



THIS WEEK IN PARLIAMENT 29 January - 02 February 2017

Welcome to my *This Week in Parliament*, my weekly newsletter on events and developments in Parliament. **Your feedback is always welcome!**

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What started out as a potentially quiet week in Parliament was quickly taken over by events outside the House.

The leaking of the Governments Brexit economic analysis once again brought to the fore the Government's cavalier attitude to Brexit and Parliament. The lack of trust in both Parliament and the voters from Government infuriated Members, leading to a much busier and fast paced week than anticipated.

All this was carried out with a background of increasingly obvious in fighting within the Government, making for an interesting and potentially crucial period for Parliament.

I also had the pleasure of meeting a delegation from the Baltic states and another from South Korea, along with other Members of the Defence Committee.

Monday

On paper Monday looked like a simple day with two Bills before Parliament which had broad support across the House. However, as is so often the case, three Urgent Questions were thrown our way.

After [questions](#) to the Secretary of State for Education, the first to of these [Urgent Questions](#) was addressed. The matter was on the implementation period after leaving the EU, Members were seeking more substance on from the Government on what this would actually consist of. I took the opportunity to put concerns of businesses I have spoken to about breaking into new markets to the Minister.

***Mrs Madeleine Moon (Bridgend) (Lab):** Whether among larger employers or small and medium-sized enterprises, it seems to me that there is currently a consensus that the length of time and potentiality of high costs for the UK in breaking into new markets is going to be devastating, with jobs lost. What change is there in the Minister's response? Will he start to listen to the voices of industry, rather than of 35 Tory Back Benchers?*

***The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union (Mr Robin Walker):** Right from the start of this process we have been listening to the voices of industry and to businesses large and small. When the Prime Minister set out the implementation period in her*



Lancaster House speech last January, she was responding to some of those concerns. I am delighted that we can now move forward to secure the implementation period, which will help businesses in the years to come.

Immediately after, another [Urgent Question](#) on Taliban and IS/Daesh Attacks in Afghanistan was asked. Finally, the third [Question](#) on the Contaminated Blood Inquiry was answered. This is an issue which has dragged on far too long and I took the opportunity to raise this frustration.

[Mrs Madeleine Moon \(Bridgend\) \(Lab\)](#): *The Minister must be tolerant if there is a cynicism about the “shortly”. An urgent question asked by my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull North (Diana Johnson) brought us here in July, when we asked urgently for the inquiry to be moved into the orbit of the Cabinet Office, but that took four months to do. We were promised a judge in December, but we are still waiting. Given that we are now at the end of January, does “shortly” mean before the end of February? Can we at least give ourselves some hope that we will not need another urgent question from my hon. Friend to bring us back here again, nagging for a decision?*

[The Parliamentary Secretary, Cabinet Office \(Chloe Smith\)](#): *Mr Speaker, I do not think we will need to trouble either you or hon. Members for another urgent question. I do expect us to be able to return promptly to the House with an update—the update that the House rightly asks for and our constituents and the victims of this scandal rightly require. We are working hard and fast so that victims come first and can be served by a judge as quickly as possible.*

Armed Forces (Flexible Working) Bill

This was the Second Reading of the [Bill](#) to allow a more flexible work pattern for those members of the Armed Forces who find themselves in need to change for a limited period in order to cope with the demands of modern living. The Bill had large cross party support and so moved through the House relatively easily.



[Mr Kevan Jones \(North Durham\) \(Lab\)](#): *I welcome the Bill. I was trying to work out how many armed forces Bills I had dealt with over the past 16 years, either as a Minister or as a Back Bencher. [Interruption.] As the Minister says, I am a veteran.*

This, I think, is one of the simplest Bills I have encountered, but, as the Minister has said, it is important. It is intended to ensure that working practices in our armed forces are modern, but also attractive to those who are thinking of joining. The Minister may think me pedantic in wanting to know how its implementation will be monitored. However, I think we need to ensure not only that the armed forces are offered these opportunities, but that the information is cascaded down the chain of command, so that people are aware that they can ask for flexible working arrangements, and those who are in a position to make the decisions recognise that they can use them.

