



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 22 July 2024 and the information is correct at the time of publication (06:24 P.M., 22 July 2024). For the latest information on written questions and answers, ministerial corrections, and written statements, please visit: <http://www.parliament.uk/writtenanswers/>

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**Notes:**

Questions marked thus **[R]** indicate that a relevant interest has been declared.

Questions with identification numbers of **900000 or greater** indicate that the question was originally tabled as an oral question and has since been unstarred.

## ANSWERS

### BUSINESS AND TRADE

#### ■ Airbus: Spirit AeroSystems

**Jim Shannon:**

[R] [67]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether officials in his Department have had discussions with representatives of the aerospace industry on guaranteeing jobs during the completion of the sale of Spirit AeroSystems' operations to Airbus.

**Sarah Jones:**

Under terms agreed between Airbus and Spirit, Airbus will acquire the elements of Spirit's Belfast site responsible for the A220 airliner. This includes the wing and mid-fuselage sections. The Government is working with the Northern Ireland Executive to help ensure the best outcome for Short Brothers and all its incredibly skilled, hard working, staff. My Department is in touch with Spirit, Airbus, Boeing and other potential buyers. We have a keen interest in seeing that any acquisition includes a commitment to develop Short Brothers and its supply chain, and to provide the best possible opportunity for growth in Northern Ireland.

#### ■ Construction: Licensing

**Mark Garnier:**

[60]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, if he will introduce a licencing regime for builders.

**Sarah Jones:**

This Government backs our wonderful construction industry and is working to ensure we have a high-quality and professional construction industry, with consumer protection at the heart of this. TrustMark, sponsored by the Department and licenced by the Government, is the Government Endorsed Quality Scheme that covers work a consumer chooses to have carried out in or around their home. In addition the Building Safety Act 2022 has introduced competence requirements for both individuals and businesses working in the built environment.

Any action that the Government takes forward more widely on licensing to protect customers and standards needs to be robust, proportionate and evidence based.

#### ■ Employment: Bullying and Discrimination

**Layla Moran:**

[209]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether the Government has plans to ban non-disclosure agreements used for victims of sexual misconduct, bullying and discrimination.

**Justin Madders:**

Thank you to the Hon. Member for raising this topic. This Government is committed to delivering the Plan to Make Work Pay in full and updating Britain's employment protections, so they are fit for our modern economy and the future of work. This includes strengthening protections from sexual harassment and harassment in the workplace. Ministers are identifying the most appropriate delivery mechanisms for the commitments in the Plan, including an Employment Rights Bill that will be introduced to Parliament within 100 days of taking office.

**Imports: Northern Ireland****Jim Allister:****[377]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of the (a) Northern Ireland Protocol and (b) Windsor Framework on trends in the level of the supply of (i) goods and (ii) other materials to Northern Ireland.

**Mr Douglas Alexander:**

In 2023, the value of goods associated with full declarations cleared by HMRC on GB to NI movements was £17.8bn, increasing by £3.6bn (26%) from 2022. More detail can be found [here](#).

The Department for Business and Trade continues to work closely with the Northern Ireland devolved government and all other stakeholders to ensure the Windsor Framework delivers positive outcomes for the people and businesses of Northern Ireland.

**Retirement****Mr Richard Holden:****[528]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what compulsory retirement ages exist in the private sector; what changes have been made to compulsory retirement ages in the public sector in the last ten years; and whether the Government plans to (a) introduce and (b) change mandatory retirement ages in the private sector.

**Justin Madders:**

The Employment Equality (Repeal of Retirement Age Provisions) Regulations 2011 prohibited compulsory retirement taking place unless it could be objectively justified.

Compulsory retirement ages in the current Police pension scheme were removed with the introduction of the 2015 Police pension scheme. Compulsory retirement ages for Firefighters were removed more than 10 years ago.

Nothing in the private pension system sets a mandatory retirement age in the private sector. The Normal Minimum Pension Age (NMPA) sets the earliest point at which you can access your private pension without facing an unauthorised payments charge (except in cases of serious ill health).

**DEFENCE**■ **Ajax Vehicles**

**Luke Akehurst:** [\[438\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the progress of the Ajax armoured vehicle programme towards meeting initial operating capability by December 2025.

**Maria Eagle:**

The Armoured Cavalry Programme (Ajax) is due to achieve Initial Operating Capability by December 2025 as planned.

■ **Armed Forces: Labour Turnover**

**Luke Akehurst:** [\[441\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of recruitment and retention across the armed forces.

**Luke Pollard:**

The new Government is reviewing the adequacy of recruitment, readiness and retention efforts. Our Armed Forces face considerable challenges due to the inadequacy of recruitment and retention in recent years. We have not recruited enough people or retained enough people. This puts pressure on the availability and readiness of units within our Armed Forces and places more burden on those in service. We are determined to change this. The new Government's work in improving retention and recruitment is part of a package of measures aimed to renew the contract between the nation and those who serve. Strength of our Armed Forces is also being considered as part of the Strategic Defence Review launched by the Prime Minister. We hope to make further announcements about retention and recruitment improvements in due course.

■ **Defence**

**James Cartlidge:** [\[119\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether the Strategic Defence Review will conclude in its entirety before the next Spending Review commences.

**Luke Pollard:**

The Strategic Defence Review will report in the first half of 2025. The timing of the next Spending Review will be announced by the Chancellor of the Exchequer in due course.

■ **Defence: Expenditure**

**James Cartlidge:** [\[117\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, by what date he expects UK defence spending to have reached 2.5 per cent of GDP.

**Maria Eagle:**

The Government is totally committed to setting out the path to spending 2.5% of GDP on defence as soon as possible. The Government will set out a clear path to 2.5% at a future fiscal event.

**■ Fleet Solid Support Ships: Procurement****Luke Akehurst:**[\[440\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of contractor delivery as part of the Fleet Solid Support Programme.

