

**The Prime Minister**

(Boris Johnson)

Today marks five years since the murder of our friend and colleague Jo Cox. My thoughts—and I am sure those of the whole House—are with her family and friends.

I am sure that the House will wish to join me in offering our thanks and best wishes to Sir Roy Stone, who is leaving the Government Chief Whip's office and the civil service. He has worked for 13 Chief Whips, and for over 20 years has played an invaluable role in delivering the Government of the day's legislative programme. We wish him well.

This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in this House, I shall have further such meetings later today.

**Sir Robert Neill**

I am sure that we would all wish to associate ourselves with the Prime Minister's remarks in relation to both Jo Cox and Roy Stone.

I know that the Prime Minister will report to the House in more detail later on the G7 summit, which President Biden described as “extremely collaborative” and successful. In taking forward the agenda—in particular, the part of the agenda of the summit that calls for us to work to uphold the rule of law and respect for an international rules-based system—will the Prime Minister bear in mind and task all parts of the Government to promote the great asset that we have in English common law, and in the expertise and reputation for integrity of our judiciary and legal systems? Will he make sure that those willing assets are harnessed in the pursuit of that G7 agenda, be it through writing commercial contracts with English law as a jurisdiction or helping, through our expertise, developing countries and markets?

**The Prime Minister**

My hon. Friend raises an important and vital sector of our economy—our legal services industry and judicial system, which is admired around the world. It is one of the reasons that we are capable of attracting so much inward investment to this country and one of the key exports that we have been able to promote just recently—thanks, for instance, to our free trade deal with Australia.

**Keir Starmer**

(Holborn and St Pancras) (Lab)

May I join with the Prime Minister's remarks in relation to Sir Roy Stone?

This week also marks the fourth anniversary of the Grenfell fire tragedy, in which 72 people lost their lives. It is frankly an outrage that there are still more than 200 high-rise flats with Grenfell-style cladding, and that many leaseholders are trapped in homes that are neither safe nor sellable. The best way to mark this tragedy is not with words, but with action; I urge the Prime Minister finally to end the cladding scandal.

As the Prime Minister has already said, today is the fifth anniversary of the death of our dear friend and colleague Jo Cox. Jo had already changed so many lives for the better. She was passionate about creating a fairer, more just world. I know she would have gone on to achieve so much more, and that she would have been so proud of the work of her foundation and what it is doing in her name. Jo and I were in the same intake into this House; we were friends and our children are around the same age. There is not a day that goes by when we do not miss Jo. I know that I speak not just for those on the Opposition Benches, but for many across the House, when I say that today we remember Jo. [Hon. Members: "Hear, hear."]

Does the Prime Minister recognise that his decision to keep our borders open contributed to the spread of the delta variant in this country?

**The Prime Minister**

No. Captain Hindsight needs to adjust his retrospectoscope, because he is completely wrong. We put India on the red list on 23 April, and the delta variant was not so identified until 28 April and was only identified as a variant of concern on 7 May. When the right hon. and learned Gentleman criticises this Government for wanting to keep our borders open, just remember that he voted 43 times in the last five years to ensure that our border controls were kept in the hands of Brussels.

### **Keir Starmer**

This is absurd. I have, on seven occasions at PMQs, raised the question of the borders with the Prime Minister. They are all marked up in the transcript; they are all there in Hansard, Prime Minister. It is time for a better defence: your defence is as bad as your border policy.

The Prime Minister talks about the dates. Let us go through the dates. On 24 March, a new variant was reported in India. On 1 April, India was reporting over 100,000 new infections a day, and rising. But the Prime Minister kept India off the red list until 23 April. In that time, 20,000 people came into the UK from India. What on earth did the Prime Minister expect would be the consequences of that? The British people did their bit by following the rules and getting vaccinated, but the Prime Minister squandered it by letting a new variant into the country. That was not inevitable; it was the consequence of his indecision. If the Prime Minister disagrees with me—he answered the first question, “No”—what is his explanation as to why Britain has such high rates of the delta variant?

