

Speech: Big data in government: the challenges and opportunities

Ladies and Gentlemen, good morning.

I'd like to begin by thanking Reform for giving me the opportunity to address you today. I want to talk to you about the potential of big data in government – and the hurdles we face along the way.

We often hear that this is the “age of data”, or that data is the raw material of a new industrial revolution. There's truth in this. And there's huge opportunity.

Data can truly be a catalyst for a society, an economy, a country that works for everyone.

Of course, data isn't new. There has always been data. The Domesday Book is data. The Rosetta Stone is data.

But the rapid advances in technology and the development of analytical tools and techniques mean we can now gather and share data in huge quantities. We can process and analyse it at previously unimaginable speed. We can draw conclusions and create policies and services that reflect how people live now.

And we can help them live better, more securely, more healthily and more prosperously as a result.

Data entrepreneurs are mining public sector data to create apps and services to make our lives more convenient. Services driven by open data are already giving people more choice in where they get their healthcare, where they live and where their children go to school. There's even a Great British Public Toilet app – a sort of relief map of the country!

In government, we get this. We've always held enormous quantities of data – now we need to make sure we use it properly. Getting this right is the next phase of public service modernisation.

That's why this month we have published the [Government Transformation strategy](#). And the Digital Economy Bill is in the last stage of its journey into law.

There are 3 key areas of opportunity that we need to grasp:

- first, improving the experience of the citizen
- second, making government more efficient
- third, boosting business and the wider economy.

The impact of data analytics and big data in our lives – for example the way online retailers tailor their recommendations for the food, books and music

we buy – is quite familiar.

Less has been said about the transformative power of this technology for the delivery of high-quality public services. And it's time that changed.

With the evidence of data we can spend less time developing policy and services that don't work, and instead focus on continuously improving those that do.

I want people to turn to digital public services as readily and confidently as they do when shopping, socialising or checking bus times.

By doing so, we can actually change the way citizens interact with us – making the relationship we have with them more transparent, more responsive, and based on increasing levels of trust.

For big service delivery departments like the Home Office, HMRC and DWP, data analytics means the ability to search across organisational data sets. It can provide data for operational teams to put into practical effect.

In DWP, for example, providing job seekers with more targeted advice, and opportunities that closely match their personal profiles. The department is also working on data-informed tools, such as interactive visualisations of benefit claimant trends.

There are examples at home and abroad where data is being used to address people's real concerns about their daily lives; providing solutions that were not available before.

In June last year, for example, Land Registry and partners published the first UK House Price Index, and provided a single source of information as opposed to the multiple competing versions which existed before.

Land Registry data has also been used to create a range of information services. From whether rude-sounding street names have an impact on house values – (they do!); to more serious matters, such as whether your home is on a floodplain.

Land Registry's Flood Risk Indicator service uses data from the Environment Agency to identify flood risk for any registered piece of land within England and Wales.

The Companies House Service gives us free access to real-time information on companies. It's receiving millions of search requests every day from people checking supplier and customer information.

The service can also be used for more mundane but practical reasons – if you're getting in builders to do work on your home, you can go on the Companies House website and check them out first.

Healthcare is another exciting area. Moorfields Eye Hospital and DeepMind Health are partners in a research project that could lead to earlier detection of eye diseases.

At the moment, clinicians rely on complex digital eye scans. 3,000 of these scans are made every week at Moorfields. But traditional tools can't explore them fully, and analysis takes time.

Moorfields will share a data set of one million anonymised scans with DeepMind, who will analyse them using machine-learning technology. This can detect and learn patterns from data in seconds, to quickly diagnose whether a condition is urgent.

With sight loss predicted to double by 2050, the use of cutting-edge technology is absolutely vital. The right treatment at the right time can prevent many cases of blindness or partial sightedness. Up to 98% of sight loss resulting from diabetes, for example, can be prevented by early detection and treatment.

Analysing data can also play a direct and powerful role in protecting the most vulnerable in society.