**Maria Eagle:**

The prime contractor, Navantia UK, is contractually obligated to deliver the Fleet Solid Support ship manufacture contract. The Ministry of Defence is well engaged with Navantia UK and members of their supply chain to monitor the progress of all aspects of the programme.

Shipbuilding supports 42,600 jobs nationwide, adds £2.4 billion to the economy every single year, and is an important pillar of our civil and defence industrial base. We are committed to supporting vibrant and successful shipbuilding and fabrication industries, and our skilled workforces who deliver them, in all parts of the UK.

**■ Military Aircraft: Helicopters****Luke Akehurst:**[\[444\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the status is of the New Medium Helicopter programme.

**Maria Eagle:**

The second stage New Medium Helicopter (NMH) competition commenced on 27 February 2024 with the release of the Invitation to Negotiate and the tender returns are due back on 30 August 2024.

**EDUCATION****■ Carers: Social Security Benefits****Grahame Morris:**[\[48\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of providing a financial allowance to kinship carers equal to that received by foster carers.

**Grahame Morris:**[\[49\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what her Department's policy is on the potential merits of trialling a kinship care allowance.

**Janet Daby:**

The department is committed to working in partnership with local government to support children in care, whether they are being looked after by their community of wider kinship care, foster carers and adoptive parents, or being cared for in children's homes, if this is the best place for them to be. The department recognises many challenges kinship carers experience, including the financial challenges that many kinship carers face. The government is considering how to most effectively transform the children's social care system so that it can deliver better support and outcomes for children and families. This will include considering how best to support kinship carers and children in kinship care.

**Education: Finance****Rachael Maskell:**[\[94\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will take steps to establish a fair funding formula for (a) SEND and (b) education.

**Catherine McKinnell:**

The department will take time to consider the various funding formulae that the department and local authorities use to allocate funding for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities. It is important that there is a fair education funding system, that directs funding to where it is needed.

Budgets for the 2025/26 financial year have not yet been set which means that decisions on the high needs and schools national funding formulae as well as the publication of allocations for that year will not be to the usual timescales.

**Multi-academy Trusts: Regulation****Rachael Maskell:**[\[93\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will review the (a) governance and (b) accountability structures of multi academy trusts.

**Catherine McKinnell:**

This government has committed to remove barriers to opportunity and raise school standards to ensure the school system is enabling every child to thrive, no matter their background.

The government is clear strong accountability is non-negotiable. That is why the government has committed to bring Multi-Academy Trusts into the inspection system, to make the system fairer and more transparent, and enable intervention when schools and trusts are not performing to the required standards.



## ■ Non-teaching Staff

**Laurence Turner:**

[219]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will make an assessment of trends in (a) recruitment and (b) retention of school support staff in (i) Birmingham and (ii) England in the last five years.

**Catherine McKinnell:**

The full-time equivalent (FTE) of support staff has increased each year since the 2019/20 academic year, to 510,400 in 2023/24, and has now passed the previous peak of 2015/16. This is an increase of 4,800 (0.9%) since last year. This increase is mainly due to the addition of 2,400 in other support staff.

Support staff are categorised into posts of teaching assistants, administrative staff, auxiliary staff, technicians and other supporting staff, plus two new posts of school business professional and leadership non-teacher reported for the first time in 2023/24.

School business professionals include roles such as bursar, business manager, finance officer, office manager, premises manager or ICT network manager.

Data relating to the FTE of all support staff can be found here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/data-tables/permalink/7b0a17e8-b3ff-403e-687f-08dca70c1109>.

Equivalent data relating to Birmingham's parliamentary constituencies can be found here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/data-tables/permalink/0fb9acee-35f2-4607-fac3-08dca70cb6e4>.

School support staff play a vital role in children's education and development. The department values and recognises the professionalism of the entire school workforce and will address recruitment and retention challenges by reinstating the School Support Staff Negotiating Body.

This body will be tasked with establishing a national terms and conditions handbook, training and progression routes, ensuring that schools can recruit and retain the staff needed to deliver high quality, inclusive education.

## ■ Parkfield School Christchurch

**Sir Christopher Chope:**

[10]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will make it her policy to reject the application by Reach South Academy Trust to close Parkfield School.

**Catherine McKinnell:**

My right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education, will not make it her policy to reject the application by Reach South Academy Trust to close Parkfield School.

Upon reviewing officials' advice around this school closing, the department agrees that closing the school is in the best interests of children and young people and their education in this case.

Parkfield School will be closing by mutual agreement with the Academy trust.

### ■ Private Education: Fees and Charges

**Mr Richard Holden:** [\[458\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment her Department has made of the potential impact on (a) class sizes, (b) teacher recruitment and retention and (c) relations with unions in state schools of the introduction of VAT on education provision in the independent sector.

**Stephen Morgan:**

Education matters and is at the heart of the mission to break down barriers to opportunity. The impact of any tax changes affecting independent schools on the state sector will be carefully considered. The government will complete its analysis once details of the policy changes have been confirmed; this will happen in due course.

### ■ Schools: Concrete

**Mr Richard Holden:** [\[457\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what is her timeline is for reviewing (a) capital projects relating to RAAC within schools and (b) other capital projects.

**Stephen Morgan:**

High and rising school standards are at the heart of the mission to break down barriers to opportunity and give every child the best start in life. Ensuring schools have the resources and buildings they need is a key part of that.

There are over 22,000 schools and colleges in England of which around 1% have reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC) present in some areas of their buildings.

The department will fix this problem as quickly as possible and permanently remove RAAC either through grant funding or rebuilding. All schools and colleges with RAAC are continuing to receive support from caseworkers where needed and are providing full time face to face education for all pupils.

School buildings should be fit for the future. The department will set out further details on wider spending plans, including for capital funding, in due course.

### ■ Schools: Solar Power

**Dr Simon Opher:** [\[374\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will make it her policy to reform the rules around the leasing of solar panels on school rooftops.

**Stephen Morgan:**

Rules around schools entering into leases fall within the remit of the department. Schools may enter into leases for solar panels on school rooftops where the arrangements do not constitute borrowing, but as these often require granting an

energy company rights over the roof space and school land, schools must involve the department. The process for gaining consent has recently been simplified, and the department receives around 20 to 30 applications per year.

