GCSE Spanish was 63,400. This includes attempts by these pupils in previous academic years.

Ministerial Policy Advisers

Tim Loughton: To ask the Secretary of State for Education pursuant to the answer of 30 October 2012, *Official Report*, columns 203-4W, on Ministerial policy advisers, for what reasons he has increased the joint number of special advisers and policy advisers in his Department by 75 per cent since September 2012.

[127026]

Elizabeth Truss [*holding answer 6 November 2012*]: It was the Secretary of State for Education’s view that it was sensible to engage additional adviser support in developing and implementing the Government’s reforms.

Outdoor Education

Justin Tomlinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what steps he is taking to ensure that outstanding practice in fieldwork teaching outside the classroom is recognised and reported on in secondary school inspections.

[127575]

Mr Laws: We have specified the core areas for Ofsted to focus on when inspecting and reporting on a school’s performance. However, it is for Ofsted to decide on how to approach the inspection of those areas. HM Chief Inspector introduced a new inspection framework in September. Within the current framework inspectors can consider the impact of relevant areas of fieldwork when assessing the learning and progress of pupils as well as in looking at how well the curriculum meets the needs, aptitude and interest of pupils.

Justin Tomlinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what steps he is taking to ensure that continuing professional development available to experienced science and geography teachers in secondary schools includes training to support the teaching of high quality fieldwork.

[127576]

Elizabeth Truss: The Government recognises the positive contribution that fieldwork can make to pupils’ understanding of science and geography. However, it is for individual schools to decide to what extent they use such experiences to enhance the teaching of these subjects, and what continuing professional development resources are appropriate for their teachers.

The Department and the Wellcome Trust are jointly funding the national network of science learning centres to provide science teachers with access to high quality

professional development opportunities. These include courses on how to plan and deliver fieldwork as part of science teaching.

Justin Tomlinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what steps he is taking to ensure that all future routes for initial teacher training will deliver sufficient numbers of early-career teachers who are able to teach high quality GCSE and A level fieldwork in practical subjects such as geography and science.

[127577]

Mr Laws: The Department’s Initial Teacher Training strategy published in June 2011 provides for a number of different routes to teacher training designed to attract the highest quality of graduates to the profession.

In all of these routes, initial teacher training providers decide what trainees should be taught to enable them to achieve the teachers’ standards, ensuring trainees know and understand the relevant settings and context applicable to the subject they wish to teach. Specifically, the standards state that trainees must demonstrate they are able to plan and teach

“out-of-class activities to consolidate and extend the knowledge and understanding pupils have acquired.”

Overseas Students: Panama

Andrew Rosindell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what steps he is taking to encourage Panamanian students to study in the UK.

[128325]

Mr Willetts: I have been asked to reply on behalf of the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills.

The Government recognises the important contribution that international students make to the UK and we welcome all legitimate students to the UK to study at our world-class academic institutions. There is no cap on international students.

The Government promotes UK education through a range of channels, including the Education UK website, managed by British Council and in-country partners, through which Panamanian students can find out about education opportunities in the UK.

The Department will continue to work with partners representing the UK higher education sector to ensure that students looking to study in the UK are aware of the full range of opportunities available to them.

Andrew Rosindell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many students from Panama are studying in the UK.

[128326]

Mr Willetts: I have been asked to reply on behalf of the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills.

Information from the Higher Education Statistics Agency showed that there were around 50 Panama domiciled enrolments at UK Higher Education Institutions for the academic year 2010/11. Information on enrolments at UK Higher Education Institutions for the 2011/12 academic year will become available from the Higher Education Statistics Agency in January 2013.

Peniel Academy

Mr Watson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will place in the Library a copy of each Ofsted inspection report for the former Peniel Academy school in Brentwood since 2000. [127749]

Elizabeth Truss [*holding answer 9 November 2012*]: Peniel Academy was renamed as Trinity School in 2010, and is inspected by the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI), rather than Ofsted. The report of the most recent ISI inspection is available to view through the following link:

<http://www.isi.net/schools/7384/>

Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education

Diana Johnson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education on what date his Department's review of personal, social health and education stopped receiving submissions; and when he plans to publish the results of that review. [128378]

Elizabeth Truss [*holding answer 13 November 2012*]: The public consultation phase of the internal review of personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education ended in November 2011. The review will take account of the outcomes of the ongoing national curriculum review and we will publish conclusions in due course.

Press: Subscriptions

Mike Freer: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how much his Department spent on newspapers, periodicals and trade publications in the last 12 months. [125682]

Elizabeth Truss: The Department for Education subscribes to the full range of national newspapers, as well as a range of journals and magazines which cover education and children's issues. In 2011/12, the most recent financial year for which full figures are available, the Department spent £4,920 on newspapers, periodicals and trade publications. This figure has been consistent for the past three years.

Private Education

John Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education with reference to the answer of 25 April 2012, *Official Report*, column 932W, on private education, how many local authorities (a) provide and (b) plan to provide those receiving independent education but whose education is publicly funded and are therefore eligible for support from the bursary fund, funding via the 16 to 19 bursary schemes. [123375]

Mr Laws: The 16-19 Bursary Fund provides targeted financial support for the most disadvantaged young people in further education and training. The vast majority of them are in publicly-funded schools, colleges or training providers, so the Government has decided that bursaries should only go to students attending publicly-funded education or training. Young people in independent schools cannot usually apply for financial support from the 16-19 Bursary Fund.

Some young people aged 16 to 19 are placed in independent special schools or other independent provision by their local authority. When a young person is attending

these types of establishments, and their education is being funded by the local authority, they can apply for support from the Bursary Fund.

However, data on the number of local authorities that provide, or plan to provide, financial support through the 16-19 Bursary Fund for young people receiving publicly-funded education in independent schools, are not held centrally.

Pupils: Disadvantaged

Mr Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what assessment he has made of the level of uptake of residential experiences by students studying geography and science in secondary schools in areas with multiple deprivation following the introduction of pupil premiums. [126900]

Mr Timpson: Information on residential experiences for school pupils studying either geography or science is not collected centrally. Schools are free to deploy their pupil premium funding as they wish, as school leaders and teachers are the professionals best placed to understand and respond to the individual educational needs of their disadvantaged pupils. This will include, in appropriate cases, supporting disadvantaged pupils' attendance on field trips and residential study opportunities.

At the same time, Ofsted have an increased focus on the performance of pupils who attract the premium, and on how it is used to remove barriers to learning for premium pupils. Since September 2012, as part of routine school inspection, Ofsted holds school leaders to account by looking at how schools have spent their pupil premium and at their rationale. Inspectors will examine what difference this is making to the learning and progress of the pupils concerned. Their judgments on schools' leadership will consider their use of both the premium and other resources to overcome barriers to achievement for their pupils.

Rehman Chishti: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many pupils have attracted payment of the pupil premium in (a) Gillingham and Rainham constituency, (b) Medway and (c) Kent in the latest period for which figures are available. [128248]

Mr Laws: The pupil premium was introduced in April 2011. Pupil premium funding is provided to schools which have on roll pupils known to be eligible for free school meals (the deprivation premium); children in care who have been continuously looked after for at least six months (the looked after child premium); and children whose parents are serving in the armed forces (the service child premium).

In the financial year 2012-13, 3,510 pupils in Gillingham and Rainham constituency area were eligible for either the deprivation premium or service child premium, attracting £2.158 million. It is not possible to identify, at constituency level, the number of pupils eligible for the looked after child premium or the number of pupils eligible for the deprivation premium in alternative provision settings.

In the same year, 9,960 pupils in Medway local authority and 44,240 pupils in Kent local authority were eligible for either the deprivation premium, service child premium or looked after child premium, attracting £6.084 million and £27.061 million respectively.

In 2013-14, the deprivation and looked after premium is set to rise to £900 per pupil and the service premium is set to rise to £300 per pupil. We are not yet able to provide estimates of the number of eligible pupils for 2013-14. The pupil premium allocations for 2013-14 will be based on pupil numbers as recorded in the January 2013 school census which are not yet known. We intend to provide provisional allocations later in the year, based on pupil numbers from the January 2012 censuses.

Mr Djanogly: To ask the Secretary of State for Education whether the pupil premium will have an effect on the difference in per pupil funding between Cambridgeshire and Bedfordshire in (a) 2013-14 and (b) 2014-15. [128982]

Mr Laws: The deprivation and looked after premium is set to rise to £900 per pupil in 2013-14 and the service premium is set to rise to £300 per pupil. Figures relating to the number of pupils eligible for the pupil premium in 2013-14 and 2014-15 are not yet available as they will be determined by the January 2013 and January 2014 pupil count. Provisional estimates for 2013-14 will be published on the Department for Education's website when the data is available.

The pupil premium may affect the difference in per pupil funding between authorities due to different areas having varying levels of disadvantaged pupils but this is not the premium's primary aim. The pupil premium is intended to recognise that disadvantaged pupils need extra support and provide additional funding for these children to help raise their attainment.

Mr Robin Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Education whether the pupil premium will have an effect on the difference in per pupil funding between Worcestershire and Birmingham in (a) 2013-14 and (b) 2014-15. [128985]

Mr Laws: The deprivation and looked after premium is set to rise to £900 per pupil in 2013-14 and the service premium is set to rise to £300 per pupil. Figures relating to the number of pupils eligible for the pupil premium in 2013-14 and 2014-15 are not yet available as they will be determined by the January 2013 and January 2014 pupil count. Provisional estimates for 2013-14 will be published on the Department for Education's website when the data is available.

The pupil premium may affect the difference in per pupil funding between authorities due to different areas having varying levels of disadvantaged pupils but this is not the premium's primary aim. The pupil premium is intended to recognise that disadvantaged pupils need extra support and provide additional funding for these children to help raise their attainment.

Pupils: Per Capita Costs

Mr Djanogly: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) what the national average per pupil unit of funding for schools in England is; and what the per pupil unit of funding is for Cambridgeshire; [128980]

(2) what the national average per pupil units of funding was for (a) Cambridgeshire and (b) Bedfordshire in the latest period for which figures are available. [128981]

Mr Laws: Local authorities receive funding for pupils through the dedicated schools grant based on a guaranteed unit of funding for each pupil. In 2012-13, the national average guaranteed unit of funding for England is £5,082.54. The guaranteed units of funding for Cambridgeshire and central Bedfordshire are £4,643.51 and £4,658.10 respectively.

Mr Robin Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what the per pupil units of funding were for (a) Worcestershire, (b) Herefordshire, (c) Gloucestershire, (d) Warwickshire, (e) Staffordshire, (f) Shropshire and (g) Birmingham in the latest period for which figures are available. [128986]

Mr Laws: Local authorities receive funding for pupils through the dedicated schools grant based on a guaranteed unit of funding for each pupil. The guaranteed units of funding for each authority for 2012-13, the latest year for which figures are available, are set out in the following table.

	Local authority	Guaranteed unit of funding, 2012-13 (£)
(a)	Worcestershire	4,600.77
(b)	Herefordshire	4,723.65
(c)	Gloucestershire	4,660.95
(d)	Warwickshire	4,662.81
(e)	Staffordshire	4,653.02
(f)	Shropshire	4,611.67
(g)	Birmingham	5,688.80

Mr Robin Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what the national average per pupil unit of funding for schools in England is; and what the per pupil unit of funding for Worcestershire is (a) including and (b) excluding the pupil premium. [128987]

Mr Laws: Local authorities receive funding for pupils through the dedicated schools grant based on a guaranteed unit of funding for each pupil. In 2012-13, the national average guaranteed unit of funding is £5,082.54 and Worcestershire's is £4,600.77. The dedicated schools grant and pupil premium are allocated on different bases. The dedicated schools grant is allocated on the basis of all pupils in a local authority, whereas the pupil premium is allocated only to the most disadvantaged pupils, looked-after children and children from armed services families. If the pupil premium allocation is added to the dedicated schools grant allocation and the total amount divided on the same basis as the dedicated schools grant, per pupil funding for Worcestershire is £4,720.29.

Schools

Andrew Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what information his Department holds on the number of children who attended (a) two, (b) three, (c) four, (d) five, (e) six, (f) seven, (g) eight, (h) nine and (i) 10 (i) primary and (ii) secondary schools in the most recent year for which figures are available. [128102]

Mr Laws: The School Census collects pupil level data on a termly basis from state-funded schools in England. We expect schools to provide data on all pupils attending their school at the time of the census. The National Pupil Database (NPD) is populated with data from the School Census and other pupil level collections. To the extent that data are collected termly, it is possible to use NPD data to track pupil movement between schools. Such analysis has not been carried out to date and developing a sufficiently robust approach and quality assuring the results could be completed only at disproportionate cost.

Schools: Admissions

Andrew Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many and which schools are (a) known and (b) permitted to select pupils on the basis of aptitude in (i) sports, (ii) the arts, (iii) modern languages and (iv) technology under the provisions of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998. [128099]

Mr Laws: The Department collects data showing the number of pupils in schools permitted to operate some form of selective admission arrangements, whether wholly or partially selective. It is not possible to provide numbers by any of the specialisms requested. The available information, on number of pupils educated in selective schools in local authority, is published in the table 7c of the Statistical First Release 'Schools, Pupils and their Characteristics, January 2012'. This is available on the Department's website:

<http://www.education.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s001071/index.shtml>

Schools: Disability

Mrs Hodgson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will commit to consulting (a) disabled people, (b) organisations representing disabled people and (c) architects in advance of any further revision to school design specifications. [125879]

Mr Laws: The Department's current design guidance Building Bulletin 102 'Designing for disabled children and children with special educational needs' is due for review. Part of the review will involve seeking advice from organisations representing disabled people and architects with experience of designing schools.