### **The Prime Minister**

There is a very simple reason why the UK generally has a better understanding of the variants in these countries: we do 47% of the genomic testing in the world. I really think that the Leader of the Opposition should get his facts straight, because the delta variant, as I have said, was identified in this country on 28 April. I have a document on which I believe he is relying—it seems to be published by somebody called David Evans, general secretary of the Labour party—in which he says that the delta variant was identified on 1 April. He says that B1617—the delta variant—was designated as under investigation on 1 April. That is not the delta variant; that is the kappa variant. It is a “gamma” for the Labour party. The delta variant, as it happens, is seeded around the world in 74 countries and, sadly, is growing. But there is a difference between those countries and this country. In this country, we have vaccinated almost 79% of the adult population and given two vaccinations to 56%—a programme that he would have stopped by keeping us in the European Medicines Agency.

### **Keir Starmer**

The question was: what is the Prime Minister’s explanation for our high rates of the delta variant? Answer came there none, other than that, apparently, we understand the variants.

The data is very, very clear. Our NHS has been doing an amazing job with the vaccine roll-out, but while the NHS was vaccinating, the Prime Minister was vacillating. It is because of his indecision that our borders stayed open. It is because of his indecision that India stayed off the red list. It is because of his indecision that in that period 20,000 people came to this country from India. The consequences are now clear. The rate of the delta variant is much higher here than in other countries, and we learn today that tragically, once again, the UK has the highest infection rate in Europe: we did not want to top that table again. If his borders policy is so strong, how does the Prime Minister explain that?

### **The Prime Minister**

For the ease of the House, the right hon. and learned Gentleman should begin by pulping his document in which he incorrectly identifies what the delta variant is. We took the most drastic steps possible to put India on the red list on 23 April, before that variant was even identified. The big difference between this country and the rest of Europe—he loves these comparisons—is that we have had the fastest vaccine roll-out anywhere in Europe. We have a very, very high degree of protection. It is thanks to the vaccine roll-out and the fantastic efforts of the NHS that we now have and can continue with one of the most open economies and societies in Europe and get on with our cautious but irreversible road map to freedom.

### **Keir Starmer**

If the Prime Minister put as much effort into protecting our borders as he does to coming up with ridiculous excuses, the country would be reopening next week. Even now, what do we know? The delta variant is responsible for 90% of infections in this country. He is persisting with a traffic light system that does not work and will not stop other variants coming in. After so many mistakes, and with the stakes so high, why does the Prime Minister not do what Labour is calling for: drop the traffic light system, get rid of the amber list, secure the borders and do everything possible to save the British summer?

### **The Prime Minister**

The right hon. and learned Gentleman does not even know what the delta variant is. We have the toughest border measures anywhere in the world, and we will continue. We have 50 countries on the red list. If he is now saying that

he wants to stop all transit, traffic and travel to and from this country, it is yet another flip-flop from the Leader of the Opposition—yet another totally unintelligible flip-flop. If he wants to close this country down to travel, which is what I understood him to be saying, it is not only yet another flip-flop, but it is also totally pointless, because we have 75% of our medicines and 50% of our food coming in from abroad. He has got to adopt a consistent position.

### **Keir Starmer**

What I have learned is that the worse the position for the Prime Minister, the more pathetic it gets. Is he really suggesting that the 20,000 people who came in from India were bringing in vital medical supplies or food? It is absolutely ridiculous. What we were arguing for was for India to be on the red list between 1 and 23 April. If that had happened, we would not have the delta variant here, and it is as simple as that. The Prime Minister's former senior adviser got it absolutely right. He said, and I quote:

“Fundamentally, there was no proper border policy, because the Prime Minister never wanted a proper border policy.”

That is the man who was in the room. It is those in hospitality, in clubs, in pubs, the arts, tourism and travel who are paying the price of the Prime Minister's failure. All they ask is that if they have to keep their businesses closed, they get the support they need, but where is it? Business rate relief is being withdrawn from the end of this month, affecting 750,000 businesses. Furlough is being phased out. In Wales, the Labour Government have acted by extending business rate relief for a year and providing new support for those affected. When is the Prime Minister going to do the same for businesses in England?

### **The Prime Minister**

We are proud of the support we have given to businesses up and down the country. The whole point about the cautious approach we are taking is to continue support with furlough, support through business rates, support through grants of up to £18,000, and there is support from councils—all that is continuing, but what we are also seeing is businesses slowly recovering. The growth in the economy in April was 2.3%. Card spending over the bank holiday weekend was actually 20% above pre-pandemic levels. I know how tough things have been, and we will look after business throughout this pandemic, but thanks

to the vaccine roll-out and the cautious steps we are taking, we are seeing a shot in the arm for business across the country, and we will look after them all the way.