Where a solar panel arrangement does constitute borrowing, this would require specific approval by exception. The department is aware of an increasing amount of interest in this area from schools and suppliers and is engaging with the sector to look at how it can further support schools in the move to solar.

## ■ Special Educational Needs: Birmingham

**Laurence Turner:**

[263]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many children who were not in school there were in Birmingham who (a) held an Education, Health and Care Plan and (b) had previously been identified in the SEN Support category by their school in each of the last five years.

**Catherine McKinnell:**

The department publishes statistics on education, health and care (EHC) plans at local authority level. This data can be found here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/education-health-and-care-plans>. This includes information on children elsewhere than at school, such as those awaiting provision, in elective home education, in other arrangements, permanently excluded, and having notice to cease of their plan, as well as those Not in Education, Employment of Training (NEET). The number of children with an EHC plan who were elsewhere than at school and who were NEET in Birmingham from 2020 to 2024 can be found here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/data-tables/permalink/fffc2c6e-ef02-4be1-689a-08dca70c1109>.

The data collection on children and young people with EHC plans does not include information on previous special educational needs (SEN) support identification.

Wider data on SEN, including information on the total number of pupils with EHC plans and SEN support at local authority level is available on GOV.UK, and can be found here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/special-educational-needs-in-england>.

## ■ Special Educational Needs: Surrey

**Dr Al Pinkerton:**

[278]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to improve special educational needs and disabilities provision in (a) Surrey Heath constituency and (b) Surrey.

**Catherine McKinnell:**

The last local area special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) inspection by Ofsted and Care Quality Commission for Surrey was in September 2023. The department's regional team has put in place systems to track outcomes against the areas for improvement found by inspectors and the progress made by children and

young people with SEND. Surrey County Council are committed to working closely with the department to improve services.

Surrey County Council also entered into a Safety Valve agreement with the department in March 2022. Safety Valve agreements aim to improve the effectiveness of local authority high needs systems and ensure their long-term financial sustainability.

A new special school, Hopescourt School, will open in Walton-on-Thames in September 2024, delivered by Surrey County Council, with support from the department. The school will provide high quality specialist education for both autistic children and children who have communication and interaction needs. It will create up to 77 school places in its first year of opening, increasing to 200 at full capacity, as an 'all through-school'.

All children and young people with SEND or in alternative provision receiving the support to succeed is at the heart of the government's mission to break down barriers to opportunity and give every child the best start in life. The department is committed to taking a community-wide approach, improving inclusivity and expertise in mainstream schools, as well as ensuring special schools cater to those with the most complex needs.

## ENERGY SECURITY AND NET ZERO

### ■ Hartlepool Power Station: Nuclear Reactors

**Mr Jonathan Brash:**

[\[205\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether his Department has plans to build a new nuclear reactor on the Hartlepool nuclear power station site.

**Michael Shanks:**

A new National Policy Statement will be developed to provide the planning framework for nuclear power beyond 2025. We believe the sites identified in the current National Policy Statement (EN6), including the privately owned Hartlepool site, are likely to retain inherent positive attributes that make them attractive for consideration for development.

### ■ Maentwrog Power Station

**Liz Saville Roberts:**

[\[514\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what recent estimate he has made of how much net revenue the Maentwrog hydro-electric power station generated in each of the last five years.

**Michael Shanks:**

The Department does not collect revenue data for power stations and has not made an estimate. Revenue estimates are within the remit of the private company that owns the power station.

## ■ Mineworkers' Pension Scheme

**Luke Akehurst:** [433]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, when he plans to (a) launch and (b) conclude a review of the mineworkers pension scheme.

**Sarah Jones:**

Work has already started across Government to deliver on our manifesto commitments. I will be meeting the Mineworkers' Pension Scheme Trustees shortly to discuss the best way to deliver the proposals.

**Grahame Morris:** [47]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, when he plans to bring forward proposals relating to the Mineworkers' Pension Scheme to (a) reform the surplus sharing arrangements and (b) transfer the Investment Reserve Fund to scheme members.

**Sarah Jones:**

Work has already started across Government to deliver on our manifesto commitments. I will be meeting the Mineworkers' Pension Scheme Trustees shortly to discuss the best way to deliver our commitments.

## ■ Oil: Production

**Ms Stella Creasy:** [62]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, with reference to the judgement in R (on the application of Finch on behalf of the Weald Action Group) (Appellant) v Surrey County Council and others (Respondents) UKSC 2022/0064, what assessment his Department has made of the potential impact of that judgement on existing licences for oil production.

**Michael Shanks:**

The Department is considering the outcome of the Finch case and the potential impacts of this across its portfolio and cannot comment further at this time.

## ■ Sizewell C Power Station: Investment

**Laurence Turner:** [R] [375]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, when he plans to make a final investment decision on the proposed construction of the Sizewell C nuclear power station.

**Michael Shanks:**

We are committed to Sizewell C. New nuclear will play an important role in the Government's vision for achieving energy independence, lowering consumers' bills, and securing thousands of good, skilled jobs.

The Sizewell C project has recently received its Nuclear Site Licence and commenced its Development Consent Order. Work continues at pace to secure a final investment decision.

The Government will continue to update the House as project development continues.

## ■ Solar Power: Supply Chains

**Alicia Kearns:**

[\[373\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, with reference to paragraph 3.9.92 of the report by the Planning Inspectorate entitled Mallard Pass Solar Farm: Examining Authority's Report of Findings and Conclusions and Recommendation to the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, published on 16 February 2024, if he will make an assessment of the implications for his policies of the findings of the Planning Inspectorate on the ethical sourcing of solar panels for solar developments.

**Michael Shanks:**

The full reasons for the Secretary of State's planning decision on the Mallard Pass project are set out in the Decision Letter. Given the Secretary of State's quasi-judicial role in taking such decisions we are not able to give any further information at this stage, in line with the Planning Propriety Guidance on nationally significant infrastructure decisions.