The Home Office Child Abuse Image Database has transformed the investigation of child abuse crimes and child protection. It won the Civil Service Innovation Challenge in 2015.

The database brings together all the images of abuse that police find. Using the images' unique identifiers and metadata, they can check devices they've seized from suspects against the material on the database much more quickly.

Previously a case involving, say, 10,000 images, would typically take up to three days to review. Now, it can be reviewed in an hour.

So, we have a process that is cheaper, less labour-intensive and more efficient. This is all good. And it makes the investigation and prosecution of these appalling crimes vastly more effective.

There are also examples of government data meeting needs that more of us will be familiar with – like tax.

Personal tax accounts from HMRC now take a real-time digital approach. For the first time you can log in when you like, check your tax information and manage your details online in one place. More than 8 million citizens have now signed up, including some of you here today, I expect. HMRC's digital team now has around 30 new online services in development.

Government open data, combined with digital technology, can also fuel an open economy. It will provide information that entrepreneurs, data start-ups and the general public can use.

In 2015, the digital sector contributed £118 billion to the economy, supporting over 1.4 million jobs.

The UK Government was an early world leader in open data. So far, we've released over 30,000 non-personal data sets in machine-readable formats, for no cost, and open for anyone to use or build upon. This has enabled the creation of innovative products that deliver value for citizens.

So far, these data releases have been turned into over 400 different apps. You may well have used some of them yourselves:

- the Floodalerts API: which uses Environment Agency data to provide 15-minute updates about flood risk
- UK Food Hygiene: which lets you see take-away and restaurant food hygiene ratings to help you make decisions on where to eat out
- FillThatHole: a site for reporting potholes and other road hazards across the UK using ONS Census geography data
- There are also apps for finding the best dentists, GPs, schools and universities.

The list of sectors tapping into Defra group data from Lidar (the airborne, laser equivalent of radar) is truly remarkable. British wine producers are using the terrain-mapping data to help them decide where best to plant vines, and if the recent prominence of English sparkling wine is anything to go by – they are having great success!

Architects are using it to build a model of London as they plan the next high-rise building; computer game developers to build new landscapes for Minecraft; and archaeologists to discover lost networks of Roman roads. In October last year alone there were almost 21,000 downloads of Lidar data from data.gov.uk.

Some companies don't only use open public data to build a business but also to act as a positive disruptive force. FoodTrade, for example, maps the food supply chain system, making it easier for people to buy and sell fresh local produce.

And other start-ups are using open data in ways that boost the economy by providing data analysis tools and data products that support the growth of SMEs.

A firm called GeoLytix offers a range of products based on geospatial data – giving smaller companies access to information that they would not be able to do on their own, and helping them to solve business location issues in the process.

So as we look to improve the availability, quality and use of government data as the basis for fully transformed public services, it will also provide a new stimulus for data-based businesses.

Because government data is public data we have a duty to use it well and open it up where possible – and we have to be seen to do so cost-effectively, efficiently, proportionately and appropriately.

But it is not without challenges, and I want to address two in particular:

1. Winning and retaining public confidence
2. Building Civil Service capability in how we collect, store, analyse, share and use data

Public trust is absolutely critical to achieving our ambition for a data-

driven government.

Information and data is power. Which is why, historically, the ability to communicate and understand it was so jealously guarded. Now that we are openly releasing information, we have to do so responsibly.

Trust means giving people confidence that their data is used appropriately and effectively, and that it's secure, particularly when it's being shared by different authorities. That trust has to be earned.

In partnership with civil society, GDS has published an ethical framework for data science in government. It is based on the key principles of data security, openness, user need and public benefit. And it highlights the importance of ensuring the data and models we are using are robust.

And to complement this, the Office for National Statistics has adopted a framework called 'The Five Safes' for building and maintaining trust and confidence:

Safe people Safe projects Safe settings Safe data Safe output

And we are looking outside of government too. The Royal Society and British Academy are conducting an independent investigation into how data is, and could be, used by government, and the types of governance that may be required.