### **Keir Starmer**

Yet again, it is not what the Government have done; it is what is needed now in light of the decision taken this week. UKHospitality says that the sector will lose £3 billion because of the delay and that 200,000 jobs could be at risk. That is not what has been done, but what is needed now, Prime Minister. The Federation of Small Businesses warns that the Government are being dangerously complacent, and I think we have just seen an example of that.

We all want these restrictions to be over, for our economy to be open and for businesses to thrive, but the Prime Minister's indecision at the borders has blown it. [Interruption.] The problem with everything that the Prime Minister says today—both what he says at the Dispatch Box and also what he mutters—is that we have heard it all before so many times. Last March, he said we could turn the tide in 12 weeks—remember that? Then he said it will all be over by Christmas. Then we were told 21 June would be freedom day. Now we are told that 19 July is terminus day.

The British people do not expect miracles, but they do expect basic competence and honesty. When it comes to care homes, protective equipment or borders, we see the same pattern from this Prime Minister—too slow, too indecisive, over-promising, under-delivering. After all these failures and mistakes, why should anyone believe the Prime Minister now?

### **The Prime Minister**

Why should anybody believe the Leader of the Opposition when he cannot decide what he thinks from one week to the next? He says he has a tough position on borders. Actually, he was attacking quarantine only recently, and saying that it was a “blunt instrument” that should be lessened. What I think the people of this country want to see is a Government getting on with the vaccine roll-out and getting on with our cautious but irreversible road map to freedom. I am very pleased, and he should say it again, that we have one of the fastest vaccine roll-outs anywhere in the world—certainly the fastest in Europe. It would not have been possible if we had stayed in the European Medicines

Agency. We would not have been able to control our borders if, as he voted for 43 times, we had stayed in the EU. We are getting on with the job. We are bringing forward now 23 and 24-year-olds and asking them to come forward for their vaccines. I ask everybody to come forward for their second jab. I trust he has had his. We are delivering on our commitments to the British people—not only a great outcome at the G7 summit last weekend in Carbis Bay, but a new free trade agreement with Australia and building back better across our country. We are getting on with the job, and it would be a wonderful thing, once in his time as Leader of the Opposition, to hear some support for what the Government are doing and some backing up for our approach.

**Paul Bristow**

(Peterborough) (Con)

Last year, doctors and care settings issued an unprecedented number of “do not resuscitate” orders to patients with learning disabilities and mental illness. Many were unlawful and caused avoidable deaths. Despite urgent Care Quality Commission and NHS guidance, shockingly, this practice has continued. Last week, The Telegraph reported that Sonia Deleon died unresuscitated. Her family said she was given a DNR without them knowing, and with her learning disabilities and schizophrenia stated as reasons. Does the Prime Minister share my alarm about these cases, which should have no place in our care, and does he agree that they should be independently investigated? (901309)

**The Prime Minister**

I thank my hon. Friend for raising this very sad case with me, and I am sure the whole House will be thinking of Sonia Deleon and her family. I think that such decisions on “do not resuscitate” should be made only in accordance with a decision involving the person concerned and their carers and families.

**Ian Blackford**

(Ross, Skye and Lochaber) (SNP)

Can I associate myself with the remarks made by you, Mr Speaker, the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition on the absolutely brutal death of our friend and colleague Jo Cox five years ago? She was a woman dedicated to public service who made, in her short time here, a tremendous contribution to this House. Our thoughts are very much with her family, her friends and all those who care very deeply for her loss.

Of course, as we do that, we should also reflect on what we saw earlier this week with the journalist Nick Watt chased through the streets of Whitehall by a mob seeking to intimidate. We must all stand up in this House for the rights of journalists to be able to go about their work safely.

I say good wishes both to Scotland and England ahead of the football match on Friday evening, but if I may say so, I hope that we do not see Scotland being dragged out of the Euros against our wishes at the end of the week.

As we enter the Chamber, we see what is reported to be a WhatsApp communication between the Prime Minister and Dominic Cummings. Perhaps the Prime Minister will clarify whether or not these are genuine, and whether or not the derogatory comments that he expressed on his Health Secretary are valid.

This morning, the details of the disastrous trade deal with Australia are slowly seeping out. It tells us everything we need to know that these details are being celebrated in Canberra, but are busy being concealed in London. For all the spin, it is clear that this Tory Government have just thrown Scottish farmers and crofters under their Brexit bus, just as they sold out our fishing community. So, today, those with most to lose from this deal do not need to hear the Prime Minister's usual waffle. Their livelihoods are at stake, Prime Minister. Just this once—just this once—they deserve honest answers from this Government. Will the Prime Minister confirm that from day one of this deal, 35,000 tonnes of Australian beef, and 25,000 tonnes of Australian lamb will be free to flood the UK market, tariff free?