**Alicia Kearns:**

[\[384\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, with reference to paragraph 3.9.92 of the report by the Planning Inspectorate entitled Mallard Pass Solar Farm: Examining Authority's Report of Findings and Conclusions and Recommendation to the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, published on 16 February 2024, if he will make an assessment of the adequacy of the measures set out in the Mallard Pass Solar Farm Outline Employment, Skills and Supply Chain Plan (Clean) published on 19 September 2023 on the ethical sourcing of solar panels.

**Michael Shanks:**

The full reasons for the Secretary of State's planning decision on the Mallard Pass project are set out in the Decision Letter. Given the Secretary of State's quasi-judicial role in taking such decisions we are not able to give any further information at this stage, in line with the Planning Propriety Guidance on nationally significant infrastructure decisions.

**ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS****■ Agriculture: Newcastle-under-Lyme****Adam Jogee:**[\[415\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he plans take to support (a) farmers and (b) the farming sector in Newcastle-under-Lyme constituency.

**Daniel Zeichner:**

We will deliver a resilient and healthy food system, with a new deal for farmers that works for farmers, food security and nature.

The only way to do this effectively is to listen to farmers and others with a stake in our food system, countryside and nature. The Government is doing this and assessing data and information about what is working and what is not before setting out detailed plans. Ministers will confirm plans for further rollout of farming grants and schemes shortly.

**■ Fertilisers: Production****Sarah Dyke:**[\[303\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the ability of the UK's fertiliser production capacity to meet domestic demand.

**Daniel Zeichner:**

Fertiliser is a global market. Ensuring a resilient supply chain involves maintaining diverse sources, domestically and through international imports. The UK sources fertiliser from a wide range of countries and both produces and imports ammonium nitrate to meet demand.

Defra actively monitors fertiliser prices and supply chains, including domestic production, through regular engagement with key manufacturers and wider stakeholders.

**■ Import Controls: Fees and Charges****Ms Stella Creasy:**[\[65\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will publish the (a) number, (b) value and (c) repayment rate of invoices issued at each border control point for charges incurred since 30 April 2024.

**Daniel Zeichner:**

HM Government is responsible for setting charges on imports coming into GB to recover operating costs for the government-run BCP facilities serving the Port of Dover and Eurotunnel. Further detail on the Common User Charge including on invoicing and ongoing support will be published imminently.

The Common User Charge (CUC) rate will not apply at privately-run ports; it is up to individual commercial ports to determine their own charging structure and rates.

### ■ Pigs: Animal Welfare

**Marsha De Cordova:** [\[414\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if his Department will make an assessment of the potential merits of banning the use of farrowing crates; and if he will commission a consultation on such a ban.

**Daniel Zeichner:**

We are firmly committed to maintaining and improving animal welfare and want to work closely with the farming sector to deliver high standards.

The use of farrowing crates for pigs is an issue we will want to fully consider in due course.

### ■ Plants: Northern Ireland

**Jim Allister:** [\[338\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether his Department (a) has deployed and (b) plans to deploy staff to specifically regulate the movement of plants from Great Britain to Northern Ireland; and what will inform that decision.

**Daniel Zeichner:**

APHA oversees biosecurity measures and conducts in-season inspections, the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) establishes plant health policy. Inspections specifically related to plant movements in Northern Ireland are carried out by the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) where they are required.

### ■ Shellfish: North East

**Mr Jonathan Brash:** [\[360\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he plans to open an inquiry into crustacean die-offs on the North East coast.

**Daniel Zeichner:**

The Department is aware of the conclusions of the independent review commissioned by the previous administration into the crustacean mass mortality event on the North East coast of England. Defra, supported by its public bodies and agencies, continues to work with researchers and the scientific community on coastal health, livelihoods, and environment.



**■ UK Internal Trade: Northern Ireland****Jim Allister:****[334]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to operate regulations on trade between Great Britain and Northern Ireland in the context of the responsibilities of his Department (a) for the operation of those regulations and (b) under the terms of the Windsor Framework (Implementation) Regulations 2024.

**Daniel Zeichner:**

Defra, in line with the regulations taken forward last year to implement the Windsor Framework, has introduced and implemented arrangements for the Northern Ireland Retail Movement Scheme and Northern Ireland Plant Health Label.

**Jim Allister:****[335]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether implementation of the (a) Windsor Framework (Implementation) Regulations 2024 and (b) Safeguarding the Union Command Paper will affect documentary checks on goods travelling from Great Britain to Northern Ireland.

**Daniel Zeichner:**

We are committed to working closely with the Northern Ireland Executive in taking forward all of our commitments under the Windsor Framework in this regard and will set out further detail on future operational arrangements in due course.

**Jim Allister:****[376]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many staff in his Department are responsible for managing the flow of trade between Great Britain and Northern Ireland; and what the cost to the public purse was of these measures in the last 12 months.

**Daniel Zeichner:**

Defra does not hold this specific information but further details of the department's overall expenditure can be found in the [Defra Annual Report and Accounts 2022-23 \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk).

**Jim Allister:****[380]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, in which locations checks are carried out on goods transported between Great Britain and Northern Ireland; and what steps his Department is taking to ensure that such checks are commensurate with (a) relevant legislation and (b) the policy paper entitled Safeguarding the Union, published on 31 January 2024.

**Daniel Zeichner:**

In line with UK rules for sanitary and phytosanitary matters, checks on goods are carried out throughout the entire supply chain. This government is committed to making this process as smooth as possible for UK businesses.

**FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE**■ **Kosovo: Serbia****Alicia Kearns:** [\[234\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions his Department has had with the Kosovan authorities on the Banjska attack on Kosovo in September 2023; and whether his Department has received reports on the potential involvement of the state of Serbia in that attack.

