



THIS WEEK IN PARLIAMENT 30 April - 04 May 2018

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

House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA
Westminster: 020 7219 0814
Bridgend: 01656 750 002
madeleine.moon.mp@parliament.uk

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The Local Elections saw a lot of focus outside of Parliament this week. However, despite the attention elsewhere, some important developments occurred in the House as well.

The Government's continued failings over the Windrush scandal further piled the pressure on. The new Home Secretary receiving an immediate baptism of fire as Members continued to pursue answers.

The continuing indecision from the Government over what our future relationship with the EU will look like post Brexit is bring further derision to an already flawed negotiating position. Members on all sides of the House are becoming increasingly fed up with the lacklustre nature of the approach. The amount of Parliamentary time taken by the process is staggering, for a glimpse of the time an effort needed for Brexit in Parliament see [here](#).

Monday

With the events of the weekend still fresh in everyone's mind, the week began with [Questions](#) to the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government. This was followed by the answer to an [Urgent Question](#) on the Sainsbury and Asda Merger.

Windrush

With the resignation of Amber Rudd over the weekend, the new Home Secretary was quickly under fire at the Dispatch Box in answer to an [Urgent Question](#) on the Windrush scandal. Members were keen to uncover how the new Home Secretary would seek to change the "Hostile Environment" created by his predecessors.



***Yvette Cooper (Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford) (Lab):** I welcome the right hon. Gentleman to his new post and the statement he has made about supporting Windrush families, whom we all agree have been shamefully treated, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Hackney North and Stoke Newington (Ms Abbott) said. Given the number of Home Office decisions that were got wrong in these Windrush cases, is he concerned about a wider culture of disbelief, about whether a net migration target is distorting decisions, and about the lack of checks and balances in the system to prevent injustice? As well as responding to the questions the Select Committee sent on Friday, will he look again at reinstating independent appeals and legal aid to prevent injustice in future, because this is not just about a fair immigration system; it is also about the kind of fair country we all want ours to be?*

***The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Sajid Javid):** I thank the right hon. Lady for her remarks. I look forward to working with her, particularly on the work she does as the Chair of the Select Committee, and to the scrutiny that she will no doubt continue to provide. She asked a number of questions and I will take a lot of that away and think about it a bit more, if she will allow me. On targets, there were some internal migration targets and I have asked to see what they were before I take a further view on them.*

Syria

Following this, the Government made a [Statement](#) updating the House on the situation in Syria. Specifically, this Statement was on the UK's efforts to alleviate the suffering of ordinary Syrian people.

***Tom Brake (Carshalton and Wallington) (LD):** The last chapter of the history of Syria's destruction has already been written: it is the complete annihilation of Idlib by barrel bombs delivered by Assad's murderous forces, backed up by the equally murderous Russians. What can the UK Government do to try to avoid tens of thousands of additional deaths in Idlib? Will the Government expand the family reunion scheme and increase the number of Syrian refugees who are able to come to the UK, to protect more vulnerable people?*

***The Secretary of State for International Development (Penny Mordaunt):** The right hon. Gentleman is right, in that we think Idlib and some other areas are going to be next hit. We have done a tremendous amount to forward deploy equipment to protect individuals—everything from sandbags to personal protection equipment. He will understand that in some areas access is extremely difficult and there are enormous numbers of people. Our priority is to protect those individuals who can protect others—the civilian defence workers and medics in those areas. Of course, we urge those who are in control of those events, who do not have to bomb their own people, to desist from doing so and to come to the negotiating table.*

The House went on to the [Third Reading](#) of the Domestic Gas and Electricity (Tariff Cap) Bill before a considering a [Motion](#) on the Economic and Fiscal Outlook. This was followed by the [Third Reading](#) of the Laser Misuse (Vehicles) Bill.

Finally, the House hosted an [Adjournment Debate](#) on Magor with Undy Walkway Station. I made an intervention in this debate to highlight the need in Wales for new, effective and efficient infrastructure.

