

Backbench Business Committee

Representations: Backbench Debates

Tuesday 10 October 2017

Ordered by the House of Commons to be published on 10 October 2017.

Watch the meeting

Members present: Ian Mearns (Chair); Bob Blackman; Robert Courts; Jess Phillips; Alex Sobel; Mr William Wragg.

Questions 1-28

Witnesses

[I:](#) Sir Kevin Barron.

[II:](#) Steve McCabe.

[III:](#) Simon Clarke.

[IV:](#) Stuart C. McDonald.

[V:](#) Marcus Fysh.

[VI:](#) Norman Lamb.

[VII:](#) Rushanara Ali and Mrs Anne Main.

Written evidence from witnesses:

– [Add names of witnesses and hyperlink to submissions]



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Chair: Welcome to the first formal meeting of the Backbench Business Committee in this parliamentary Session. We know that this is a two-year Session, and that we have a limited amount of time to allocate at fairly short notice, I am afraid to say. So if you are making a bid this afternoon, please bear in mind that we may look to you to fill some time next week if at all possible.

We have eight applications in front of us this afternoon, and we will take applicants in the order that the applications were received. Before I ask Kevin Barron to address us—Kevin, please come to the fore—I have one little piece of business. Robert, would you do it?

Robert Courts: Thank you, Chairman. I declare an interest, as laid out in the Register of Members' Financial Interests.

Chair: Thank you very much indeed. I would just point out that we had a private sitting of the Committee on 12 September, when all the other Members did the necessary from that perspective.

Sir Kevin Barron made representations.

Q1 **Chair:** The first application in front of us this afternoon is Sir Kevin Barron on tobacco control.

Sir Kevin Barron: I sent the application, so I will not go through it all, Ian; I will just pick out one or two points I believe are salient. This is the first tobacco control plan that has been published since 2010. You may or may not know that the targets set in the last one were quite successful; they were actually met, in most areas anyway. This is a quite adventurous new plan for meeting further targets, particularly on smoking and teenagers, which is something that we all have an interest in, I hope.

We still have 7.3 million smokers here in the UK at the moment, and we still have something in the region of 200 deaths per day from smoking-related diseases. It is still the biggest killer by far. Notwithstanding the success of the last plan, it is quite clear that we have to keep pressure on all parties in relation to that. The cost to us of smoking is somewhere in the region of £11 billion, from the cost to the national health service to the costs to employers of lost output due to sickness and smoking breaks, and £4.1 billion to wider society from lost output. It is quite a massive thing, and it affects the economy in many ways.

The recent analysis by the King's Fund found that in 2017-18, local authority funding for wider tobacco control faces cuts of more than 30%, and stop smoking services are one of the top four services in absolute planned cuts—some £16 million. How that squares with the targets in the new plan that has been published is something we need to seek out.

As I said, I won't keep you any further, but I will say this finally. I have been involved in smoking cessation for many decades in Parliament. This is the first one that has ever been published with this new thing in society,

Comment [GS]: <TimeTag
ServerDate="10 October 2017"
ServerTime="14:34:52"
ServerTimeZone="14:34:52"
LocalTime="GMT" />

Comment [GS]: <TimeTag
ServerDate="10 October 2017"
ServerTime="14:31:31"
ServerTimeZone="14:31:31"
LocalTime="GMT" />



HOUSE OF COMMONS

e-cigarettes. In this plan, it is estimated that 2 million people have recently stopped smoking directly by using e-cigarettes. I suspect that is why we have hit the targets, but I have no hard evidence on that. The ONS survey estimates that at the moment, 470,000 people are currently using both cigarettes and e-cigarettes. We all know that Public Health England has said that e-cigarettes are at least 95% safer than cigarettes. This is the first time they have been in a tobacco control plan.

There are a lot of issues out there that I will not bore you with, but I am involved in this debate on a regular basis, and I think we should have a debate in the House on this matter and see how the Government plan to meet these targets, because of the issues and the changed instructions that we have had through health and wellbeing. Public health has gone away from the national health service to local authorities, and we need to look in general at how it will fit with this future plan.

Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr Wragg: Chairman, am I correct in saying that at the moment, there is no Chamber time allocated by the Government for this Committee?

Chair: We do have Chamber time allocated. At the moment, we have a half-session, which is next Tuesday 17th, and we have so far been allocated what has been euphemistically called a full day on Thursday 19th. So, we do have Chamber time to allocate.

Q2 **Mr Wragg:** With reference to Kevin's application, given that there is no substantive motion forthcoming and you do not express a preference either way of Westminster Hall or Chamber—

Sir Kevin Barron: No, no. The last one, if memory serves me well, was in Westminster Hall. The important thing is that this is done. We need to see what the Government's plans are, particularly because of the restructuring of public health since the 2012 Act.

Q3 **Chair:** Anyone else with any comments or questions? I have one observation on the number that you gave us, Kevin, of 200 people a day still dying from the effects of smoking. I am glad to say that that is a reduction from the last tobacco control plan when about 90,000 people a year were dying. That is about a Wembley Stadium full of people; we are down to an Old Trafford now. We are moving in the right direction, but we are still talking about the biggest and the second-biggest football grounds in the country full of people who have died on an annual basis from the effects of smoking.