**Stephen Doughty:**

The UK has repeatedly condemned the attack at Banjska and its destabilising effect in the region. The UK has repeatedly urged Serbia's leaders to help bring those responsible to justice and to take action to stop the illegal flow of weapons into Kosovo. The UK has discussed these issues with Kosovan Ministers and officials on a number of occasions. On 18 July, the Foreign Secretary discussed regional stability and reinforced its importance with both President Osmani and President Vucic at the European Political Community Summit.

■ **UNRWA: Finance****Ben Lake:** [\[453\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of the resumption of funding for UNRWA; and when he plans to reach a decision on the resumption of such funding.

**Mr Hamish Falconer:**

As the Foreign Secretary announced in his speech on 19 July, UNRWA is absolutely central to humanitarian efforts in Gaza. It also plays a critical role in the wider region in providing essential services to Palestinian refugees, including healthcare and education. We are confident that UNRWA is taking robust action in response to Catherine Colonna's independent review. Britain is committed to supporting UNRWA's lifesaving work, and will resume funding, releasing £21 million for Gaza and the region.

**HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE**■ **Ambulance Services: North Shropshire****Helen Morgan:** [\[328\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department plans to take to reduce ambulance waiting times in North Shropshire.

**Karin Smyth:**

The Government has committed to supporting the National Health Service to improve ambulance response times and achieve the standards set out in the NHS

Constitution. In doing so we will be honest about the challenges facing the health service, and serious about tackling them.

As a first step, my Rt hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care has appointed the Professor Lord Darzi to lead an independent investigation of NHS performance, which will report in September 2024.

## ■ **Cancer: Children and Young People**

**Sorcha Eastwood:**

[\[532\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has had discussions with Cabinet colleagues on (a) the adequacy of current travel costs support schemes for young cancer patients from Northern Ireland travelling to receive treatment in England and (b) the potential merits of establishing a UK-wide Travel Fund for young cancer patients to support with the cost of travel to attend specialist treatment across the UK.

**Sorcha Eastwood:**

[\[533\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the report by Young Lives vs Cancer entitled Running on Empty: Research exploring the costs young cancer patients and their families face travelling for treatment, published in June 2023, if he will make an assessment of the (a) adequacy of travel cost support schemes for young cancer patients and (b) the potential merits of establishing a UK-wide travel fund for young cancer patients.

**Sorcha Eastwood:**

[\[534\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure a whole-UK approach to addressing the unique needs of all children and young people with cancer; if he will establish a dedicated cross-UK group to deliver on these needs; and if he will take steps to bring forward a cancer plan for children and young people.

**Sorcha Eastwood:**

[\[535\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions he has had with his counterparts in the devolved Administrations on ensuring that all children and young people are enabled to (a) participate in research and (b) access clinical trials, where appropriate to support their treatment and care.

**Andrew Gwynne:**

The Department is responsible for healthcare in England. In Northern Ireland, health is a transferred matter, and for Scotland and Wales, health is a devolved matter. The Government has not yet made a formal assessment on a cancer plan for children and young people, or a United Kingdom-wide cancer needs delivery group. However, as part of the Department's work to improve the experience and outcomes for children and young people with cancer in England, Department officials have previously undertaken some engagement work with stakeholders across the cancer sector to gain a further understanding of the unique needs and challenges for children and

young people with cancer in England. This engagement included exploring key issues in relation to detection and diagnosis, genomic testing and treatment, and research and innovation. While the initial focus has been on children and young people's cancer services in England, the Department is keen to expand collaboration in order to benefit children and young people's cancer outcomes as widely as possible.

Department officials regularly meet with counterparts from other Government departments and the devolved administrations, to support research and access to clinical trials across the UK. The Department is committed to ensuring clinical trials are people-centred and more accessible, including for children and young people. This will involve making it easier for patients, service users, and members of the public across the UK to access and participate in research, if they want to. Our aim is to lead the world in clinical trials and ensure that all patients, their families, and their carers are empowered to directly and proactively explore research opportunities, and to make informed decisions about participating in research.

At this stage the Department has not made a formal assessment of the adequacy of support for travel for young cancer patients, including schemes for young cancer patients from Northern Ireland travelling to receive treatment in England, or the merits of establishing a UK-wide travel fund. NHS England and the integrated care boards are responsible for commissioning and ensuring the healthcare needs of local communities are met, including providing support for travel. The National Health Service runs schemes in England to provide financial assistance for travel to a hospital or other NHS premises for specialist NHS treatment or diagnostics tests, when referred by a doctor or other primary healthcare professional. The Healthcare Travel Costs Scheme (HTCS) provides financial assistance to patients in England who do not have a medical need for transport, but who require assistance with the costs of travelling to receive certain NHS services. Patients who do not qualify for the HTCS and are on a low income may be able to claim the costs from the Department for Work and Pensions through Universal Credit or Personal Independence Payment.

## ■ Health Services: Birmingham

**Laurence Turner:**

**[351]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many NHS sites have closed in Birmingham since May 2010; and what the (a) name and (b) postcode was of each site.

**Karin Smyth:**

The Department does not collect data on the closure of National Health Service sites. The NHS, however, publishes the annual Estates Returns Information Collection, which is a mandatory collection for all NHS trusts and includes detailed information on all operational or temporarily unoccupied sites larger than 500m<sup>2</sup> or with 10 or more inpatient beds, including site name and postcode. The collection is available at the following link:

<https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/estates-returns-information-collection>

## ■ Hospital Beds: Somerset

**Sarah Dyke:** [304]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many hospital beds there were in Somerset (a) in 2015 and (b) 2024.

**Karin Smyth:**

The latest published data shows a total of 1,438 hospital beds in Somerset, in quarter four of 2023/24. This compares to a total of 1,374 hospital beds reported by National Health Service trusts in quarter four of 2014/15.

Data on NHS bed numbers is published by NHS England, and is available at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/statistics/statistical-work-areas/bed-availability-and-occupancy/bed-data-overnight/>

## ■ Vaccine Damage Payment Scheme

**Sir Christopher Chope:** [11]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many applications were made under the Vaccine Damage Payment Scheme for redress arising from the administration of covid-19 vaccines as at 1 July 2024; and how many and what proportion of those applications were (a) decided, (b) successful and (c) rejected on the grounds that the 60% disability threshold had not been reached.

