News story: Regional Flood and Coastal Committee (RFCC) chair appointments

Following a recruitment campaign for 5 Regional Flood and Coastal Committee (RFCC) posts (Anglian Central, Northumbria, North West, South West and Thames), the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs is pleased to announce the following 4 RFCC Chairs' appointments:

- Phil Rothwell as the Chair of the Northumbria RFCC
- Adrian Lythgo as the Chair of the North West RFCC
- Philip Rees as the Chair of the South West RFCC
- Professor Robert Van de Noort as the Chair of the Thames RFCC

Their appointments run from 1 September 2017 for 3 years until 31 August 2020.

All the appointments followed procedures set out in the Ministerial Governance Code for Public Appointments which came into force on 1 January 2017. There is a requirement for appointees' political activity (if significant) to be declared. None of the appointees have declared any significant political activity during the past 5 years.

RFCCs help to provide governance for the Environment Agency (EA) Flood and Coastal Erosion risk management functions and cover all flood risks that are not the responsibility of the water companies. They have 3 main purposes:

- to ensure there are coherent plans for identifying, communicating and managing flood and coastal erosion risks across catchments and shorelines
- to promote efficient, targeted and risk-based investment in flood and coastal erosion risk management that optimises value for money and benefits for local communities
- to provide a link between the EA, Lead Local Flood Authorities, other risk management authorities, and other relevant bodies to engender mutual understanding of flood and coastal erosion risks in its area

All Chair posts attract a remuneration currently set at £17,503 for a commitment of 5 days per month except for the Northumbria RFCC post which attracts a remuneration currently set at £14,002 for a commitment of 4 days per month.

Anglian Central RFCC

No appointment was made for the Anglian Central RFCC post.

A new recruitment campaign for this post will be included as part of a wider recruitment campaign for other posts which will require new appointments. An announcement on this will be made shortly on the Public Appointments website.

Arrangements for a temporary chair for Anglian Central RFCC will be made in the meantime.

Background details of the 4 appointed RFCC Chairs are as follows:

Northumbria RFCC

Phil Rothwell has worked at a senior level in statutory agencies and charities for over 35 years. For 10 years he led the EA team dealing with flood and coastal risk policy including research, flood mapping and warning, planning and development in the flood plain and related policy. This included input to the Pitt Inquiry, the Floods and Water Management Act, and implementation of the Floods Directive. He was also one of EAs lead media commentators during flood events.

Phil retired from the EA in 2013 and has since worked independently on a range of issues including environmental implications of leaving the European Union, and setting up the new Floods Degree programme at Brunel University. He has for 3 years served on the Anglian Central RFCC, and also sits on the East of England Heritage Lottery Committee and the Anglia Water Sustainability and Resilience panel.

North West RFCC

In a career spanning more than 30 years Adrian Lythgo, BSC, CPFA, has held leadership positions in both the public and private sectors. From 2010 to February 2017 he was the Chief Executive of Kirklees Council in West Yorkshire. Concurrently between 2014 and 2016 he was Head of Paid Service of the newly created West Yorkshire Combined Authority until the recruitment of a full time Managing Director. In these roles, he provided policy advice to Councillors as well as being both organisations most senior official, working in partnership with a wide range of public organisations and private businesses.

An accountant by profession, Adrian was also Kirklees’s Director of Finance and performance from 2009 to 2010. Prior to that he was an Associate Partner at KPMG leading audit and advisory work at public sector nationally, with many North West based clients.

His earlier career was spent at both the Audit Commission where he was involved in the development of Best Value and Comprehensive Performance Assessment and audit work in Local Government and the NHS and at KPMG where his clients also included Universities, Colleges and other governmental organisations.
He has also held a variety of independent non-executive roles in public organisations and organisations that relate to the public sector.

South West RFCC

In addition to his role as a Chair of South West RFCC, Philip Rees is Chairman of Cornwall Care, a major provider of adult domiciliary care, and residential and nursing care homes. He has recently been Chair of the South

West Coastal Group and Chair of the Board of Governors of Cornwall College, one of the largest Further/Higher Education Colleges in the UK.

For the majority of his previous career he was a director of a major construction, housing and property development company, responsible for commercial business development and, in latter times, Private Finance Initiative projects.

Philip owns and runs a small holiday complex and, with his wife, has a horse livery business both based in North Cornwall.