### **The Prime Minister**

This is a great deal for the UK. It is a great deal for Scotland, for Scottish whisky, and for Scottish business and services exports. It is a great deal for Scottish legal services. It is also a great deal for Scottish farming, and how tragic—how absolutely tragic—that it should be the posture of the Scottish National party to see absolutely no way that Scottish farmers will be able to take advantage of opportunities to export around the world. What the right hon. Gentleman does not realise, is that £350 million-worth of UK food already goes from this country



to Australia. This is an opportunity to turbocharge those exports, get behind Scottish farming, and encourage that, not run it down.

### **Ian Blackford**

My goodness—I do not even think the Prime Minister can believe that tripe. In the Tories' desperation to get a post-Brexit trade deal with somebody—anybody—they have given the farm away, literally. It is blindingly obvious who are the winners and who are the losers in this deal. Australia's economy will benefit to the tune of \$1.3 billion a year. The UK Government's own assessment states that the Australian deal is worth just "0.02% of GDP". We would need 200 Australian deals to come close to mitigating the cost of Brexit. We were told that Brexit was all about taking back control, but for our farmers and crofters there has been no scrutiny, no consultation, and no consent. If the Prime Minister is really confident about the benefits of this deal, does he have the guts to put it to a vote in this House?

### **The Prime Minister**

The people of this country voted for this Government to get on and deliver free trade deals around the world. I believe they were totally right. The right hon. Gentleman talks about tripe, and when it comes to exporting the intestines of sheep, which I know is a valuable part of Scottish tradition, even that is now being opened up around the world, thanks to the deals that this country is doing. If he is saying that he wants to go back into the EU, hand back control of our fisheries and our agriculture to Brussels, and lose all the opportunities that this country has gained, I think he is frankly out of his mind and going in totally the wrong direction. If he means another referendum, we had one of those.

### **Mr Speaker**

May I just say gently to everybody that we now need to turbocharge questions and answers?

### **Robert Largan**

(High Peak) (Con)

Thanks to our unique geography, High Peak has some of the worst broadband and mobile coverage gaps anywhere in the country. We are making good progress, but may I urge the Prime Minister to redouble efforts in the roll-out of ultrafast broadband, especially to hard-to-reach rural areas such as High Peak?

May I suggest that the Government build on the success of the kickstart scheme, with more focused support for key infrastructure industries, so that we can recruit a new generation of highly skilled broadband engineers to turbocharge the roll-out? (901311)

**The Prime Minister**

My hon. Friend is absolutely right, which is why we are working with industry to accelerate our rural network. Coverage across the UK has massively increased, and will be increasing thanks to the steps we are taking.

**Sir Jeffrey M. Donaldson**

(Lagan Valley) (DUP)

I know that, like me, the Prime Minister cares passionately about the Union. Can he confirm that the passing of the European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018 and the Northern Ireland protocol that forms part of it, has not resulted in an implied repeal of article 6 of the Act of Union, which enables Northern Ireland to trade freely with the rest of this United Kingdom? Will he commit fully to restoring Northern Ireland's place within the UK internal market?

**The Prime Minister**

Yes, of course. I can give assurances on both counts. I can say that unless we see progress on the implementation of the protocol, which I think is currently totally disproportionate, then we will have to take the necessary steps to do exactly what the right hon. Gentleman says.

**David Simmonds**

(Ruislip, Northwood and Pinner) (Con)

Does my right hon. Friend agree that the rebuild of Hillingdon Hospital will be of great benefit to his constituents and mine? Will he commit to working with me and other local Members of Parliament, and potential future MPs such as Peter Fleet in Chesham and Amersham, to secure the future of services at Hillingdon's other site, Mount Vernon Hospital in my constituency, which provides specialist medical treatments to a very wide catchment area? (901315)

**The Prime Minister**

My hon. Friend is totally right about Hillingdon Hospital, which has a great future. I look forward to working with him to ensure that the future of services

at Mount Vernon is also protected. I know that a full consultation is due to start in September.