**Andrew Gwynne:**

As of 1 July 2024, the NHS Business Services Authority had received 14,088 claims to the Vaccine Damage Payment Scheme (VDPS) relating to COVID-19. Following medical assessment, 6,850 claims, or 48.6% of the total number of claims, had received an initial outcome, with 181 claims, or 1.3%, being successful and 6,062 claims, 45.1%, being unsuccessful. A further 607 claims, or 4.3%, were found invalid, due to being either outside the scope of the VDPS or a duplicate claim. Of the 6,062 unsuccessful claims, 360 claims, or 2.6%, were rejected on the grounds that the 60% disability threshold had not been reached.

## HOME OFFICE

### ■ Abortion: Demonstrations

**Ms Stella Creasy:** [64]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when she expects the implementation of safe access zones around abortion clinics to be enacted.

**Jess Phillips:**

It is unacceptable that anyone should be subjected to harassment or intimidation for exercising their legal right to have access to abortion services. We will quickly review where these arrangements have got to and commence safe access zones around abortion clinics imminently.

**■ Asylum: LGBT+ People**

**Nadia Whittome:** [454]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent assessment she has made of the level of the risk of (a) discrimination, (b) harassment and (c) violence towards LGBTQ+ people seeking asylum in immigration detention centres.

**Dame Angela Eagle:**

It is vital that detention and removal are carried out with dignity and respect, and we take the welfare and safety of people in our care very seriously. We will not tolerate any form of discrimination against those who are detained in our immigration removal estate. We keep the level of risk under regular review and will take robust action against anyone who is found not to have behaved appropriately.

In order to effectively support individuals in immigration detention that identify as LGBT+ there is detailed published guidance for all staff working in immigration removal centres (IRCs). Detention Services Orders [2/2016 'Lesbian, gay and bisexual detainees in the detention estate'](#) and [11/2012 'Care and Management of Transsexual Detainees'](#) set out the actions and safeguarding processes that are undertaken in IRCs to ensure that the needs of LGBT+ individuals are identified and appropriately met.

**■ Motor Vehicles: Anti-social Behaviour**

**Mr Jonathan Brash:** [358]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will take steps to tackle the antisocial use of off-road vehicles.

**Mr Jonathan Brash:** [361]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make an assessment of the adequacy of the regulations governing the powers of the police to (a) pursue and (b) detain people using off-road bikes illegally.

**Dame Diana Johnson:**

Tackling anti-social behaviour is a top priority for this Government, and a key part of our Safer Streets Mission to take back our streets.

The police are able to pursue off road bikers but any decision on whether to undertake a pursuit is an operational one, and should take account of the risk factors and proportionality in each situation. The Home Office works closely with the NPCC to understand how the safety of police pursuits can be improved.

The Government will give police the powers they need to take illegal, dangerous and antisocial bikes off the streets for good, so that they will be able to quickly destroy the bikes that they seize from offenders. We will set out more information in due course.

### ■ Overseas Students: Gaza

**Rachael Maskell:**

[97]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of allowing people from Gaza who are studying in the UK to be able to bring their families to the UK.

**Seema Malhotra:**

The Government is determined to secure a ceasefire in Gaza, rapidly increase aid, and the return of all hostages. The government is keeping all existing pathways under review in response to events.

The current position is that Palestinians who wish to join family members in the UK can do so via the existing range of routes available to work, study or settle/join family in the UK.

Any application for a UK visa will be assessed against the requirements of the Immigration Rules. Immediate family members of British citizens and those settled in the UK who wish to come and live in the UK can apply under one of the existing family visa routes.

Students from Gaza seeking to bring dependants to the UK may do so where they meet the relevant requirements of Appendix Student of the immigration rules.

### ■ Prostitution: Gower

**Tonia Antoniazzi:**

[548]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to help reduce demand for trafficking for sexual exploitation in Gower constituency.

**Jess Phillips:**

The trafficking of woman and girls for sexual exploitation is a truly horrific crime. We are determined to safeguard victims and to bring the ruthless perpetrators of this crime to justice.

We are working closely with law enforcement partners and the devolved administrations to tackle the drivers of trafficking for sexual exploitation, including through operational intensifications to target perpetrators and implementing the Online Safety Act 2023 so online companies fulfil their duty to eradicate this exploitation from their sites.

We are committed to making our streets safer by tackling the harm and exploitation associated with prostitution. This Government will work closely with the voluntary and community sector to ensure that those who want to leave are able to.

The Home Office is funding a three-year project by Changing Lives to tackle violence against women and girls online, which includes providing early intervention and support for women and girls at high risk of commercial online exploitation.

**Tonia Antoniazzi:**

[553]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what support the Government is providing to help people in Gower exit prostitution.

**Jess Phillips:**

The trafficking of woman and girls for sexual exploitation is a truly horrific crime. We are determined to safeguard victims and to bring the ruthless perpetrators of this crime to justice.

We are working closely with law enforcement partners and the devolved administrations to tackle the drivers of trafficking for sexual exploitation, including through operational intensifications to target perpetrators and implementing the Online Safety Act 2023 so online companies fulfil their duty to eradicate this exploitation from their sites.

We are committed to making our streets safer by tackling the harm and exploitation associated with prostitution. This Government will work closely with the voluntary and community sector to ensure that those who want to leave are able to.

The Home Office is funding a three-year project by Changing Lives to tackle violence against women and girls online, which includes providing early intervention and support for women and girls at high risk of commercial online exploitation.

## ■ Refugees: Children

**Rachael Maskell:**

[96]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will take steps to enable children brought to the UK by the UNHCR to be reunited with their parents.

**Seema Malhotra:**

Keeping families together as part of the resettlement process is a priority. Children resettled through the UK Resettlement Scheme will usually arrive in the UK with their parents or carers.