Thames RFCC

Professor Robert Van de Noort works at the University of Reading where he is the Pro Vice-Chancellor for Academic Planning & Resource. Robert is responsible for planning and resource allocation at institutional level and he has oversight of the University's capital investment programme; he is also the University's champion for Gender Equality.

As an archaeologist, Robert is best known for his work in marine, intertidal and terrestrial wetlands and his research has looked at the impact of climate change of people living on the coast and near rivers in the past and present. Previously, Robert was Chair of the South West Regional Flood and Coastal Committee (2013-2017).
Robert lives in Goring on Thames and is a keen member of the Goring Gap Boat Club.

News story: Webinar – 25 Sept – Selling to the Ministry of Defence

Join this 30 minute webinar to hear from John Kite, SME Champion for Ministry of Defence, on the type of products and services purchased by MoD, frameworks used, and top tips on how SMEs can identify and respond to procurements.

Click here to register.

Speech: First Sea Lord outlines the Royal Navy's requirements for the Type

31e frigate

Minister, ladies and gentlemen, it’s a pleasure to speak to you today, in the midst of a hugely exciting few weeks for the Royal Navy and the UK’s maritime industrial sector.

As the minister mentioned, when HMS Queen Elizabeth arrived in Portsmouth last month, I described it as a triumph of strategic ambition and a lesson for the future, and I really meant it.

Here was a project first initiated 20 years ago, in which time it outlasted 3 prime ministers, 8 defence secretaries and 7 First Sea Lords. It survived 5 general elections, 3 defence reviews and more planning rounds than I care to remember.

But despite all these twists and turns, the project endured and, in doing so proved to the world, and to ourselves, that we still have what it takes to be a great maritime industrial nation.

Now, in the National Shipbuilding Strategy, we have an opportunity to maintain the momentum.

So my reason for being here today is two-fold. Firstly, to outline the Royal Navy’s requirement for the Type 31e by describing the kind of ship we’re looking for and it’s place in our future fleet.

Secondly, to emphasise our commitment to working with you, our industry partners, to build on what we’ve achieved with the Queen Elizabeth class, and to bring about a stronger and more dynamic shipbuilding sector which can continue to prosper and grow in the years ahead.

Requirement

The Royal Navy’s requirement for a general purpose frigate is, in the first instance, driven by the government’s commitment to maintain our current force of 19 frigates and destroyers.

The 6 Type 45 destroyers are still new in service, but our 13 Type 23 frigates are already serving beyond their original design life.

They remain capable, but to extend their lives any further is no longer viable from either an economic or an operational perspective.

Eight of those Type 23s are specifically equipped for anti-submarine warfare and these will be replaced on a one-for-one basis by the new Type 26 frigate.

As such, we look to the Type 31e to replace the remaining 5 remaining general purpose variants.

This immediately gives you an idea of both the urgency with which we view this project, and how it fits within our future fleet.

In order to continue meeting our current commitments, we need the Type 31e to fulfil routine tasks to free up the more complex Type 45 destroyers and Type 26 frigates for their specialist combat roles in support of the strategic nuclear deterrent and as part of the carrier strike group.

So although capable of handling itself in a fight, the Type 31e will be geared toward maritime security and defence engagement, including the fleet ready escort role at home, our fixed tasks in the South Atlantic, the Caribbean and the Gulf, and our NATO commitments.

These missions shape our requirements.

There is more detail in your handout but, broadly speaking, the Type 31e will need a hanger and flight deck for both a small helicopter and unmanned air vehicle, accommodation to augment the ship's company with a variety of mission specialists as required, together with stowage for sea boats, disaster relief stores and other specialist equipment.

It will be operated by a core ships company of between 80-100 men and women and it needs to be sufficiently flexible to incorporate future developments in technology, including unmanned systems and novel weaponry as they come to the fore, so open architecture and modularity are a must.

All this points towards a credible, versatile frigate, capable of independent and sustained global operations.

Now I want to be absolutely clear about what constitutes a frigate in the eyes of the Royal Navy.

In Nelson's time, a first rate ship like HMS Victory was a relative scarcity compared with smaller, more lightly armed frigates.

They wouldn't take their place in the line of battle, but they were fast, manoeuvrable and flew the White Ensign in many of the far flung corners of the world where the UK had vital interests.

More recently, the navy I joined still had general purpose frigates like the Leander, Rothesay and Tribal class and, later, the Type 21s, which picked up many of the routine patrol tasks and allowed the specialist ASW frigates to focus on their core NATO role.

It was only when defence reductions at the end of the Cold War brought difficult choices that we moved to an all high end force.