Sir Kevin Barron: Mr Chairman, you know that this is socio-economic as well. In areas such as yours there are many more deaths than in the south-west. The south-west has been very capable of not having as many smokers and being quite successful in smoking cessation, but we need to pursue this. I was in Leicester a couple of weeks ago. It probably has the best smoking cessation programme in England. They are using e-cigarettes now, notwithstanding that they are not on prescription. We need to hold this whole debate. A full day would be great, not for me but

Comment [GS]: <TimeTag
ServerDate="10 October 2017"
ServerTime="14:34:52"
ServerTimeZone="14:34:52"
LocalTime="GMT" />

Comment [SS]: <TimeTag
ServerDate="10 October 2017"
ServerTime="14:35:00"
ServerTimeZone="14:35:00"
LocalTime="GMT" />

Comment [SS]: <TimeTag
ServerDate="10 October 2017"
ServerTime="14:35:12"
ServerTimeZone="14:35:12"
LocalTime="GMT" />

Comment [SS]: <TimeTag
ServerDate="10 October 2017"
ServerTime="14:35:12"
ServerTimeZone="14:35:12"
LocalTime="GMT" />



HOUSE OF COMMONS

for other people.

Q4 **Chair:** From my perspective, to continue the football ground analogy, even a Bournemouth would be too much, but there we go.

Sir Kevin Barron: I am a Rotherham supporter and we are in the first division, so I can't compete with either club.

Q5 **Chair:** Thank you very much. If we were to allocate some time next week, could you fill the slot, do you think?

Sir Kevin Barron: Yes, whatever is in the diary—I don't know what I am doing—but I will cover it, yes.

Chair: Thank you. Swiftly, next up is Steve McCabe on childhood oral health. Is he here?

Mrs Main: Yes, he is.

Steve McCabe made representations.

Q6 **Chair:** Steve, you're on.

Steve McCabe: Thank you. First, I apologise for coming singlehanded. I know that Sir Paul Beresford was hoping to come and he might yet appear. Others have been tied up with other things.

This is a relatively straightforward request. This issue, as you will see from some of the figures that we have provided, affects about 25% of five-year-olds right across the country. That figure rises to almost 50% in some poorer parts.

It is the leading cause of hospital admissions for five to nine-year-olds. This is surgery for something that is readily preventable. Tooth extractions for under-18s are costing the NHS about £50 million a year—all something that we could readily do something about. This is clearly not a party-political issue. This is a problem that is little understood but readily identifiable. It needs more exposure and a clear action plan to do something about it.

The reason I have decided to pursue a Back-Bench debate is that I previously tried to secure a Westminster Hall debate and was not successful. I think that, because it is such a narrow topic in terms of its specific nature, it is unlikely that the Government would give time for debate for that in itself. It is unlikely to attract an Opposition day debate because it is rather narrow.

I think we have to recognise what is happening. We are seeing money that could be deployed elsewhere in the NHS being spent on hospitalisation for tooth extractions. We could have a prevention programme. We are seeing children unnecessarily exposed to dangerous anaesthetics for something they should never need to end up in hospital for.

There have been two recent policy announcements. There is going to be a dental check by one campaign launched by the Society of Paediatric

Comment [SS]: <TimeTag
ServerDate="10 October 2017"
ServerTime="14:39:56"
ServerTimeZone="14:39:56"
LocalTime="GMT" />

Comment [DA]: <TimeTag
ServerDate="10 October 2017"
ServerTime="14:35:52"
ServerTimeZone="14:35:52"
LocalTime="GMT" />

Comment [SS]: <TimeTag
ServerDate="10 October 2017"
ServerTime="14:37:26"
ServerTimeZone="14:37:26"
LocalTime="GMT" />

Comment [SS]: <TimeTag
ServerDate="10 October 2017"
ServerTime="14:39:56"
ServerTimeZone="14:39:56"
LocalTime="GMT" />

Comment [SS]: <TimeTag
ServerDate="10 October 2017"
ServerTime="14:39:56"
ServerTimeZone="14:39:56"
LocalTime="GMT" />

Comment [SS]: <TimeTag
ServerDate="10 October 2017"
ServerTime="14:39:56"
ServerTimeZone="14:39:56"
LocalTime="GMT" />

Comment [SS]: <TimeTag
ServerDate="10 October 2017"
ServerTime="14:39:56"
ServerTimeZone="14:39:56"
LocalTime="GMT" />

Comment [SS]: <TimeTag
ServerDate="10 October 2017"
ServerTime="14:39:56"
ServerTimeZone="14:39:56"
LocalTime="GMT" />



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Dentistry. That is funded as a temporary programme of existing unused units of dental activity, and there is another NHS England programme called "Starting Well", which is designed to encourage parents to take children to the dentist at an early age. Interestingly enough, that pilot will operate in 13 local authorities, but not necessarily those with the poorest dental health.

In summary, I am saying that this issue affects all parts of the country. It affects a group—young children—who normally have no voice. It is a cross-party issue. You can see that from the number of people who signed the earlier EDM and who have indicated that they would be willing to speak in such a debate. It has broad cross-party support, and it would be helpful in influencing Government and parliamentary thinking if we were to give a greater focus to the issue. I would like to bid for a debate on that basis.

- Q7 **Chair:** Thank you very much indeed. Any questions or comments? No. Right. Steve, we have a number of potential slots coming up. We've been told that we have Chamber time next Tuesday for a half-day session, and on Thursday for a full-day session. If any of that were to be allocated, could you fill the slot? Similarly, we have a Westminster Hall slot next Thursday, the 19th, from 1.30 pm to 4.30 pm. If you were offered that, could you take it?

Steve McCabe: To the best of my knowledge, I could, yes.

Chair: Thank you very much indeed. That's very good. Steve, I have already informed the Committee that you are holding your next debate in abeyance; it is on the stocks and is registered, but you are not going to present it this afternoon. That moves us swiftly on to Mr Simon Clarke.

Mr Simon Clarke made representations.