***Mrs Madeleine Moon (Bridgend) (Lab):** Is it true that the community to which my hon. Friend refers to is growing because, thanks to her work on the Severn bridge tolls, more people are now moving from Bristol to enjoy the delights of living in Wales, and that they are moving into Newport—expanding the community there—and commuting to work in Bristol because housing is cheaper and education is better in Wales?*

***Jessica Morden (Newport East) (Lab):** I thank my hon. Friend for her intervention. She makes a valid point. Many more people are moving from Bristol to live in our corner of Wales, which is great. Many of them then travel across the border to work in England, and that creates an urgent need for new infrastructure.*



Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee

The [Committee](#) held an [evidence](#) session on Devolution and the EU, taking evidence from witnesses including Members of the devolved bodies and academics. The Border in Northern Ireland once again came under discussion and the implications for the UK leaving pan-EU agreements.

***Mr Bernard Jenkin (Chair) (Harwich and North Essex) (Con):** I think the physical border is the issue.*

***Professor Michael Keating Professor of Politics, Aberdeen University, Director of Centre on Constitutional Change:** But if you have different regulatory systems, different standards for animal health or agricultural products and so on, then that becomes an obstacle even if you get rid of the physical border.*

Mr Bernard Jenkin (Chair) (Harwich and North Essex) (Con): We already have different regulatory standards for animal health, for example. We have higher regulatory standards than the Republic of Ireland. If we can resolve this without physical infrastructure at the border, surely that would be sufficient.

Professor Michael Keating Professor of Politics, Aberdeen University, Director of Centre on Constitutional Change: Yes. You have mutual recognition in most regulatory systems and therefore—

Mr Bernard Jenkin (Chair) (Harwich and North Essex) (Con): Mutual recognition being different from regulatory alignment?

Professor Michael Keating Professor of Politics, Aberdeen University, Director of Centre on Constitutional Change: There has been a lot of exegesis of words—regulatory alignment, no regulatory divergence and so on—but the broad principle is mutual recognition and compatibility. That is the problem there. There is also a political issue in that, whether it is the customs union or the single market—which is mainly about regulation—there is a fear that you will not preserve the current position, which is that Northern Ireland has an open border both to the Republic and to the United Kingdom. Whatever solution you have—people have talked about a border in the Irish Sea—that does not resolve the problem; that is still a border. For the nationalist community, having a border of any sort or a stronger border—a deeper border, I should say—is a political red line and for the unionist community, having a border with GB is a red line. I can understand where they are both coming from because it is important almost psychologically for the agreement to work that you can have these open borders and that you can have the free movement of people across both of those borders.

Tuesday



The Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy came to the House to answer Member's [Questions](#). The questioning ranged from climate change to consumer protection. The Government accepted that the work of the Devolved Government's in encouraging Employee owned companies was something they should look in to.

[John Grogan \(Keighley\) \(Lab\)](#): Does the Minister agree that, taken as a sector, the UK's 300 employee-owned businesses have higher than average productivity? Will he follow the example of the Scottish and Welsh Governments and more actively promote the sector, particularly to small and medium-sized businesses that are looking for a succession plan?

[The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy \(Richard Harrington\)](#): That is very interesting. I will look with care at what is happening in Scotland and Wales. We are generally in favour of employee-owned companies and companies with employees who have a share in them.

Following the recent passing of the former Speaker, Michael Martin, [Tributes](#) were paid by the House.

Members moved on to the [First Reading](#) of the Road Traffic Offenders (Surrendering of Driving Licences Etc.).

Sanctions and Anti-Money Laundering Bill

In the House for its [Third Reading](#), Members were considering several amendments before the Bill could move to its next stage, one of which was the much discussed Magnitsky amendment.