Training will be needed, and, in some cases, attitudes must change. I have no problem with the senior levels of the armed forces, who have, I think, bought into this, but the Bill must have an effect in practice, throughout the chain of command. That is why I think it important for us to monitor the number of people who take up these opportunities, and also when and why they are refused. Is there a good reason for that? I know that civil servants have convinced the Minister that such monitoring would be an onerous task, but I do not accept that for one minute. As the system beds in, the information will obviously need to be produced internally in the Department, for monitoring purposes, and I find it difficult to understand why it cannot subsequently be published. I think that in future, as a result of freedom of information requests or parliamentary questions, the Minister, or his successor, will have to publish it anyway. I also think that it would be positive to project the fact that the forces are introducing flexible working by giving examples.

[The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence \(Mr Tobias Ellwood\)](#): *I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman*

for giving way. This is the first of five interventions that I intend to make.

The hon. Gentleman has raised an important point about the need to trickle information down to commander level to ensure that people are aware of the opportunities. That will be incentivised and supported by local commanders, but there will be a higher approvals authority. It is all based on operational capability, which we must not lose sight of. I hope that that clarifies the way in which the system will work.

This debate was followed by the Second Reading of a [Bill](#) on Automated and Electric Vehicles. The object being to prepare the infrastructure needed as transport turns increasingly towards these systems. Again the Bill had cross party support and moved through the House with ease.

The day in the Chamber ended with an Adjournment [Debate](#) on Same-sex Marriage in Bermuda.

Tuesday

The Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy was in front of the House to answer [questions](#) to begin the day.

Leaving The EU: Economic Analysis

Following the leak of the Government's Economic Analysis of leaving the EU, which showed that whatever option the UK takes there is likely to be economic damage. An [Urgent question](#) was called to get the Government's side of the story.

[Hilary Benn \(Leeds Central\) \(Lab\)](#): A lack of transparency is not in the national interest. On 6 December, I asked the Brexit Secretary,

"have the Government undertaken any impact assessments on the implications of leaving the EU for different sectors of the economy?"

He replied, "Not in sectors." Now we learn that that work has been done, and it is reported that chemicals, clothing, manufacturing, food and drink, cars and retail will be the hardest hit sectors. Will the Minister offer the House an explanation for the discrepancy between what the Exiting the European Union Committee was told and what we now know?



[The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union \(Mr Steve Baker\)](#): As I have explained, we have always said that our economic analysis was continually evolving across a wide range of activities—*[Interruption.]* Opposition Members laugh, but what else would they expect but for the Government to work continually on a developing analysis? As I may not have said in my opening remarks, I know that the Secretary of State only saw this particular document last night—I saw it this morning—and I think that that will explain the answers he has given.

I took the chance to question the Minister on the Governments lack of trust of the voters.

[Mrs Madeleine Moon \(Bridgend\) \(Lab\)](#): Why do this Conservative Government not trust the voters of Bridgend, many of whom rely on the Ford engine plant for their jobs? It is acknowledged that car manufacturing will be one of the hardest-hit areas. The Minister says that there is going to be growth. In that case, let the people of Bridgend know where the growth is going to be and what better growth could be achieved by staying in the single market. Is he more interested in healing the wounds within the Conservative party than looking after the people of Bridgend?

[The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union \(Mr Steve Baker\)](#): I am interested in healing the wounds across the whole country, getting people to unite behind a democratic decision and thus taking it forward. It is precisely because we do trust the voters that we want not only to carry through the referendum re-

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sult, but to ensure our parliamentary independence, so that the voters can materially affect a Government's policy choices.

PIP Back Payments

A second [Urgent Question](#) was then asked in relation to promised back payments where the Government's Personal Independence Payment (PIP) scheme has been delayed.

