



### Miss Sarah Dines >

(Derbyshire Dales) (Con)

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Q1. If he will list his official engagements for Wednesday 21 February. (Unique identification number 901464 (Unique identification number ))

### The Prime Minister >

(Rishi Sunak)

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The whole House will join me in sending our deepest condolences to the family of Alexei Navalny. He died for a cause to which he dedicated his whole life: freedom. To return home knowing that Putin had already tried to have him killed was one of the most courageous acts of our time. Together with our allies, we are considering all options to hold Russia and Putin to account, and this morning we sanctioned those running the prison where Alexei Navalny's body still lies.

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.

### Miss Dines >

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I know that my right hon. Friend will share the horror felt by this House—the oldest people's assembly in the world—at the acid attack against a woman and two children on the streets of London. Does he share my anger that we would still have been unable to deport the perpetrator had he been found because of the so-called European Court of Human Rights? When will we stop bending the knee to this so-called European court—a travesty of a court?

### The Prime Minister >

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This was a horrific attack, and my thoughts are with the victims and their family. Obviously, I cannot comment on a live investigation, but speaking more broadly, clearly I do not think that it is right for dangerous foreign criminals to be able to stay in our country. That is why our Nationality and Borders Act 2022 made it clear that anyone who is convicted of a crime and gets a sentence of 12 months or more will not be granted asylum in the United Kingdom. That is the common-sense position, which I believe is supported by the majority of the British public, but one that the Labour party voted against time and time again.

### Mr Speaker >

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I call the Leader of the Opposition.

**Keir Starmer >**

(Holborn and St Pancras) (Lab)

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I start by welcoming my hon. Friends the new Members for Kingswood (Damien Egan) and for Wellingborough (Gen Kitchen). I know that they will both be powerful advocates for their constituents.

On a more sombre note, I join with the Prime Minister—I was glad to hear what he just had to say, because I am sure that the whole House will join me—in sharing our disgust at the death of Alexei Navalny, who, as the Prime Minister said, died because of his efforts to expose the corruption of the Putin regime. It is a reminder that Putin has stolen not just the wealth but the future and democracy of the Russian people.

Would the Prime Minister be prepared personally to repeat the allegation made by his Business Secretary that the former chair of the Post Office is “lying” when he says that he was told to “go slow” on compensation for postmasters, and “limp” to the next election?

**The Prime Minister >**[Share](#)

As the Business Secretary said on Monday, she asked Henry Staunton to step down after serious concerns were raised. She set out the reasons for this, and the full background, in the House earlier this week, but importantly we have taken unprecedented steps to ensure that victims of the Horizon scandal receive compensation as swiftly as possible, and in full. Making sure that victims receive justice and compensation remains our No. 1 priority, and we will shortly bring forward legislation to address this matter.

**Keir Starmer >**[Share](#)

I am not sure that takes us very much further forward, so let me press on. On Monday, the Business Secretary also confirmed categorically—I will quote this, in fairness to the Prime Minister:

“that the Post Office was at no point told to delay compensation payments by either an official or a Minister from any Government Department, and that at no point was it suggested that a delay would be of benefit to the Treasury”.—[*Official Report*, 19 February 2024; Vol. 745, c. 476.]

That was on Monday. A note released by the former Post Office chair this morning appears to directly contradict that. I appreciate—[*Interruption.*] This really matters to the people who have been at the heart of this. I appreciate that the Business Secretary has put the Prime Minister in a tricky position, but will he commit to investigating this matter properly, including whether that categorical statement was correct, and why, rather than taking those accusations seriously, she accused a whistleblower of lying?

**The Prime Minister >**[Share](#)

It is worth bearing in mind that, as the Business Secretary said on Monday, she asked Henry Staunton to step down after serious concerns were raised. However, this is, on a matter of substance, one of the greatest miscarriages of justice in our nation's history, because people who were working hard serving their communities had their lives and reputations destroyed. That is why we are working hard to ensure that they get justice and compensation, why we established Sir Wyn Williams's inquiry, why we have already paid out over £150 million of compensation to almost 3,000 victims, and why we will introduce new legislation shortly to exonerate them. We will ensure that we do what is needed, that the truth comes to light, that we right the wrongs of the past, and, crucially, that victims get the justice that they deserve.