So forgive the history lesson, but the point I'm making is the advent of a mixed force of Type 31 and Type 26 frigates is not a new departure for the Royal Navy, nor is it a 'race to the bottom'; rather it marks a return to the concept of a balanced fleet.

And the Type 31e is not going to be a glorified patrol vessel or a cut price corvette. It's going to be, as it needs to be, a credible frigate that reflects the time honoured standards and traditions of the Royal Navy.

Ambition

In order to maintain our current force levels, the first Type 31e must enter service as the as the first general purpose Type 23, HMS Argyll, leaves service in 2023.

Clearly that’s a demanding timescale, which means the development stage must be undertaken more quickly than for any comparable ship since the Second World War.

But while this programme may be initially focused on our requirements for the 2020s, we must also look to the 2030s and beyond.

You know how busy the Royal Navy is and I won’t labour the point, suffice to say international security is becoming more challenging, threats are multiplying and demands on the navy are growing.

Added to this is that, as we leave the European Union, the UK is looking to forge new trading partnerships around the world.

Put simply, Global Britain needs a global Navy to match.

It is therefore significant that the government has stated in its manifesto, and again through the National Shipbuilding Strategy, that it views the Type 31e as a means to grow the overall size of the Royal Navy by the 2030s.

If we can deliver a larger fleet, then we can strengthen and potentially expand the Royal Navy’s reach to provide the kind of long term presence upon which military and trading alliances are built.

Delivery

This is a hugely exciting prospect, but we must first master the basics.

We can all think of examples of recent projects which have begun with the right intentions, only for timescales to slip, requirements to change and costs to soar.

As Sir John Parker highlighted in his report last year, we end up with a vicious cycle where fewer, more expensive, ships enter service late, and older ships are retained well beyond their sell by date and become increasingly expensive to maintain.

So we need to develop the Type 31e differently if we’re going to break out of that cycle.

We’ve said that the unit price must not exceed £250 million.

For the Royal Navy, this means taking a hard-headed, approach in setting our requirements to keep costs down, while maintaining a credible capability, and then having the discipline to stick to those requirements to allow the project to proceed at pace.

It also means playing our part to help win work for the UK shipbuilding sector from overseas.

So the challenge is to produce a design which is credible, affordable and exportable.

Adaptability is key, we need a design based on common standards, but which offers different customers the ability to specify different configurations and capabilities without the need for significant revisions.

So while it may be necessary to make trade offs in the name of competitiveness, export success means longer production runs, greater economies of scale and lower unit costs, and therein lies the opportunity to increase the size of the Royal Navy.

With a growing fleet it would be perfectly possible for the Royal Navy to forward deploy Type 31e frigates to places like Bahrain Singapore and the South Atlantic, just as we do with some of our smaller vessels today.

If our partners in these regions were to buy or build their own variants, then we could further reduce costs through shared support solutions and common training.

And because of the Royal Navy's own reputation as a trusted supplier of second hand warships, we could look to sell our own Type 31's at the midpoint of their lives and reinvest the savings into follow-on batches.

So by bringing the Royal Navy's requirements in line with the demands of the export market, we have the opportunity to replace the vicious circle with a virtuous one.

And beyond the Type 31e, the benefits could apply to the Royal Navy's longer term requirements, beginning with the fleet solid support ship but also including our future amphibious shipping and eventually the replacement for the Type 45 destroyers as well as other projects that may emerge.

Ultimately, the prize is a more competitive and resilient industrial capacity: one that is better able to withstand short term political and economic tides and can serve the Royal Navy's long term needs.

Conclusion

So, in drawing to a close, I believe we have a precious opportunity before us.

My father worked at the Cammell Laird shipyard for over 40 years. It was visiting him there as a schoolboy and seeing new ships and submarines taking shape that provided one of the key inspirations for me to join the Royal Navy, nearly 40 years ago.

And yet, for most of my career, the fleet has become progressively smaller while the UK shipbuilding sector contracted to such an extent that it reached the margins of sustainability.

But with the Queen Elizabeth class carriers, and the 6 yards involved in their build, we demonstrated that shipbuilding has the potential to be a great British success story once again.

Far beyond Rosyth, we've seen green shoots emerging in shipbuilding across the country, and throughout the supply chain, driven by a new entrepreneurial ambition.

Now the National Shipbuilding Strategy has charted a bold and ambitious plan to capitalise on that and reverse the decline.

And in the Type 31e, we have the chance to develop a ship that can support our national security and our economic prosperity in the decades to come.