[Stephen Timms \(East Ham\) \(Lab\)](#): *The Minister has told the House that all 1.6 million existing claimants will have their cases reviewed. I am grateful to her for adding that those who had zero points, and therefore did not get PIP, will also be included in the review. Will she confirm that the 180,000 people who used to be on disability living allowance and are no longer receiving benefit will be included? In total, on top of the 1.6 million, how many cases does she expect to review?*

[The Minister for Disabled People, Health and Work \(Sarah Newton\)](#): *As all Members will know, people have been going through a managed process of transferring from disability living allowance to PIP. We will be looking at people who have gone through the PIP assessment process. Just over half of people on disability living allowance have gone through the managed process to PIP. There are still people on DLA who are yet to go through the process, but we are taking on board all the findings of the appeal and improving the process to ensure that we make the right decision the first time. That is really important to us and to claimants.*



These questions were followed by the first reading of a [Bill](#) in regard to Kew Gardens and another [Bill](#) on the High Speed Rail project was read for a second time.

The day in the Chamber then drew to a close with a [motion](#) on Capital Gains Tax and an Adjournment [Debate](#) on Lorry Parking.

Defence Committee

Due to a last minute change by the MoD, this week's Defence Committee session focused on a report on The Royal Marines and the UK's amphibious capability. This has been a concern for some time, as the Armed Forces face the threat of more cuts, Members are worried that the UK's ability to operate an amphibious force will disappear altogether.

As a point to the seriousness with which the Committee is taking this issue, a session was also held before Christmas looking into this issue and feeding the [report](#). In that [session](#) the reasons for maintaining an amphibious force were laid out by the witnesses.

[Ruth Smeeth \(Stoke-On-Trent North\) \(Lab\)](#): *Julian, why is our amphibious capability a strategic asset for the UK?*

[Major General Thompson](#): *It is a strategic asset because, apart from the Americans, we are the only truly amphibious capability nation in NATO. It also gives the UK the ability to project power where needed with the leading commando group. It is able to do it without putting a foot on the ground until the moment arrives because it is able to wait offshore. It is able to do it without requiring an airfield and without what I call the "red carpet" of friendly nation providing fuel, roads, transport and so forth. It enables us also to pull out again, without any fuss or bother, whenever it suits us. So it gives us a flexibility that is absolutely crucial, and we are one of the few nations that possess this ability.*

[Ruth Smeeth \(Stoke-On-Trent North\) \(Lab\)](#): *What do you believe our amphibious capability adds to our international dynamic? Obviously, one of the issues in future is the lead we take in NATO in 2019 and 2020 in terms of our amphibious capability. What unique skills does it give us in terms of power leverage with our allies?*

[Major General Thompson](#): *It gives us something that many of them do not have—even the French don't have the same amphibious capability that we do, or the Dutch. We provide a niche ability that no one else, other than the*

Americans, has. In a NATO context we are a key part of the setup, and in a non-NATO context we bring something to the party that no one else can bring.

Wednesday

The Chamber was packed to begin the day, Welsh [questions](#) was clearly high on Members priorities, although one can't help think that Prime Ministers Questions immediately following had some draw.

Prime Ministers Questions

The Prime Minister was visiting China and so this session was a first test for the new Minister for the Cabinet Office. Questioning quickly turned to the voting age in Britain as many opposition Members have voiced the idea of the age being lowered to sixteen.

[Emily Thornberry \(Islington South and Finsbury\) \(Lab\)](#): If the Conservative party is so proud of having a female leader, why are so many of them trying to get rid of her and why has she had to run away to China to get away from them? However, I thank the right hon. Gentleman for that answer and I totally agree with his sentiments. Let me ask him about the first right that I mentioned, a right that millions of women received 100 years ago this week: the basic right to vote. It was originally restricted to women with property over the age of 30. Then 90 years ago, it was extended to all women over 21. Almost 50 years ago, it was extended to all men and women over the age of 18. I ask the right hon. Gentleman a simple question: how many more years do we have to wait until the vote is extended to everyone over 16?