Mr Clarke: Thank you, Mr Chairman.

- Q8 **Chair:** Simon, your bid this afternoon is on delivering carbon capture and storage in the UK.

Mr Clarke: Yes. Carbon capture and storage is an emerging technology that has the potential to resolve our conundrum about how the UK meets its carbon targets without paralysing the economy. The Committee on Climate Change concluded in June that it is pretty much inconceivable that we can resolve that challenge without going for some form of carbon capture and storage. That is because various industries, such as cement, fertilisers and steel, involve the emission of carbon dioxide in large quantities as an integral part of their production. So however much we want to rebalance our economy towards clean energy, there is a critical role for carbon capture as a technology that can enable us to still produce carbon dioxide, but in a way that is commensurate with our climate target.

This is a critical time in the development of the technology. I spent two hours on Friday with researchers from Durham University talking about how this would work in practice. There are really two elements or

Comment [LJ]: <TimeTag
ServerDate="10 October 2017"
ServerTime="14:47:01"
ServerTimeZone="14:47:01"
LocalTime="GMT" />

Comment [CM]: <TimeTag
ServerDate="10 October 2017"
ServerTime="14:40:13"
ServerTimeZone="14:40:13"
LocalTime="GMT" />

Comment [CM]: <TimeTag
ServerDate="10 October 2017"
ServerTime="14:40:57"
ServerTimeZone="14:40:57"
LocalTime="GMT" />

Comment [CM]: <TimeTag
ServerDate="10 October 2017"
ServerTime="14:41:23"
ServerTimeZone="14:41:23"
LocalTime="GMT" />

Comment [CM]: <TimeTag
ServerDate="10 October 2017"
ServerTime="14:41:47"
ServerTimeZone="14:41:47"
LocalTime="GMT" />

Comment [CM]: <TimeTag
ServerDate="10 October 2017"
ServerTime="14:41:50"
ServerTimeZone="14:41:50"
LocalTime="GMT" />

Comment [LJ]: <TimeTag
ServerDate="10 October 2017"
ServerTime="14:47:01"
ServerTimeZone="14:47:01"
LocalTime="GMT" />

Comment [CM]: <TimeTag
ServerDate="10 October 2017"
ServerTime="14:42:11"
ServerTimeZone="14:42:11"
LocalTime="GMT" />

Comment [CM]: <TimeTag
ServerDate="10 October 2017"
ServerTime="14:43:02"
ServerTimeZone="14:43:02"
LocalTime="GMT" />



HOUSE OF COMMONS

challenges, and they revolve first around financing and secondly around the technical process—not least that of the storage of the carbon. We were talking about sites where it could be stored under the North sea, and conceivably also under the Irish sea. People are desperate to make progress with this, because there is a long time lag in the roll-out of the technology, the cost of which would run into the billions.

The clean growth plan, which is anticipated at some point this month, is likely to set out the framework within which investment decisions can be taken. The question is whether carbon capture will form part of that strategy and, in so far as it does, what timeline and support will be available from Government for it. So this really is a hinge point in the battle to roll this technology out. Certain other countries are making big strides on this; Norway is the most obvious example. The UK has extraordinary potential, owing both to our concentration of high-emitting industries and our offshore geography on the continental shelf. I am no geologist, but there is a unique opportunity here for the UK to really get ahead of the game, in the way we could have with wind energy had we been more proactive at the time.

I think that there is huge enthusiasm from industry, that there is a clear scientific case, and that now is the time when we need, in the most constructive way possible, to urge Government to give us clarity about how they are going to support this. This is the moment, if you like. With the big picture stuff about to come out from Government, it would be very helpful for us to get the chance to discuss this specific technology with Ministers in detail.

Q9 **Mr Wragg:** Thank you, Mr Clarke. This is a very worthy application, but whether the time requested is 90 minutes or 3 hours, it seems a little sparse in terms of the Members whose names are listed. Have you had an opportunity to recruit others?

Mr Clarke: The short answer is that I have been in correspondence with the Carbon Capture and Storage Association, which is the body that represents the group. Essentially, I decided last week that it was critical that we made some progress on this, in the light of the fact that the clean growth plan is imminent. I went round the APPG on this, and people like Alex Cunningham, for example—he effectively can't do it because he is a shadow Front Bencher—are very keen. I have been given a list of some 20 colleagues—I have not approached them—who would be minded to talk on this, according to the CCSA.

Given the widespread interest in climate science and clean energy, there would be a lot of colleagues who would want to weigh in on this. It is of particular interest to me as a Teesside MP, and you will have noticed that there is a Teesside preponderance among those bidding, precisely because this has huge potential for our area, but it is not restricted; Scotland and Merseyside both have viable CCS sites as well.

Mr Wragg: Thank you.

Comment [CM]: <TimeTag
ServerDate="10 October 2017"
ServerTime="14:45:06"
ServerTimeZone="14:45:06"
LocalTime="GMT" />

Comment [CM]: <TimeTag
ServerDate="10 October 2017"
ServerTime="14:45:06"
ServerTimeZone="14:45:06"
LocalTime="GMT" />

Comment [JH]: <TimeTag
ServerDate="10 October 2017"
ServerTime="14:49:54"
ServerTimeZone="14:49:54"
LocalTime="GMT" />

Comment [JH]: <TimeTag
ServerDate="10 October 2017"
ServerTime="14:49:54"
ServerTimeZone="14:49:54"
LocalTime="GMT" />

Comment [LJ]: <TimeTag
ServerDate="10 October 2017"
ServerTime="14:46:26"
ServerTimeZone="14:46:26"
LocalTime="GMT" />



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Q10 **Chair:** Out of interest, have you spoken to Paul Younger? He used to be a professor at Newcastle University and is now at Glasgow University. He is an eminent expert in this field.