The Department has recently published baseline designs for schools based on the Department's most recent output specification, for the Priority School Building Programme. These designs are intended to meet all relevant regulations and to ensure the schools are accessible to people with limited mobility and other disabilities. Accessibility reviews were carried out to check that the designs met all requirements. We expect the baseline designs to evolve in response to feedback, and intend to add further versions.

The baseline designs for schools can be seen at:

<http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/adminandfinance/schoolscapital/buildingsanddesign/baseline/b00213595/baseline-designs---how-the-designs-address-the-brief/key-principles>

The new PFI Output Specification is now available to download on the DFES website:

<http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/adminandfinance/schoolscapital/buildingsanddesign/baseline/b00213573/facilities-output-specification-for-the-priority-school-building-programme-pfi-projects>

Schools: Finance

Iain Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many schools have received an Environment Improvement Grant of more than £50,000 in each local authority; which such schools are sponsored academies; and which organisations sponsor such academies. [128568]

Mr Laws: A total of 124 schools (65 primaries, 59 secondaries) have been allocated Environmental Improvement Grants in the current financial year (2012-13). Of these, four primary and 16 secondary schools have so far received funding greater than £50,000. Predecessor schools receiving Environmental Improvement Grants only do so in advance of them opening as sponsored academies.

The following table provides a breakdown of this information by local authority, and the list includes details of the sponsors for these academies.

It should be noted that secondary sponsored academies receive higher rates of Environmental Improvement Grant than primary sponsored academies. Primary sponsored academies will only receive more than £50,000 in cases of exceptional need.

Table 1: Environmental Improvement Grant funding over £50,000 in financial year 2012-13

Local authority	Primary	Secondary
Suffolk	—	2
Gloucester	—	1
Cheshire West and Chester	—	1
Darlington	—	1
Nottinghamshire	—	1
Durham	—	1
Wolverhampton	—	1
Manchester	1	—
Buckinghamshire	—	1
Walsall	—	1
Kent	—	1
Medway	—	1
Haringey	2	—
Birmingham	—	1
Milton Keynes	—	1
Merton	—	1
Greenwich	—	1
Essex	1	—

Sponsors of academies receiving Environmental Improvement Grant funding over £50,000 in financial year 2012-13

AET
 ARK
 E-ACT
 Fort Pitt Academy Trust
 Harris Federation
 Hearts Academy Trust
 Heath Park Business Enterprise College
 Lang O'Rourke and Lend Lease
 Longfield School

New College Durham
School Partnership Trust
University of Chester

Schools: Lancashire

Mr Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many (a) primary and (b) secondary schools have been put into special measures in Wyre and Preston North constituency since 2009. [127797]

Mr Laws: This question is a matter for Ofsted. HM chief inspector, Sir Michael Wilshaw, has written to the hon. Member, providing him with the information requested, and a copy of his response has been placed in the House Libraries.

Letter from Michael Wilshaw, dated 7 November 2012:

Your recent parliamentary question has been passed to me as Her Majesty's Chief Inspector, for response.

Since 2005, maintained school inspections have been carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005, and more recently the Education Act 2011. Of the 27 primary schools and six secondary schools inspected between the academic years 2009/10 and 2011/12 (up to 30 June 2012) in the Wyre and Preston North constituency, one primary school and no secondary schools, were judged inadequate for their overall effectiveness. This primary school was placed in special measures, following its section 5 inspection.

Under section 5 Ofsted inspects maintained schools (nursery, primary, secondary and special schools and pupil referral units), state-funded independent schools such as academies and certain non-maintained special schools in England. All primary and secondary schools have been included in this response. On 1 January 2012 Ofsted implemented a new school inspection framework for section 5 inspections. This reflected amendments made by the Education Act 2011 and included a sharper focus on the judgements that matter most, even more time spent in the classroom and a continued drive to raise standards, particularly in literacy.

Statistics covering the outcomes of all inspections carried out in each academic year can be found at:

<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/advanced-resources-search/results/Maintained%20schools/2/all/any/200/any>

The most recent official statistics release covering the outcomes of maintained school inspections undertaken between 1 April 2012 and 30 June 2012 was released on 13 September and can be accessed at the same link.

A copy of this reply has been sent to David Laws MP, Minister of State for Schools, and will be placed in the library of both Houses.

Schools: Worcestershire

Karen Lumley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what assessment his Department has made of the fairness of the funding formula for schools in Worcestershire. [126002]

Mr Laws [*holding answer 5 November 2012*]: The Department recognises that the current funding system is unfair and out of date. It is based on a historic assessment of need which dates back to at least 2005/06. This means that as the needs of pupils have changed in areas such as Worcestershire, the levels of funding have not always reflected those changes.

In March the Secretary of State for Education, the right hon. Member for Surrey Heath (Michael Gove), announced our intention to introduce a new national funding formula during the next spending review period.

A new national funding formula would redistribute money across local authorities to reflect the current needs of pupils.

From 2013-14, we are simplifying the way in which funding is distributed within local authorities so that there is greater transparency and consistency. This is an important first step towards a national funding formula.

To ensure that these new arrangements do not result in sharp changes to schools budgets, we have put in place a Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG). In 2013-14 and 2014-15, the MFG will mean that, in most cases, schools will not experience a reduction to their budgets of greater than 1.5% per pupil. I cannot give an exact value beyond 2014-15, but I can assure the House that an MFG will continue. As I have discussed with the hon. Member, the Department will review the 2013-14 arrangements and consider whether changes should be made for 2014-15 to help us move towards a new national funding formula. I have made a commitment that the Department will work with Worcestershire county council in conducting this review.

Science: Education

Chi Onwurah: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) what steps his Department is taking to encourage schools to improve science teaching; and what measures are in place to assess the quality of science teaching in schools; [128177]

(2) what steps his Department is taking to promote girls studying science subjects. [128178]

Elizabeth Truss [*holding answer 13 November 2012*]: The Department is taking a number of actions to encourage schools to improve science teaching and to help to engage more girls in science education.

Improving science teaching is at the heart of the Government's key education reforms. The review of the national curriculum aims to ensure that the new primary and secondary programmes of study for science focus on the essential knowledge pupils need to be taught. Academies and free schools have more freedom to teach science in ways that best suit the needs of their pupils. The inclusion of science GCSEs in the English baccalaureate will also help improve take up and standards.

The Department has also allocated up to £135 million over the period 2011-15 to support better science teaching. This includes funding the national network of science learning centres in partnership with the Wellcome Trust to provide science teachers and technicians with access to high quality professional development opportunities. The work of the Stimulating Physics Network, delivered by the Institute of Physics, aims to support better physics teaching in schools so that more pupils, particularly girls, consider studying physics at A level. The Triple Science Support Programme continues to support greater take up of GCSE triple science through advice and support for teachers.

The Department is also taking action to recruit more specialist science teachers. This includes attracting the best graduates into science teaching through bursaries of up to £20,000. The Department has also teamed up with the Institute of Physics and the Royal Society of Chemistry to offer £20,000 scholarships to the most gifted aspiring physics and chemistry teachers.

As with other areas of the curriculum, science is not explicitly covered in the current school inspection framework. However, Ofsted does carry out subject surveys. "Improving science in colleges" was published in October 2011 and "Successful Science" in January 2011. Both reports noted that good teaching and learning in science depends on how well teachers know their subject and the extent to which they can generate students' interest and enthusiasm for science.

Inspection of initial teacher training provision includes consideration of relevant subject and curriculum knowledge and understanding.

Sixth Form Education: West Midlands

Steve McCabe: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many sixth form colleges in (a) Birmingham and (b) the West Midlands received funding for new buildings from his Department in each year since 2006; and how much his Department plans to spend in each year up to 2015. [126370]

Mr Laws: The number of sixth form colleges in (a) Birmingham and (b) the West Midlands that have received funding for new buildings from the Department for Education in each year since 2006 is as follows:

<i>Financial year</i>	<i>Number of colleges in Birmingham</i>	<i>Number of colleges in the West Midlands</i>
2006-07	0	0
2007-08	0	0
2008-09	0	0
2009-10	0	0
2010-11	0	0
2011-12	1	8
2012-13	1	8

Please note that this table includes those sixth form colleges that have received capital funding for the modernisation and refurbishment of existing buildings but excludes devolved formula capital funding allocated to all sixth form colleges. The table does not list the number of sixth form colleges that have received capital funding from the Department of Business Innovation and Skills.

The amount the Department for Education plans to spend on new buildings for sixth form colleges in each year up to 2015 has not yet been determined.

Special Educational Needs

Mrs Hodgson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what assessment he has made of whether local authorities would need additional administrative support and human resources to administer the proposals contained in his draft Children and Families Bill. [127401]

Mr Timpson: The Government has published draft clauses for pre legislative scrutiny in the following areas: SEN; adoption; family justice; and Office of the Children's Commissioner. We will continue to work in preparation for introduction, and during the passage of the Bill to assess any new resource implications for local authorities, in line with the Government's New Burdens Doctrine.

Notably with regards to SEN, learning from the local pathfinder areas is helping us to understand what is needed to put the special educational needs and disability reforms into practice. The pathfinder areas have very recently been extended to continue until September 2014.

Special Guardianship Orders

Craig Whittaker: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what his policy is on the practice of law firms advertising special guardianship orders as an alternative to surrogacy arrangements; and if he will make a statement. [126241]

Mr Timpson [*holding answer 5 November 2012*]: In the case of a surrogacy arrangement, parental orders can be sought to determine the legal parentage of a child born in the UK. They are governed by strict criteria. The Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act 2008 provides that applicants must be a husband and wife, civil partners or two persons who are living as partners in an enduring family relationship. This recognises the sensitivity and seriousness of surrogacy, an arrangement where a woman becomes pregnant with the express intention of handing the child over to someone else at birth.

Special guardianship orders may offer an alternative for single people and applicants should ensure that they are fully informed about the limitations of the order before entering into a surrogacy arrangement.

The decision to make either a special guardianship or parental order is taken by the court, which will need to be satisfied that the making of the order is in the child's best interests. The Government does not view special guardianship orders as an exact alternative to parental orders as they do not create the same legal relationship between the adult and the child. However, a special guardianship order will give the special guardian parental responsibility to the exclusion of all others, although there are some limitations.

Teachers

Steve McCabe: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many qualified teachers have stopped working as teachers in (a) England, (b) the West Midlands and (c) Birmingham since 2003. [128203]

Mr Laws: The information is not available in the format requested.

The following table provides the qualified teacher wastage figures in publicly-funded schools in England and the West Midlands region in each financial year, March 2003-04 to March 2010-11.

Full-time and part-time wastage is defined as all teachers in full-time or part-time service in English publicly-funded schools in March who were not in full-time or part-time service anywhere in English publicly-funded schools in the following March. It includes teachers who moved to other educational sectors such as independent schools and further education and those who had left teaching temporarily.

Qualified teacher wastage in publicly-funded schools¹, by type and destination², March 2006-07 to 2010-11, England and West Midlands³ region

	England	West Midlands
2010-11 ⁴	47,770	5 —
2009-10 ⁴	40,070	4,340
2008-09	40,460	4,400
2007-08	40,540	4,630
2006-07	42,870	4,660
2005-06	42,870	4,440
2004-05	41,880	4,320
2003-04	41,410	4,720

¹ Academies and CTCs are included in the figures from 2007-08 onwards.

² 10% to 20% of part-time teachers may not be included in the data.

³ Full-time and part-time wastage is defined as all teachers in full-time or part-time service in English publicly-funded schools in March who were not in full-time or part-time service anywhere in the English publicly-funded schools in the following March. This does not include moves between full-time and part-time service.

⁴ Provisional estimates. 2010-11 figures by region are incomplete and therefore not considered reliable.

⁵ Not available.

Note:

Figures at local authority level are not available due to data quality issues.

Source:

Database of Teacher Records.

The source data continue to be updated until three years after the period in question and may remain incomplete after that for some local authorities. Therefore, some teachers are estimated as remaining in service, particularly in recent years, in order to obtain numbers of teachers in service that agree with other trusted sources. While this provides figures that are considered reliable nationally, there is no assurance that the same would apply for the West Midlands region for the most recent year available, or in any year for Birmingham local authority. Therefore, these have not been supplied.

Teachers: Pensions

Mr Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will consider commissioning an independent valuation of the teachers' pension scheme; and if he will make a statement. [128365]

Mr Laws [*holding answer 13 November 2012*]: Actuarial scheme valuations are dependent on assumptions about the value of future pensions, the design of benefits and many other factors. Many of these assumptions are being considered as part of current work on the design of a reformed TPS.

The Public Service Pensions Bill, which is currently being debated in the House, contains provisions for each public service scheme to undertake a valuation in accordance with Treasury directions. An actuarial valuation of the teachers' pension scheme will be completed in advance of the introduction of the reformed scheme in 2015.

Mr Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Education with reference to the answer of 1 December 2011, *Official Report*, column 1093W, on teachers: pensions, when he expects the next valuation of the teachers' pension scheme to take place. [128366]

Mr Laws [*holding answer 13 November 2012*]: As stated in the answer of 1 December 2011, *Official Report*, column 1093W, the 2008 valuation for the teachers' pension scheme (TPS) was not completed because the Government suspended valuations of public service schemes following the interim findings of the Independent Public Sector Pensions Commission. Following the announcement of proposals to implement a reformed scheme, completion of the outstanding valuation will serve no useful purpose. A consultation is currently active which proposes to remove the provisions relating to valuation in the Teachers' Pension Regulations 2010.