[The Minister for the Cabinet Office and Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster \(Mr David Lidington\)](#): The age of 18, rather than 16, is widely recognised as the age at which one becomes an adult and that is when full citizenship rights are attained. Only a handful of countries have a nationwide voting age below 18 and we believe that it is right that the age of majority—18—should continue to be the age at which people become eligible to vote. PMQ's was followed by the presentation of a [Bill](#) on Freedom of Information.

Government's EU Exit Analysis

Following the leak of the Government's documents analysing likely scenarios when we leave the EU, the [opposition day](#) time was used to call for another humble address which would bind the Government to releasing the documents they held.



[Emma Reynolds \(Wolverhampton North East\) \(Lab\)](#): As ever, Mr Deputy Speaker, it is a pleasure and a privilege to serve under your chairmanship. It is also a pleasure to follow the right hon. and learned Member for Rushcliffe (Mr Clarke). In the referendum, people were asked to decide whether or not we should leave the European Union. They were not asked about the form that Brexit should take; that was not on the ballot paper. However, as was pointed out by my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Holborn and St Pancras (Keir Starmer), the choice now is about how we are to leave the European Union. There are many different options and models. We need to secure the best possible deal to protect people's jobs and livelihoods, and we therefore need to pursue policies based on evidence, not ideology.

Let me say gently to Ministers that the debate which took place in our country about the EU referendum was one of the most divisive that I can remember. It divided the country pretty much straight down the middle. It divided cities, regions, rural areas and towns. It divided generations, and in some cases it divided families. I will admit that it divided my family: close family members voted to leave the EU, and we had many robust debates about it, although thankfully we did not fall out over it in the end.

Surely the role of the Government in the 19 months since the referendum should have been to try to unite the country again, to bring the country together, to stand above the fray and do the right thing, rather than getting their hands dirty in the fray and levelling accusations at Members. I say to Ministers—not the thoughtful Minister from whom we heard today, but perhaps the Minister who spoke yesterday, the hon. Member for Wycombe (Mr Baker)—that they should not question the integrity of Members of this House. I see it as my duty, in representing the people of Wolverhampton North East, to ensure that leaving the European Union does not make them poorer. I will hold to that very firmly, and I will not be cowed by Ministers or any other Members who tell me that I am not acting in the national interest.

Some of the extremists—or Brextremists—on the Conservative Benches advance the same arguments day after day, week after week. If any of us dares to question the mess that the Government are in, we are told that we are acting against the national interest. If we ask what impact a certain model or option for Brexit will have on our constituents, we are told that we are betraying the will of the people. Ah—the other Minister, the hon. Member for Wycombe, has entered the Chamber at a very appropriate time.



If economists, or any other trade experts, warn about the consequences of leaving the customs union or the single market, they are told that they are always wrong and it is rubbish. I am afraid that we are descending into a position in which a Government are making decisions solely on the basis of ideology, and not on the basis of evidence.

Seema Malhotra (Feltham and Heston) (Lab/Co-op): My hon. Friend is making a very powerful and passionate speech. The report appears to highlight the fact that the biggest negative impact comes from the UK's decision both to leave the customs union and to leave the single market, neither of which we have to do if we leave the European Union, and the fact that both decisions were made without proper debate, scrutiny and the presenting of evidence in the House. Is that not interesting?

Emma Reynolds (Wolverhampton North East) (Lab): I agree with my hon. Friend. As the right hon. Member for Broxtowe (Anna Soubry) said earlier, those options were taken off the table soon after the referendum result. They were not debated very much in the House. There were no impact assessments, or economic analyses, whatever the difference between those may be. There was no discussion about the impact of leaving the customs union and leaving the single market. What will be the impact on the car industry in our country? What will be the impact on Jaguar Land Rover, which employs thousands of people in my constituency, and on Honda, whose representatives gave evidence to the Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Committee? They said that if we left the customs union, the delays at the border would cost hundreds of thousands of pounds, and could lead to job losses. Why are we not listening to those people?