**Keir Starmer >**[Share](#)

I do hope that the Prime Minister will instigate that investigation into what was said on Monday, because one of the features of this miscarriage is that where concerns have been raised, they have been pushed to one side.

This week, we also learned that a 2016 investigation into whether post office branch accounts could be altered was suddenly stopped before it was completed. Had that investigation revealed that they could be altered, which we now know to be the case, the livelihoods of those wrongly prosecuted could have been saved. What did Government Ministers know about it at the time?

**The Prime Minister** >

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The Leader of the Opposition has picked one particular date, but it is worth bearing in mind that this scandal—*[Interruption.]* Hang on. This scandal has unfolded over decades, and it was following a landmark 2019 High Court case that the previous Government established a statutory inquiry led by Sir Wyn Williams, which is uncovering exactly what went wrong. It is right that that inquiry is allowed to do its work. Also, following the High Court case, the Government established an independent advisory board and not one but three different compensation schemes. As of now, over two thirds of people have received full and final offers. What we are focused on is ensuring that victims get the justice and compensation that they deserve.

**Keir Starmer** >

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This information about 2016 has come to light just this week, which is precisely why I am asking about it. Considering that the Prime Minister's Foreign Secretary was running the Government in 2016, and one of the Prime Minister's current Cabinet Office Ministers was the Post Office Minister, has he thought to ask either of them what they knew in 2016?

**The Prime Minister** >

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No, Mr Speaker—*[Interruption.]* We did the right thing, which was to set up an independent statutory inquiry. That is the right way to resolve this issue; it is the right way to get victims the truth and the answers that they demand. This Government are getting on with getting them the compensation that they rightly deserve.

**Keir Starmer** >

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As we all know, the Horizon scandal left people isolated, their livelihoods lost, their lives ruined. Some died without ever getting the justice that they deserved. Fears of delay, or of cover up, are causing them anguish. Yesterday, Chris Head, once accused by the Post Office of owing more than £80,000, said this:

“There is a lack of transparency...We need to see the correspondence between [the] Post Office, the department and UKGI because all of this time everything gets shrouded in secrecy”—*[Interruption.]*

These are his words; have some respect, please. These are victims.

I appreciate that the inquiry is ongoing, but as the Prime Minister knows—as do I and the whole House—that does not provide a reason why he cannot draw a line under this, give postmasters such as Chris the peace of mind that they need, and release all the correspondence that he wants to see. Will he now do so?

**The Prime Minister** >

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As I said, this is one of the greatest miscarriages of justice in our country's history. I do not think it is one that the Leader of the Opposition ever raised with me during these exchanges over the past year, but we are working hard to get victims not just the answers but the compensation that they deserve. We now have a statutory inquiry led by Sir Wyn Williams, who has the powers to

get access to all the documentation that he requires and to speak to everybody that he needs to. That is the right and proper way to get the truth that the victims deserve, but in the meantime, we are not wasting a moment to get victims the compensation they deserve. The legislation will be before the House shortly.

**Keir Starmer** >

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In recent decades, there have been numerous scandals that have left public faith in our institutions shaken, and rebuilding that confidence will require those affected to see that politicians are being honest with them and to believe it. Just like the postmasters, victims of the **infected blood** scandal have been subject to unimaginable trauma during their search for justice, so can the Prime Minister put their minds at ease and tell the House what undertakings he has given to ensure that the Government are not “limping to the election” on payments that those victims are owed by the British state?

**The Prime Minister** >

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When it comes to the **infected blood** scandal, as I have said before, I am acutely aware of the strength of feeling on this issue and the suffering of all those who were impacted by that dreadful scandal. I gave evidence to the inquiry myself last year, and as I said then, I recognise that thousands have suffered for decades.