Mr Clarke: I have not as yet, but it sounds as though I should. Paul—

Chair: Younger.

Mr Clarke: Right, I will approach him. Thank you very much, Chairman.

Q11 **Chair:** I certainly recommend him on this issue. The bid is on the table, but in order for a bid of this nature to go further, we would need to flesh out the names of people who would be interested in speaking. It has happened in the past, though rarely, that we have allocated bids to debates and, unfortunately, the names have not turned into bodies in the main Chamber or Westminster Hall. So we would like you to flesh out the support for the bid and add that, via the Clerk.

Mr Clarke: That is fine; I will do so. Thank you.

Stuart C. McDonald made representations.

Q12 **Chair:** Stuart, your application is on HMRC office closures.

Stuart C. McDonald: That is correct.

Q13 **Chair:** Good afternoon and welcome.

Stuart C. McDonald: As I am sure all Members will be aware, the HMRC's agenda for change is one heck of a significant programme, whatever your view of it. We are talking about reducing the HMRC estate from about 160 or 170 offices down to 13, plus some small dedicated hubs doing specialist work. Huge questions arise from that, as to how that has an impact on HMRC's ability to do its job of providing tax advice and clamping down on tax evasion and avoidance. It also raises huge questions about the impacts of moving those jobs away from 120 or so different towns and cities. Obviously, it has a huge impact on the employees.

In the last Parliament, MPs had two opportunities to debate these issues; the first was an Opposition day debate in November 2015, and the second was a Backbench Business debate in April 2016—about a year and a half ago. Since then, as I point out in my application, there have been a couple of important developments. The National Audit Office issued a fairly critical report in January; then in April, just prior to the election, the Public Accounts Committee also reported and raised significant concerns about how the programme was proceeding. Given the massive scale of change proposed, it is important that MPs continue to have the opportunity to input into the debate. As you will see, at fairly short notice there are already 16 MPs interested in taking part in the debate, and I am sure that more would emerge.

Chair: Yes, we have received your additional list, Stuart. Just for the record, I will run through them: yourself, Chris Stephens, Lisa Cameron, Hannah Bardell, Chris Law, Gavin Newlands, John McNally, Ian Lucas,

Comment [JH]: <TimeTag
ServerDate="10 October 2017"
ServerTime="14:49:54"
ServerTimeZone="14:49:54"
LocalTime="GMT" />

Comment [LJ]: <TimeTag
ServerDate="10 October 2017"
ServerTime="14:46:36"
ServerTimeZone="14:46:36"
LocalTime="GMT" />

Comment [LJ]: <TimeTag
ServerDate="10 October 2017"
ServerTime="14:46:36"
ServerTimeZone="14:46:36"
LocalTime="GMT" />

Comment [JH]: <TimeTag
ServerDate="10 October 2017"
ServerTime="14:49:54"
ServerTimeZone="14:49:54"
LocalTime="GMT" />

Comment [JH]: <TimeTag
ServerDate="10 October 2017"
ServerTime="14:49:54"
ServerTimeZone="14:49:54"
LocalTime="GMT" />

Comment [JH]: <TimeTag
ServerDate="10 October 2017"
ServerTime="14:49:54"
ServerTimeZone="14:49:54"
LocalTime="GMT" />

Comment [JH]: <TimeTag
ServerDate="10 October 2017"
ServerTime="14:49:54"
ServerTimeZone="14:49:54"
LocalTime="GMT" />



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Sandy Martin, Eleanor Smith, Hugh Gaffney, Emma Hardy, Naz Shah, Christine Jardine, Philip Davies and Lucy Allan—although it has to be said that Lucy Allan has expressed an interest in the debate but is not in full agreement with the motion. That is the nature of debate; some people speak against motions. That happens in this place occasionally.

The body of names is on the record. Are there any questions for Stuart? No? Thank you very much for your application.

Marcus Fysh made representations.

Q14 **Chair:** Next up is Mr Marcus Fysh, on the SDSR and the industrial strategy.

Mr Fysh: It is a bit broader than that, actually.

Q15 **Chair:** It is the Government's defence capability. Is that right?

Mr Fysh: It is the Government's review of defence capability. Essentially, I have serious and urgent concerns about the way the Government are conducting this review. You may have read in the newspapers recently that they are considering the complete scrapping of a strike brigade, of the Marines, of Army and Navy helicopters and armoured vehicles, and of amphibious capability in general. Very recently, since I submitted this application, I have got the names of 23 MPs from all parties and across all parts of the country who would support my application.

Essentially, what is happening is that the big carrier programmes and the successor to our Trident subs are moving through the defence budget. They are being included in the main defence budget, whereas in the past—for example, when the nuclear submarines were built the last time around—they were treated as part of a separate budget. The MOD and the service chiefs are being left to think about what to salami-slice—what to cut out—in order to be able to afford these things.

There are big implications for jobs. I estimate that in my own constituency up to 8,000 jobs may be at risk, so I declare a constituency interest, but I am also concerned more broadly. We have heard the Government talk a lot about defence industrial strategy, and trying to get the MOD working more proactively with industry to bring new innovation forward and work for value for money in a way that helps jobs and helps our communities. I think what is happening now is at risk of being the complete opposite of that, where the service chiefs make these decisions on their own. That raises broader questions about the extent to which even Ministers are being involved in the process at this point.

If we do not have a debate now, to put in the public domain our concerns as MPs, it might be too late: the decisions will have been made, with the Ministers rubber-stamping them—let alone Parliament and its views. That is my submission to you.