When the Secretary of State appeared before the Exiting the European Union Committee, we asked him about the automotive sector, and about the evidence presented to us by businesses. He said that

“existing trade associations tend to reflect the existing interests of existing factories, businesses and so on. They tend to be small-c conservative. In other words, they support the existing trade and do not think too much about future trade.”

Wow. Gosh. So we should not even bother to listen to the existing factories and existing businesses that employ tens of thousands of people throughout the country. Ideology will see the position in its own way. That is what we have

been reduced to. If we follow the argument to its logical conclusion—my hon. Friend the Member for Wirral South (Alison McGovern) made this point—why should we bother to have the Treasury? Why should we bother to have a Budget? Why should we bother to set up the independent Office for Budget Responsibility? If we are going to rubbish all the experts all the time, we do not need to listen to anyone; we can simply follow our own ideology to its logical conclusion. I cannot believe that we have come to this, but we have.

Let me say this to the Government. We need a better analysis from them—a proper analysis—of the impact on the car industry of leaving the customs union. I am also very concerned to read in the leaked reports about the impact on my own constituency and my own region, the west midlands. This is a serious point. I want to know what more is behind the analysis that suggests that the midlands, Northern Ireland and parts of the north will be hardest hit, and I also want to know what exactly is the solution to keeping the border invisible between Northern Ireland and the Republic. When the Select Committee was in Dublin last week, we were told that the Government proposed that regulatory alignment, as agreed in December, would apply to 142 areas, not six, as the Secretary of State told the Committee.

I am afraid that the Government need to take this issue much more seriously. I am sick of the blunder. I am sick of the arrogance that tells us that everything will be OK. Where is the evidence that the trade agreements that the Government want to forge with other countries around the world will replace the jobs and the other benefits of the trade that we already have with our nearest neighbours in the European Union?

Restoration and Renewal

The House then moved on to the issue of the Palace itself. For many years the Palace has been in desperate need of repairs, Members were finally given the chance to [debate](#) the best and most cost effective way forward. After having toured the Palace myself, the need for repairs and the dangers posed to the people working here are evident.

[Mrs Madeleine Moon \(Bridgend\) \(Lab\)](#): I did the underground tour as well. It was very frightening to see the gas pipes alongside the electrical wiring, but the most frightening thing I saw was the sheets of metal sitting above that wiring. They were full of water that was dripping down through the building and were there to stop the wires getting soaking wet. Given that we work in such conditions, how can we not make urgent efforts to get the work done in this building?

[Damian Green \(Ashford\) \(Con\)](#) The hon. Lady's point illustrates the general one that those who have spent most time and effort looking at the conditions of this House, either on various committees or, indeed, inside Government, are the ones who are most keen to take early and decisive action. No one's conscience should be comfortable with the potential consequences of delay and inaction in these circumstances.



I have great sympathy with and support for the Leader of the House, who has been energetic and active in bringing this matter before us. I agree with those who say that this should conceivably have been dealt with 10 years ago, but I assure the House that the Leader of the House has been very energetic in bringing it before us and we should be grateful to her.

The conclusion I draw is simple: get on with it—just get on with it. In the spirit of that conclusion, I will support amendment (b) to motion 1, as that is the best way to minimise the chance of a disaster happening as a result of inaction—a disaster that would reflect appallingly on this House....

...

Mrs Madeleine Moon (Bridgend) (Lab): Before casting their votes tonight, those Members who want to remain should nip into the Library and read sections of “Mr Barry’s War”, in which they will see the absolute chaos when Parliament refused to decant the last time. It was horrendous. It drove Pugin almost mad. We must leave.