As the Leader of the Opposition knows, there is an independent inquiry. As this is an incredibly complex issue, as he well knows, the Minister for the Cabinet Office updated Parliament with the latest Government position just before the Christmas recess. He announced that the Cabinet Office was appointing an expert group of clinical, legal and social care experts so that it had the relevant expertise to make informed decisions, responding to the inquiry’s recommendations on compensation when they come. He also confirmed that the Department of Health and Social Care will implement a fully bespoke psychological service for people **infected** and affected. We have also committed to providing an update to Parliament on next steps through an oral statement within 25 sitting days of the publication of the final report. But I will end where I began: this is a deeply awful scandal, and we will do what we need to do to make it right.

**Karl M<sup>c</sup>Cartney** >

(Lincoln) (Con)

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Q2. There is a plan for at least 2,000 single young men who have come here illegally soon to be housed just 3 miles from the centre of Lincoln at RAF Scampton, in the constituency of my right hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough (Sir Edward Leigh)—if Home Office Ministers have their way. On top of the huge and rising costs and the recent advice from civil servants to Home Office Ministers to can the plan, what reassurance can the Prime Minister and his Home Secretary give that Scampton will not replicate the scandalous incidents that occurred in Cambridge in 2014, when 300 Libyan trainees were housed at RAF Bassingbourn? (Unique identification number 901465 (Unique identification number ))

**The Prime Minister** >

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My hon. Friend is right to raise the concerns of his constituents. I assure him that we want asylum accommodation to have as little impact as possible on the local community. I understand that the Home Office has put a number of measures in place, including a specialist security provider working on site 24/7 and CCTV, and it is working with the local police as well. However, I know my hon. Friend agrees with me that the only way to stop this problem fully and ensure that local communities are not seeing the housing of illegal migrants—whether that is on large sites or in hotels—is to have a plan to stop the boats. That is what this party and this Government do, and it is Labour that is blocking us at every step of the way.

**Mr Speaker** >

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I call the SNP leader.



**Stephen Flynn >**

(Aberdeen South) (SNP)

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I begin by echoing the sentiments of the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition in relation to the heroic bravery of Alexei Navalny. We must all continue to be united in our opposition to Vladimir Putin.

As it stands, some 60% of the buildings in Gaza are either damaged or destroyed. Much of the farmland is in ruin; some 30,000 people are dead, 70,000 are injured, and 1.4 million are currently sheltering in Rafah, awaiting an imminent Israeli onslaught. Surely the Prime Minister must accept that that does not amount to self-defence.

**The Prime Minister >** [Share](#)

I share the concern of many Members about the high rate of civilian casualties and, indeed, the growing humanitarian crisis in Gaza. That is why we have called consistently for an immediate humanitarian pause, which would allow for the safe release of hostages and more aid going into Gaza, so that we create the sustainable conditions for a long-term and enduring ceasefire. That is what our diplomatic efforts are focused on, and that is what I impressed upon the Israeli Prime Minister last week when I spoke to him.

**Stephen Flynn >** [Share](#)

Tonight, this House will have the opportunity to join the majority of the international community and say that enough is enough, that the killing in Gaza must stop and that the hostages must be released, and the best way to do that is to send a clear and united message that we back an immediate ceasefire. Surely, all of us, irrespective of our political allegiance, can agree on that very issue?

**The Prime Minister >** [Share](#)

Of course, we want to see the fighting in Gaza end as soon as possible, and never again allow Hamas to carry out the appalling terrorist attacks that Israel was subject to. The hon. Member talks about the UN resolution, but just calling for an immediate full ceasefire now, which collapses back into fighting within days or weeks, is not in anyone's interest. We must work towards a permanent ceasefire, and that is why the right approach is the approach that we have set out and the United States has set out in its resolution, which is for an immediate humanitarian pause to get hostages out and aid in, so that we then can create the conditions for a sustainable ceasefire. In the meantime, we are doing everything we can to increase the amount of humanitarian aid that we bring into Gaza—something I discussed with the King of Jordan last week—and we will have more updates in the coming days of more airdrops into Gaza, but also just in the last couple of days, that have managed to deliver family tents into Gaza, which are providing much-needed shelter for very vulnerable people.