**Layla Moran**

(Oxford West and Abingdon) (LD)

Kevin, a hotel manager in Oxford, contacted me last week because he is worried. Even if this country does open up in the next few weeks, he will not be able to run at full capacity due to chronic staff shortages. Local staff are leaving the industry because of the uncertainty caused by this Government's bungled handling of the pandemic. The EU staff have already left because of the botched handling of Brexit and he cannot recruit from abroad because of the damaging new immigration policy. This is the Prime Minister's wake-up call. Oxfordshire's economy alone relies on the hospitality industry to the tune of £2.5 billion. Will the Government introduce a covid recovery visa to help Kevin to recruit the staff he desperately needs? (901306)

**The Prime Minister**

It is absolutely true that as we open up our economy there are more vacancies, which is great. We also have large numbers of young people in this country who need jobs and large numbers of people who are still furloughed. What we want to see is those people coming forward to get those jobs. Of course, we will retain an open and flexible approach towards allowing talent to come in from overseas.

**Anthony Mangnall**

(Totnes) (Con)

The Prime Minister knows the full value of the UK shellfish industry and the opportunity potential. This week the Food Standards Agency produced a list of recommendations that will allow us to regrade our waters and challenge anomalous results. However, the recommendations only come in in September this year. Will the Prime Minister flex his muscles and see if the report and the recommendations can be brought forward to the end of this month? (901318)

**The Prime Minister**

I will do everything I can to ensure that we accelerate that process. My hon. Friend is right to raise it. A great deal of progress has already been made and the Food Standards Agency has been flexible, but we need to go further. We will

make sure that great British shellfish can continue to be exported to Europe and around the world.

**Marion Fellows**

(Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)

The UK Government's trade deal with Australia has been made with no consultation, no consent and no parliamentary scrutiny. The president of the National Farmers Union Scotland said: "Our seafood industry has already been hit hard by Brexit and now Scottish farming is next to be sacrificed – and once again it's Scotland's key industries which will bear the brunt of a Tory Brexit people here did not vote for". Does the Prime Minister accept the concerns of the NFU Scotland president, or does he think he knows better? (901307)

**The Prime Minister**

From listening to the SNP, Mr Speaker, you would think there was no Scotch whisky industry or no banking and financial services industries in Scotland. Even then, they are missing the point because this is a massive opportunity for the Scottish agriculture sector. What they need is a different type of MP who can champion and get behind them, and who actually believes in Scotland. That is what the people of Scotland need.

**Philip Davies**

(Shipley) (Con)

One of the reasons for the popularity of the Prime Minister is that he has always been on the side of the public, rather than on the side of the establishment. Given that overall deaths in the UK over the last 13 weeks are 8,873 below the five-year average, which includes the time the Indian variant has been around, can my right hon. Friend explain why, instead of trusting his world-leading vaccine programme, the common sense of the British people and his Conservative instincts of individual freedom and individual responsibility, he instead prefers to trust people like Professor Susan Michie at the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies, a long-standing member of the Communist party who last week let the cat out of the bag and said she wanted some covid restrictions to last forever? (901319)

### **The Prime Minister**

Nobody, least of all my hon. Friend or I, wants to see covid restrictions last forever, nor do I think that they are going to last forever. As I made clear earlier this week, I think we can have a high degree of confidence that our vaccination programme will work. I think that we need to give it a little more time, as I have explained, to save many thousands more lives by vaccinating millions more people. That is what we want to do.

### **Margaret Ferrier**

(Rutherglen and Hamilton West) (Ind)

My constituent Ross has been invited to sit his driving theory test in Oban, 100 miles away from his home in Hamilton. His test has already been cancelled twice, first in November last year and then in February 2021. This September, Ross is starting a university course in paramedic science with a view to becoming a qualified paramedic in the Scottish Ambulance Service with placements across Scotland. Being able to drive is crucial. Will the Prime Minister meet me to discuss the delays in the scheduling of Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency theory tests, and the impracticality of the locations being offered? (901308)

### **The Prime Minister**

I am aware of the problem, and we are doing what we can to accelerate the number of driving instructors and testers to allow young people such as the gentleman that she mentions to get their driving test done, and enable them to fulfil their ambitions.

### **Julian Smith**

(Skipton and Ripon) (Con)

I support the Prime Minister's comments on Jo Cox and, as a former Chief Whip, his comment on Sir Roy Stone. Sir Roy gave amazing service to me when I was Chief Whip during the worst of the Brexit years in dealing with a hung Parliament and with the occasional disruptive Back Bencher.