Chair: Thank you very much indeed. It is quite some time since I visited Yeovil, but my best regards to it, anyway.

Comment [MG]: <TimeTag
ServerDate="10 October 2017"
ServerTime="14:50:49"
ServerTimeZone="14:50:49"
LocalTime="GMT" />

Comment [MG]: <TimeTag
ServerDate="10 October 2017"
ServerTime="14:50:45"
ServerTimeZone="14:50:45"
LocalTime="GMT" />

Comment [MG]: <TimeTag
ServerDate="10 October 2017"
ServerTime="14:53:31"
ServerTimeZone="14:53:31"
LocalTime="GMT" />



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Mr Fysh: You'd be welcome any time.

Q16 **Jess Phillips:** You were saying that you had 23 further names to be submitted.

Mr Fysh: That is in total. Would you like me to read them out?

Jess Phillips: No, no.

Chair: If you let us have the list, we will put it on the record.

Q17 **Jess Phillips:** You have expressly said that you want it in the Chamber. Do you think you have enough people on the list to make up three hours in the Chamber?

Mr Fysh: I do, yes.

Q18 **Jess Phillips:** Okay. This is obviously very important and quite time-sensitive, so I understand that the bid has been put in quite quickly, but from this piece of paper it does look essentially as if you, Jack Lopresti, and Derek Twigg—all fine men—were going to talk about nothing for three hours.

Mr Fysh: We are not going to carry it ourselves for three hours; I can guarantee that. I am happy to give you the list, if you want.

Jess Phillips: Slightly more information on the form would be good.

Mr Fysh: Fair enough.

Jess Phillips: I feel like a schoolteacher now.

Mr Fysh: It was an emergency application, but that is a fair point.

Q19 **Jess Phillips:** You specifically want the debate to be held in the Chamber.

Mr Fysh: I think it should be, because it is a major thing that is happening to our country.

Q20 **Jess Phillips:** Once again, I am going to feel like a schoolteacher: is the draft text of your substantive motion what you have put in the "topic" section of this form? "That this House has considered the Government's Strategic Defence & Security Review and procurement and what implications this has for its Industrial Strategy"—that is what you would want to be your substantive motion?

Mr Fysh: That is not what I would want to be my substantive motion.

Q21 **Jess Phillips:** Okay, so the very sparse form is not even correct.

Mr Fysh: The substantive motion would be on the Government's review of defence capability, because that is broad enough to make it not just about equipment and all the industrial strategy elements, but the services themselves that are at risk.

Jess Phillips: Then you need to submit that, presumably, as well.

Comment [MG]: <TimeTag
ServerDate="10 October 2017"

Comment [MG]: <TimeTag
ServerDate="10 October 2017"

Comment [MG]: <TimeTag
ServerDate="10 October 2017"

Comment [MG]: <TimeTag
ServerDate="10 October 2017"

Comment [MG]: <TimeTag
ServerDate="10 October 2017"

Comment [MG]: <TimeTag
ServerDate="10 October 2017"

Comment [MG]: <TimeTag
ServerDate="10 October 2017"

Comment [MG]: <TimeTag
ServerDate="10 October 2017"

Comment [MG]: <TimeTag
ServerDate="10 October 2017"

Comment [MG]: <TimeTag
ServerDate="10 October 2017"

Comment [MG]: <TimeTag
ServerDate="10 October 2017"

Comment [MG]: <TimeTag
ServerDate="10 October 2017"

Comment [MG]: <TimeTag
ServerDate="10 October 2017"

Comment [MG]: <TimeTag
ServerDate="10 October 2017"

Comment [MG]: <TimeTag
ServerDate="10 October 2017"

Comment [MG]: <TimeTag
ServerDate="10 October 2017"

Comment [AK]: <TimeTag
ServerDate="10 October 2017"

Comment [AK]: <TimeTag
ServerDate="10 October 2017"

Comment [AK]: <TimeTag
ServerDate="10 October 2017"

Comment [AK]: <TimeTag
ServerDate="10 October 2017"

Comment [AK]: <TimeTag
ServerDate="10 October 2017"

Comment [AK]: <TimeTag
ServerDate="10 October 2017"



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Chair: The text of a substantive motion would be very useful, Marcus, if you don't mind. The Committee has a history and track record of giving Chamber time to divisible motions.

Norman Lamb made representations.

Q22 **Chair:** Next up, Mr Norman Lamb please. This is on valproate and fetal anti-convulsive syndrome.

Norman Lamb: Absolutely, and thank you for considering this application.

This issue is, in some ways, akin to the thalidomide scandal. It has had some coverage over the last fortnight, on the BBC and in a number of newspapers. It is an extraordinary affair, going back to the '70s, when sodium valproate became available as a very effective medication for people with epilepsy.

The problem is that, taken during pregnancy, there are real risks. Just to read to you the list of potential outcomes, the baby can be born with "spina bifida, malformations of the face, skull, limbs and organs, heart defects, autism, lower IQ, poor speech and language skills, and memory problems", so this is very significant.

Papers have emerged that indicate that, in the early period, a decision was taken not to put warnings on the packaging for fear of worrying people. Subsequently, a warning did appear on the packaging, but there was a real problem with women not being informed properly, or consulted so that there could be an informed discussion about the risks, so very large numbers of women—right up until now—have been taking this drug during pregnancy with no real idea of the risk. We all know about the dangers of none of us reading medication information leaflets.

There is now a valproate toolkit, which has been issued as a result of European review. This doesn't affect only this country. I think more efforts are now being made to ensure that women are informed, but that is not universally the case; it is still a problem. The French, interestingly, have launched a compensation fund to provide financial relief to people who have suffered the consequences of this.