The Public Service Pensions Bill, which is currently being debated in the House, contains provisions for each public service scheme to undertake a valuation in accordance with Treasury directions. An actuarial valuation of the TPS will be completed in advance of the introduction of the reformed scheme in 2015.

Truancy

Andrew Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education for how many and which (a) primary and (b) secondary schools were more than (i) 10, (ii) 20, (iii) 30 and (iv) 40 per cent of pupils classified as persistent absentees in each local authority area in the latest year for which figures are available. [128100]

Elizabeth Truss: In 2010/11, there were 677 state-funded primary schools with more than 10% of pupils classified as persistent absentees.

22 of the 677 schools had more than 20% of pupils classified as persistent absentees;

three schools had more than 30% of pupils classified as persistent absentees;

two schools had more than 40% of pupils classified as persistent absentees.

In 2010/11, there were 977 state-funded secondary schools with more than 10% of pupils classified as persistent absentees.

35 of the 977 schools had more than 20% of pupils classified as persistent absentees;

one school had more than 30% of pupils classified as persistent absentees;

No schools had more than 40% of pupils classified as persistent absentees.

Lists of these schools and their local authority area have been placed in the House Libraries.

Persistent absence is best measured on the basis of a school year. The information provided relates to school year 2010/11, the latest school year of data available.

The latest data on absence, for the school year, is published as Statistical First Release 04/2012 'Pupil Absence in Schools in England, Including Pupil Characteristics: 2010/11' at:

<http://www.education.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s001060/index.shtml>

This includes school level information.

The most recent absence data, for the first two terms of 2011/12, is published as Statistical First Release 22/2012 'Pupil Absence in schools in England: Autumn Term 2011 and Spring Term 2012' at:

<http://www.education.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s001090/index.shtml>

This includes school level information. Persistent absence figures are included in the release but these two term figures can be affected by changes in term length. For this reason, end of year data provide the best measure of persistent absence.

Andrew Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many and which schools had more than four per cent of half days missed due to unauthorised absence in the most recent year for which figures are available. [128108]

Elizabeth Truss: In the 2010/11 school year, there were 322 schools with more than 4% of half days missed due to unauthorised absence.

39 of the 322 schools were state-funded primary schools;

126 were state-funded secondary schools;

157 were special schools.

A list of these schools and their local authority area have been placed in the House Libraries.

The latest data on absence, for the school year, is published as Statistical First Release 04/2012 'Pupil Absence in Schools in England, Including Pupil Characteristics: 2010/11' at:

<http://www.education.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s001060/index.shtml>

This includes school level information.

Information for the first two terms of 2011/12 is published as Statistical First Release 22/2012 'Pupil Absence in schools in England: Autumn Term 2011 and Spring Term 2012' at:

<http://www.education.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s001090/index.shtml>

This includes school level information but does not cover special schools.

Universal Credit

Mr McCann: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how the qualifying conditions for each passported benefit for which he is responsible will change under universal credit. [128330]

Mr Laws: We are working with the Department for Work and Pensions to develop new eligibility criteria following the introduction of universal credit for those passported benefits, for which the Department for Education is responsible. Our aim is to ensure that education benefits continue to be available to the families who need them most.

The development of eligibility criteria for passported education benefits in Scotland, including free school meals, is the responsibility of the Scottish Government.

HEALTH

Accident and Emergency Departments

Dr Offord: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what proportion of NHS patients spent fewer than four hours waiting in accident and emergency departments in English hospitals in the latest period for which figures are available. [128078]

Dr Poulter: Statistics on accident and emergency (A&E) departments are published weekly, and can be found on the Department's website:

<http://transparency.dh.gov.uk/2012/06/14/weekly-ae-sitreps-2012-13/>

The weekly A&E collection collects the total number of attendances in the week for all A&E types, including minor injury units, urgent care centres and walk-in centres, and of these, the number discharged, admitted or transferred within four hours of arrival.

Information about the number of patients who spent fewer than four hours in all types of A&E departments in England in the last quarter for which data is available (Q2 2012-13) is shown in the following table:

2012	Percentage of patients spending four hours or less in all types of A&E department.
30 September	96.10
23 September	96.90
16 September	96.60
9 September	96.90
2 September	97.50
26 August	97.00
19 August	96.40
12 August	97.20
5 August	97.20
29 July	97.10
22 July	97.20
15 July	97.10
8 July	96.70

Alcoholic Drinks: Children

Chris Ruane: To ask the Secretary of State for Health pursuant to the answer of 7 November 2012, *Official Report*, columns 640-2W, on alcoholic drinks: children, what assessment he has made of the reasons for the reduction in the proportion of 11 to 15-year-olds who reported ever having had a drink from 65 per cent in 1990 to 46 per cent in 2011. [128171]

Anna Soubry: There has been a long-term trend of fewer 11 to 15-year-old pupils ever having drunk alcohol. We are not aware of published studies that examine this trend.

The decline in pupils who have ever drunk alcohol reflects declines in those taking illegal drugs and in those smoking.

Mean consumption by those pupils who do drink alcohol, shown in 'Smoking, drinking and drug use among young people in England in 2011', has not declined to the same extent. Despite a fall from 2010 to 2011, mean consumption of alcohol was still higher in 2011 than in 1990.

Research suggests that the influences on young people's decisions to drink alcohol and how much they might drink are complex and include parental supervision and drinking behaviour, the influence of friends, ease of access to alcohol, the availability of alternative social and other activities, and marketing.

Alcoholic Drinks: Misuse

Chris Ruane: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what the rate of alcoholism was for (a) 11 to 18 and (b) 18 to 25-year-olds in each year from 1988 to 2011. [128173]

Anna Soubry: Figures on alcohol dependence are available from the Adult Psychiatric Morbidity Survey, which was run in 2000 and 2007. This survey covered those aged 16 and over, so estimates for 11 to 15-year-olds are unavailable. Estimates are presented for 16 to 17-year-olds and 18 to 25-year-olds.

The following tables estimates the prevalence (percentage) of alcohol dependence by age group and severity for adults living in private households in England, based on the Severity of Alcohol Dependence Questionnaire (SADQ).

	2000	
	16 to 17-year-olds	Percentage 18 to 25-year-olds
No dependence (0-3)	93.0	84.8
Mild dependence (4-19)	6.3	14.9
Moderate dependence (20-34)	0.7	0.4
Severe dependence (35-60)	0.0	0.0

Source:
Adult Psychiatric Morbidity Survey, 2000.

	2007	
	16 to 17-year-olds	Percentage 18 to 25-year-olds
No dependence (0-3)	91.9	87.4
Mild dependence (4-19)	8.1	11.6
Moderate dependence (20-34)	0.0	1.0
Severe dependence (35-60)	0.0	0.0

Source:
Adult Psychiatric Morbidity Survey, 2007.

Survey results above were weighted to ensure they are representative of the population.

The SADQ-C, asked of all respondents with an audit score of 10 or more, consists of 20 items, covering a range of dependence symptoms, with the six months before the interview as the reference period. Answers to all questions are scored from zero to three, and summed to give a total score ranging from zero to 60. Established thresholds indicate different levels of alcohol dependence:

- No dependence (scores of three or less);
- Mild dependence (scores ranging from four to 19);
- Moderate dependence (scores ranging from 20 to 34); and
- Severe dependence (scores ranging from 35 to 60).

Arthritis

Nic Dakin: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment his Department has made of data collection for people with arthritis attending rheumatology department out-patient services. [127098]

Norman Lamb: The NHS Information Centre collects information on out-patient attendances through its Hospital Episode Statistics collection, available online at:

www.hesonline.nhs.uk/Ease/servlet/ContentServer?siteID=1937&categoryID=890

Information is available on the main specialty of the out-patient clinic attended. Information on the primary diagnosis is not mandatory, but is available in a sufficiently large proportion of cases to make it possible to estimate the number of people with arthritis attending rheumatology out-patient services.

Autism: Prisoners

Simon Hart: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many prisoners have been diagnosed with autism in the UK prison system. [128609]

Norman Lamb: This information is not collected centrally. The national health service information centre collects data on the number of individuals with autism on a regular basis but this does not identify whether an individual is within the criminal justice system.

Behaviour Disorders: Children

Mrs Hodgson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps he plans to take to improve the awareness of (a) the public, (b) those who work in education and (c) GPs of the significance of childhood conduct problems. [128463]

Norman Lamb: The Government's mental health strategy "No Health Without Mental Health: a cross-Government mental health outcomes strategy" for people of all ages takes a life course approach and emphasises the importance of providing early intervention at any age. The implementation framework for the Mental Health Strategy has been produced by five national mental health organisations in partnership with Government. It is for everyone with a role in improving mental health, not just health and care services. For children and young people, it suggests actions that schools and colleges can take, including: understanding the link between emotional wellbeing and good educational and wider outcomes; and ensuring staff know how mental health relates to their work and when to intervene early to tackle mental health problems. Half of those with a lifelong mental health problem first experience symptoms by age 14 and three quarters before their mid twenties.

The Department is funding a consortium hosted by the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health and including the Royal College of General Practitioners, to develop an interactive e-portal for children and young people's mental health. This will extend the skills and knowledge of all staff working with children: NHS clinicians, including general practitioners, and also non-health professionals such as teaching staff, social workers, police and probation staff on how best to identify and help children and young people when they are experiencing mental health issues including conduct disorders. The e-portal will be ready for use from 2014.

Bereavement Counselling

Andrew Rosindell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what grief counselling services the NHS provides to family and friends of deceased persons. [128219]

Norman Lamb: The Department does not hold information centrally on the current provision of grief counselling services by the national health service.

In 2005, the Department published 'When a Patient Dies: Advice on Developing Bereavement Services in the NHS', which set out the principal elements required to provide an appropriate bereavement service.

This guidance was updated in 2011 by the Bereavement Services Association in collaboration with the National End of Life Care Programme, and with support from the Department. 'When a Person Dies' is available at:

www.endoflifecareforadults.nhs.uk/publications/when-a-person-dies

The Quality Standard for end of life care for adults, published by the National Institute for Clinical Excellence in 2011, contains 16 statements which set out the markers, of high quality care for people at the end of life and their families and carers. Statement 14 highlights the importance of communicating sensitively with those closely affected by a death, and offering immediate and ongoing bereavement support. The Quality Standard is available at:

<http://guidance.nice.org.uk/QS13>

Calcium

Jim Shannon: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps he has taken to address the low level of calcium intake; and what estimate he has made of the number of people who suffer from low calcium in England and Wales. [128503]

Anna Soubry: Most people should be able to get all the calcium they need by eating a healthy balanced diet, which is promoted through the Change4Life campaign, the Healthy Start Scheme and the NHS Choices (England) and the Welsh Government (Wales).websites.

The Department has assessed the calcium intake of the United Kingdom population using data from the National Diet and Nutrition Survey (NDNS). 6% of adults aged 19 to 64 years have intakes below the Lower Reference Nutrient Intake (LRNI; the intake that is sufficient only for those individuals with a low requirement for calcium)—no change since 2000-01. 13% of 11 to 18-year-olds have intakes below the LRNI compared to 18% in 1997. 1% of younger children (aged one and a half to 10 years) and 3% of older adults have intakes below the LRNI.

A low intake of calcium, by an individual during a dietary survey like the NDNS does not necessarily mean that person has a calcium deficiency, but habitual intakes below the LRNI put individuals at greater risk of becoming calcium deficient.

Cancer

Tessa Munt: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what the budget of the National Commissioning Board for commissioning radiotherapy services will be for 2013-14; [127986]

(2) what the budget of the National Commissioning Board for commissioning chemotherapy services will be for 2013-14. [127987]

Anna Soubry: The NHS Commissioning Board's overall budget—its revenue and capital resource limits—for 2013-14 is set out in the mandate to the NHS Commissioning Board, alongside the objectives for the board. The mandate was published on 13 November 2012.

The NHS Commissioning Board determines budgets for the services it will directly commission, including radiotherapy and chemotherapy. Budgets for these services for 2013-14 have not yet been set.

Cancer: Drugs

Dr Offord: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what estimate he has made of how many additional people received treatment as a consequence of the introduction of the Cancer Drugs Fund. [128077]

Norman Lamb: The Cancer Drugs Fund was launched on 1 April 2011 to help national health service patients access the cancer drugs their clinicians believe will help them. We also made an additional £50 million available to strategic health authorities (SHAs) in 2010-11 to support improved access to cancer drugs.

SHAs have reported that between October 2010 and the end of September 2012, this funding has helped over 23,000 cancer patients in England to access the cancer drugs their clinicians recommended.

Care Homes: Fees and Charges

Paul Burstow: To ask the Secretary of State for Health with reference to the proposals of the final report of the Commission on Funding Care and Support, if he will place in the Library case studies showing the effect on an individual's assets in terms of depletion if they incurred care costs under a (a) £50,000 cap on care costs with an extended upper capital limit of £100,000 and (b) £60,000 cap on care costs with an extended upper capital limit of £100,000; how the depletion of assets would vary according to (i) low income and low asset individuals, (ii) low income and modest asset individuals and (iii) mid income and substantial asset individuals. [128665]

Norman Lamb: The Progress Report on funding reform sets out how people's expenditure would vary according to their wealth and the level of the cap. It also set out an individual's responsibility for care costs. Particular figures of interest are figures four, five and fourteen.