Chris Bryant (Rhondda) (Lab): My hon. Friend is absolutely right; that is a great book and it, too, is available in all good bookshops, although it is not by me.

The day in the Chamber ended with an Adjournment **debate** on British Jihadis returning from Iraq and Syria. Finally a **motion** on Capital Gains Tax was agreed to.

Defence Sub-Committee

I chaired the Defence **Sub-Committee** sat in the morning, hearing evidence on the UK’s role on the strategic position in the Arctic. The **session** saw evidence taken from Minister’s about the Government’s assessment of the situation in Arctic.

Mrs Madeleine Moon (Bridgend) (Lab): So how is the UK discharging its long-standing commitment to the defence of the northern flank?

The Minister for the Armed Forces (Mark Lancaster): We do that in a number of ways. I am sure we will get on to the capability of the Royal Marines shortly—

Mrs Madeleine Moon (Bridgend) (Lab): We will. Definitely.

The Minister for the Armed Forces (Mark Lancaster): So I don’t need to go into all of that detail. I will leave that for General Stickland. SDSR ‘15 was a good example of where we recognised that there was a gap, which is why we are purchasing P-8s. We work very closely with the Norwegians and the Americans over interoperability for that platform. As we look more to our naval assets and procurements with Type 26 and Type 31, and as we begin to move towards hopefully increasing the number of platforms rather than having fewer highly specialist platforms, the Type 31, as we all know and as has been discussed elsewhere, is aimed at providing a greater footprint. If anything, we are seeing an uptick in our activity, not a downtick.

Thursday

Questions to the Secretary of State for Exiting The European Union focused on the question regulatory alignment or regulatory equivalence with the EU after exit was high on the agenda as it would form an important part of our relationship with the EU in the future.

Mike Amesbury (Weaver Vale) (Lab): By more than 2:1, members of the Institute of Directors would prefer the UK to maintain regulatory alignment with the single market rules for goods and services, rather than actively seeking to diverge after Brexit. Is that the Government’s aim as well?



The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union (Mr Robin Walker): The Government have been talking to a wide range of industry groups and representative bodies of business, and we recognise that there are benefits in some areas of maintaining regulatory alignment and ensuring that we have the most frictionless access to European markets. Of course we are entering the negotiations on the future partnership, and we want to take the best opportunities to trade with Europe and the wider world.

An **Urgent Question** was then put to the Government over the financial position of Capita. Members were keen to ensure that the potential for a repeat of the recent Carillion collapse was not about to happen.

As usual on a Thursday, this was followed by the [Business](#) of the House. I took this opportunity to speak about the work of the APPG on Suicide prevention and self-harm, which I Chair.

[Mrs Madeleine Moon \(Bridgend\) \(Lab\)](#): The all-party group on suicide and self-harm prevention heard a harrowing presentation this week from Professors Nav Kapur and Keith Hawton from the multicentre study of self-harm in England. We learned that there are 200,000 hospital presentations a year in England for self-harm and almost the same number to community health facilities, particularly of 12 to 17-year-olds. One in 100 of those will die by suicide a year after their presentation, and 50% of those dying by suicide have been involved in self-harm. This is an epidemic that is hitting this country. May we have a statement from the Government expressing how they intend to deal with the major risk of self-harm presentation in our hospitals?



[The Leader of the House of Commons \(Andrea Leadsom\)](#): The hon. Lady sets out harrowing evidence about the extent of self-harming, and the Government are incredibly concerned about this, particularly about the need for more support for those with mental health issues. We are investing a record £1.4 billion into children's and young people's mental health, and there are now a record 1,440 children's mental health beds. Also, importantly, by this time next year, we will have trained 2,000 secondary school staff in mental health first aid to try to provide support to young people, and by 2021, 70,000 additional children and young people each year will be accessing NHS specialist mental health services.

The Chair of the Foreign Affairs Select Committee was then invited to give a [statement](#) on UK Diplomacy In Europe.