There are a number of aspects of this that the motion seeks to address. The first is to make absolutely certain that every woman is properly informed, and that a discussion takes place before it is too late. Secondly, we have to address the issue of all those babies that have been born with defects as a result of this medication. Thirdly, there is the respective responsibility of Government, the manufacturer and the regulator over many years for how this happened.

This is a significant issue that deserves to be debated in Parliament. We have put a substantive motion in the application, so that it can hopefully be debated in the main Chamber. That is the application.

Q23 **Chair:** Is there also an issue of clinicians of different specialisms not talking to each other effectively about the potential side effects of the

Comment [AK]: <TimeTag
ServerDate="10 October 2017"
ServerTime="14:56:04"
ServerTimeZone="14:56:04"
LocalTime="GMT" />

Comment [AK]: <TimeTag
ServerDate="10 October 2017"
ServerTime="14:56:19"
ServerTimeZone="14:56:19"
LocalTime="GMT" />

Comment [AK]: <TimeTag
ServerDate="10 October 2017"
ServerTime="14:56:19"
ServerTimeZone="14:56:19"
LocalTime="GMT" />

Comment [AK]: <TimeTag
ServerDate="10 October 2017"
ServerTime="14:56:14"
ServerTimeZone="14:56:14"
LocalTime="GMT" />

Comment [AK]: <TimeTag
ServerDate="10 October 2017"
ServerTime="14:56:53"
ServerTimeZone="14:56:53"
LocalTime="GMT" />

Comment [AK]: <TimeTag
ServerDate="10 October 2017"
ServerTime="14:57:06"
ServerTimeZone="14:57:06"
LocalTime="GMT" />

Comment [AK]: <TimeTag
ServerDate="10 October 2017"
ServerTime="14:59:17"
ServerTimeZone="14:59:17"
LocalTime="GMT" />



HOUSE OF COMMONS

[drug?

Norman Lamb: I think it is a case of the message not getting through effectively enough to GPs—the clinicians with whom the mother would be in most contact. In places, I think there has been a lax attitude towards properly informing women of the importance of this, even after the emergence of the toolkit. The knowledge and awareness of the risks have been there for many years, yet we have allowed this to continue.

Q24

Bob Blackman: My apologies for being slightly late. May I test out my knowledge of this particular set of people, who have suffered incredible problems? It is slightly out of date, but my recollection is that there was legal action by victims to try to force the drug companies to compensate and provide care for the victims. Clearly, the difference between the thalidomide victims and the victims of this particular scandal is, of course, that the victims of thalidomide have been compensated, and there has been a whole legal process to ensure that happens. My recollection was that this ran out of steam with the refusal of drug companies to accept their responsibility for the problems their drug had caused, and it seemed to have stalled. Within your motion, you ask for financial assistance and so on. Presumably, this would lead to Government support for the victims, but would not lead to the drug companies paying any compensation as a result of their failure to provide the drugs—

Norman Lamb: It is a very good point. My view is that we should establish the principle that there should be financial assistance for people who have suffered as a result of this. There can then be a debate about what share of responsibility comes from the drug company. Of course, there is always the possibility of negotiation between Government and the drug company—and, indeed, the regulator—on their role. The principle that there should be some sort of financial assistance seems to me to be a very strong one.

Bob Blackman: Absolutely.

Q25

Chair: Is there any particular time sensitivity in terms of getting the debate heard, Norman?

Norman Lamb: This has gone on for years, so a few weeks do not matter too much. There is a strong case for it being in the Chamber with this motion. I want to be as flexible as I can to give it the chance of getting debated in the Chamber.

Chair: Okay, thank you.

Rushanara Ali and Mrs Anne Main made representations.

Q26

Chair: Lastly this afternoon, we have Rushanara Ali and Anne Main.

Rushanara Ali: I am really pleased to have here my colleague and chair of the all-party group on Bangladesh. I am the co-chair of the all-party group on Burma. In the space of 48 hours, we have received support from 74 parliamentarians, even though that was during the conference season.

Comment [AK]: <TimeTag
ServerDate="10 October 2017"
ServerTime="14:59:20"

Comment [AK]: <TimeTag
ServerDate="10 October 2017"
ServerTime="14:59:20"

Comment [JH]: <TimeTag
ServerDate="10 October 2017"
ServerTime="15:04:56"

Comment [JH]: <TimeTag
ServerDate="10 October 2017"
ServerTime="15:04:56"

Comment [JH]: <TimeTag
ServerDate="10 October 2017"
ServerTime="15:01:52"

Comment [JH]: <TimeTag
ServerDate="10 October 2017"
ServerTime="15:01:51"

Comment [JH]: <TimeTag
ServerDate="10 October 2017"
ServerTime="15:01:51"

Comment [JH]: <TimeTag
ServerDate="10 October 2017"
ServerTime="15:04:56"

Comment [JH]: <TimeTag
ServerDate="10 October 2017"
ServerTime="15:02:06"

Comment [JH]: <TimeTag
ServerDate="10 October 2017"
ServerTime="15:04:56"

Comment [JH]: <TimeTag
ServerDate="10 October 2017"
ServerTime="15:04:56"

Comment [JH]: <TimeTag
ServerDate="10 October 2017"
ServerTime="15:02:25"

Comment [JH]: <TimeTag
ServerDate="10 October 2017"
ServerTime="15:02:42"

Comment [LJ]: <TimeTag
ServerDate="10 October 2017"
ServerTime="15:01:15"

Comment [JH]: <TimeTag
ServerDate="10 October 2017"
ServerTime="15:04:56"



HOUSE OF COMMONS

There are many on the Front Bench—and on this Committee—who were keen and interested in this debate.