Figure four in the progress report highlights how much people spend on care with different levels of wealth and different cap levels. Figure five sets out what the cap would, and would not cover, and so what people are liable to purchase. Figure fourteen sets out the indicative proportion of assets that people spend under the current system and different levels of the cap, for people with different levels of starting wealth.

The Department does not hold the additional information requested.

Chronic Illnesses

Joan Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps his Department is taking to enable people with long-term medical conditions to access specialist rehabilitation. [128163]

Anna Soubry: From April 2013 the NHS Commissioning Board will directly commission specialist rehabilitation services for patients with highly complex needs that are beyond the scope of their local rehabilitation services. The board will decide the best way to commission these services to meet patients' needs.

Death Certificates

Mr Hollobone: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps he is taking to promote the Chief Medical Officer's guidance issued in 2007 that entries in death certificates should reflect doctors' best assessment of the causes of death and other contributory factors, including healthcare associated infections. [128554]

Anna Soubry: Doctors are required under the Births and Deaths Registration Act 1953 to complete the medical certificate of cause of death (MCCD) 'to the best of their knowledge and belief'. Internationally accepted guidance from the World Health Organisation requires only those conditions that contributed directly to the death to be recorded on the death certificate, and whether a condition contributed is a matter for their clinical judgment.

Books of MCCDs have short notes at the front on how to complete the MCCD and when to refer deaths to the coroner. Additional guidance for doctors has been produced and it is available to download from the General Register Office website at:

www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/medcert/index.asp

In terms of health care associated infections, the November edition of the Medical Director's Bulletin to clinicians will contain a reminder regarding the chief medical officer's letter of October 2007.

Dementia

Mr Bradshaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps he plans to take to ensure that any forthcoming proposals in respect of free end of life care are developed with consideration of people with dementia, and do not increase the costs of care borne by people with dementia. [128514]

Norman Lamb: End of life health care is provided free at the point of delivery, irrespective of the patient's diagnosis.

In the "Caring for our future" White Paper we stated that

"we think there is much merit in providing free health and social care in a fully integrated service at the end of life".

The White Paper went on to say:

"We will use the eight palliative care funding pilot sites to collect the vital data and information we need to assess this proposal, and its costs, along with the Palliative Care Funding Review's other recommendations. A decision on including free social care at the end of life in the new funding system will be informed by the evaluation of the pilots, and an assessment of resource implications and overall affordability".

Paul Burstow: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will publish an estimate of the number of lives saved as a result of the 52 per cent reduction in the prescribing of antipsychotics reported in his Department's audit of antipsychotic prescribing in dementia; if he will estimate the number of further lives saved by reducing prescribing by two-thirds; and if he will make a statement. [128664]

Norman Lamb: The National Dementia and Antipsychotic Prescribing Audit, published in July 2012, does not contain an estimate of the number of lives saved and it is not possible to provide an estimate from the data collected. The purpose of the audit was to measure the reduction in antipsychotic prescribing and this showed a 52% reduction in prescribing between 2008 and 2011.

Depressive Illnesses: Children

Chris Ruane: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many prescriptions were issued for the treatment of depression in children in each of the last 10 years. [128724]

Norman Lamb: This information is not collected centrally.

Diabetes

Keith Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he plans to introduce for GPs diabetes testing targets for those patients who do not have the condition. [127974]

Anna Soubry: The National Health Service Health Check programme is aimed at everyone eligible in England between the ages of 40 and 74. It is a risk assessment and risk management programme, which assesses people's risk of heart disease, stroke, kidney disease and diabetes and supports people to reduce or manage that risk through individually tailored support, and advice. In rolling out this programme, some primary care trusts targeted high-risk groups first, such as South Asian populations who are at particularly high risk of diabetes.

The UK National Screening Committee (UK NSC) advises Ministers and the NHS in all four countries about all aspects of screening policy. The UK NSC has just commenced a review of screening for type 2 diabetes against its criteria and stakeholders will be given the opportunity to input into the review process once the completed review is posted on the UK NSC website for consultation.

The National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence's public health guidance "Preventing type 2 diabetes: population and community-level interventions in high-risk groups and the general population", published in May 2011, makes recommendations for the provision of culturally appropriate messages about preventing type 2 diabetes. The guidance underlines the action that we are already taking to improve public health and reduce the risk of people developing type 2 diabetes.

Keith Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if he has any plans to increase the use of insulin pumps by type one diabetics to manage their condition; [128238]

(2) what guidelines have been issued to clinical commissioning groups on the provision of insulin pumps for type one diabetic patients. [128239]

Anna Soubry: There is no mention of insulin pumps explicitly in the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) quality standard for diabetes, but there is clear NICE guidance available outlining the circumstances in which an individual with type 1 diabetes is eligible for an insulin pump. It should be noted that insulin pump therapy is not suited for everyone who is eligible, as it requires self-management and regular close monitoring. People who commence insulin pumps need to have a detailed structured education programme and good clinical support to maintain and support them on this therapy.

NHS Diabetes has produced commissioning guidance for clinical commissioning groups regarding insulin pumps, to encourage the provision of insulin pumps to eligible patients.

NHS Diabetes has also launched a Insulin Pump Network, which is aimed at reducing variation and improving access to insulin pumps. The network is not only aiming to increase uptake but aims to improve education and support for those on an insulin pump already.

The NHS Technology Adoption Centre published a 'How to Why to Guide' in February 2011.

The first ever United Kingdom wide audit of insulin pump use was recently sponsored by the Association of British Clinical Diabetologists, Diabetes UK and the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation with support from NICE. This showed that there are at least 11,985 people over the age of 18-years-old and at least 4,447 people 17-years-old or younger using an insulin pump in England.

Subsequent audits will allow the Department to monitor trends in insulin pump usage and to identify unwarranted variation in access to insulin pumps.

The NHS Technology Centre and the NHS Information Centre are working together to ensure that in the future information collections that capture data related to insulin pumps will be improved. This will include the introduction of new codes in OPCS (operating procedure code supplement), improved diabetes datasets information and the possible introduction of HRG (healthcare resource groups) tariffs.

Keith Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what guidelines are currently in place for GPs on the provision of testing strips for type one diabetics. [128240]

Anna Soubry: Blood glucose testing strips are one means of helping diabetics manage their condition day to day. There are currently no specific guidelines in place for general practitioners on the provision of testing strips for type 1 diabetics, although National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence has issued guidelines on the use of strips by patients with type 2 diabetes. Any decisions about changing testing regimens for people with type 1 diabetes should be taken after discussion between the patient and their health care professional.

Jim Shannon: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment he has made of the benefits of artificial pancreases in the treatment of diabetes. [128501]

Anna Soubry: The artificial pancreas is based on two existing and already licensed technologies. An insulin pump and a continuous glucose monitor. Research has shown that the artificial pancreas can reduce the night-time risk of hypoglycaemia in children and adolescents with type 1 diabetes, and a prototype system for home use is being developed and trialled currently.

General Medical Council

Stephen Barclay: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment his Department has made of the effect on Fitness to Practice decisions of the Cohen decision and the General Medical Council's lack of a right of appeal. [129016]

Norman Lamb: The Department is aware of the Cohen decision, where the decision of a fitness to practise panel was overturned on appeal by the practitioner to the High Court on the ground that it was found to have approached the test for impairment of fitness to practise incorrectly.

The Council for Healthcare Regulatory Excellence has a right of appeal against decisions of fitness to practise panels where it considers decisions are unduly lenient and it is desirable to do so to protect the public. Discussions are being held with the General Medical Council and the Council for Healthcare Regulatory Excellence about a proposal to also introduce a similar appeal right for the General Medical Council alongside that. This is within the context of wider proposals by the General Medical Council to improve and modernise their fitness to practise adjudication processes, to enhance the independence of adjudication while continuing to protect patients and the public. Any changes will be subject to full public consultation.

Genito-urinary Medicine

Amber Rudd: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what the reasons are for the time taken to publish his Department's sexual health policy document; [128000]

(2) when he expects to publish his Department's new sexual health policy document. [128007]

Anna Soubry: The sexual health policy document will set out the framework for improving all aspects of sexual health in England. It will cover a number of important issues such as reducing unplanned and unwanted pregnancies, reducing sexually transmitted infections, and tackling HIV. We have invested time in developing this document, as we know the issues it will cover can have a substantial impact on peoples' lives. We plan to publish the document before the end of the year.

Health Services: Schools

Mrs Hodgson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps he plans to take to encourage schools to participate in the (a) work of health and wellbeing boards and (b) development of joint health and wellbeing strategies. [128493]

Norman Lamb: Health and wellbeing boards will develop a comprehensive analysis of the current and future health and social care needs in each local area through joint strategic needs assessments (JSNAs), and translate these into action in joint health and wellbeing strategies (JHWSs). Throughout the process, health and wellbeing boards will be under a statutory duty to involve local people, including children and young people—taking account of their views in JSNAs and JHWSs to ensure that local services are shaped and influenced by the people that use them. It will be for each health and wellbeing board to decide how best to engage local schools and other education institutions in their work, in particular in the development of both JSNAs and JHWSs.

The statutory membership of the director of children's services and that of local Healthwatch on health and wellbeing boards will also ensure the voice of the whole community including individuals sharing characteristics that are protected by the Equality Act 2010, which includes children and young people, are fed into the work of health and wellbeing boards.

The Department is currently developing statutory guidance to support health and wellbeing boards in undertaking JSNAs and developing JHWSs. The guidance will emphasise the importance of understanding and addressing the needs of children and young people as part of the local population.

Hotels

Ms Abbott: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the discounts on hotel charges for officials on Government business which his Department has negotiated. [128186]

Anna Soubry: The Department does not negotiate discounts with hotels for use by officials on Government business but uses the mandated central contract awarded by Government Procurement Services that contains rates available across wider Government.

Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority and Human Tissue Authority

Mr Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) when he expects to publish a response to his consultation on proposals to transfer functions from the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority and the Human Tissue Authority; and if he will place all replies to the consultation in the Library; [129004]

(2) what proportion of respondents to his recent consultation on proposals to transfer functions from

the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority and the Human Tissue Authority supported the abolition of the Human Tissue Authority; [129005]

(3) what proportion of respondents to his recent consultation on proposals to transfer functions from the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority and the Human Tissue Authority supported the continuation of the Human Tissue Authority; [129006]

(4) what discussions he has had with the (a) Human Tissue Authority, (b) Care Quality Commission and (c) Health Research Authority on his recent consultation on proposals to transfer functions from the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority and the Human Tissue Authority. [129007]

Anna Soubry: The consultation on proposals to transfer the functions of the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority and Human Tissue Authority closed on 28 September 2012. The Department is now considering and analysing the responses, which will inform the way forward and the Government's response. We would expect to publish the response once cross-Government consideration is completed.

We would expect to handle the consultation responses in line with Government best practice at the point of the consultation launch, which would be, as a minimum, to publish a summary of stakeholder views alongside the formal Government response.

The Secretary of State for Health, my right hon. Friend the Member for South West Surrey (Mr Hunt) has not held discussions with the Human Tissue Authority, Care Quality Commission or Health Research Authority about this consultation.

Kidneys: Diseases

Andrew Stephenson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many cases of (a) autosomal dominant polycystic kidney disease and (b) autosomal recessive polycystic kidney disease have been diagnosed in East Lancashire in each of the last five years. [127891]

Anna Soubry: Information on the numbers of people with autosomal dominant and autosomal recessive polycystic kidney disease is not collected centrally. However, we do collect the number of finished admission episodes (FAEs) with a primary diagnosis of autosomal dominant polycystic kidney disease, autosomal recessive polycystic kidney disease or polycystic kidney disease, unspecified, for East Lancashire Teaching primary care trust (PCT) of residence for the years 2007-08 to 2011-12.

<i>PCT of residence</i>	<i>PCT code</i>	<i>Primary diagnosis</i>	<i>2007-08</i>	<i>2008-09</i>	<i>2009-10</i>	<i>2010-11</i>	<i>2011-12</i>
East Lancashire Teaching PCT	5NH	Autosomal dominant polycystic kidney disease	*	*	*	0	0
		Autosomal recessive polycystic kidney disease	*	*	*	*	*

<i>PCT of residence</i>	<i>PCT code</i>	<i>Primary diagnosis</i>	<i>2007-08</i>	<i>2008-09</i>	<i>2009-10</i>	<i>2010-11</i>	<i>2011-12</i>
		Polycystic kidney disease, unspecified	*	*	*	7	*

Notes:**1. Finished admission episodes**

A finished admission episode (FAE) is the first period of in-patient care under one consultant within one healthcare provider. FAEs are counted against the year in which the admission episode finishes. Admissions do not represent the number of inpatients, as a person may have more than one admission within the year.

2. Primary Diagnosis

The primary diagnosis is the first of up to 20 (14 from 2002-03 to 2006-07 and seven prior to 2002-03) diagnosis fields in the Hospital Episode Statistics (HES) data set and provides the main reason why the patient was admitted to hospital.

ICD-10 Codes used:

Q61.1 Polycystic kidney, autosomal recessive

Q61.2 Polycystic kidney, autosomal dominant

Q61.3 Polycystic kidney, unspecified

3. SHA/PCT of residence

The strategic health authority (SHA) or primary care trust (PCT) containing the patient's normal home address. This does not necessarily reflect where the patient was treated as they may have travelled to another SHA/PCT for treatment.