**Rob Butler >**

(Aylesbury) (Con)

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Q4. Key to the much-needed regeneration of Aylesbury are new link roads to cut congestion. Money from the cancelled part of HS2 is meant to be paying towards them—that is only right, given the destruction being caused by the construction of the first part of this unwanted railway—but the cash has not arrived yet. Can my right hon. Friend assure my constituents they will get the roads they need, so they can spend less time sitting in traffic jams and more time growing the local economy? (Unique identification number 901467 (Unique identification number ))

**The Prime Minister >** [Share](#)

As my hon. Friend knows, last autumn we announced the Government's vision to redirect £36 billion of savings from HS2 to invest in hundreds of transport projects across the country, including possible increased funding for two projects that I know my hon. Friend has campaigned on tirelessly—the south-east Aylesbury link road and the Aylesbury eastern link road. I know he has met the relevant Minister on a number of occasions to discuss these proposals, and I can tell him that the details of how these funding uplifts will be allocated will be decided very shortly.

**Neale Hanvey >**

(Kirkcaldy and Cowdenbeath) (Alba)

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Over 40,000 North sea oil and gas jobs are at risk from an incoming Labour Administration, and neither Labour, the Tories or the SNP have lifted a finger to save Grangemouth oil refinery from closure. With the passing of last night's Offshore Petroleum Licensing Bill, the UK Government gave not one, but two fingers to Scotland's energy ambitions within the UK. Can the Prime Minister explain: in today's money, the UK has received over £300 billion in tax receipts from North sea oil and gas, so why cannot the UK Government find £80 million to secure Grangemouth's future and profitability beyond 2025?

**The Prime Minister >**[Share](#)

As I have previously told the House, the future of Grangemouth is a commercial decision for its owners. The site will remain operating as a refinery until at least May 2025. The UK and the Scottish Governments are working together to make sure that there are sufficient assurances in place for the support of employees. But when it comes to backing Scottish energy, it is this Government who just this week have ensured that we can support British North sea oil and gas, safeguarding 200,000 jobs and increasing our energy security. It is the SNP and the Labour party that oppose that, but we will always back our fantastic North sea economy.

**Virginia Crosbie >**

(Ynys Môn) (Con)

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Q10. Does the Prime Minister agree with me and Welsh farmers such as Gareth Wyn Jones that our farmers and food security are vital and that the agricultural budget should be ringfenced, unlike the Welsh Labour Government, propped up by Plaid, who are determined to force our farmers out of business with their approach to nitrate vulnerable zones, TB and their new sustainable farming scheme, which using the Welsh Government's own analysis, is forecast to result in 5,500 job losses and a £200 million hit to the Welsh economy? (Unique identification number 901473 (Unique identification number ))

**The Prime Minister >**[Share](#)

My hon. Friend is an excellent campaigner on behalf of her local farming community, and I know she has been working hard with Gareth Wyn Jones to raise its voice, especially where there is so much concern. Conservative Members are supporting farmers with more money to grow more British food, in contrast with the plans she highlighted, which would decimate farming communities in Wales and are the opposite of what is needed. While we will always back our rural communities across the UK, Labour would take them back to square one.

**Mr Clive Betts >**

(Sheffield South East) (Lab)

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Q3. It is now more than two years since the fan-led review on football governance was produced. Will the Prime Minister commit to setting up an independent regulator, with the up-front power to intervene to achieve a fairer distribution of football's enormous riches, to ensure that no community in future loses its football club, as happened in Bury? Will he commit to bringing forward legislation urgently, or will he leave it for a future Labour Government to act on behalf of football fans? (Unique identification number 901466 (Unique identification number ))

**The Prime Minister** >[Share](#)

The independent regulator will put fans back at the heart of football and help to deliver a sustainable future for all clubs. That delivers on our manifesto commitment. The Government are engaged in discussions with industry, and that was part of our King's Speech, as the hon. Gentleman knows. I am glad he brought up Bury football club, because it was my hon. Friend the Member for Bury North (James Daly) who ensured £1 million of funding to safeguard that football club, and that is what we are doing to communities up and down the country.