The navy is ready and willing.

Now we look to you, our partners in industry, to bring your expertise, your innovation and your ambition to bear in this endeavour.

News story: Defence Minister thanks charity for helping disabled veterans into employment

On a visit today to The Poppy Factory in Richmond, Mr Ellwood saw first-hand the work the charity does to help veterans with disabilities into meaningful employment. The Poppy Factory, which also employs around 30 disabled veterans, produces poppies and wreaths for the Royal Family and The Royal British Legion's annual Poppy Appeal, something they have been doing since they were founded in 1922.

Minister for Defence People and Veterans Tobias Ellwood said:

> The work The Poppy Factory does in helping businesses across the country provide employment for disabled veterans is hugely important and I'd like to thank them for all the work they do.
>
> It's important that Government works with charities to provide comprehensive support to veterans, including the Armed Forces Covenant and the new Veteran's Gateway.

While most veterans successfully re-integrate into civilian life, a small number do face challenges after their military career. The Ministry of Defence and other Government Departments work with the charity sector to provide comprehensive support.

This support includes the Armed Forces Covenant, a promise from the nation enshrined in law to make sure that service personnel, veterans, and their families are treated fairly and receive the support they deserve. In June of this year, the MOD launched a new Veterans' Gateway, a single point of contact for veterans, allowing them to get the support they need. The initiative is backed by £2 million of Government money.

The MOD in July of this year also launched the new Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy. The innovative new strategy is designed to improve the mental health and wellbeing of the Armed Forces, their families, veterans, and Defence civilians.

During the visit Mr Ellwood met with Poppy Factory staff working to help disabled veterans back into employment, as well as staff who produce the famous Poppies for Remembrance. As one of the UK's leading veterans charities The Poppy Factory has a tremendous record of getting disabled veterans back into employment, with 70% of veterans who the charity helps remaining in employment after 12 months.

News story: David Davis' opening statement at the second reading of the Repeal Bill

Introduction

I beg to move, that the Bill be now read a second time.

Mr Speaker, when I introduced the European Union (Notification of Withdrawal) Bill earlier this year, I said that Bill was just the beginning – the beginning of a process to ensure that the decision made by the people in June last year is honoured.

And today we begin the next step in the historic process of honouring that decision.

Put simply, this Bill is an essential step. Whilst it does not take us out of the EU – that is a matter for the Article 50 process – it does ensure that on the day we leave, businesses know where they stand, workers' rights are upheld and consumers remain protected.

This Bill is vital to ensuring that as we leave, we do so in an orderly manner.

Summary of the Bill

Let me start with a brief summary of the Bill, before going on to set out its key provisions in more depth.

The Bill is designed to provide maximum possible legal certainty and continuity, whilst restoring control to the UK. It does so in three broad steps.

First, it removes from the statute book the key legislation passed by this Parliament in 1972 – the European Communities Act.

That Act gave EU law supreme status over law made in this country. It is therefore right that it be removed from our statute book on the day the UK leaves the EU, bringing to an end to the supremacy of EU law over laws made here in the UK.

Second, the Bill takes a snapshot of the body of EU law which currently forms part of the UK legal system, and ensures it will continue to apply in the UK after we leave.

This is to ensure that, wherever possible, the same rules and laws will apply the day after exit as they did before. Without this step, a large part of our law would fall away when the European Communities Act is repealed.

But simply preserving EU law is not enough. There will be many areas where the preserved law does not work as it should.

So, as its third key element, the Bill provides ministers in this Parliament and in the devolved legislatures, with powers to make statutory instruments to address the problems that would arise when we leave the EU.

These powers allow ministers to make those changes to ensure the statute book works on day one. This will be a major, shared undertaking across the UK.

Following this, it will be for UK legislators to pass laws and for UK courts to adjudicate those laws. Mr Speaker, the Bill enables us to leave the EU in the smoothest and most orderly way possible.

It is the most significant piece of legislation to be considered by this House for some time, and it will rightly be scrutinised clause by clause, line by line, on the floor of this House.

I stand ready to listen to those who offer improvements to the Bill, in the spirit of preparing our statute book for our withdrawal from the EU.

The right hon. member for Holborn and St Pancras likes to remind me of my past incarnation as a backbenchers' champion and my dedication to holding the Government to account.

Mr Speaker, I have not changed my views one jot. Let me be clear, this Bill does only what is necessary for a smooth exit and to provide stability.