We need to make sure we take the public with us on this journey, and maintain their trust that we are using and sharing data responsibly and effectively.

Transparency is part of this – transparency of evidence, 'showing your working', and opening up to greater scrutiny the data and analysis on which we base policy decisions. For transactions (such as driving licence and passport applications) users can now see the data government holds about them and change it if it is wrong.

We must also have the confidence that a person accessing a service is who they say they are, and we must do that in a way which the public trust.

Verify – the government identity service for citizens – is enabling people to access a whole range of online government services easily, securely and in a way which builds their trust. By 2020, we are aiming to get 25 million people using the service.

But providing transactional services is only part of what government does – it also uses data to: identify individuals for support where there is wider impact on society – such as elderly people in fuel poverty; or to develop policy, plan services and assess outcomes; or to promote innovation, or allow citizens to hold us to account.

The introduction of new legislation on data access in the Digital Economy Bill is designed to give confidence that government is doing the right thing.

The Bill provides a robust legal framework for sharing data between public

authorities, where there is a clear public need and benefit.

A case in point is the Troubled Families Programme to get children back into school, put adults in employment or on a path back to work, and cut youth crime and anti-social behaviour. To identify families in need of help, public authorities need to see information held by other authorities.

The Bill also makes provision for public authorities sharing information with energy companies to identify customers living in fuel poverty so they can automatically receive support – such as energy bill rebates or energy-saving measures.

We see a clear link between public trust and government capability in its handling of data.

A May 2016 survey for the Government Data Science Partnership showed that public approval for government sharing data is actually quite high when they accept that it is used in measured, proportionate and targeted ways. So the way we collect, store and release our data must keep pace with expectations.

We've introduced the first six developer-friendly open registers of reliable and up-to-date data on specific areas that we can use with confidence to build a service. These include countries, territories and English local authority registers – with more to come, covering everything from police stations and schools, to doctors and courts.

We need to think about the collection and storage of data as part of core national infrastructure, in the same way as we think of our road and rail systems, energy supply, and telecommunications networks as infrastructure.

To give confidence that we handle data and can realise its potential effectively, we also need the right people with the right skills in the right place, in government and across the economy.

And we are still short of the key data science skills in Government.

Such a shortage is not peculiar to this country – research in the US predicts that by 2018 they will be short of 190,000 data scientists.

Here, in the UK Civil Service, we are growing the specialist data science community in a variety of ways – from direct recruitment to training to defining new career pathways for analysts.

The Data Science Accelerator Programme is tapping into the 3,000 or so analysts from other disciplines looking to develop their data science skills

A Data Science Campus opened its doors at ONS's headquarters in Newport last October. And the first intake for a new Apprenticeship in Data Analytics started work on their two-year vocational training programme at the end of 2016.

And because everyone at every level should have an appreciation of the power of data, we're developing a programme in data literacy for non-data

specialists. The Digital Academy will provide skills training right across government for up to 3,000 people a year.

Together, these measures are nudging us towards a cultural shift in the status of data in government and those who work with it.

And how Government uses data in service of the citizen will define how the citizen experiences Government. When we get it right, we will deliver the right service at the right time to the right person. And that is our goal.

So – to conclude.

Data underpins everything we do – but we could do so much more. The possibilities are tremendously exciting: Services for the citizen that are both targeted and responsive; More effective and more efficient government; and Data as an enabler of growth in the wider economy.

And we have to step up our efforts. We have announced that we plan to appoint a new Chief Data Officer, whose role will be to oversee this agenda, and a cross-government senior Data Advisory Board.

But it is not without challenge, and we need your help. We need to partner with you to help us navigate the difficult ethical judgements about how to share data in the right way.

We need you to tell us which data you want in the open and how, and we need to share scarce resources to build toward our overall goal.

Data is at the heart of 21st century government. It puts the citizen front and centre in public service delivery. It powers effective decision making on the front line. It makes government work for everyone, by better reflecting the world that we live in.