**Andrew Selous** >

(South West Bedfordshire) (Con)

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Q12. GP surgeries promised in planning applications take far too long to be built. Can we clear away the obstacles and make it easier for our amazing family doctors to use additional consulting rooms that they are happy with elsewhere in the community, so that GPs, and the many extra prescribing nurses they are now employing, can see more patients now while they wait for bespoke premises to be built? (Unique identification number 901475 (Unique identification number ))

**The Prime Minister** >[Share](#)

I thank my hon. Friend, who speaks from a point of authority. He knows that we have high standards to ensure that GPs provide services from premises that meet all the required criteria, but I understand it is possible for those services to be provided at alternative locations that meet the contract requirements. I will happily ensure that the Health and Social Care Secretary looks into his suggestions about more flexibility. He will also welcome our recent plans to expand the range of services available at pharmacies, saving many people time and hassle to get treatment for seven common ailments at their local pharmacist, easing the pressure on our GPs and speeding up the care that people deserve.

**Pete Wishart** >

(Perth and North Perthshire) (SNP)

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Q5. I was in the House on 18 March 2003 when this House voted to go to war in Iraq on the demands of the then Labour Government. What followed was death, misery, and destruction on an almost unimaginable scale. Voting against the Iraq war is the vote I am most proud of in my time in this House. Today, after 29,000 deaths in Gaza, we face a vote of similar significance. Does the Prime Minister believe that MPs today should look back with that same pride, knowing that they have done everything possible to stop the death, destruction, and misery tonight? (Unique identification number 901468 (Unique identification number ))

**The Prime Minister** >[Share](#)

Nobody wants to see the fighting in Gaza go on for a moment longer than is necessary, and nobody wants to see innocent civilians suffer. That is why we are doing absolutely everything we can to bring about an immediate humanitarian pause, allowing for the safe release of hostages, which the hon. Gentleman failed to mention I believe, and also getting more aid into Gaza to create the conditions for a genuinely sustainable ceasefire. That is the position shared by our allies, that is what our diplomatic efforts are focused on, and that is what our motion tonight will reflect.

**Andrew Rosindell** >

(Romford) (Con)

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I have had the privilege to be spending a lot of time with the law-abiding, tax-paying, hard-working patriotic people of Romford in recent months, and they have been telling me what they think. Does the Prime Minister agree with the people of Romford that we need a radical plan to control immigration and stop illegal immigration, to regain sovereignty over our human rights laws in this country, to tell the Mayor of London that we need more police to stop crime in the London Borough of Havering, and a fair funding settlement for Havering? Will the Prime Minister come with me to Romford market, following the footsteps of Margaret Thatcher, and meet the people of Romford? One thing I can tell him they do not want is to be taken back into the European Union by a socialist Government.

**The Prime Minister** >

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May I welcome my hon. Friend back to his place? I agree with everything he said, and I look forward to visiting him and his Romford constituents at the earliest opportunity.

**Matt Western** >

(Warwick and Leamington) (Lab)

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Q6. At a recent meeting of Warwickshire County Council, children with special educational needs were described by some county councillors as requiring “some form of strict correction”, or were “just really badly behaved”. Other inappropriate language was used. Parents of SEN children across the country have been outraged by this, with some 30,000 of them signing a petition calling for those councillors’ resignations. Will the Prime Minister condemn the Conservative councillors’ language and urge them to do the right thing and resign? (Unique identification number 901469 (Unique identification number ))

**The Prime Minister** >

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I have not seen the details of those comments and this issue. More generally, the Government have a strong track record of supporting those with disabilities. It is important that children with special educational needs receive the right support in the right place at the right time. We have seen funding for SEN increase by 60% over this Parliament to more than £10 billion. Most recently, the Department for Education and the Department of Health and Social Care are piloting a new project to improve access to specialty support in mainstream primary schools, because we want to make sure that these children get all the support and opportunities they deserve.