Those who approach this critical Bill in a spirit of cynicism and look for conspiracies in it simply fuel popular mistrust of those of us who serve in this place.

However, as I have repeatedly said, I welcome and encourage contributions from those who approach the task in good faith and in the spirit of collaboration.

All of us as legislators have a shared interest in making this Bill a success for the national interest.

The key point of this Bill is to avoid significant and serious gaps in our statute book.

The Bill ensures consumers can be clear about their protections, employees can be clear about their rights, and businesses can be clear about the rules that regulate their trade.

Workers' rights, consumer and environmental protections will be enforceable through the UK courts, which are renowned the world over.

The Bill provides certainty as to how the law applies after we leave the EU, and ensures individuals and businesses can continue to find redress when problems arise. And of course, without this Bill, all of these things are put at risk.

The Bill must be on the statute book in good time ahead of our withdrawal, so that the statutory instruments that will flow from the Bill can be made in time for exit day, and so we are in a position to take control of our laws from day one.

The Bill provides a clear basis for our negotiation with the European Union by ensuring continuity and clarity in our laws, without prejudice to the ongoing negotiations. Without this legislation, a smooth and orderly exit is impossible.

The shape of any interim period would need to be determined by negotiations, but we cannot await the completion of negotiations before ensuring that there is legal certainty and continuity at the point of our exit. To do so would be reckless.

Repeal of the ECA

Mr Speaker, let me now talk the House through the Bill's main provisions.

The first clause of the Bill repeals the European Communities Act on the day we leave the EU, ending the supremacy of EU law in the UK and preventing new EU law from automatically flowing into UK law after that point.

When the then Prime Minister, Harold Wilson, led a debate here in May 1967 on the question of the UK's entry into the European Communities, he said:

"It is important to realise that Community law is mainly concerned with

industrial and commercial activities, with corporate bodies rather than private individuals. By far the greater part of our domestic law would remain unchanged after entry." [Official Report, 8 May 1967; Vol. 746, c. 1088.]

I think the passage of time has shown he was mistaken. European Union law touches on all aspects of our lives, in a far wider way than the drafters of the European Communities Act could have envisaged.

This means that the Bill we have before us today has a difficult task: it must rebuild UK law in a way that makes sense outside the EU.

Preservation and conversion of EU law

To do this, the first step the Bill takes is to preserve all the domestic law we have made to implement our EU obligations.

This mainly means preserving the thousands of statutory instruments that have been made under the European Communities Act, with subjects ranging from aeroplane noise to zoo licensing. It also extends to preserving any other domestic law that fulfils our EU obligations or otherwise relates to the EU.

Equally, the Bill converts EU law – principally EU regulations, all 12,000 of them – into domestic law on exit day.

It also ensures that rights in the EU treaties that are directly effective – that is, rights that are sufficiently clear, precise and unconditional that they can be relied on in court by an individual – continue to be available in UK law under the Bill.

I have no doubt that there is much about EU law that could be improved – and I know this Parliament will over time look to improve it.

But that is not the purpose of this Bill. This Bill simply brings EU law into UK law, ensuring that, wherever possible, the rules and laws are the same after exit as before.

Just as important as the text of EU law is the interpretation of that law.

For that reason, the Bill ensures that any question as to the meaning of retained EU law is to be decided in the UK courts in accordance with the CJEU's case law and retained general principles of EU law as they stood on exit day.

This approach maximises stability by ensuring that the meaning of the law does not change overnight, and only the Supreme Court and the High Court of Justiciary in Scotland will be able to depart from retained EU case law.

They will do so on the same basis that they depart from their own case law. Any other approach would either actively cause uncertainty, or fossilise CJEU case law forever.

Future decisions of the CJEU will not bind our courts, but our courts will have discretion to have regard to such decisions if they consider it relevant

and appropriate to do so – in just the same way that our courts might at the moment refer to cases in other common law jurisdictions, such as Australia or Canada.

Exceptions to preservation and conversion

Overall, then, the Bill provides for very significant continuity in the law.

But there are some elements that would simply not make sense if they remained on the UK statute book once we have left the EU and in the years and decades to come.

It would not make sense, for example, for the Bill to preserve the supremacy of EU law, or to make the preserved EU law supreme over future legislation passed by this Parliament.

Laws passed in these two Houses after exit day will take precedence over retained EU law.

Mr Speaker, we also do not believe it would make sense to retain the Charter of Fundamental Rights. The Charter only applies to member states when acting within the scope of EU law.