We are at the start of this journey – but I can't wait to see how we can accelerate from here toward a public sector which is truly in service of the citizen.

Press release: Record exports support Global Britain drive

Global sales of the UK's food and drink have hit the £20 billion mark for the first time, Environment Secretary Andrea Leadsom will announce today.

New figures reveal exports grew by nearly 10 per cent in 2016, with food and drink sales to the USA – one of Britain's biggest markets – up 12 per cent. China is quickly becoming one of our fastest growing markets, with the export value of pork skyrocketing to £43 million, an increase of over 70 per cent.

Alongside these global heavy-hitters, newer markets also saw record growth last year – exports to Malaysia grew by a whopping 143 per cent, while India emerged as one of our priority markets thanks to growing demand for Scotch whisky.

The figures reveal exports show no sign of slowing following the decision to leave the EU, and come as the Environment Secretary vows to ramp up the focus on international trade.

With only one in five food producers currently exporting, a dedicated Government team has turned its attention to ensuring UK companies have the skills, knowledge and confidence to tap into new international markets and take advantage of the global demand for British food and drink.

Speaking ahead of the NFU Conference today, Environment Secretary Andrea Leadsom said:

It's great to see the global appetite for British food and drink continues to grow – thanks to our well-established reputation for taste, quality and high animal health and welfare standards.

As we prepare to leave the EU, there has never been a better time to become more outward looking – developing new trading relationships and establishing our place as a truly Global Britain.

But the food and drink industry cannot do this alone – we need to give them the skills, knowledge and contacts to make the most of the opportunities ahead.

I want to see more companies taking advantage of these opportunities, which is why we're expanding our team of trade experts to support UK businesses, encouraging them to take the leap and share their quality produce with the world.

As well as opening up new markets around the globe, the Government will continue its focus on taking advantage of European markets – with exports of salmon to France growing by 31 per cent and all food and drink exports to Germany up by 12 per cent.

France and Germany are among the priority markets identified in the [UK International Action Plan for Food and Drink](#) launched last October.

Through this plan, the Government is focusing on forging stronger links with key markets including USA and Canada, China and India to generate an extra £2.9 billion in exports over the next five years.

Food and Drink Federation Director General Ian Wright CBE said:

Exports of food and drink reached record levels last year and we're committed to building on this success going forward.

We'll continue to work closely with Government to help existing and new food and drink exporters take advantage of the growing international demand for our produce.

Ministers are also continuing to fly the flag for British food abroad – the Environment Secretary visited China in November last year, while Food Minister George Eustice will be visiting the UAE and Kuwait next week to support nearly 100 UK firms exhibiting at Gulfood and agree market access for lamb.

Through the Government's [Food is GREAT](#) campaign Defra will continue its work to drive exports and increase global demand for the UK's top quality food and drink.

Press release: Jo Johnson demands tough penalties on student plagiarism

Universities Minister Jo Johnson is today (Tuesday 21 February) calling on university and student bodies to do more to deal with the spread of 'essay mills' – websites which provide custom written essays for students to submit as part of their degree.

The Universities Minister has asked for guidance aimed at universities and information for students to help combat the use of these websites, as well as other forms of plagiarism. The Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) has also been tasked to take action against the online advertising of these services and to work with international agencies to deal with this problem.

The Minister is calling for the guidance to include tough new penalties for those who make use of essay mills websites, as well as the need to educate students about the potentially significant negative impacts on their future career if they are caught cheating.

Universities Minister Jo Johnson said:

"This form of cheating is unacceptable and every university should have strong policies and sanctions in place to detect and deal with it.

"Essay mill websites threaten to undermine the high quality reputation of a UK degree so it is vital that the sector works together to address this in a consistent and robust way."

The spread of essay mill websites was uncovered in a QAA report, commissioned by the government, which was published last year. It found that the websites often advertise their services to students for a fee and many promote

“plagiarism-free guarantees”, or essays tested against plagiarism detection software.