**Siobhan Baillie** >

(Stroud) (Con)

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We have legislated to give the public ID verification options on social media, and tech companies know the safety value and popularity of that, because they offer it now, but for a big fee every month—it is not good enough. Bereaved parents are campaigning for more measures to protect kids online, fraudsters are routinely exploiting fake social media accounts to scam, and there are fears of global political interference in elections from faceless, traceless bots. It is creating the perfect cyber-storm. Will my right hon. Friend use his influence to get tech companies to get on with offering robust, visible and free verification measures as soon as possible to keep people safe?

**The Prime Minister** >

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Can I start by commending my hon. Friend on her work on this issue? She is absolutely right that user verification can be a powerful tool to keep people safe online. The Online Safety Act 2023, as she knows, requires companies to offer all adults optional user identity verification. Companies will also need to take firm action to improve safety for children in particular, and Ofcom will be able to monitor tech companies and have strong powers to ensure they comply. I can tell her that the Home Secretary is meeting the industry on Monday next week and will be sure to raise the points she has mentioned today.



**Mary Glendon** >

(North Tyneside) (Lab)

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Q7. A KPMG study finds a strong economic case to remove power cables over the Tyne. Despite my questions to previous Prime Ministers, we are no further forward. Can this Prime Minister finally secure a commitment from National Grid to implement its clear legal obligation and fund this vital work? This fog on the Tyne is impeding local businesses and risks possible net GVA benefits of up to £1.2 billion. Our great river needs action now. (Unique identification number 901470 (Unique identification number ))

**The Prime Minister** > [Share](#)

I am happy to look into the issue that the hon. Lady raises. What would be damaging to the north-east and the Tyne are her party's plans to stick with their completely ridiculous 2030 decarbonisation target with absolutely no plan to pay for it, which just means higher taxes for everyone in her constituency and the country.

**Sir John Hayes** >

(South Holland and The Deepings) (Con)

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Britain's food security, compromised by cheap foreign imports, now faces a parallel threat: all kinds of industrialisation of the countryside, from large solar plants to interconnectors and substations, and now huge pylons covering 87 miles of countryside. These will blot the landscape and use up valuable growing land, filling the fenland big skies. Knowing that the Prime Minister's bow burns with gold, like my own, will he ensure that he joins my fight for our green and pleasant land and so make sure that food security and energy security are not competitors?

**The Prime Minister** > [Share](#)

My right hon. Friend raises an excellent point about our food security. The Government have taken steps, which he has supported, to protect prime agricultural land from large-scale solar developments, which I know will be warmly welcomed. Our announcements this week at the National Farmers Union conference also demonstrate our support to increase our country's food security, backing farmers with more funding and enhancing their productivity to produce great British food. As he knows, all of that, including our green and pleasant land, would be put at risk by the Labour party, which not only does not want to back our farmers but wants to impose top-down planning targets, which would concrete over the countryside that he and I both love.

**Mr Ben Bradshaw** >

(Exeter) (Lab)

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Q8. In December, the Cabinet Minister for Women and Equalities told the House that she had engaged "extensively" with LGBT organisations since her appointment 18 months ago. A freedom of information answer published this week reveals that, in fact, the Minister has not met a single LGBT organisation but has met two fringe groups that actively campaign against transgender rights. What is the problem that the Prime Minister and a section of his party have with trans people, and that his Minister has with the truth? (Unique identification number 901471 (Unique identification number ))

**The Prime Minister** > [Share](#)

As I have always said, the Government have a proud track record of supporting those in the LGBT community, and we will continue to do so. I have also always said that those who are questioning their gender and identity should be treated with the utmost dignity, compassion and sensitivity as they consider those questions. But, alongside that, it is completely reasonable to highlight the

importance of biological sex when it comes to those questions. Nobody should be stigmatised or demonised for pointing out that fact.

Mr Robin Walker >

(Worcester) (Con)

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The Education Committee has heard compelling evidence to support the strengthening of guidance to keep mobile phones out of classrooms and break times, but over the course of our screen time inquiry we continue to hear deeply disturbing evidence about the risks to young people from too much exposure to social media too early. May I urge the Prime Minister to seek the swiftest possible implementation of the Online Safety Act 2023 and to consider whether it is time to review the age of digital consent?