4. Assessing growth through time

HES figures are available from 1989-90 onwards. Changes to the figures over time need to be interpreted in the context of improvements in data quality and coverage (particularly in earlier years), improvements in coverage of independent sector activity (particularly from 2006-07) and changes in NHS practice. For example, changes in activity may be due to changes in the provision of care.

5. Small numbers

To protect patient confidentiality, figures between 1 and 5 have been replaced with "*" (an asterisk).

To protect patient confidentiality, figures between 1 and 5 have been replaced with "*" (an asterisk). The vast majority of counts presented in this table fall in this range and are therefore denoted as "*".

These are figures for admissions to hospital for treatment of polycystic kidney disease and are not a count of people who have the disease but did not require admission to hospital. It should be noted that these are not a count of people as the same person may have been admitted more than once in a year.

Reference should be made to the footnotes when interpreting this data.

Learning Disability: Social Services

Caroline Lucas: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will include a full assessment of the adequacy of any funding levels in the final report of the Winterborne View review or any accompanying agreement; if he will make it his policy to ensure that (a) funding arrangements do not work against incentives to get people out of assessment and treatment units, (b) economies of scale do not incentivise the continued development of larger units and (c) adequate local services, including community-based intensive support services, are developed as near as possible to the families of children and adults with a learning disability and behaviour that challenges; and if he will make a statement. [127549]

Norman Lamb: The interim report on Winterbourne View hospital published in June 2012 set out the model of care we expect for people with learning disabilities or autism who have mental health conditions or behaviour which challenges. The focus must be on developing the range of responsive local services which can prevent admissions to in-patient units or other large institutional settings.

The Department will support commissioners of health and social care services in developing shared accountability, pooled budgets and joint commissioning in order to deliver the integrated services needed in local communities.

Decisions about social care spending are made locally but local commissioners should ensure that they commission for good quality person-centred community-based care. Appropriate care may cost less than the sort of care provided by Winterbourne View with the average cost

of £3,500 per person per week. Good commissioning can offer better care for less money. Local services should not be run from Whitehall, and councils were clear in discussions at the spending review that the freedom to prioritise locally would allow them to deliver better services. Local authorities received a challenging settlement in the 2010 spending review, and the Government took action to protect social care by allocating an extra £7.2 billion over four years. Along with a continued focus on efficiency, this is sufficient to allow councils to maintain access to services—a view supported by analysis from the King's Fund.

Some councils have chosen to reduce their expenditure on social care, despite the extra funding we provided. In some cases this is because of greater efficiency, but where this has led to a reduction in services the council will have to justify this decision to their electorate.

The final report from the Department's review will be published shortly.

Lung Cancer

Mr Streeter: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment his Department has made of the potential effect of selenium supplementation on the incidence of lung cancer in women. [128085]

Anna Soubry: The Department has not made an assessment of the potential effect of selenium supplementation on the incidence of lung cancer in women. The Department advises that you should be able to get all the nutrients you need by eating a varied and balanced diet.

The Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition (SACN) is currently undertaking a review of the evidence on selenium and health, including lung cancer. SACN is due to publish its findings in a position statement in mid 2013.

Lung Diseases

Mr Sanders: To ask the Secretary of State for Health by what mechanism Ministers in his Department will hold the NHS Commissioning Board to account for making progress on the Outcomes Strategy for chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and asthma. [128110]

Anna Soubry: The Government's Mandate to the NHS Commissioning Board asks the NHS Commissioning Board to make progress against all the outcomes in the NHS Outcomes Framework, which includes an indicator on reducing mortality from respiratory disease in under 75s. This will be a key marker of progress in improving respiratory outcomes.

It is for the NHS Commissioning Board and local commissioners to determine how best they can improve outcomes in chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and asthma for their local populations. The Outcomes Strategy and associated tools and resources, including the NHS Companion Document, have been published to support local areas in making those decisions.

Meningitis

Mrs Hodgson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what support his Department provides for research to develop a vaccine for group B meningococcal meningitis. [128462]

Anna Soubry: The National Institute for Health Research Clinical Research Network is currently hosting a study to test a new vaccine against meningococcus group B on healthy volunteers. The name of the vaccine is MenPF-1 and it uses two bacterial proteins called PorA and FetA that are known to stimulate the immune system.

Mrs Hodgson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will estimate the average lifetime cost to the taxpayer of residual physical and cognitive issues caused by group B meningococcal meningitis. [128464]

Anna Soubry: The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) is undertaking an assessment of the impact and cost effectiveness of potential meningococcal B vaccination strategies. As part of this assessment, JCVI is considering evidence on the epidemiology and carriage of different meningococcal serogroup B strains, the costs of treating meningococcal serogroup B disease and the costs of treating the long-term conditions that result from this disease, the quality of life of affected individuals as well as the potential clinical effectiveness of vaccination.

This assessment (expected to be completed in 2013) of the economic impact of a possible immunisation programme is following the criteria and methodology of National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence for the assessment of cost effectiveness. It therefore, will include assessment of public expenditure on health and social care associated with meningococcal disease.

Mental Health Services

Mrs Hodgson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment he has made of the Centre for Mental Health report entitled *A Chance to Change*, published in October 2012; and what assessment he has made of its recommendation on improving the availability of evidence-based parenting interventions. [128526]

Norman Lamb: A good start in life and positive parenting are fundamental to good mental health and well-being, and to lifelong resilience to adversity. Half of those with lifelong mental illness first experience

symptoms by the age of 14. For this reason we have invested around £54 million over the four years from 2011-12 until 2014-15 in the Children and Young People's Improving Access to Psychological Therapies project, which aims to embed National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence approved best evidence-based therapies across child and adolescent mental health services. These include evidence-based parenting programmes for three to 10-year-olds with conduct disorders.

The Government is also committed to increasing the number of families who can benefit from Family Nurse Partnerships (FNP) (a targeted, evidence-based intensive home visiting programme that supports first time young mothers from early pregnancy until their child is two years old) at any one time to 13,000 by 2015. Good progress towards this is being made with 10,000 places in 86 different local authority areas at October 2012. FNP is based on a robust body of evidence from the United States that shows that FNP improves a wide range of outcomes for vulnerable young mothers and their children including reduced behavioural and emotional problems.

Musculoskeletal Disorders

Nic Dakin: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans his Department has to ensure that musculoskeletal health is included in the responsibilities of Public Health England and the public health observatories. [127096]

Anna Soubry: Public Health England will advise on evidence-based public health interventions to promote the public's health, including, where appropriate, the prevention of musculoskeletal conditions. It will also publish data on indicators in the Public Health Outcomes Framework (i.e. 'Improving outcomes and supporting transparency. Part 1: A public health outcomes framework for England, 2013-2016'). The framework has two indicators, on excess weight in adults and the proportion of physically active and inactive adults, which are particularly relevant to musculoskeletal health. A copy of the Outcomes Framework has already been placed in the Library.

NHS

Andrew Gwynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when the NHS Commissioning Board plans to announce its list of national clinical leads. [127896]

Anna Soubry: This is a matter for the NHS Commissioning Board. We understand its plans relating to national clinical leadership will be announced shortly.

NHS Commissioning Board

Tessa Munt: To ask the Secretary of State for Health who will sit on the National Commissioning Board's 27 local area teams; and what skills relating to health members of those teams will be required to have. [128335]

Anna Soubry: These will be matters for the NHS Commissioning Board to determine. We understand that working as part of a single organisation, each local area team will have a director supported by qualified, appropriately skilled medical, nursing, finance, operations and delivery, and commissioning directors.

NHS: Disclosure of Information

Stephen McPartland: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information his Department holds on the number of instances in which confidentiality clauses have been included in NHS staff severance agreements. [128636]

Dr Poulter: The information requested is not held centrally by the Department, but would be held locally by individual organisations.

The Department approves business cases for extra contractual payments proposed under a compromise agreement but does not usually have sight of the agreements and therefore does not routinely monitor the use of confidentiality clauses.

NHS: Drugs

Jim Shannon: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what discussions he has had with hospital trusts and health organisations on the use of junior drugs. [128511]

Dr Poulter: In 2007 a new European regulation was introduced concerning the development of medicines for children. All new medicinal products and some existing drugs being explored for additional uses are now investigated in paediatric patients unless there is a clear reason not to do so, such as the disease not occurring in children or where there are safety concerns.

The issue of the safety of medicines for children was raised in the Children and Young People's Health Outcomes Forum report published in July. The forum made a number of recommendations on this issue and discussions have been taking place between departmental officials and the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Authority, the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health and the Royal Pharmaceutical Society on how these can be taken forward. The Children and Young People's Health Outcomes Strategy is to be published by Christmas.

Organs: Donors

Glyn Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what recent discussions he has had with the Welsh Government on the effect that the introduction of presumed consent into the organ donation system in Wales will have on the organ transplantation system in England. [128410]

Anna Soubry: We continue to work closely with the Welsh Government on the potential policy, financial, operational and legal implications of their proposed introduction of an opt-out system of consent for organ donation in Wales. Across the United Kingdom we have made considerable progress over the last four years with a welcome significant improvement in organ donor rates. We wish to be certain that the introduction of opt-out legislation in Wales will not have an adverse impact on this progress overall.

Glyn Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what assessment he has made of the effect on the number of human organs likely to become available for

transplant in England if presumed consent were to be introduced in England; [128625]

(2) what assessment he has made of the effect on the number of human organs likely to become available for transplant in England if presumed consent were to be introduced in Wales; [128626]

(3) what discussions he has had with (a) black and minority ethnic, (b) Muslim and (c) Jewish communities in England on the introduction of presumed consent into the organ donation system. [128627]

Anna Soubry: In 2008, the Organ Donation Taskforce considered the issue of presumed consent in considerable detail looking at the clinical, communication, cultural, ethical legal and practical aspects of opt-out legislation. Their second report, "The potential impact of an opt-out system for organ donation" published in November 2008, did not recommend introducing an opt-out system at that time finding that while such a system would have the potential to deliver benefits, they were not confident its introduction would increase organ donor numbers, and felt there was some evidence that donor numbers may go down. For example the majority of faith and belief groups interviewed were positive about donation but most were opposed to the introduction of opt-out legislation.

Instead, the Taskforce believed that a significant increase in donor rates could be achieved by acting on the recommendations in their first report, "Organs for Transplants", published in January 2008, without the need for legislation, and the costs and risks associated with introducing a new consent system. Implementation of the Taskforce recommendations has seen United Kingdom donor numbers rise by 40% over the baseline year of 2007-08.

The Explanatory Memorandum accompanying the recent draft Welsh Government Human Transplantation (Wales) Bill is not definite about the level of increase that is likely to occur with the introduction opt-out legislation in Wales but every additional donor could donate on average three organs to the UK pool for transplantation.

Palliative Care

Glyn Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many formal complaints have been made to his Department claiming that patients were placed on the Liverpool Care Pathway without discussion with the next of kin beforehand. [128148]

Norman Lamb: We have received no formal complaints about the Liverpool Care Pathway (LCP). However, we have received a number of letters from Members of this House and members of the public raising concerns about aspects of the LCP and about reports in the media.

In response to the recent media speculation about the LCP, a number of organisations, led by the National End of Life Care Programme, Dying Matters and the Association for Palliative Medicine, are working with patients, carers and health professionals to look for evidence to support or refute the accusations made in the press. If this work suggests any cause for concern we will respond on the basis of that evidence.

I will be meeting these organisations as well as other organisations representing professionals and patient groups, as well as some patient representatives, for a roundtable discussion to hear a range of views on the issues to be addressed. We are taking a close interest in this work and the outcomes of the projects under way.

Glyn Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what proportion of hospital deaths in (a) England and (b) Wales were on the Liverpool Care Pathway; [128149]

(2) how many patients in (a) England and (b) Wales have been taken off the Liverpool Care Pathway after reassessment by clinicians in each of the last 10 years; [128150]

(3) how many patients in (a) England and (b) Wales have been placed on the Liverpool Care Pathway in each of the last 10 years. [128151]

Norman Lamb: The Liverpool Care Pathway (LCP) was developed by the Marie Curie Palliative Care Institute in Liverpool as an approach to support the delivery of good care in the last hours or days of life.

The Department does not collect information centrally on the number of hospitals, or the number of wards in those hospitals, hospices or care homes which use the LCP, or the number of patients whose care is guided by the LCP.

The LCP is subject to regular audit. The results of the third audit, undertaken by the Marie Curie Palliative Care Institute with the Royal College of Physicians, was published in November 2011.

Information on the LCP, including the third audit and how the pathway should be used, is available from the LCP website:

www.mcpcil.org.uk/mcpcil/liverpool-care-pathway/index.htm

Andrew Rosindell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what training (a) nurses and (b) doctors receive in palliative care. [128210]

Norman Lamb: The General Medical Council (GMC) set out its recommendations on undergraduate medical education in 'Tomorrow's Doctors' (2009). This provides the framework that medical schools use to design detailed curricula and schemes of assessment, and sets out the standards that the GMC use to judge the quality of undergraduate teaching and assessments at individual medical schools. Describing the doctor as a practitioner, 'Tomorrow's Doctors' states that in diagnosing and managing clinical presentations, the doctor will need to contribute to the care of patients and their families at the end of life, including management of symptoms and effective communication and team working. 'Tomorrow's Doctors' is available at:

www.gmc-uk.org/education/undergraduate/tomorrows_doctors.asp

Following qualification, doctors can choose to undertake specialist postgraduate training in palliative medicine.