Further work by QAA has confirmed that there are now over 100 essay mills websites currently in operation. Prices charged by these sites vary depending on the complexity of essay and tightness of deadline. They can range from a couple of hundred pounds for a single essay to as high as £6,750 for a PhD dissertation.

Ian Kimber, QAA’s Director of Universities, Quality Enhancement and Standards said:

“Essay mills are a major challenge for universities and colleges because, unlike other forms of cheating, the practice is notoriously difficult to detect. We look forward to continuing our work with the government and sector colleagues in addressing an issue potentially damaging to students and the reputation of UK higher education.”

The new sector guidance and student information is expected to be made available for the beginning of the 2017/18 teaching year.

Following a request by the government to investigate the use of essay mills in the UK, the QAA published a report on this issue in August 2016 titled ‘Plagiarism in Higher Education – Custom essay writing services: an exploration and next steps for the UK higher education sector’. This report confirmed that essays mills are a “growing threat to UK higher education”.

Sector guidance on plagiarism has not been updated for some time. It is currently left to individual institutions to develop their own plagiarism policies in accordance with the requirements and indicators of sound practice set out in the [UK Quality Code](#).

Statement to Parliament: Final local government finance settlement 2017 to 2018

I have today laid before the House, the [Report on Local Government Finance \(England\) 2017 to 2018](#), which represents the annual [local government finance settlement](#) for local authorities in England.

I would like to thank all colleagues in the House, and council leaders and officials, who contributed to the consultation after the [provisional settlement](#) was published before Christmas. Representations from nearly 200 organisations or individuals have been carefully considered before finalising the settlement.

[political content removed]. As we continue to bring the deficit down, local government, which still accounts for nearly a quarter of public spending despite the savings delivered since 2010, must continue to play its part.

At the same time, local residents rightly continue to expect excellent public services. I commend all councils for how they are getting on with the job. Public satisfaction with local services has been maintained, and councils are engaged in substantial efforts to modernise, transform local services, and reduce waste so that frontline services can be protected.

The 2017 to 2018 local government finance settlement supports councils to continue in that regard, and progresses funding reforms to make councils more self-sufficient.

We remain committed to increasing funding certainty for local government. In total, local government spends more than £120 billion a year and the 2015 Spending Review and 2016 to 2017 settlement delivered a flat-cash settlement for local government, providing 4 year funding allocations for the first time.

The settlement being published today is the second year of the 4 year offer which was accepted by 97% of councils. To enshrine this commitment to stability in law the Local Government Finance Bill establishes a legal framework for multi-year settlements.

Councils are able to use this increased funding certainty to continue reforming the way they work and become more efficient, both in back-office functions and front line service delivery. Building on the £508 million savings already delivered from shared service arrangements, councils are using improved digital technology, new delivery models and innovative partnerships to deliver savings across local government.

We listened to the unanimous view that we must prioritise spending on adult social care services that councils provide to our elderly and vulnerable citizens. The Spending Review put in place up to £3.5 billion of additional funding for adult social care by 2019 to 2020.

Recognising the immediate challenges in the care market facing many councils next year, this settlement repurposes £240 million of money which was previously directed to local authorities via the New Homes Bonus to create a new adult social care support grant next year. It also grants councils extra flexibility to raise the adult social care precept by up to 3% next year and the year after.

These measures make available almost £900 million of additional funding for adult social care over the next 2 years, bringing the total dedicated funding available for adult social care to £7.6 billion over the 4 year settlement period.

But more money is not the only answer. We will bring forward reforms to provide a sustainable market that works for everyone who needs social care. And I welcome the consensus across both sides of the House that every area

should move towards the integration of health and social care services by 2020, so that it feels like one service.

Council Tax referendum principles

We are committed to keeping Council Tax down, and will maintain referendum principles to protect hard-working tax-payers from rising bills. Council Tax in England has fallen by 9% in real terms from the levels [political content removed] in 2010, and is expected to be lower in real terms in 2019 to 2020 than it was in 2010 to 2011.