## The Prime Minister >

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I thank my hon. Friend for his work on this issue. He knows that we do have a plan when it comes to education and protecting children online. The Secretary of State is making sure that we can implement the Online Safety Act as quickly as possible with Ofcom, but we have also published new guidance banning mobile phones in schools, to minimise disruption and improve behaviour and educational attainment in the classroom. Crucially, we are going beyond that, because what our children see online is of the utmost importance to us, and we want to make sure that we protect their safety and their mental health.

Patricia Gibson &gt;

(North Ayrshire and Arran) (SNP)

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Q9. When important matters of life and death are voted on in this House, does the Prime Minister think MPs should vote according to their party Whip or according to their conscience? (Unique identification number 901472 (Unique identification number ))

## The Prime Minister >

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This afternoon the House will have an opportunity to consider its approach to the situation in Israel and Gaza. Our position is crystal clear: we have called, and will always call, for an immediate humanitarian pause, which would allow the safe release of hostages and more aid to go into Gaza, to create the conditions for a genuinely sustainable ceasefire. But just calling for an immediate, full ceasefire now, which would collapse back into fighting in days or weeks, would not be in anyone's interests. We are committed not just to an immediate humanitarian pause, but to finding a lasting resolution to this conflict that delivers on the promise of a two-state solution and ensures that Israelis and Palestinians can live in the future with dignity and security.

Marco Longhi >

(Dudley North) (Con)

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It seems that, with the exception of the British Transport police, all other police forces will treat non-contact sex crimes as they would perhaps the theft of a bike, petty retail crime or antisocial behaviour. Will the Prime Minister facilitate a meeting between me, colleagues and the Home Secretary to give priority to these acts of crime, to ensure that women and young girls get the protection they deserve?

## The Prime Minister >

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Of course we want women and girls to get the protection that they deserve, and I am pleased that our violence against women and girls strategy is showing results, improving the safety on our streets and increasing sentences for rapists. I will make sure that my hon. Friend gets the meeting that he needs with the Home Secretary or relevant policing Ministers to discuss his concerns.

**Kate Osborne >**

(Jarrow) (Lab)

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Q11. I heard the Prime Minister's responses to the Leader of the Opposition. Just like the Business Secretary's claims that delays on compensation are wild, baseless allegations, his answers are unbelievable. The response from the Government Benches to the quote from my constituent Chris Head was completely disrespectful. The reality is that we would not have any action without the ITV serialisation of the sub-postmaster scandal—*[Interruption.]* Government Members can shout all they like, but we all know that is the case. The Prime Minister has promised a new law to swiftly exonerate and compensate victims. Today he said "shortly", so will he commit today to ensuring that it is brought forward before the next general election? (Unique identification number 901474 (Unique identification number ))

**The Prime Minister >** [Share](#)

Yes, the legislation will be brought before the House very, very soon.

**Dr Ben Spencer >**

(Runnymede and Weybridge) (Con)

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After Network Rail's so-called signalling improvement works, there has been traffic chaos and delays at level crossings across Egham. In fact, data analysed by my team shows that in the year to September 2023 there was a 3,967% increase in waits of more than 10 minutes from when the barriers go down. Does my right hon. Friend agree that this is unacceptable and that Network Rail needs to sort it out?

**The Prime Minister >** [Share](#)

I am sorry to hear about the delays faced by my hon. Friend's constituents, which I know will be disruptive to their lives. It is important that we have proper connectivity in our local areas, and I will ensure that he gets the relevant meeting he needs to put pressure on Network Rail to improve the service it is providing.