The Nursing and Midwifery Council is liable for quality assuring the provision of nurse education and ensuring that education providers produce educational programmes that meet the minimum standards set. These standards are included in 'Standards for pre-registration nursing education' (2010). They set out

broad standards of proficiency, which enable local and national needs to be reflected in local curricula, and include specific reference to supporting and addressing the needs of people approaching the end of life.

The standards are available at:

<http://standards.nmc-uk.org/Pages/Welcome.aspx>

Nurses are also able to choose to undertake specialist postgraduate training in palliative care, which would range from degree programmes to training provided by hospices.

As well as recognising the important role of palliative care specialists, the 'End of Life Care Strategy' (2008) highlighted the importance of increasing the skills of generalist doctors and nurses, and other health and social care staff, in the delivery of end of life care.

A number of initiatives have been pursued to develop this element of work force, including:

- the development of core competences and principles for end of life training care;

- developing an extensive e-learning package on end of life care;

- free to access for health and social care staff; and

- producing 'Talking about end of life care: right conversations, right people, right time', based on the findings of a number of communication skills projects.

Andrew Rosindell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information his Department holds on how many people have been placed on the Liverpool Care Pathway since its inception. [128212]

Norman Lamb: The Liverpool Care Pathway (LCP) was developed by the Marie Curie Palliative Care Institute in Liverpool as an approach to support the delivery of good care in the last hours or days of life.

The Department does not collect information centrally about the LCP, including the number of patients whose care is guided by the LCP.

Information on the LCP, including the third audit and how the pathway should be used, is available from the LCP website:

www.mcpcil.org.uk/liverpool-care-pathway/index.htm

Andrew Rosindell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps he is taking to ensure that the relatives of a patient who is in and out of consciousness are consulted and supported to help make decisions such as whether to resuscitate. [128346]

Anna Soubry: It is for health care providers to have appropriate resuscitation policies in place which respect patients' rights, and are understood by all relevant staff, and accessible to those who need them.

The Department has commended the Joint Statement from the British Medical Association, the Resuscitation Council (UK) and the Royal College of Nursing, 'Decisions relating to cardiopulmonary resuscitation' (2007), to national health service trusts as the basis for a resuscitation policy. The Joint Statement provides guidance to assist health care staff in making decisions about resuscitation and on the involvement of the patient and their family in the decision-making process.

Prescription Drugs: Misuse

Jim Dobbin: To ask the Secretary of State for Health who the programme manager is for the National Treatment Agency's research into addiction to prescribed medication. [127887]

Anna Soubry: The Department's policy is that the names of officials should be withheld from disclosure unless they are members of the senior civil service or have a high profile that would justify release. We are accordingly withholding the information requested. The annual accounts of the National Treatment Agency for Substance Misuse for 2011-12 list the organisation's executive directors and are available at:

www.nta.nhs.uk/uploads/ntaannualaccounts2011-12.pdf

Prostate Cancer

Laura Sandys: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much funding the Government specifically sets aside for prostate cancer. [128337]

Anna Soubry: The vast majority of funding for prostate cancer is allocated to primary care trusts (PCTs) as part of their annual allocation. It is not ring-fenced as it is for individual PCTs to assess their populations' health needs and to allocate their resources to meet those needs.

The only funding specifically set aside for prostate cancer is for the Prostate Cancer Risk Management Programme (PCRMP). Since 2002, the PCRMP has been in place to ensure that men over 50 without symptoms of prostate cancer can have a prostate specific antigen (PSA) test free on the national health service after careful consideration of the advantages and disadvantages of PSA testing and after a discussion with a general practitioner.

NHS Cancer Screening Programmes (NHS CSP) is responsible for the management of the PCRMP and funding provided to NHS CSP for the PCRMP in 2012-13 was £232,000. It is for NHS CSP to determine the final amount needed to deliver the PCRMP.

Radiotherapy

Tessa Munt: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what estimate he has made of the additional NHS funding required to fulfil the Prime Minister's pledge that all cancer patients in need of innovative radiotherapy will have access to it from April 2013. [127988]

Anna Soubry: We established a £15 million Radiotherapy Innovation Fund from October 2012 to enable providers to prepare to deliver from April 2013 certain advanced radiotherapy to all patients who might benefit.

Our current best estimate is that it will cost up to £10 million a year from April 2013 onwards to meet the Prime Minister's pledge that patients will be guaranteed access to innovative radiotherapy. Actual costs will depend on decisions by the NHS Commissioning Board on how best to approach implementation.

Tessa Munt: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) with reference to section 3.27 of his Department's report on Radiotherapy Service in England 2012, for

what reason three of the four new cancer centres planned are situated in the South East of England; and for what reason none are being built in the South West of England; [128280]

(2) with reference to table 3 of his Department's report on Radiotherapy Service in England 2012, whether a lack of modern radiotherapy equipment prevents all the cancer centres in the South West region of England from delivering intensity modulated radiation therapy at no more than two per cent of all radical episodes; [128281]

(3) with reference to section 2.6 of his Department's report on Radiotherapy Service in England 2012, if he will conduct an economic study to measure the financial effectiveness and benefit to cancer patients of the money the NHS spends on cancer drugs against that spent on radiotherapy; [128290]

(4) with reference to section 3.36 of his Department's report on Radiotherapy Service in England 2012, when work will begin to establish the effectiveness of treating solitary metastases, early lung and prostate cancer with stereotactic ablative radiotherapy. [128291]

Anna Soubry: We are advised by NHS South that radiotherapy capacity in the South West is currently able to meet the needs of patients requiring radiotherapy treatment within the appropriate timeframes. Local planning has anticipated that the current levels of provision will be suitable up to at least 2016. As such, there are no plans to build additional radiotherapy centres at this time. Page 26 of the report Radiotherapy Services in England 2012 also shows that a new radiotherapy centre was built in Taunton in 2009.

Almost all radiotherapy machines in the national health service in England are capable of delivering Intensity Modulated Radiotherapy (IMRT). There are likely to be a range of reasons why IMRT activity remains low in some centres. Recognising that there may be one-off set-up costs such as additional software licences and staff training required to establish services, a £15 million radiotherapy innovation fund has been established for 2012-13. This fund will enable centres to ensure that they are ready to deliver IMRT at the right levels from April 2013. There will be a fixed sum allocated to all centres and bids have been sought for the remainder of the fund. Intensive support is also being provided to help centres develop and implement local action plans.

Work to establish the effectiveness of treating solitary metastases, early lung and prostate cancer with stereotactic ablative radiotherapy needs to be undertaken in clinical trials. Radiotherapy related research is complex and requires centres of excellence with critical mass to lead the process as well as a network of active centres to recruit to clinical trials. The National Cancer Research Institute Clinical and Translational Radiotherapy Research Working Group coordinates radiotherapy research initiatives and is likely to have a key role in coordinating research in this area.

The Department currently has no plans to conduct an economic study to measure the financial effectiveness and benefit to cancer patients of the money the NHS spends on cancer drugs against that spent on radiotherapy.

Cancer treatment falls into three main categories: chemotherapy, radiotherapy and surgery. Each has a different role and they can be used in combination to

treat an individual patient. While chemotherapy is directly responsible for the cure of fewer patients, it has a greater role to play in the palliation of symptoms.

A common framework is used across different health treatment setting to permit relative merits of new drugs and technological advances to be evaluated and judged if they offer good value for money.

Radiotherapy: Wells

Tessa Munt: To ask the Secretary of State for Health where the nearest cancer centre is at which cancer patients in Wells constituency can receive stereotactic ablative radiotherapy treatment for tumours of the (a) prostate, (b) lung, (c) liver and (d) brain. [127989]

Anna Soubry: We are advised that the nearest cancer centre for patients from Wells to receive stereotactic ablative radiotherapy treatment for tumours is the Royal Marsden hospital in Sutton, Surrey.

Registration of Births, Deaths, Marriages and Civil Partnerships

Patrick Mercer: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many deaths of people aged (a) under five, (b) between five and 14, (c) between 15 and 44, (d) between 45 and 59, (e) between 60 and 69 and (f) over 70 which occurred in (i) 2005, (ii) 2006, (iii) 2007 and (iv) 2008 were (A) registered by the end of 2011, (B) registered by the end of 2011, with a delay between death date and death registration date exceeding 90 days, (C) registered by the end of 2011, with a delay between death date and death registration date exceeding

182 days and (D) registered by the end of 2011, with a delay between death date and death registration date exceeding 365 days. [128345]

Mr Hurd: I have been asked to reply on behalf of the Cabinet Office.

The information requested falls within the responsibility of the UK Statistics Authority. I have asked the authority to reply.

Letter from Glen Watson, dated November 2012:

As Director General for the Office for National Statistics, I have been asked to reply to your recent question asking 'how many deaths of people aged (a) under five, (b) between five and 14, (c) between 15 and 44, (d) between 45 and 59, (e) between 60 and 69 and (f) over 70 which occurred in (i) 2005, (ii) 2006, (iii) 2007 and (iv) 2008 were (A) registered by the end of 2011, (B) registered by the end of 2011, with a delay between death date and death registration date exceeding 90 days, (C) registered by the end of 2011, with a delay between death date and death registration date exceeding 182 days and (D) registered by the end of 2011, with a delay between death date and death registration date exceeding 365 days. [128345]

The following table provides the number of deaths in England and Wales that occurred between 2005 and 2008 and were registered by the end of 2011. Registration delays exceeding 90 days, 182 days and 365 days are presented by age group.

Annual figures on the number of deaths registered by sex, age group and cause in England and Wales are available from the Office for National Statistics at:

<http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/publications/all-releases.html?definition=tcm%3A77-27475>

Further details on the impact of registration delays on mortality statistics are available at:

<http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/user-guidance/health-and-life-events/impact-of-registration-delays-on-mortality-statistics--2011.html>

Number of death registrations by age group and duration of registration delay in England and Wales, 2005 to 2008^{1,2}

	<i>Age group (years)</i>	<i>Exceeding 90 days</i>	<i>Exceeding 182 days</i>	<i>Exceeding 365 days</i>	<i>Deaths All registrations</i>
2005	0-4	649	364	115	3,877
	5-14	229	143	49	757
	15-44	6,674	3,504	919	17,842
	45-59	3,623	1,585	396	40,278
	60-69	2,276	1,010	230	61,379
	70+	5,980	2,531	539	390,945
2006	0-4	642	346	110	3,938
	5-14	214	125	39	752
	15-44	6,850	3,787	970	17,734
	45-59	3,816	1,799	459	40,100
	60-69	2,430	1,107	263	60,484
	70+	6,220	2,797	611	381,288
2007	0-4	701	391	145	3,963
	5-14	215	138	45	715
	15-44	7,262	4,315	1,249	17,738
	45-59	4,205	2,156	554	38,990
	60-69	2,798	1,370	366	61,178
	70+	7,123	3,587	942	383,272
2008	0-4	723	395	127	3,924
	5-14	209	121	43	641
	15-44	7,020	3,925	1,139	17,407
	45-59	4,166	2,048	530	38,125
	60-69	2,849	1,342	346	61,399

Number of death registrations by age group and duration of registration delay in England and Wales, 2005 to 2008^{1,2}

Age group (years)	Exceeding 90 days	Exceeding 182 days	Exceeding 365 days	Deaths All registrations
70+	7,423	3,552	980	387,395

¹ Figures are for deaths occurring in each year and registered by 31 December 2011.

² Figures include deaths of non-residents.

Source:

Office for National Statistics

Streptococcus

Naomi Long: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what effect he expects the 2012 update to the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists Prevention of early onset neonatal group B streptococcal disease guidelines to have on rates of group B streptococcus infections in newborn babies; [128273]

(2) how many responses have been received by the UK National Screening Committee consultation on introducing routine screening for group B streptococcus in pregnant women; [128274]

(3) how many meetings he has had with (a) officials and (b) stakeholders to discuss the UK National Screening Committee's review of group B streptococcus screening for pregnant women. [128275]

Dr Poulter: The national guidelines for prevention of early onset neonatal group B streptococcus disease are developed to set the standards for high quality health care. The Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists published on 18 July 2012 the revised Green-Top guideline, originally published in November 2003, to take into account new evidence on the prevention of early-onset neonatal group B streptococcus (GBS) disease. In addition, the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) published a new guideline on antibiotics for the prevention and treatment of early-onset neonatal infection, including GBS on 22 August 2012.

The UK National Screening Committee (UK NSC) advises Ministers and the national health service in all four United Kingdom countries about all aspects of screening policy, including screening policy for GBS carriage in pregnancy. In 2008-09, the UK NSC recommended that a national screening programme to test for GBS carriage in pregnancy using the enriched culture medium test should not be offered. The UK NSC is currently reviewing the evidence for screening for GBS carriage in pregnancy against its criteria again.

The UK NSC held a public consultation on its screening review from 16 July 2012 to 23 October 2012. In total, 212 written responses were received. The UK NSC will consider all of the submissions made during the consultation at its 13 November 2012 meeting. All consultation replies will be available on the UK NSC's website following the meeting apart from those where stakeholder organisations or individuals have requested that their response is not made public. The Department expects to receive a recommendation from the UK NSC shortly.