This year, in addition to the further flexibility on the Adult Social Care Precept, we are proposing a core Council Tax principle of 2% for principal authorities, or £5 – whichever is greater – for all shire district councils, and for police and crime commissioners in the lowest quartile.

100% business rates retention

To reduce local government's dependence on central government for funding – long campaigned for by councils – we have announced that by the end of this Parliament, local government will keep 100% of the income raised locally through business rates.

Councils will take on new responsibilities to be funded from this additional income – estimated to be around £12.5 billion – as central government grants are phased out. And to ensure councils with less business rates do not lose out, there will continue to be redistributions between authorities.

The Local Government Finance Bill, currently before Parliament, provides the legislative framework for these reforms. This will allow us to continue to work closely with interested parties over the coming months on the more detailed aspects of reforms.

A consultation has already been conducted. The [government response](#) to that announced that, in the reformed system, Revenue Support Grant, Rural Services Delivery Grant, the Public Health Grant and the Greater London Authority Transport Grant will be funded through retained business rates.

Taken together these account for around half of the additional retained business rates that we estimate will be available to councils. We will continue to engage with local government on the remaining responsibilities to be devolved as part of these reforms but it has already been confirmed that the devolution of Attendance Allowance funding is no longer being considered as part of the business rates retention reforms.

A [further consultation](#) has been published seeking views on many of the important aspects of the new system – for example, how growth in business rates can best be rewarded, and how the system can help authorities to manage and share risk. Responses to that consultation are invited by 3 May.

Pilots of these reforms will take place from April 2017 in Liverpool, Greater Manchester, West Midlands, West of England, Cornwall and Greater London. We

have also confirmed that we are interested in building on the existing pilot scheme and will be inviting all councils to apply to participate in piloting aspects of 100% business rates retention from April 2018. We will be publishing more information about this process shortly.

Conclusion

Reforms to local government finance, based around 100% business rates retention offer a bold and innovative response to the twin challenges of promoting economic growth and securing more self-sufficient and sustainable local government. They will help determine the role, purpose and means of delivery for local government in the years ahead.

The 2017 to 2018 local government finance settlement provides the financial stability authorities need as they transition towards the reformed system in 2019 to 2020; these longer-term reforms will ensure the councils people rely on for their local services are both sustainable, and more self-sufficient.

Statement to Parliament: Minister Duncan statement on US State Visit petitions

Thank you, Mr Turner. It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship.

In response to the two petitions which have triggered this debate, and having listened to the arguments of both sides, I would like to set out the position of Her Majesty's Government, and explain the thinking behind it.

The State Visit as people have mentioned is a uniquely British construct. No other country is able to offer a State Visit in quite the same way as we do. It is distinctively British.

Over the course of her reign, Her Majesty has hosted over 100 of them. All such visits are a rare and prestigious occasion. But they are also our most powerful diplomatic tool. They enable us to strengthen and influence those international relationships that are of the greatest strategic importance to this country, and even much more widely to other parts of the world as well. In answer to the Honourable lady who speaks for the front bench, the opposition, recommendations for state visits are made on the advice of government through the Royal Visits Committee, not by parliament as such. That committee is attended by representatives of the Royal Household, Downing Street, the Cabinet Office, the Department for Trade and is chaired by the Foreign Office.

In an uncertain and increasingly dangerous world, the ability to work closely

with key countries is of critical importance. Strong alliances and close relationships are a central stabilising pillar for world security.

This is an increasingly unstable world. Yet always within that world, and throughout modern history, the United States and the United Kingdom have worked together, side by side, to bring peace and security during times of danger and uncertainty. Especially with the world as it is today, that is why a State Visit matters so much. Put simply, diplomacy matters.

The relationship between the United Kingdom and the United States is built around a common language, the common principles of freedom and democracy, and common interests in so many other areas besides.

Our relationship is undoubtedly special. On security, on defence, on trade, on investment, on all of these issues, the United Kingdom and the United States are, and will remain, the closest of partners.