The reason we are calling for a Backbench debate is that, as you will be familiar, the persecution of Rohingya minorities has gone on for a very long time, and it has got worse in the last few years. In 2012, 120,000 people were internally displaced in Rakhine state, and many thousands were displaced and had to flee to Bangladesh, to Chittagong. This carried on last year, in October, and thousands of others face a similar predicament. Many thousands have been killed over the incursions, and this year it happened again. In the space of a few weeks, half a million people have been displaced into the Chittagong area of Bangladesh. Tens of thousands are stuck in no-man's land between the two countries' borders, and many thousands—an estimated 2,000 to 5,000—have been killed.

This is an organised programme by the military. The international community, particularly through the media, has expressed its condemnation of both the State Counsellor, who is democratically elected, and the military. Some 180 parliamentarians wrote a letter to the Foreign Secretary at the beginning of the recent escalation of violence, led by the military. Our Government has stepped up its efforts, stopping the training provided to the Burmese military, and increasing humanitarian assistance to £30 million. I do not believe those things would have happened without the support of MPs from different parties and Members of the Lords, and public pressure; I welcome what they have done.

What happens in our Parliament matters internationally, and it has certainly galvanised support in the international community for urgent humanitarian assistance—in Chittagong in Bangladesh, in some of the neighbouring states, and in Rakhine state—and for pressure on the military to bring an end to this persecution.

The UN Human Rights Commissioner described this as "a textbook example of ethnic cleansing". We believe it is absolutely vital that there is time on the Floor of the House for a Back-Bench debate, given the strength of feeling among parliamentarians and our constituents, many of whom, up and down the country, are raising money to support the non-governmental organisations that have access in the camps. We must continue the pressure on the international community to put pressure on the Burmese military.

Understandably, much of the media attention has been on Aung San Suu Kyi, because she is such a prominent figure and has been admired for her work in her pro-democracy movement, which led to the transition to what is a fledgling democracy. There has been great disappointment at her failure to condemn what has been happening. We believe that the debate will give us an opportunity to take stock of what has happened, and address what else the international community needs to do and how our Government can play a stronger leadership role, building on what it has done so far. That is why we are here today.

Comment [JH]: <TimeTag
ServerDate="10 October 2017"
ServerTime="15:04:56"
ServerTimeZone="15:04:56"
LocalTime="GMT" />

Comment [HJ]: <TimeTag
ServerDate="10 October 2017"
ServerTime="15:05:41"
ServerTimeZone="15:05:41"
LocalTime="GMT" />



HOUSE OF COMMONS

I want to ask Anne to talk about her recent visit to the Chittagong area and the camps there.

Mrs Main: Thank you, Rushanara.

Briefly, as has been observed, this has been going on for 20 years, but the escalation has been enormous. I went over on 15 September and visited both camps. The Kutupalong camp has been going for 20 years, and the Balukhali camp has been going for only a year. 15,000 people a day arrive, and there are 80,000 pregnant women and 13,000 unaccompanied children. We also visited the border and saw the no-man's land. The border is mined, and we saw graphic images of people's legs being blown off.

While we were visiting one of the Médecins Sans Frontières hospitals, two men were brought in: one was an older man with a severe gash in his head, and the other was his son, who had been virtually beaten to death. The medics on the site say that they regularly see brutal beatings and shootings. This has escalated hugely. Since August, 15,000 people a day have been arriving. We have had a statement, but the urgency now is that we stand up in this Parliament and say that this is totally unacceptable.

We spoke to whoever we wanted to speak to. Paul Scully and Will Quince were with me, as well as some of our team. We were told tales of genital mutilation, brutal beatings, savage beheadings and young people, if they were male, being assaulted in terrible ways. This is a disaster of a magnitude I do not think we can even imagine. Having seen it, I know it is something we should bring to the House now. I believe that many colleagues want to speak out against it. The world needs to speak out, and as yet this Chamber has not done so.

Chair: Okay. Thank you very, very much indeed. Any questions?

Q27 **Bob Blackman:** I have a quick one. I well understand the enormity of what you are talking about and are applying for, but we have a problem in the sense that no Chamber time has been allocated.

Chair: It has.

Bob Blackman: Okay. The key issue is, what do you want to see happen? At the moment, your application has no substantive motion and seeks no action from the Government. I share your view that the Chamber should speak about this issue, but in my view—I hope you share the same view—there should be a requirement on the Government to take action, and on the Burmese Government and security forces also to take action. Framing that is a matter for you, as the applicants. It seems to me to be a matter of urgency and a priority. If you can formulate a suitable motion, it would give us a much better position for allocating time for the subject.