[Stephen Kinnock \(Aberavon\) \(Lab\)](#): Along with other colleagues, I absolutely share the objectives of the Magnitsky provisions. I have been in touch with Bill Browder, for whom Sergei Magnitsky worked at the time of his brutal murder by the Russian authorities, and Mr Browder has made it absolutely clear to me that if this does not lead to the

To get in touch, write to me at: 47 Nolton Street Bridgend, CF31 3AA Call: 01656 750002

Email: moonm@parliament.uk

Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/madeleine.moon>; or visit www.madeleinemoonmp.com

full publication the names of the people who are being sanctioned and to absolute clarity on the nature of the independent review that has just been mentioned, the Bill will have failed in its objectives. It is important that the Minister understands what Mr Bill Browder is saying on this matter.

The Minister for Europe and the Americas (Sir Alan Duncan): I can say that any person sanctioned under this Bill will have their name published on an administrative list, which will be publicly available. I hope that that will reassure the hon. Gentleman, the House and all those interested in this issue.

The day in the Chamber concluded with two Motions, one on [Prisons](#) and the other on Tribunals and Inquiries, before an [Adjournment Debate](#) on Shop Direct (Greater Manchester).

Defence Committee

This week's Committee Session saw the National Security Adviser giving [evidence](#) to the Committee on the Modernising Defence Programme. Members of the Committee, including myself, were keen to point out that headline grabbing flagship projects, such as our new aircraft carriers, are great assets for force projection, but without the money to provide supporting assets, such as the ships needed to protect the carriers, these impressive capabilities become vulnerable and ineffective.

***Mrs Madeleine Moon (Bridgend) (Lab)**: Given that it has taken us 20 years to build the two aircraft carriers, that money should have gone in five years ago. We are playing very belated catch-up in areas where there are serious capability and national security gaps: not least of all in our submarine capability and missile defence capability, our naval capability and our air protection capability. The question is whether we are spending enough. The suggestion that we are does not seem to sit alongside the threats and the lack of capability that is in front of us.*

***Sir Mark Sedwill KCMG, National Security Adviser**: Of course, "Are we spending enough?" is one question. "Are we spending it on the right things and in the right way?" are two equally important questions. You mentioned the carriers and the fact it will take 20 years—we are not quite at full operating capacity yet—from the initial decision. The carriers were a discretionary choice made by Government, to be able to project power. There are others who are more expert on this, but their primary purpose is not theatre defence in Europe; it is to project British military power, as part of our overall national security and foreign policy strategy, around the world. That was a deliberate choice made, to invest in that discretionary capability.*



I think the Committee is driving at something quite profound: that there needs to be continuing investment in some of the less eye-catching capabilities that preserve the underlying coherence of defence and national security as a whole. If that is a reasonable way of inferring the line of questioning, I agree with that.

Wednesday

Prime Ministers Questions

The Secretary of State for Wales preceded the Prime Minister this week, ensuring a packed Chamber for Wales [Questions](#).

The Prime Minister was [questioned](#) on a range of issues, as ever the NHS loomed large over proceedings.

***Jeremy Corbyn (Islington North) (Lab)**: Not only was March the worst month on record in A&E departments; it was also the worst month for cancelled operations. There are 100,000 vacancies for NHS staff—and the Prime Minister personally intervened to overrule the Health Secretary and the previous Home Secretary when they asked for a relaxation of visa rules in order to recruit staff to work in our NHS.*

But it is not just the NHS where the Government are damaging our public services. In January, the Education Secretary promised that no school would see a cut in its funding. Last week, he was invited to repeat that pledge, and

refused. I wonder why. Will the Prime Minister now tell parents, teachers and students the truth—that the schools budget is in fact being cut in real terms all over the country?



The Prime Minister (Mrs Theresa May): *The right hon. Gentleman is wrong. What we are doing is ensuring that there is more money available to schools. We are ensuring that we are protecting that core budget, because we want to ensure that every child, regardless of their background, gets the education that they need and the education that fulfils their potential. That is why, once again, it is not just a question of the money you put in; it is about how you spend the money you are spending. That is why I am pleased to say that 1.9 million more children are in good or outstanding schools under*

this Government and education standards are going up under this Government. That means more opportunities for our young people.