We will not be a member state, nor will we be acting within the scope of EU law, once we leave the EU.

As I said to the House when I published the White Paper on the Bill, the Charter catalogues the rights found under EU law, which will be brought into UK law by the Bill.

It is not, and never was, the source of those rights. Those rights have their origins elsewhere in domestic law. Or relate to international treaties or obligations which the UK remains party to – for example the ECHR.

So let me be clear: the absence of the Charter will not affect the substantive rights available in the UK.

And I have said at this despatch box before, if Members opposite – or anyone in this House – find a substantive right that is not carried forward into UK law, they should say so, and we will deal with it. In the several months since I said that, no-one has yet brought to my attention a right we have missed.

Delegated powers

Mr Speaker, the conversion of EU law into UK law is an essential measure to ensure the UK leaves the EU in the smoothest way possible.

However, that action alone is not enough to ensure that the statute book continues to function. Many laws will no longer make sense outside the EU. If we were only to convert EU law into UK law, our statute book would still be broken.

Many laws would oblige UK individuals, firms or public authorities to continue to engage with the EU in a way that is both absurd and impossible for a country that is not within the EU.

Other laws would leave the EU Institutions as key public authorities in the UK, a role they would not be able to perform or fulfil.

The problems which would arise without making these changes range from minor inconveniences to the disruption of vital services we all rely on every day.

In practical terms this ranges from a public authority being required to submit reports on water quality to the EU, to causing disruption to the City by removing the supervision of the Credit Rating Agencies entirely.

It is essential that these issues are addressed before we leave the EU, or we will be in breach of our duty as legislators to provide a functioning and clear set of laws for our citizens.

That is why the Bill provides a power to correct problems that arise in retained EU law as a result of our withdrawal from the EU. This is clause 7 of the Bill, the so-called correcting power.

Unlike section 2(2) of the European Communities Act – which can be used to do almost anything to the statute book to implement EU law – the correcting power is a limited power.

It can only be used to correct problems with the statute book arising directly from our withdrawal from the EU – ministers cannot use it simply to replace EU laws they do not like.

It is designed to allow us to replicate as closely as possible existing EU laws and regimes in a domestic context. It is also restricted so that it cannot, for example, be used to create serious criminal offences, amend the Human Rights Act, or impose or increase taxation.

And we have ensured that it expires two years after exit day, so nobody can suggest that this is an attempt at a permanent transfer of power to the executive.

Mr Speaker, I accept that proposing a delegated power of this breadth is unusual. But leaving the EU presents us with a unique set of challenges that need a pragmatic solution.

Using secondary legislation to tackle challenges such as these is not unusual: secondary legislation is a process of long standing, with clear and established roles for Parliament.

Our current estimate is that the UK Government will need to make between 800 and 1,000 statutory instruments – possibly 12,000 pages of legislation – to make a exit a reality in UK law.

Mr Speaker, this may seem in some ways like a large number – it’s a little less than one year’s quota as it were.

And I understand members have concerns about the scrutiny of this volume of legislation. But let me contrast it to the 12,000 EU Regulations and 8,000 domestic regulations – 20,000 pieces of law – that have brought forward new policies while we have been members of the EU.

This one-off task is very different to the flow of new law we have had from the EU over the last 40 years – and is ultimately about ensuring that power returns to this House.

All of these changes must happen quickly to maintain stability as we leave the EU. Many of the changes will be minor and technical, replacing, for example, references to "EU law" or to "other member states".

It would not make sense, nor would it be possible, to make these numerous changes in primary legislation.

Some of the changes we bring forward will, by their nature, be more substantial and will demand more scrutiny.

An example would be a proposal to transfer a function currently exercised by the Commission to a new domestic body that needs to be set up from scratch.

We hope to minimise the need for such bodies – but where they are needed, I readily accept that these changes require fuller parliamentary scrutiny.

That is why the Bill sets clear criteria that will trigger the use of the affirmative procedure, ensuring a debate and a vote on the instrument in both Houses.

Over the course of the two days we will spend debating this Bill, I am sure we will hear calls for this secondary legislation to receive greater scrutiny, along the lines of that given to primary legislation.

I say to hon. Members that I am clear that the way to make significant changes is through primary legislation.

That is why the Queen's Speech set out plans for several further Bills to follow this one, including on immigration, trade and sanctions.

Bringing in significant new policy changes is not the task at hand: with this power we are making corrections to the statute book rather than bringing in new policies that take advantage of the opportunities offered by our withdrawal from the EU.