The US is the world's greatest power, and in the light of America's absolutely pivotal role, we believe it is entirely right that we should use all the tools at our disposal to build common ground with President Trump.

As the baton of office passed seamlessly, constitutionally, from one President to another, we were already well placed to have a productive and meaningful engagement with the wider new Administration. The British Embassy in Washington has been working with key administration figures over many months. British Secretaries of State have built relationships with their opposite numbers following their Congressional confirmation process.

The Prime Minister's visit last month was of enormous significance. The Foreign and Defence Secretaries met their opposite numbers only last week and on Friday I met Homeland Security Secretary John Kelly.

This Government places our national interest at the heart of our government's decision-making, and the Special Relationship is a central part of that national interest. It is a relationship which transcends political parties on both sides of the Atlantic and it is bigger than individual personalities. It is about the security and prosperity of our two nations.

Mr Turner, The Prime Minister's meeting with President Trump in Washington last month identified many areas of common interest where we will work with the new Administration. A State Visit will provide the opportunity to advance these common interests further.

In respect of timing, which has been mentioned in this debate, State Visits are not necessarily the sole preserve of long-serving Heads of State. In the past a State Visit has been extended to the Presidents of South Africa, France, South Korea, Finland and Poland, amongst others, each within their first year of office.

The Government strongly believes that it is a perfectly legitimate decision to use the full impact of an invitation to maximise the diplomatic significance of a State Visit at the start of President Trump's term of office. Both President Obama and President George W Bush visited the UK on a

State Visit during their first term in office, so it is entirely appropriate that President Trump should be invited in his first term too.

But let me be also be clear: neither the precise timing nor the content of the proposed visit have yet been agreed.

Mention has been made of the prospect of the President addressing Parliament in some manner or other. The fact is, on only three occasions in the past century has the guest addressed both Houses of Parliament as part of their State Visit: President de Gaulle in 1960, President Mandela in 1996 and President Obama in 2011.

But in any event, Mr Chairman, as the House and you are both aware, whether this ever happens is an issue solely for the relevant Parliamentary authorities to determine. Comment on whether or not this might happen has, on this occasion, completely run ahead of itself.

Because the simple fact is that no request has ever been received from Washington for any Parliamentary event to take place. The question of perhaps addressing a meeting of Parliament has never even been mentioned. Therefore, Mr Turner, any discussion or judgement about this possibility is purely speculative.

But within the views that have been expressed about the appropriateness of a State Visit for the President there lurks too, I would argue, a fundamental principle that Members of this House should consider very seriously. It is the principle of freedom of speech.

President Trump was democratically elected by the American people under their own constitutional system. To have strong views about him is one matter: but to translate a difference of opinion into a demand to ban him is quite another.

Given the understandable questions on certain policy stances which arise with any change of government, it is prudent for us to work closely alongside the United States as the new administration charts its course. And already we see the importance of that engagement with the Prime Minister's early meeting with the President eliciting key commitments on NATO, echoed by the Vice President in Munich on Saturday, and laying the groundwork to establish a swift post-Brexit free trade agreement. Mr Turner, in February 1917, a century ago, the Spectator magazine published its view on the US and the UK. It read:

It would be easy to write down a hundred reasons why unclouded friendship and moral co-operation between the United States and Britain are a benefit to the world, and why an interruption of such relations is a detriment to progress and a disease worldwide in its effects.

It went on:

But when we had written down all those reasons we should not have expressed the instinctive sentiments which go below and beyond them all. To our way of feeling, quarrelling and misunderstandings between the British and American peoples are like a thing contrary to Nature.

They are so contrary to Nature that the times of misunderstanding have always seemed to us abnormal, and a return to friendship not an achievement of wise diplomacy but merely a resumption of the normal.

It is that historic normality that is reflected in this invitation. This is a special moment for the Special Relationship.

Mr Turner, the visit should happen. The visit will happen. And when it does, I trust that the entire United Kingdom will extend a polite and generous welcome to President Donald Trump.