Dr Sarah Wollaston (Totnes) (Con): Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for letting me catch your eye when so many hon. Members wish to do the same.

I thank the hon. Members for Chippenham (Duncan Hames) and for Luton South (Gavin Shuker) for their passionate speeches about education. I come to the House with little political experience, but as a doctor and teacher selected through an open primary, the first in the country to give every voter in a constituency the chance to select their candidate. I would also like to thank my predecessor, Anthony Steen. He served this House for an extraordinary 36 years. He is not the sort to retire, and I wish him well in his continuing fight against the evils of human trafficking.

I am very fortunate to represent one of the most spectacular and diverse constituencies in this country. The Totnes constituency stretches from the hill farms of Dartmoor to the most stunning of West Country coastlines, which supports a diverse tourist and fishing industry. Many people may not realise this, but more fish are landed at Brixham than at any other port in England—and I hope all Members will join me in recognising the adverse effect of the common fisheries policy on our fishing industry.

We are also home to "Transition Town Totnes", which is the home of the transition towns movement. As such, it recognises not only the problem of climate change, but problem of the peak oil; it is planning ahead for a time when we no longer have abundant or cheap fossil fuels.

In the South Hams, we also have some of the most spectacular countryside, but I have to inform Members that that countryside is in crisis. We are fast losing our sustainability as more and more dairy farms in particular go out of business because of the problems of bovine tuberculosis. Devon is, in fact, at the very heart of the bovine TB epidemic. As a doctor, I have to tell Members that we cannot treat infected badgers by vaccination. Vaccination can only hope to prevent the disease in unaffected individuals. I have been teaching junior doctors evidence-based medicine for 11 years, and I can say that one of the problems we face is that the randomised badger culling trial has for years wrongly been used to justify a policy of inaction. Unless we do something about bovine TB, more and more of our farmers will go out of business. We need to recognise the effect on them and their families, and the very real distress bovine TB causes them.
The main reason why I came to this House is because I feel passionately about our NHS and the patients it treats. I welcome the proposals in the Gracious Speech to get rid of top-down bureaucracy in the NHS and to hand power back to clinicians on the front line.

In my constituency, we have four community hospitals, and I would like to pay tribute to their staff, and also their volunteers, for the work that they do. I hope that giving patients a louder voice in our NHS will prove to be the best protection for community hospitals, because people, particularly those in rural constituencies, really value them. I hope Members will support me in this endeavour.

There is another issue I wish to highlight, which affects not only my constituents, but those of all Members. After the tragedy of the Paddington rail disaster in which 31 people lost their lives, we rightly held a public inquiry and that led to the setting up of the Rail Safety and Standards Board, and after 3,000 terrible deaths in the USA, we joined a "Global War on Terror", so what should we say should happen after 15,000 to 20,000 deaths every year in this country as a result of alcohol? I pay tribute to the right hon. Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron), who has chaired the Select Committee on Health. It has recommended minimum-price alcohol as the best way forward. That may not be popular-in fact, in suggesting that we cull diseased badgers and raise the price of alcohol, it is clear that I am going for the popular vote! However, unless we do something about this, our constituents will continue to suffer. Let us look at the statistics: 1.3 million children in this country are directly affected by alcohol, and alcohol is a factor in half of all homicides. Members also need only consider the number of constituents they see in their surgeries who are victims of domestic violence. Alcohol continues to be the number one date-rape drug in this country, too. I ask all Members to look at the evidence, so we can have evidence-based politics.

The evidence is out there, and it is very clear. If we want to do something about the death toll-15,000 to 20,000 people a year in this country-we have to do something about price and availability. This is not about the nanny state; lives are at stake, and I ask the House to look again at the evidence, not only from the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence report issued today, but from its own Select Committee. I commend minimum-price alcohol to the House.

There is no such thing as cheap alcohol; we are all paying a very heavy price.

6.55 pm

Emma Reynolds (Wolverhampton North East) (Lab): I congratulate the hon. Member for Totnes (Dr Wollaston) on making such an excellent maiden speech.

ENDS