These corrections need to be made to ensure we have a functioning statute book. As far as we can see, the power we have proposed is the only logical and feasible way to make those corrections.

Our approach remains the only viable plan – we considered others – put forward in this House. While we have heard complaints from the benches opposite, we have not seen any alternative.

Power to implement the withdrawal agreement

Mr Speaker, the Bill also contains a limited power to implement the withdrawal agreement by statutory instrument if that proves necessary.

The Government's aspiration is to agree a new, deep and special partnership with the EU. Under the Article 50 process, we are negotiating a withdrawal agreement with the EU.

Provisions of that agreement will need to be implemented in domestic law, and some of that will need to be done by exit day.

Given the timetable set by Article 50, it is prudent to take this power now so that we are ready if necessary to move quickly to implement aspects of an agreement in domestic law.

This will be particularly important if the negotiations conclude late in the two year period.

This power will help to ensure that the UK Government and devolved administrations are able to implement the outcome of the negotiations.

The power is limited: it will only be available until exit day, at which point it will expire. The power is aimed at making the legislative changes that absolutely need to be in place for day one of exit to enable an orderly withdrawal from the EU.

The exact use of the power will of course depend on the contents of the withdrawal agreement. For example, the power could, depending on what the withdrawal agreement says, be used to clarify the status of UK cases at the CJEU that started before exit but were not yet concluded by exit day.

It could also be used, for example, to enable regulatory approvals for UK products that were pending at the point of exit – in line with the proposal set out in the UK's position paper on the Continuity of the Availability of Goods in the EU and UK this summer.

The power will also be able to modify the Bill itself. This is not unprecedented.

Depending on the outcome of the negotiations, we may need to amend the Bill's provisions to ensure that our domestic legislation correctly reflects the terms of the agreement.

Any regulations that modify the Bill itself would be subject to proper Parliamentary scrutiny as they would require the affirmative procedure. This means they would have to be debated and approved by Parliament before they could be made.

We have already committed to bringing forward a motion on the final agreement to be approved by both Houses of Parliament before it is concluded.

That vote is in addition to Parliament's scrutiny of any statutory

instruments we propose under this power, and also in addition to the enormous amount of debate and scrutiny that will be applied to the primary legislation that will cover all and every major policy change around our exit from the EU.

So Parliament will be fully involved in taking forward a Withdrawal Agreement.

I want to reassure the House that the Government will do whatever is necessary to prepare for our exit – including bringing forward further legislation if necessary.

Devolution

Mr Speaker, let me now deal with the Bill's approach to devolution. As I have set out, the overall approach of this Bill is to provide for continuity wherever possible at the point of exit, not seek to take advantage of the opportunities of withdrawal immediately. That is the approach that guides the devolution provisions as well.

Let me be clear: we have a strong track record on devolution. Our commitment to strengthening the devolution settlements is clear from the statute book – most recently the Wales Act 2017 and the Scotland Act 2016.

Leaving the EU allows us to make sure that decision-making sits closer to the people than ever before; we expect a significant increase in the decision-making power of the devolved institutions.

The current devolution settlements have always created common frameworks within the United Kingdom by reflecting the context of the UK's EU membership.

So, in areas subject to EU law, all parts of the UK currently follow common rules and principles even where matters are otherwise devolved.

For example, England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland each pass their own laws relating to food policy – but each nation has to ensure they comply with EU rules on food hygiene.

When we leave the EU, it is not in the interests of people and businesses – living and working across the UK – for all those arrangements to disappear, or for there to be new barriers to living and doing business within our own country.

So, the Bill provides certainty and continuity for people across the UK by recreating in UK law the common frameworks currently provided by EU law, and providing that the devolved institutions cannot generally modify them.

The Bill also ensures that every decision that the devolved administrations and legislatures could take before exit day, they can still take after exit day.

Mr Speaker, this is a transitional arrangement. It is an arrangement that

ensures certainty and continuity whilst the UK undertakes negotiations with the EU on its future relationship, and the UK government and devolved administrations discuss precisely where we need to retain common frameworks within the UK in the future.

These common frameworks will be important, as they will enable us to manage shared resources such as the sea, rivers and the air, and enable the continued functioning of the UK's internal market.

They will also allow us to strike ambitious trade deals, administer and provide access to justice in cases with a cross-border element and enter into new international treaties. This includes our future relationship with the EU.

For example, they will mean a business in Wales knows that it only needs to comply with one set of rules on food labelling and safety in order to sell to the rest of the UK.