Mrs Main: I would happily support a motion that was divisible. I can't believe that people would vote against it, but I think it would show the weight of support behind the Government. I am aware that this is a very sensitive thing to be discussing. Aung San Suu Kyi in my view, having

Comment [HJ]: <TimeTag
ServerDate="10 October 2017"
ServerTime="15:06:55"
ServerTimeZone="15:06:55"
LocalTime="GMT" />

Comment [HJ]: <TimeTag
ServerDate="10 October 2017"
ServerTime="15:08:00"
ServerTimeZone="15:08:00"
LocalTime="GMT" />

Comment [HJ]: <TimeTag
ServerDate="10 October 2017"
ServerTime="15:07:50"
ServerTimeZone="15:07:50"
LocalTime="GMT" />

Comment [HJ]: <TimeTag
ServerDate="10 October 2017"
ServerTime="15:07:49"
ServerTimeZone="15:07:49"
LocalTime="GMT" />

Comment [HJ]: <TimeTag
ServerDate="10 October 2017"
ServerTime="15:08:10"
ServerTimeZone="15:08:10"
LocalTime="GMT" />

Comment [HJ]: <TimeTag
ServerDate="10 October 2017"
ServerTime="15:08:25"
ServerTimeZone="15:08:25"
LocalTime="GMT" />

Comment [HJ]: <TimeTag
ServerDate="10 October 2017"
ServerTime="15:08:45"
ServerTimeZone="15:08:45"
LocalTime="GMT" />

Comment [HJ]: <TimeTag
ServerDate="10 October 2017"
ServerTime="15:08:58"
ServerTimeZone="15:08:58"
LocalTime="GMT" />

Comment [CM]: <TimeTag
ServerDate="10 October 2017"
ServerTime="15:10:48"
ServerTimeZone="15:10:48"
LocalTime="GMT" />



HOUSE OF COMMONS

talked to her there, has actually gone a step further than being impotent—she is being complicit. Those are the sort of things that I would like to bring out in a debate, but I am aware that diplomacy operates in weird ways that are way beyond my pay grade. We could potentially come up with a divisible motion, but I think the topic is evidence that we cannot watch. The reason they are bombing the border is to stop them going back. It was estimated there were 1.3 million people in Rakhine province. With those they have killed and those they have driven over the border, there are so few left they have now bombed themselves in, to stop them going back. That is why there are bombs.

Rushanara Ali: The reason we have framed it in this way is to give colleagues the space to be able to talk about what steps could be taken. There is a series of questions around sanctions. What kinds of sanctions should and might be resumed, bearing in mind the dilemmas of helping a country make a difficult transition towards democracy, which everybody supported and fought for? The second set of issues is about humanitarian assistance, and so on.

We would be very happy to look at how we can ensure that there is scope to do that, but we would like to make sure that the space is there for colleagues to bring in their concerns about the fact that, while this particular community is the most persecuted and has suffered the most in terms of fatalities, killings, displacement and so on, there are others in Kachin, for instance, which has not had attention recently. There are major issues around access to humanitarian assistance for people who are caught in the conflict in Shan state and the persecution of Christian minorities. I am aware that there are a number of colleagues who will want to bring that up. So we will need to think about how we structure that, but we are very happy to talk to the Clerks and look at that.

Chair: I think this is not just a topical matter. It seems to me from my perspective, given the parliamentary hiatus that we have had, an urgent matter. It is something that I would personally be sympathetic towards and would try to give it some time as soon as possible. Therefore, if you can get your heads together and submit a votable motion as soon as possible, please, that would help us to move forward.

Q28 **Bob Blackman:** The other alternative, which you might think worth doing, is to have a debate in Westminster Hall on the subject—wait for this—and then see what the Government's view is, because you will be able to tease out the Government's view, and then have a divisible motion in the Chamber, which gives you two bites of the cherry. Clearly, the House of Commons, will be speaking hopefully with one voice on a particular subject, but reinforcing the view with a votable motion.

Mrs Main: I know where you are coming from: the Chamber is the best place for divisible motions and therefore I would happy to support one. The only thing I would say is that this is the biggest humanitarian crisis globally that there has ever been; the volume of people coming over is vast. The other side of it is that Bangladesh feels that the world is somewhat forgetting about it. Their own rice harvest has failed and they

Comment [CM]: <TimeTag
ServerDate="10 October 2017"
ServerTime="15:10:56"

Comment [CM]: <TimeTag
ServerDate="10 October 2017"
ServerTime="15:10:52"

Comment [CM]: <TimeTag
ServerDate="10 October 2017"
ServerTime="15:10:52"

Comment [CM]: <TimeTag
ServerDate="10 October 2017"
ServerTime="15:10:51"

Comment [CM]: <TimeTag
ServerDate="10 October 2017"
ServerTime="15:11:23"

Comment [CM]: <TimeTag
ServerDate="10 October 2017"
ServerTime="15:14:19"

Comment [CM]: <TimeTag
ServerDate="10 October 2017"
ServerTime="15:12:25"

Comment [CM]: <TimeTag
ServerDate="10 October 2017"
ServerTime="15:12:24"

Comment [CM]: <TimeTag
ServerDate="10 October 2017"
ServerTime="15:12:52"

Comment [CM]: <TimeTag
ServerDate="10 October 2017"
ServerTime="15:12:55"

Comment [CM]: <TimeTag
ServerDate="10 October 2017"
ServerTime="15:13:20"

Comment [CM]: <TimeTag
ServerDate="10 October 2017"
ServerTime="15:13:30"

Comment [CM]: <TimeTag
ServerDate="10 October 2017"
ServerTime="15:13:28"

Comment [CM]: <TimeTag
ServerDate="10 October 2017"
ServerTime="15:13:28"



HOUSE OF COMMONS

are struggling. One third of the country is under water. They are struggling manfully. We are aware of the significance of a Westminster Hall debate, but it somehow does not seem quite as serious in the eyes of the world. Therefore, I make a plea that if a divisible motion swings it, instead of 75 people cramming into Westminster Hall, let it be in the Chamber, because I think half the Chamber would want to speak on this.

Chair: Okay, thank you very much indeed for that application. It is a very serious and urgent matter. That concludes the formal business of the Committee. We will now go into a private session to make some conclusions.

Comment [CM]: <TimeTag
ServerDate="10 October 2017"
ServerTime="15:14:20"
ServerTimeZone="15:14:20"
LocalTime="GMT" />