As part of UNHCR's assessment, UNHCR will first seek to reunify unaccompanied children with parents or family members within the host region or wherever their family members may be. For unaccompanied children, UNHCR will refer a child to the UK or another participating State should they consider that it would be in the child's best interest to be resettled.

The government provides a safe and legal route to bring families together through its refugee family reunion policy. This allows individuals with protection status in the UK to sponsor their partner or children to reunite with them, provided they formed part of the family unit before their sponsor fled the country of their habitual residence in order to seek protection. We will seek to ensure that this route works effectively.



## ■ Sexual Harassment

**Ms Stella Creasy:**

[66]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the Answer of 19 February 2024 to Question 13568 on Sexual Harassment, when she plans that the Protection from Sex-based Harassment in Public Act 2023 will come into force.

**Jess Phillips:**

Everyone has the right to live in freedom from fear. Women and girls are still facing threats of violence and abuse and we will not stand by and let this continue.

This Government considers tackling violence against women and girls (VAWG) a national emergency, and we are committed to halving levels of VAWG within the next decade.

This includes tackling public sexual harassment, which can have a devastating impact on victims and mean that women do not feel safe on our streets. The Protection from Sex-Based Harassment in Public Act 2023 will make it a specific offence and see perpetrators face up to 2 years in jail. We will confirm next steps imminently.

## ■ Visas: Gaza

**Liz Saville Roberts:**

[543]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make an assessment of the adequacy of routes available to people in Gaza to join families in the UK.

**Seema Malhotra:**

The Government is determined to secure a ceasefire in Gaza, rapidly increase aid, and the return of all hostages. The government is keeping all existing pathways under review in response to events.

We are assisting British nationals and other eligible people to leave Gaza, liaising closely with the Israeli and Egyptian authorities.

The current position is that Palestinians who wish to join family members in the UK can do so via the existing range of routes available to work, study or join family in the UK.

Any application for a UK visa will be assessed against the requirements of the Immigration Rules. Immediate family members of British citizens and those settled in the UK who wish to come and live in the UK can apply under one of the existing family visa routes.

**Liz Saville Roberts:**

[544]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of establishing a family reunification visa scheme for people in Gaza.

**Seema Malhotra:**

Currently, Palestinians who wish to join family members in the UK can do so via the existing range of routes available.

Any application for a UK visa will be assessed against the requirements of the Immigration Rules. Immediate family members of British citizens and those settled in the UK who wish to come and live in the UK can apply under one of the existing family visa routes.

There are also routes available for dependants of those who are in the UK on a work or student route.

Individuals with protection status or settlement on a protection route may sponsor their partner or child (under 18), to join or stay with them in the UK, providing they formed part of the pre-flight family unit before the sponsor fled their country to seek protection.

When the visa application has been received, consideration will be given to compelling, compassionate and exceptional circumstances.

**■ Visas: Married People****Grahame Morris:**[\[51\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of reducing the the minimum income requirement for spousal visa applications.

**Seema Malhotra:**

We keep all policies under review. Any changes will be announced to Parliament in the normal way.

**HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT****■ Community Ownership Fund****Ms Stella Creasy:**[\[63\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether the Community Ownership Fund Round 4 Window 2 will be reopened and restored for applications.

**Alex Norris:**

This government is committed to the communities sector and community ownership through empowering communities to own and run those local assets which mean the most to them. The English Devolution Bill will empower communities with a strong new 'right to buy' beloved community assets, such as empty shops, pubs and community spaces.

We will make further announcements in due course.

## ■ Housing: Construction

**Mrs Kemi Badenoch:** [\[586\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to the speech entitled Chancellor Rachel Reeves is taking immediate action to fix the foundations of our economy, published on 8 July 2024, what estimate she has made of how many houses need to be built in (a) 2023-24, (b) 2024-25, (c) 2025-26, (d) 2026-27 and (e) 2027-28 to meet the target of 1.5 million homes in the next five years.

**Mrs Kemi Badenoch:** [\[587\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to the speech entitled Chancellor Rachel Reeves is taking immediate action to fix the foundations of our economy, published on 8 July 2024, what methodology she plans to use to confirm that the target of 1.5 million homes over the next five years has been met.

**Matthew Pennycook:**

In our manifesto we committed to building 1.5 million homes over the duration of the parliament. We will update Parliament on our progress in the usual manner.

## ■ Housing: Older People

**Dr Rupa Huq:** [\[114\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, when she plans to publish the report of the Older People's Housing Taskforce.

**Matthew Pennycook:**

This Government recognises the need to provide greater choice, quality and security of housing for older people.

No decision has yet been taken with regard to the publication date for this report.

## ■ Planning

**Mrs Kemi Badenoch:** [\[583\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to the speech entitled Chancellor Rachel Reeves is taking immediate action to fix the foundations of our economy, published on 8 July 2024, if she will list the vested interests referenced in the planning system.

**Mrs Kemi Badenoch:** [\[584\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to the speech entitled Chancellor Rachel Reeves is taking immediate action to fix the foundations of our economy, published on 8 July 2024, if she will list the items of red tape referred to.

**Matthew Pennycook:**

Sustained economic growth is the only route to improving the prosperity of our country and the living standards of working people. To achieve it, we need to get Britain building again.

We know the planning system currently acts as a major brake on economic growth and we were clear in our manifesto that we need to change national planning policy to lift it.

The Chancellor's speech sent a strong signal about the principles that will guide our fresh approach and we will make further announcements in due course.

**■ UK Shared Prosperity Fund: Northern Ireland****Claire Hanna:**[\[211\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether her Department plans to maintain funding from the UK Share Prosperity Fund for projects in Northern Ireland after the funding period ends in March 2025.

**Alex Norris:**

My officials are in regular communication with our key stakeholders in Northern Ireland on this issue, as well as with the officials from the Northern Ireland Executive and our UKSPF Partnership Group. We will continue to work closely with our key stakeholders and will use their feedback as we determine our approach going forward.

Decisions regarding funding beyond March 2025 are a matter for the next Spending Review.