Northern Ireland faces some challenges over the coming weeks in terms of nominating a First Minister and a Deputy First Minister. Does the Prime Minister agree that it is vital that the parties stick to the agreements that have been made in the "New Decade, New Approach" deal, which he and I negotiated 18 months

ago, and that if they fail to do that—I know he does not like this concept—the UK Government ultimately act as a backstop?

### **The Prime Minister**

It gives me great pleasure to thank my right hon. Friend for all the work that he did on the “New Decade, New Approach” deal. I agree that it would be a good thing for the whole package to be agreed, and I certainly support the approach that he has set out. I think that what the people of Northern Ireland want is a stable, functioning and mature Executive.

### **Kenny MacAskill**

(East Lothian) (Alba)

A new Lord Advocate has taken up position, but the structural flaws in the office remain. In no other legal jurisdiction in the UK, or indeed in the western world, is the Government’s senior legal adviser simultaneously the country’s chief prosecutor; yet the role is enshrined in the Scotland Act 1998. Will the Prime Minister commit to changes so that that historical anachronism can be changed and a separation of powers achieved? (901310)

### **The Prime Minister**

First, I congratulate the hon. Gentleman on the outstanding success of his party in the recent elections. I will study the anomaly that he raises and revert to him as soon as possible.

### **Ruth Edwards**

(Rushcliffe) (Con)

May I welcome the Taskforce on Innovation, Growth and Regulatory Reform report, published today by my right hon. Friends the Members for Chingford and Woodford Green (Sir Iain Duncan Smith) and for Chipping Barnet (Theresa Villiers) and my hon. Friend the Member for Mid Norfolk (George Freeman)? The report makes recommendations about how to seize new opportunities from Brexit and back start-ups and new tech. Will my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister look closely at that report so that we can make the most of the great benefits of Brexit and lead the world in the development of new technologies?

**The Prime Minister**

Yes. I thank my hon. and right hon. Friends for their excellent report, and I think it is time to put a TIGRR in the tank.

**Helen Hayes**

(Dulwich and West Norwood) (Lab)

I associate myself with the remarks concerning the fifth anniversary of the murder of Jo Cox. Jo was a dear personal friend and colleague, who will always be missed and remembered, and whose extraordinary legacy endures far beyond this place. Last month, a fire in an east London block of flats caused three people to be hospitalised and dozens more to be treated for smoke inhalation. That block was one of more than 200 high-rise buildings in England still fitted with Grenfell-style cladding. I ask the Prime Minister why it is that four years after the Grenfell tragedy took 72 lives, and after all the warnings, all the tireless campaigning and the unspeakable injustice, people are still living in unsafe flats, and his Government have failed to end the cladding scandal. (901312)

**The Prime Minister**

We have invested massively in removing cladding from high-rise blocks, and we will continue to do so. I know the structure in question and I do believe that Ballymore, the company concerned, has been too slow. We are on its case. I think it is very important that people understand that overall risks of death by fire have been coming down for a very long time and will continue to come down. It is simply not the case that all the high-rise buildings in this country are unsafe, and it is very important that Members of Parliament stress that.

**Paul Holmes**

(Eastleigh) (Con)

Independent lifeboat stations such as the Hamble lifeboat in my constituency respond to over 100 incidents a year in the Solent. The pandemic has increased the operating costs of independent lifeboat stations while also restricting their ability to raise money. Will the Prime Minister look to see what more the Government can do to support independent lifeboat stations such as the Hamble lifeboat as they keep a watchful eye on all of us?

**The Prime Minister**

I thank my hon. Friend for raising the excellent work of Hamble lifeboat. In April last year, my right hon Friend the Chancellor put forward another £750 million in support of charities such as that one.

**Stewart Malcolm McDonald**

(Glasgow South) (SNP)

Staff at two hospitality venues in Glasgow, Blue Dog and AdLib, have had no furlough payments since the summer of last year. Although I have raised this with HMRC directly, the situation still has not moved forward. If I send the Prime Minister the details, will he knock heads together; help the staff, whose bills are going unpaid and debts are rising; and get the cash that they are entitled to into their accounts?

**The Prime Minister**

I am very happy to look at it.

**Mr William Wragg**

(Hazel Grove) (Con)

When can we expect the co-ordinated chorus of SAGE members recommencing their media appearances to depress morale, and does my right hon. Friend fear having to give another press conference at which he again postpones the return of our freedoms? We are rightly told that we need to learn to live with covid, so what can the Prime Minister say to the country to convince us of that reality?