A meeting between the former Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health, my hon. Friend the Member for Guildford (Anne Milton), and officials took place on 10 January 2012 to discuss screening for GBS carriage in pregnancy. The former Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health also hosted a meeting to discuss the UK NSC's antenatal screening for GBS

carriage review on 24 January 2012. Attendees included the UK NSC, the charity Group B Strep Support and Members of Parliament.

Tranquillisers

Jim Dobbin: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what his Department's policy is on the closure of specialist tranquilliser withdrawal clinics; [127888]

(2) what steps his Department is taking to reduce the over-prescribing of tranquillisers by doctors. [127889]

Anna Soubry: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave him on 15 October 2012, *Official Report*, columns 175-6W.

Jim Dobbin: To ask the Secretary of State for Health pursuant to the answer of 15 October 2012, *Official Report*, columns 175-6W, on tranquillisers, whether his Department retains oversight of policy on addiction to medicines; whether stand-alone tranquilliser addiction will be treated by the National Treatment Agency or whether treatment will only be provided when such addictions occur in association with misuse of drugs; and where the information not collected centrally is held and how it can be obtained. [128083]

Anna Soubry: The Department retains oversight of policy on addiction to medicines. For information about the providers of locally-commissioned services, the hon. Member should approach the relevant local commissioner.

Primary care trusts, not the National Treatment Agency, are currently responsible for commissioning specialist services for the treatment of dependency. This responsibility will transfer to local authorities from April 2013. An individual patient who is worried that they are addicted to a prescription medicine should raise the issue with the prescribing doctor, so that they can have a discussion about the help that they might need.

The Government's Drug Strategy published in December 2010 made clear that we are determined to tackle dependence on any substance including prescription and over-the-counter medicines, alcohol and illicit drugs.

Jim Dobbin: To ask the Secretary of State for Health with reference to the answer of 20 July 2009, *Official Report*, column 1008W, on tranquillisers, what steps he has taken to ensure that the National Treatment Agency programme of work on prescribed medication will produce high-quality and effective services for tranquilliser withdrawal. [128095]

Anna Soubry: The work of the National Treatment Agency for Substance Misuse is overseen by its Board of Directors, and as an arm's length body, it is accountable to the Department for progress against its Action Plan for 2012-13.

Transplant Surgery

Andrew Rosindell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many people received an organ transplant in 2011; [128207]

(2) what recent steps he has taken to encourage people to become organ donors; [128208]

(3) how many people in the London borough of Havering received an organ transplant in 2011; [128209]

Anna Soubry: NHS Blood and Transplant (NHSBT) advise that, in 2011, 3,890 people received an organ transplant in the United Kingdom and 14 people received a transplant in the London borough of Havering.

Since the publication in 2008 of the Organ Donation Taskforce (ODTF) plan for a 50% improvement in donation rates by 2013, a great deal of work has taken place to strengthen the donation programme and increase the number of organs available for patients. Since then organ donor rates have increased by around 40% and continue to rise.

We have a number of initiatives to encourage people to add their name to the organ donation register (ODR). Much of this work is led by NHSBT in conjunction with a number of partners in the private, public and third sectors. For example, people may sign up to the ODR when they register with a new general practitioner, when applying for a new passport, when applying for a European Health Insurance Card and when applying for a Boots advantage card. We have established a prompted choice scheme, working in partnership with the Department of Transport and the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency, which requires people applying for a driving licence online to answer a question about organ donation.

Also, there are now over 200 highly trained specialist nurses for organ donation based in hospitals across the country. Clinical leads for organ donation have been appointed in every acute hospital working closely with hospital organ donation committees to increase donation rates.

NHSBT are now in the process of developing their post 2013 strategy—building on the ODTF recommendations and identifying new ways to make sure that as many people as possible in the UK receive the transplant they need.

We have also set up the National Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Transplant Alliance to increase the number of Black, Asian and minority ethnic people on bone marrow and whole organ registers, and to increase donation rates in those communities.

Universal Credit

Mr McCann: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how the qualifying conditions for each passported benefit for which he is responsible will change under universal credit. [128334]

Norman Lamb: The administration of passported benefits is the responsibility of a number of Government Departments and the devolved Administrations. We are currently working across government to ensure that we introduce universal credit in a way that works smoothly

with all passported benefits while ensuring that these benefits continue to be available to the families that need them most.

We will announce our eligibility criteria in due course.

Vitamin D

Jim Shannon: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what steps he is taking to address vitamin D deficiency amongst young girls; [128502]

(2) what discussions he has had with hospital trusts to ensure that pregnant women receive the correct dosage of vitamin D. [128504]

Anna Soubry: The Department has not had any formal discussions with hospital trusts regarding the dose of vitamin D pregnant women should receive.

The UK Chief Medical Officers (CMOs) wrote to health professionals on 2 February 2012 to raise awareness of the importance of vitamin D and to reiterate the current advice from UK Health Departments that those groups of people who are at risk of vitamin D deficiency, including pregnant women and young children, should take a daily vitamin D supplement to prevent vitamin D deficiency.

The CMOs' letter specifically stated that all pregnant and breastfeeding women should take a daily supplement containing 10 micrograms (400 IU) of vitamin D. The NHS London Medicines Information Service has compiled a list of vitamin D supplements that will provide the amounts of vitamin D recommended by the Department for different age groups. This list is available on the National Electronic Library for Medicines website and was also sent to pharmacy organisations in March 2012.

As part of the Government's Healthy Start scheme, vouchers that can be exchanged for free vitamin supplements containing the recommended amounts of vitamin D are provided to pregnant women and families with children under four years of age in very low income and disadvantaged families. All pregnant women under 18 years old also qualify for the scheme, even if they do not receive any of the benefits or tax credits listed in the eligibility criteria.

UK Health Departments advise that most people, including young girls over the age of five years, should be able to get all the vitamin D they need via exposure to summer sunlight and eating a healthy balanced diet.

Window Blinds: Accidents

Andrew Rosindell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps he is taking to ensure that parents are aware of the potential hazards of window blind cords to young children. [128317]

Dr Poulter: NHS Choices website has information and advice on child injury prevention including a video on risks to young children within the home. This includes reference to the potential hazards of blind cords. The Government also funds the Royal Society for Accident Prevention for projects around the home to prevent tragic deaths, including childhood deaths from strangulation by blind cords.

DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER

Trident

Mr Ainsworth: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister what assessment he has made of the current indicative year-on-year profile of spending on the development phase of the replacement for Trident. [126934]

Mr Dunne [*holding answer 6 November 2012*]: I have been asked to reply on behalf of the Ministry of Defence.

The Initial Gate decision for the Successor Submarine Programme was announced to Parliament on 18 May 2011 at an estimated cost of some £3 billion. The latest forecast year-on-year profile of spending on the programme, out to the Main Gate investment decision in 2016, forecast by the Ministry of Defence as at 31 March 2012, is as follows:

<i>Financial year</i>	<i>Costs (£ million)</i>
2012-13	431
2013-14	486
2014-15	595
2015-16	695
2016-17	608

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Bangladesh

Mrs Main: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development pursuant to the answer of 22 October 2012, *Official Report*, column 724W, on Bangladesh, how much was spent training each government official. [128190]

Mr Duncan: All projects selected for the Civil Society Challenge Fund were required to show that the budget required for the proposed work was realistic, economic and efficient. The project referred to in the answer of 22 October 2012 was closed in 2010. DFID does not have information about the exact level of resources spent on training for each government official.

Mrs Main: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development pursuant to the answer of 22 October 2012, *Official Report*, column 724W, on Bangladesh, how the project assisted people to understand their rights and entitlements. [128191]

Mr Duncan: The project assisted people to understand their rights and entitlements through various activities including: production and dissemination of information materials and leaflets on the right to information; implementation of a training course for elected representatives and for civil society organisations; follow-up support to 50 members of Parliament plus local government officials; and organised 160 workshops with the public on their right to information. In addition, training and debates were conducted with schools, colleges and journalists in 64 districts. A national level convention on International Information was organised. The project also developed and disseminated a booklet on community radio to create broader access to information for poor communities.

Developing Countries: Urban Areas

Mr Ivan Lewis: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what her key urban development priorities are. [128515]

Justine Greening: In addressing the many opportunities and challenges presented by rapid urbanisation, the priorities that we have identified and for which we have programmes include: the need to provide the poor with proper services and housing; ensuring cities are resilient to the impacts of climate change; and improving city management and governance.

EU Aid

Mr Ivan Lewis: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development whether she will support the European Development Fund's proposed level of £30 billion in the EU budget negotiations. [128517]

Justine Greening: The UK's top priority in the negotiations for the European Union (EU) budget and European Development Fund (EDF) in the period 2014 to 2020 is that the level of EU expenditure must be carefully contained. We oppose increases beyond real growth in any area of EU expenditure, including the EDF. However, we believe that it is also important to maintain or increase the proportion of Official Development Assistance within a restrained overall budget.

India

Keith Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development (1) what plans she has for the redistribution of UK aid to India; [127975]

(2) what her timescale is for the reduction of UK aid to India. [127976]

Justine Greening: I refer the right hon. Member to my written ministerial statement of 9 November 2012, *Official Report*, column 51WS. As a result of our decision to make no new financial aid grants to India, plans for reallocating these sums to other Department for International Development programmes have not yet been finalised.

Financial aid grants will start to fall from the current financial year, and will be completed by the end of 2015.

Mr Ivan Lewis: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what projects currently funded by her Department in India will cease by 2015. [128516]

Justine Greening: The following ongoing projects are expected to close by 2015:

*DFID India projects closing by 2015**State level projects*

- Bihar Governance and Administrative Reform Programme
- Kolkata Urban Services for the Poor
- Madhya Pradesh Health Sector Support
- Madhya Pradesh Power Sector Reform—Phase 2
- Madhya Pradesh Rural Livelihoods Project—Phase 2
- Madhya Pradesh Urban Services for the Poor

Orissa Health Sector Support

National projects

Reproductive and Child Health Programme Phase II
Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan II (Universal elementary education)
Mahila Samakhya (Gender equality and women's empowerment)
Support to National Policies for Urban Poverty Reduction

Civil society and multilaterals

UNICEF Strategic Partnership in India
DFID—Asian Development Bank Partnership for India

Other

Impact Evaluation Fund

Mr Ivan Lewis: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what funding her Department will spend in India after 2015. [128521]

Justine Greening: DFID will conclude all its financial aid grants to India by 2015 as planned. After 2015, DFID's bilateral programme in India will include only technical assistance programmes and investments in private sector projects which give opportunities to poor people while generating a financial return. Budgets for this work have not yet been finalised.

Mr Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what analysis her Department undertook to inform the decision to withdraw UK financial aid to India; and if she will make a statement. [128668]

Justine Greening: My officials in Delhi regularly monitor India's economic performance and development progress. More information on the decision can be found in the written ministerial statement of 9 November 2012, *Official Report*, column 51WS.

Mr Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what assessment her Department has made of the potential effect of the withdrawal of UK financial aid to India on poverty levels in India. [128669]

Justine Greening: India is expected to achieve the millennium development goal of halving the proportion of people living under \$1.25 per day by 2015.

St Helena

Stephen Barclay: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development with reference to her planned funding of an airport at St Helena, what the estimated (a) total cost and (b) cost is of the airport in each of the next five years, including preparatory and associated spend. [128995]

Mr Duncan: I refer my hon. Friend to the written ministerial statement of 3 November 2011, *Official*

Report, column 50WS, which provided details of the Design Build and Operate contract for the St Helena airport. Estimated payments under this contract over the next five years are:

	£ million
2012-13	75.6
2013-14	54.2
2014-15	30.5
2015-16	2.7
2016-17	3.2

The contract amount comprises most of the total estimated cost. We have also allowed for other related expenditure, but it would be inappropriate to release further financial estimates as this could influence future procurement and negotiations.

Stephen Barclay: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development with reference to her planned funding of an airport at St Helena, and her key goal of boosting the local economy, what assessment her Department has made of the likely level of demand to visit the island. [129018]

Mr Duncan: A great deal of analysis has been done in this area. The 2005 feasibility study into the provision of access to St Helena included an assessment of potential tourism demand. This was based on original research, a survey of tourism operators, and studies of tourism growth in other island communities that have experienced significant improvements in air access. The figures were independently reviewed and revised in 2008 and again in 2010. The conclusion of this work is that tourist numbers are likely to increase from around 1,000 a year under the current sea access arrangements to around 29,000 a year within 25 years of the opening of the airport. Investment in an airport is justified even without such an increase in tourism.

Stephen Barclay: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development with reference to her planned funding of an airport at St Helena, what assessment her Department has made of the sufficiency of the cargo capacity of any likely aircraft service to replace that currently provided by ship. [129019]

Mr Duncan: While there will be an opportunity for limited air cargo on flights to St Helena, it is not expected that this will replace the current cargo capacity of the RMS St Helena. UK Government subsidy to the RMS St Helena will cease on commencement of air services, and we will assist the St Helena Government in establishing alternative sea cargo services through commercial shipping.