Or that a farmer in Scotland is able to sell her livestock in other parts of Great Britain, safe in the knowledge that the same animal health rules apply across that geographic area.

Certainty on common approaches is critical for the day-to-day life of people in the UK, on the day we exit the EU and into the future.

Just as important, are those areas where we do not need to keep common approaches in the future. We do not expect that we will need to maintain a framework in every single area the EU has mandated.

We can ensure our common approaches are better suited to the UK and our devolution settlements. And, therefore, the Bill provides a mechanism to release policy areas where no frameworks are needed.

This Bill gives time for us to work together with the devolved administrations to determine where we will continue to need common frameworks in the future. And, crucially, it will not create unnecessary short-term change that negatively affects people or businesses.

Before the summer recess, my right hon. friend the First Secretary of State wrote to the Scottish and Welsh Governments to begin intensive discussions about where common frameworks are and are not needed.

In the current absence of a Northern Ireland Executive, equivalent engagement has taken place at official level with the Northern Ireland Civil Service.

We will bring forward further detail on the process underpinning these discussions in due course for Parliament to decide.

Certainty in devolved legislation affected by EU exit is also vitally important. The key delegated powers in this Bill are conferred on the devolved administrations, so that the task of preparing the devolved statute books for exit can rightly be led from Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

The Government is committed to ensuring the powers work for the administrations and legislatures. For instance, I have already confirmed that we will always consult the administrations on corrections made to direct EU law that relate to otherwise devolved areas of competence.

I firmly believe that the outcome of this process will be a significant increase in the decision-making power of each devolved administration and legislature.

It will mean that decisions and power sit in the right place and closer to people than ever before.

And, crucially, this Bill means that our UK businesses and citizens have confidence and certainty in the laws that allow them to live and operate across the UK as we exit the EU.

Conclusion

It is a privilege to stand here today and open two days of debate on this Bill.

As the PM said in January, the historic decision taken by the British people in June last year was not a rejection of the common values and history that we share with the EU.

But it was a reflection of the desire of the British people to control our own laws and ensure these reflect the country and people we want to be.

This Bill is an essential building block for this – it lays the foundation for a functioning statute book which future policies and laws can be debated and altered.

This Bill itself is not the place for those substantive changes to the frameworks we inherit from the EU. We will have many more opportunities to debate those – both before and after we leave.

I hope hon. Members on all sides though will recognise that we have acted responsibly in leaving the EU by prioritising, first and foremost, a functioning statute book.

In bringing forward this Bill, we are ensuring the smoothest possible exit from the EU – an exit that enables the continued stability of the UK's legal system, and maximises certainty for business, consumers and individuals across the UK.

And as we exit the EU and seek a new, deep and special partnership with the European Union – the Bill ensures that we will be doing so from a position where we have the same standards and rules.

So in this Bill we are not rejecting EU law, but embracing the work done between member states in over forty years of membership and using that solid foundation to build on in the future, once we return to being masters of our own laws.

I hope everyone in this House recognises this Bill's essential nature – it is the foundation upon which we will legislate for years. to come –

Now, we have just had this morning proposals from the opposition on their proposal to move a reasoned amendment. I have just emphasised the critical nature of this Bill.

A vote for the Hon. Member's amendment is a vote against this Bill, a vote for a chaotic exit from the EU. The amendment suggests that this Bill provides some sort of blank cheque to ministers.

That is a fundamental misrepresentation of parliament and our democratic process. Using the Bill's powers does not mean avoiding parliamentary scrutiny. Secondary legislation is still subject to parliamentary oversight, using well-established procedures in no way provides unchecked unilateral powers to the government.

On rights, the government agrees that EU exit cannot and will not lead to weaker rights and protections in the UK. We have been clear we want to ensure workers' rights are protected and enhanced as we leave the EU.

This Bill provides for existing legislation in this area to be retained. After we leave the EU it will be for Parliament to determine the proper level of rights protection.

On devolution, I have just gone through in detail how we are going to deal with that.

And finally, the argument that this Bill undermines any particular approach to interim or transitional period for the implementation of our new arrangements with the EU is completely wrong.

The Bill provides a clear basis for our negotiation by ensuring continuity and clarity in our laws without prejudicing the ongoing negotiations.

Without this legislation a smooth and orderly exit is impossible.

We cannot await the completion of the negotiations before ensuring this legal certainty and continuity at the point of our exit, to do so would be reckless and extreme.