The Health Secretary then came to the House to give a **Statement** on Breast Cancer screening. This was followed by the First Reading of a Bill on Tenant Fees and a further **Bill** on Victims of Terrorism.

Opposition Day

Windrush

Opposition day this week was used as an important opportunity to further press the Government on the Windrush Scandal, putting the new Home Secretary under pressure.

Yvette Cooper (Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford) (Lab): *The Home Secretary has announced the additional safeguards he wants to put in place for the Windrush generation, but will he apply those safeguards more widely? In evidence to the Home Affairs Committee, we have heard that about 10% of the cases passed by the Home Office to banks are incorrect, and that the banks may therefore be taking action against people who are here legally because of errors by the Home Office. Will he put in place safeguards for everybody?*

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Sajid Javid): *The right hon. Lady makes a very important point, and I am looking precisely at that. She used the example of banks that may be acting inappropriately or in error, perhaps through no fault of their own. I will look at that very carefully, and I will get back to her, because this is a very important issue and she is absolutely right to raise it.*

I must now conclude to leave other Members enough time to speak in this debate. I am clear that all the measures I have outlined today will make a real difference. I will continue to assess what further action needs to be taken, because I know that I am not alone in this House when I say that this situation has made me angry. I know that I am not alone when I say that it is unacceptable that there are those from the Windrush generation who feel hurt and betrayed by the country they call home. That is why the measures we are taking, and will continue to take, are so vital. We must make sure that those affected get the support and attention that they so rightly deserve, so that something like this can never happen again.

The day in the Chamber ended with an **Adjournment Debate** on Mental Health Services.

Thursday

Questions to the Secretary of State for Leaving the European Union

Members got the chance to put **Questions** to the Secretary of State the day after the Cabinet held yet another meeting to decide on their approach to Britain's future partnership with the EU and the debate on the Customs

Union last week.

I took the opportunity to question the arrangements for jobs depending on pan-EU supply chains.



Mrs Madeleine Moon (Bridgend) (Lab): To follow on from the previous question, the thousands of families in my constituency whose income and prosperity rely on the Ford engine plant are also deeply alarmed about the refusal to remain in the customs union. A large number of parts come in from Europe to create the engines built in Bridgend, which are then exported to Europe. How does the Minister envisage those supply chain needs and Ford's just-in-time policy being met?

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union (Mr Steve Baker): Both sides have agreed that we wish to have tariff-free access to each other's markets. The hon. Member for Belfast South (Emma Little Pengelly) referred to the tiny proportion of our imports that need to be physically checked. With a degree of mutual recognition, which has been outlined by the Prime Minister, these things can be delivered through the terms of our future economic partnership, and I am confident that it is in both sides' interest to ensure that supply chains can continue uninterrupted

Business of the House

With the Leader of the House at the Dispatch Box, I put a question to her on the shocking statistics on Kidney Cancer diagnosis to raise the awareness of issues such as this with Members.

Mrs Madeleine Moon (Bridgend) (Lab): Mr Speaker, I am sure you will share my horror that this year's Kidney Cancer UK patient survey found that over 51% of kidney cancers are diagnosed as a result of an unrelated scan. There is a huge problem with GPs not identifying and finding early treatment for kidney cancers, some of the photographs of which are pretty horrific. May we have a statement about what the Government are doing to raise awareness of kidney cancer and to develop a simple, cheap and effective test that will give early diagnoses and allow treatment to take place?

The Leader of the House of Commons (Andrea Leadsom): This is, of course, an incredibly important health issue. The hon. Lady will be aware of the enormous advances in cancer care, both from a medical point of view, and with the Government's commitment to the cancer drugs fund and to improving the speed of diagnosis and treatment of different cancers. She is highlighting a specific cancer, a subject that would lend itself very much to an Adjournment debate or a Westminster Hall debate, so that hon. Members who have similar constituency concerns can raise them.

Backbench Business this week focused on the upcoming May Adjournment of the House. The day then ending with an Adjournment Debate on the National Living Wage: Under-25s.