Backbench Business

This week's Backbench Business saw two important debates. The first was on the issue of [parental leave](#) for MP's, an issue keenly felt by many in the House struggling to do their job to the best of their ability and raise young families at the same time.

The second [debate](#) was on the matter of Hospital Car Parking Charges. A huge problem for many people, the last thing most people wish to think about when ill is the cost of parking and the increase in difficulty and stress this issue can cause in an already difficult time for most people is too much.

The day in the Chamber then drew to a close with an Adjournment [Debate](#) on Housing, Planning and Infrastructure.

Leaving the EU: Chemical Regulation

Away from the Chamber, Westminster Hall hosted a [debate](#) on the regulation of chemicals after we leave the EU. Another unforeseen side effect of leaving the EU is the knock on effect of the regulation of dangerous substances. As currently the UK abides by the common standards set by the EU, upon leaving a whole new infrastructure will be needed, in particular to avoid damaging the UK industry.

[Mary Creagh \(Wakefield\) \(Lab\)](#): I beg to move, that this House has considered the Eleventh Report of the Environmental Audit Committee of Session 2016-17, The Future of Chemicals Regulation after the EU Referendum, HC 912, and the Government response, HC 313:

I am delighted to be here with you, Mr Evans, and with so many colleagues to debate this vital matter. I am grateful to the Liaison Committee for granting the debate and to colleagues for attending. I look forward to good speeches

and good debate.

Nine months after the Environmental Audit Committee's report, the chemicals industry in the UK remains deeply concerned about the Government's decision to leave the European single market and customs union and the impact that doing so will have on their business. Today, I will set out why our chemicals industry is the foundation stone of UK manufacturing; how the chemical regulation REACH—the registration, evaluation, authorisation and restriction of chemicals—regulates the UK chemicals industry; and what the Government's decision to leave the single market and customs union means in terms of jobs, trade, potential increases in animal testing, duplication of regulation and costs, the risk of tariffs and increased red tape.

Let us begin by looking at the chemicals industry. From the leaked Brexit economic analysis this week, we heard that chemicals is one of the five sectors that will be worst hit by leaving the European single market and customs union. Our Committee looked at that last year. The industry has a £32 billion annual turnover and provides half a million direct and indirect jobs across the country. Chemical clusters tend to be on coastal sites near to petrochemical sites because they are often connected by pipelines. Clusters are found in Hull, Teesside, Grangemouth and Runcorn—areas that have already been hit by industrial decline and capital flight, and where good, well-paid engineering jobs are not easy to come by.



The paints, adhesives, mixtures, polymers, plastics and dyes made by the industry are used in every aspect of our lives, including the car industry, aerospace industry, tech sector, energy sector and pharmaceutical sector—I could go on. They are the backbone of the nation's manufacturing industry, and we rely on an integrated European Union supply chain. The UK no longer produces a number of important chemical feedstocks and is reliant on them coming in from the European Union.

The UK exports almost £15 billion-worth of chemicals to the EU each year. Chemicals is our second largest manufacturing industry and our second largest export to the EU after cars, but it is not getting the attention it deserves. It is not as glamorous; it is a Cinderella sector.

What is REACH? It is the EU's regulation, agreed by this country about 10 years ago, which regulates chemicals and hazardous substances. It covers more than 30,000 substances bought and sold in the EU single market. It also covers products and articles such as the coating on a non-stick frying pan, flame retardants in sofas, carpets and curtains, and medicines.

Our chemicals inquiry came out of our inquiry into the future of environmental regulation after we leave the EU. People kept saying, "You need to look at the chemicals sector", so we decided to do so. The inquiry found that, first and foremost, UK companies want to stay in REACH. They have made more than 5,000 registrations with REACH. Another deadline is looming—31 March—by which smaller tonnages of chemicals will have to be registered. By the end of March, UK companies will have spent an estimated £250 million on registering their products on the database. One concern raised in the inquiry was that smaller manufacturers, looking ahead at the potential of a hard Brexit, would balk at spending £20,000, £30,000 or £40,000 on registering a chemical when that registration could fall exactly one year later, on exit day.