**The Prime Minister**

Academic and scientific freedom are an invaluable part of our country, and I note that my scientific colleagues would echo my sentiment that we need to learn to live with covid.

**Stuart C. McDonald**

(Cumbernauld, Kilsyth and Kirkintilloch East) (SNP)

The Government's two-child cap and childcare proof of payment rules mean that my hard-working constituent, Ms Cowan, who is a single parent on universal credit supporting four kids, faces £1,000 of nursery arrears. She is therefore at risk of losing the kids' nursery places, as a result of which she would have to give up work and would therefore be at risk of sanction and forced



further into debt and poverty. Can the Prime Minister help my constituent out of this trap and fix these rules that are pushing people out of work and into poverty? (901314)

**The Prime Minister**

I would be happy to study the case, but the whole point of universal credit, which this Government introduced, is that it is helping hundreds of thousands of people into work. That is its success.

**Jason McCartney**

(Colne Valley) (Con)

I associate myself with the comments of the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition about our friend Jo Cox. Will the Prime Minister join me in congratulating rugby league legend Kevin Sinfield on his OBE in the Queen's birthday honours? Kevin has done so much to raise awareness of motor neurone disease and support his good friend Rob Burrow. MND is a devastating disease. There is no cure, but scientists believe they are on the cusp of developing effective treatments. Will the Government please commit to investing £50 million over five years to establish a virtual MND research institute and to accelerate research?

**Mr Speaker**

Prime Minister, I totally agree with that, and it should have been a knighthood.

**The Prime Minister**

Thank you, Mr Speaker. It is an OBE, and I thank Kevin Sinfield very much for his outstanding work. We are following it up by spending £55 million on research into MND, but there will be more to come as part of our general massive investment in life sciences.

**Kirsten Oswald**

(East Renfrewshire) (SNP)

Simply put, the trade deal that the Prime Minister has struck means undercutting our farmers and short-changing consumers, and it will set animal welfare standards back by decades. The RSPCA has said that the Prime Minister's deal "will start a race to the bottom and the losers will be billions of farmed

animals and UK farmers.”Does the Prime Minister accept these concerns from the experts at the RSPCA, or does he think that he knows better? (901316)

**The Prime Minister**

I really think that these constant attacks on Australia, its standards and its animal welfare standards will be very much resented by the people of Australia, and will not be recognised. Australia is marked five out of five, which is the highest possible, for animal welfare by the World Organisation for Animal Health performance of veterinary services evaluation team. This deal that we have done is the first ever to incorporate high animal welfare standards, as part of the package that Australia has agreed.

**Lucy Allan**

(Telford) (Con)

Will my right hon. Friend join me in paying tribute to assisted dying campaigner Noel Conway, who has died after taking the decision to have his breathing support removed, and does my right hon. Friend agree that it is now time for Parliament to properly consider the law on assisted dying?

**The Prime Minister**

I thank my hon. Friend, and I know that the whole House will be in sympathy with Noel Conway’s family and friends. There are very deeply and sincerely held views on both sides of this matter, and a change in the law would obviously be one for Parliament to consider.

**Owen Thompson**

(Midlothian) (SNP)

Over the course of this question session, the Prime Minister has been presented with the views of stakeholder after stakeholder expressing real fears and concerns over these bungled trade talks. Why is the Prime Minister willing to put the livelihoods of farmers and crofters across Scotland in peril for a shoddy trade deal with Australia, which will not even cover 1% of the lost opportunities to Europe’s markets that we have lost through Brexit? (901317)

**The Prime Minister**

We have not lost opportunities to Europe’s markets through Brexit.

**Dr Ben Spencer**

(Runnymede and Weybridge) (Con)

In 2014, Runnymede and Weybridge was hit by devastating floods, and my constituents live under the fear of flooding. Last week, the Government signed off the outline business case for the River Thames flooding alleviation scheme, which will allow the detailed design and planning for this scheme to begin in earnest. It is fantastic news and a monumental milestone, and it will massively improve our protection from flooding. Will the Prime Minister join me in celebrating and thanking everyone who has got us to where we are, and does he agree that we need to keep the momentum going?

**The Prime Minister**

My hon. Friend is completely right. The £1 million River Thames scheme will reduce the flood risk for 11,000 homes and 16,000 businesses, and I thank him for raising it with me today.

**Mr Speaker**

That concludes the questions.