ORAL ANSWERS

Monday 19 November 2012

	<i>Col. No.</i>		<i>Col. No.</i>
HOME DEPARTMENT	291	HOME DEPARTMENT—continued	
Antisocial Behaviour	304	Policing (Bureaucracy)	299
Asylum Seekers	298	Policing Levels (East Midlands)	297
Drugs Strategy	294	Student Visa System	295
Front-line Police Officers	291	Student Visas	301
Gangmasters Licensing Authority	306	Topical Questions	307
Immigration Rules	293	UK Border Force	298
Police and Crime Commissioners	305	Visa System	302
Police Procurement	303		

WRITTEN MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Monday 19 November 2012

	<i>Col. No.</i>		<i>Col. No.</i>
BUSINESS, INNOVATION AND SKILLS	15WS	JUSTICE	22WS
Balance of Competences Review	16WS	Judicial Review	22WS
Regulation of Business	15WS		
COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT ..	17WS	TREASURY	17WS
Parliamentary Written Question (Correction)	17WS	Public Service Pension Reform	17WS
ENERGY AND CLIMATE CHANGE	18WS	WALES	23WS
EU Environmental Council	18WS	Commission on Devolution in Wales	23WS
FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE	19WS	WORK AND PENSIONS	23WS
Conflict Resources	19WS	Access to Work	23WS
		Measuring Child Poverty (Consultation)	26WS

PETITION

Monday 19 November 2012

	<i>Col. No.</i>	<i>Col. No.</i>
DEFENCE	3P	
The Green Howards	3P	

WRITTEN ANSWERS

Monday 19 November 2012

	<i>Col. No.</i>		<i>Col. No.</i>
ATTORNEY-GENERAL	220W	BUSINESS, INNOVATION AND SKILLS—continued	
Pay	220W	Students: Loans	317W
BUSINESS, INNOVATION AND SKILLS	308W	Universal Credit	317W
Agriculture: Education	308W	CABINET OFFICE	251W
Antidumping Duties	308W	Job Creation: Private Sector	251W
Employment: Rural Areas	308W	Minimum Wage	251W
Engineering: Young People	309W	Part-time Employment	252W
EU Grants and Loans	309W	Pay	252W
Export Credit Guarantees	309W	Temporary Employment: Tax Avoidance	253W
Further Education: West Midlands	310W	Voluntary Work: Young People	253W
Higher Education: Blackpool	310W	Working Mothers	253W
Kidneys: Diseases	310W		
Local Enterprise Partnerships	311W	COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT ..	342W
Manufacturing Industries: Tees Valley	311W	Affordable Housing	342W
Nuclear Physics	312W	Affordable Housing: Havering	343W
Overseas Trade: Somalia	312W	Bookmakers	343W
Pay	313W	Broadband	343W
Regional Assistance	313W	Council Tax	344W
Satellite Communications	313W	Family Intervention Projects	345W
South East	314W	Fire Services	342W

	<i>Col. No.</i>
COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT—	
<i>continued</i>	
Government Procurement Card	345W
Homelessness: Plymouth	346W
Housing: Construction	347W
Housing: Havering	347W
Leasehold Valuation Tribunal	347W
Local Government	348W
Members: Correspondence	348W
Non-domestic Rates	348W
Pay	349W
Planning Permission	349W
Research	350W
Universal Credit	350W
CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT	317W
Arts	317W
Arts Council England	319W
Gun Sports	320W
International Broadcasting	321W
Internet: Gillingham	321W
Leisure: Surveys	322W
Pay	322W
Social Networking: Advertising	322W
Sports: Public Participation	323W
Universal Credit	323W
DEFENCE	223W
Afghanistan	223W
Armed Forces: Children	223W
Armed Forces: Foreign Nationals	223W
Armed Forces: Redundancy	225W
Armed Forces: Sexual Offences	226W
Armed Forces: Vehicles	226W
Armoured Fighting Vehicles	227W
BAE Systems	227W
Canada	227W
Catering	228W
Civil Servants: Retirement	228W
Defence: Procurement	229W
Defence Reform Review	228W
Defence: Scotland	230W
DM Longtown	231W
Elbit Systems	231W
ELINT	231W
Fuels	232W
HMS Dragon	232W
ICT	232W
Information and Communications Technology	233W
Joint Strike Fighter Aircraft	233W
Maritime Collaborative Working Environment	234W
Military Aircraft	234W
NATO	235W
Nuclear Weapons	235W
Public Expenditure	236W
Redundancy	236W
Reserve Forces	236W
Scotland	236W
Sea King Helicopters	237W
Staff	237W
Stealth Technology	237W
Submarines	237W
Trident Missiles	238W
Trident Submarines	239W
UN Programme of Action On Small Arms and Light Weapons	239W
Unmanned Air Vehicles	240W
Veterans	240W
Westminster Connections	240W
DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER	409W
Trident	409W

	<i>Col. No.</i>
EDUCATION	350W
Academies	350W
Children: Custody	351W
Children in Care	351W
Children: Malnutrition	352W
Children's Play	352W
Class Sizes	352W
Education: Qualifications	353W
Engineering: Young People	353W
Free School Meals	353W
Further Education: Free School Meals	354W
Grammar Schools: Free School Meals	355W
Health Education: Sex	365W
Home Education	365W
Languages: GCSE	366W
Ministerial Policy Advisers	367W
Outdoor Education	367W
Overseas Students: Panama	368W
Peniel Academy	369W
Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education	369W
Press: Subscriptions	369W
Private Education	369W
Pupils: Disadvantaged	370W
Pupils: Per Capita Costs	371W
Schools	372W
Schools: Admissions	373W
Schools: Disability	373W
Schools: Finance	374W
Schools: Lancashire	375W
Schools: Worcestershire	375W
Science: Education	376W
Sixth Form Education: West Midlands	377W
Special Educational Needs	377W
Special Guardianship Orders	378W
Teachers	378W
Teachers: Pensions	379W
Truancy	380W
Universal Credit	381W
ENERGY AND CLIMATE CHANGE	259W
Electricity and Gas (Energy Company Obligation) Order 2012	259W
Employment Agencies	259W
Energy	260W
Energy: Housing	260W
Exhaust Emissions: Transport	260W
Fuel Poverty	260W
Garages and Petrol Stations: Closures	261W
Glass: Recycling	261W
Petrol	261W
Universal Credit	261W
Wind Power	262W
ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS	324W
Agriculture: Subsidies	324W
Air Pollution	324W
Animals: Exports	324W
Ash Dieback Disease	325W
Beaches: Saltburn	327W
Bovine Tuberculosis	328W
Catering	329W
Cider	329W
Common Land	329W
Floods: Insurance	330W
Gangmasters Licensing Authority	330W
Himalayan Balsam	331W
Livestock: Exports	331W
Livestock: Transport	332W
Marine Conservation Zones	332W

	<i>Col. No.</i>
ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS—	
<i>continued</i>	
Nappies: Waste Disposal.....	333W
National Wildlife Crime Unit	334W
Nature Conservation.....	334W
Plants: Disease Control.....	335W
Ragwort	337W
Sick Leave	337W
Sky Lanterns.....	337W
Trees: Diseases	338W
Water	338W
Water Charges.....	339W
FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE.....	274W
Algeria	274W
China	275W
Dalai Lama	275W
EU Defence Policy.....	275W
EU Law.....	275W
Mauritania.....	276W
Slovak Roma.....	276W
Trade Agreements.....	276W
Turks and Caicos Islands	277W
Ukraine.....	278W
Unmanned Air Vehicles	278W
Visits Abroad	278W
Western Sahara	279W
Yemen.....	279W
HEALTH.....	381W
Accident and Emergency Departments	381W
Alcoholic Drinks: Children.....	382W
Alcoholic Drinks: Misuse.....	383W
Arthritis	383W
Autism: Prisoners.....	384W
Behaviour Disorders: Children.....	384W
Bereavement Counselling.....	385W
Calcium	385W
Cancer	385W
Cancer: Drugs.....	386W
Care Homes: Fees and Charges.....	386W
Chronic Illnesses	387W
Death Certificates	387W
Dementia	387W
Depressive Illnesses: Children	388W
Diabetes	388W
General Medical Council	390W
Genito-urinary Medicine	390W
Health Services: Schools	390W
Hotels	391W
Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority and Human Tissue Authority	391W
Kidneys: Diseases	392W
Learning Disability: Social Services	393W
Lung Cancer	394W
Lung Diseases	394W
Meningitis	395W
Mental Health Services	395W
Musculoskeletal Disorders	396W
NHS.....	396W
NHS Commissioning Board	396W
NHS: Disclosure of Information	397W
NHS: Drugs.....	397W
Organs: Donors	397W
Palliative Care.....	398W
Prescription Drugs: Misuse.....	401W
Prostate Cancer	401W
Radiotherapy	401W
Radiotherapy: Wells.....	403W
Registration of Births, Deaths, Marriages and Civil Partnerships.....	403W

	<i>Col. No.</i>
HEALTH—continued	
Streptococcus.....	405W
Tranquillisers	406W
Transplant Surgery.....	407W
Universal Credit.....	407W
Vitamin D.....	408W
Window Blinds: Accidents	408W
HOME DEPARTMENT.....	240W
Antisocial Behaviour.....	242W
Arrest Warrants: Extradition	243W
Boarding Schools: Abuse	243W
Boko Haram	243W
Bovine Tuberculosis	244W
Counter-terrorism	244W
Crime: Merseyside	244W
Draft Communications Data Bill.....	245W
Ecstasy.....	245W
Electoral Commission	245W
Human Trafficking	240W
Imitation Firearms.....	245W
Islam.....	246W
Mass Media	246W
Migration Controls	242W
Police	247W
Police Accountability	242W
Police and Crime Commissioners.....	241W
Police and Crime Commissioners: Elections	247W
Police and Crime Commissioners: Wales.....	247W
Police Custody: Death.....	247W
Police: Driving	248W
Police: Ethnic Groups	248W
Police Force Collaboration.....	241W
Police: Job Satisfaction.....	249W
Primates: Animal Experiments.....	249W
Remembrance Day.....	250W
Sick Leave	250W
UN Protocol on Illicit Manufacture and Trafficking Firearms	251W
HOUSE OF COMMONS COMMISSION.....	221W
Palace of Westminster: Repairs and Maintenance..	221W
Select Committees.....	222W
INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT	409W
Bangladesh.....	409W
Developing Countries: Urban Areas	410W
EU Aid	410W
India	410W
St Helena	411W
JUSTICE.....	279W
Billing	279W
Catering	280W
Crime and Courts Bill.....	280W
Debt Collection.....	281W
Drugs: Birmingham	281W
Electronic Tagging	282W
Landlords: Prosecutions.....	282W
Leasehold Valuation Tribunal	289W
Methamphetamine.....	290W
Offenders: Rehabilitation	291W
Policing and Crime Act 2009.....	291W
Prisoners: Repatriation	293W
Prisons: Finance.....	293W
Prisons: Procurement	296W
Richard III.....	297W
Risley Prison.....	297W
Sentencing.....	298W
Universal Credit.....	303W
Wandsworth Prison.....	305W

	<i>Col. No.</i>
JUSTICE—continued	
Work Capability Assessment.....	306W
Written Questions	307W
LEADER OF THE HOUSE	220W
Palace of Westminster: Repairs and Maintenance..	220W
NORTHERN IRELAND	273W
Bombings: Omagh	273W
Employment Agencies.....	274W
PRIME MINISTER	341W
Middle East	341W
SCOTLAND	254W
Employment Agencies.....	254W
TRANSPORT	217W
Catering	217W
Dementia	217W
Manufacturing Industries: Motor Vehicles.....	217W
Railways: Capital Allowances	218W
Stagecoach Group and Go Ahead Group	218W
Streatham Common Station.....	219W
Tolls: Motorcycles.....	219W
Universal Credit.....	219W
TREASURY	262W
Apprentices	262W
Banks: Loans	263W
Child Benefit	263W
Corporation Tax	264W
Economic Situation: Forecasts	265W
Excise Duties: Fuels	265W
Gift Aid	266W

	<i>Col. No.</i>
TREASURY—continued	
Gift Aid: Schools	267W
Government Departments: Procurement	267W
Government Securities	268W
Imports: Eggs.....	268W
Mortgages.....	269W
National Insurance Contributions: Musicians	269W
Offshore Industry.....	269W
Personal Income	270W
Public Sector Debt	270W
Regional Planning and Development	270W
Revenue and Customs: Cumbernauld	271W
Social Enterprises.....	271W
Staff	272W
Taxation: Fraud	272W
Temporary Employment: Tax Avoidance	273W
Venture Capital	273W
WALES	220W
Employment Agencies.....	220W
WOMEN AND EQUALITIES	341W
Equality and Human Rights Commission.....	341W
WORK AND PENSIONS	254W
Consumer Prices Index	254W
Dementia	254W
Housing Benefit	255W
Industrial Health and Safety	255W
Musculoskeletal Disorders	255W
Occupational Pensions	256W
Pension, Disability and Carers Service.....	256W
Social Security Benefits.....	257W
State Retirement Pensions.....	257W
Vacancies	257W
Vacancies: Cumbria	258W

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CONTENTS

Monday 19 November 2012

Oral Answers to Questions [Col. 291] [see index inside back page]
Secretary of State for the Home Department

UK Aid (Uganda and Rwanda) [Col. 313]
Answer to urgent question—(Justine Greening)

Groceries Code Adjudicator Bill [Lords] [Col. 326]
Motion for Second Reading—(Jo Swinson)—agreed to
Programme motion—(Greg Hands)—agreed to

Petitions [Col. 413]

Telford Rail Services [Col. 414]
Debate on motion for Adjournment

Written Ministerial Statements [Col. 15WS]

Petition [Col. 3P]
Observations

Written Answers to Questions [Col. 217W] [see index inside back page]