Friday

This week the House had one of its sitting Fridays. The chance for more Private Members Bills to be heard began with a [debate](#) on Civil Partnerships, Marriages and Deaths registrations.

[James Cartlidge \(South Suffolk\) \(Con\)](#): Some may argue that in effect, the idea of commitment would potentially be undermined, but does my hon. Friend agree that probably in reality, people who might opt for civil partnership might otherwise not have made any commitment?

[Tim Loughton \(East Worthing and Shoreham\) \(Con\)](#): It is interesting. I recorded a television interview this morning with a couple who have been together for 26 years; they have teenage children and, for a variety of reasons, do not want to get married. They travelled to the Isle of Man, which is the only part of the British Isles that recognises civil partnerships for opposite-sex couples, and have become the first couple from mainland UK to have a civil partnership through the Isle of Man. Obviously, it is not recognised in the UK proper.

They made a very interesting point. They said, “We want to show our commitment in the eyes of the state. We want the stability and the protection, and the legal protections, that we just don’t have as a cohabiting couple, but marriage is not right for us. If we are going to be forced into a marriage as the only way of getting that legal protection, we would effectively be undermining marriage, because we would be doing it for the wrong reasons.” Civil partnership is a way to show that commitment and get the protections without having to conform in a way that they do not believe in.

Whether we agree with them, that is their right. Surely in an age when families take many different forms, the key thing that the state should be interested in is doing whatever creates stability and the best opportunities for loving couples to thrive and for children, when they are involved, to be brought up in a stable environment. This is surely another opportunity to get more people to be able to take advantage of such a situation.

After this the House moved on to debate a [Bill](#) on Parking aimed at easing parking difficulties.



[Sir Greg Knight \(East Yorkshire\) \(Con\)](#): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

Parking is an indispensable part of motoring. If you arrive by a car, you need to park it. Our high streets, in-town businesses, many other facilities and even some housing units are all only reachable, useable or viable through the use of local parking facilities.

According to the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency, there are 38 million vehicles on our roads. Of those, probably some 19 million—about half—will drive and then undertake at least one parking transaction each and every day. The number of tickets issued every year from private car parks is near to 5 million, so it is clear that the majority of vehicle owners do not have an issue involving parking fines.

However, it is important that those parking on private land who receive a private parking notice are treated fairly and consistently. Motorists should have the certainty that when they enter a car park on private land, they are entering into a contract that is reasonable, transparent and involves a consistent process. Poor signage, unreasonable terms, exorbitant fines, aggressive demands for payment and an opaque appeals process, together with some motorists being hit with a fine for just driving in and out of a car park without stopping, have no place in 21st-century Britain.

Kevin Brennan (Cardiff West) (Lab): rose—

Sir Greg Knight (East Yorkshire) (Con): I give way to the hon. Gentleman, whom I regard as an hon. Friend.

Kevin Brennan (Cardiff West) (Lab): I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for giving way. We usually co-operate musically, rather than politically, but in this case I am happy to co-sponsor his Bill. Does he agree that the statutory code of practice he proposes ought to take into account the poor response by parking companies to inquiries from our constituents and from us as MPs? I wrote to New Generation Parking Management in September last year about my constituent Ann Martin-Jones and had no reply. I wrote again in January this year and had no reply whatsoever from that company. Does that not show that some of the companies in this industry are cowboy companies?

Sir Greg Knight (East Yorkshire) (Con): It is only common courtesy in business to respond to correspondence. I expect the code of practice to have a requirement that where someone challenges a parking notice, whether it be the car owner, the car owner's solicitor or the car owner's MP, the parking company is obliged to respond, and within a reasonable time—I would say 14 days.