**Kim Johnson >**

(Liverpool, Riverside) (Lab)

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Q13. Children and young adults are most likely to be the victims or perpetrators of knife crime. Ava White was 12 years old when she was stabbed and killed by a 14-year-old in Liverpool city centre in 2021. Danny Jamieson was 16 when he died as a result of knife crime. Their mothers, Leann and Mandy, are campaigning for tougher sentences for knife crime. Will the Prime Minister support the Danny and Ava campaign to end the scourge of knife crime on our streets? (Unique identification number 901476 (Unique identification number ))

**The Prime Minister >** [Share](#)

I express my condolences to Danny and Ava's families, and the families of all the young people whose lives have been so tragically cut short by knife crime. We have plans in place to cut knife crime, and they are working—we have confiscated over 120,000 weapons, we have cut violent crime in half since 2010, and more dangerous criminals are going to jail for longer. We are bringing forward legislation to increase sentences for knife crime and to ban zombie knives, and I very much hope that the hon. Lady and her party will support those proposals when they are put before the House.

(Rother Valley) (Con)

After years of campaigning, it is great news that there will be a direct bus link between two of my biggest towns in Rother Valley, Dinnington and Maltby. However, there is still a lack of bus transport to our local hospitals. Does the Prime Minister agree that the South Yorkshire Mayor should use some of his resources to back my plan for transport for the Rother Valley, to ensure that every single village and town has a direct bus link to our local hospitals?

We know how vital bus services are to communities right across the country—indeed, buses are our most popular form of public transportation—which is why we have used some of the savings from HS2 to invest in bus services. We have capped bus fares at £2 right across the country, and we have provided my hon. Friend's local authority with millions of pounds of more funding specifically to support local bus services. I join him in calling on the Mayor to ensure that there are direct bus routes to hospitals in my hon. Friend's constituency, and to make sure that people can see their loved ones at a distressing time.

Q14. At the weekend the people of south Wales marched in support of the steel industry, following the Government's grubby deal with Tata, which is now placing thousands of jobs at risk in Port Talbot and beyond. The Prime Minister is failing to protect our steel industry because he failed to make protecting jobs at the plant a red line. He now has a choice: work with the unions, Tata and the workforce to protect the industry and the jobs with investment, or walk away and do what Tories always do—abandon the south Wales communities yet again. Which is it, Prime Minister? (Unique identification number 901477 (Unique identification number ))

This Government have worked hard to secure a long-term, sustainable future for Welsh steelmaking, and to grow the legacy of that important industry. That is why during the pandemic we stepped in to support Celsa, which, as the hon. Gentleman knows, safeguarded more than 1,000 jobs and ensured that the plant was sustainable. It is why we agreed one of the largest ever cash grants, of half a billion pounds, for Tata Steel to safeguard at least 5,000 jobs that would otherwise have been lost. The hon. Gentleman might want to ask why the Welsh Labour Government did not put in a penny to support that deal.

The Watford area continues to be the proud home of the national lottery, which employs more than 900 people. Will my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, and the whole Cabinet, join me in celebrating the successful handover from Camelot to Allwyn on 1 February, and also the £48 billion raised by national lottery players, which so far has funded 700,000 projects in, I am sure, every constituency?

I join my hon. Friend in his congratulations and thank everyone involved with the national lottery. We are all seeing, in our constituencies, the incredible benefit from the investments that they are making, and he is absolutely right to ensure that they receive the praise they deserve today in Parliament.



## Graham Stringer &gt;

(Blackley and Broughton) (Lab)



Q15. The Prime Minister has been at it again. In a previous answer, he boasted about transferring investment from the north of England to the south. When he came to Manchester in the autumn to insult the people of the north of England and cancel HS2—proudly cancel it—was he aware then that, because the trains have to split without the HS2 lines and do not tilt, he would be slowing down services and reducing capacity? Did he not know that, or did he not care? (Unique identification number 901478 (Unique identification number ))

## The Prime Minister >



Let me say a couple of things. First, our plans to continue with phase 1 mean that we can handle triple the capacity that is currently being used on the line. Secondly, every penny of the £19.8 billion from the northern bit of HS2 will stay in the north, being invested in services that people use, such as local buses, and will be delivered quicker. Thirdly, the hon. Gentleman is critical of the decision, but I have still not quite figured out Labour's position on this. Do they support the redeployment of £36 billion of HS2 savings in transport across the rest of the country, or do they not? As ever, we do not know what they stand for, they cannot say what they would do, and they would just take Britain back to square one.

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