**■ Vagrancy Act 1824****Layla Moran:**[\[207\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what her policy is on repealing the Vagrancy Act 1824.

**Rushanara Ali:**

The Government is clear that homelessness is too high and can have a devastating impact on those affected.

We need to take a long term approach and to tackle the different factors that can cause people to become homeless.

We will consider these issues carefully and, working with Mayors and councils across the country, develop a new cross-government strategy to put Britain back on track to ending homelessness. This will include consideration of any relevant legislation.

**JUSTICE****■ Prisoners' Release: Domestic Abuse****Ruth Cadbury:**[\[86\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many prisoners released between October 2023 and June 2024 under the End of Custody Supervised License scheme had been imprisoned for an offence relating to domestic violence.

**Alex Davies-Jones:**

End of Custody Supervised Licence (ECSL) began in October 2023. The number of ECSL releases that took place between 17 October 2023 and 30 June 2024 was 10,083.

The information requested is not held centrally and could only be obtained at a disproportionate cost.

**NORTHERN IRELAND****■ Casement Park: Regeneration****Claire Hanna:**[\[203\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, if he will have discussions with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on funding for the redevelopment of Casement Park.

**Hilary Benn:**

The UK Government is committed to ensuring that EURO 2028 benefits the whole of the United Kingdom. That is why we are working as quickly as possible with all the partners involved in the Casement Park project to assess the options available.

**■ Windsor Framework****Jim Allister:**[\[322\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, with reference to The Windsor Framework (Implementation) Regulations 2024, what functions he exercises direction and control over; and if he will publish the directions issued under those regulations.

**Hilary Benn:**

The Windsor Framework (Implementation) Regulations are intended to assist with the delivery of the arrangements adopted between the UK and EU as set out in the Windsor Framework and, more specifically, the operation of arrangements under the Windsor Framework concerning the movement of goods between Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

The Government does not routinely publish details of discussions with officials working under its direction, whether under the terms of these regulations or otherwise.

**Jim Allister:**[\[381\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, with reference to the policy paper entitled Safeguarding the Union, published on 31 January 2024, whether he plans to implement the policies set out in that paper.

**Hilary Benn:**

The Government is committed to implementing the Windsor Framework in good faith and to taking all necessary steps to protect the UK internal market.

**SCIENCE, INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY**■ **Spaceflight: Liability****Mark Garnier:**[\[61\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, if he will bring forward legislative proposals to limit the liability of licenced commercial spaceflight operators.

**Chris Bryant:**

Guidance already specifies that all spaceflight operator licences issued under the Space Industry Act 2018 limit an operator's liability. This Government will look at opportunities to amend Section 12(2) of the Act to make this clear in legislation under Section 36 of the Act.

**TRANSPORT**■ **A27****Andrew Griffith:**[\[366\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps National Highways is taking to help reduce congestion at the A27 Crossbush junction.

**Lilian Greenwood:**

This government is committed to maintaining and renewing our road networks to ensure they work for all road users and to future investment on the Strategic Road Network. However, as the Chancellor has said, we face the worst set of circumstances since the Second World War. She has committed to presenting to Parliament, before the summer recess, an assessment of the state of the new Government's spending inheritance and has made clear that she will not shrink from difficult choices.

■ **A283: Air Pollution****Andrew Griffith:**[\[364\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether her Department has commissioned research on the level of airborne particulate matter on the A283 in Storrington.

**Lilian Greenwood:**

The Department for Transport has not commissioned research on the level of airborne particulate matter on the A283 in Storrington. However, the Environment Agency does record air quality in Storrington as part of the national air quality monitoring network on behalf of the Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs.

**■ Aviation: Climate Change****Daisy Cooper:**[\[406\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the report by the Climate Change Committee entitled 2023 Progress Report to Parliament, published on 28 June 2023, whether he plans to accept the recommendation that no airport expansions should proceed until a UK-wide capacity management framework is in place to (a) annually assess and (b) control sector (i) CO2 emissions and (ii) non-CO2 effects.

**Mike Kane:**

Decarbonising transport is central to delivery of the UK's cross-economy climate targets and directly supports the Prime Minister's mission to make Britain a clean energy superpower and accelerate our journey to net zero.

Delivering greener transport is one of five priorities the Secretary of State for Transport has set out for the Department for Transport.

The Government will respond to points raised in the Climate Change Committee's annual report to Parliament, published on 18 July 2024, in the autumn.

**■ Bus Services: Concessions****Mr Richard Holden:**[\[459\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of ending the Get around for £2 bus fare scheme this year on bus use (a) nationally, (b) regionally and (c) by operator.

**Simon Lightwood:**

Delivering reliable and affordable public transport services for passengers is one of my top priorities as I know how important this is for passengers and for local growth. The government is urgently considering the most effective and affordable ways to deliver on these objectives.

**■ Bus Services: Finance****Sarah Dyke:**[\[305\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what plans she has for the funding of (a) the Bus Service Improvement Plan and (b) BSIP Phase 2 after the next financial year.

**Simon Lightwood:**

Improving bus services is a key part of this Government's growth mission. We are determined to deliver better services, grow passenger numbers and drive opportunity

to under-served regions. The Government will empower local transport authorities and reform funding by giving local leaders more control and flexibility over bus funding and allowing them to plan ahead to deliver their local transport priorities. We will work closely with local authorities and mayors to understand what is needed to improve and grow their bus networks by learning from their experiences and building on their successes, and we will announce our future bus funding plans in due course.

#### ■ Department for Transport: Finance

**Mr Richard Holden:** [\[460\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether she has made an assessment of the (a) financial impact and (b) potential for delay of her Department's capital projects.

**Lilian Greenwood:**

This government is committed to ensuring that people have access to transport that enables them to travel to the destinations they want to reach and meets their needs. As my Right Honourable Friend the Chancellor has set out, the first step is undertaking an assessment of the spending inheritance from the previous government, and this will be set out before the summer recess.

#### ■ Motor Vehicles: Registration

**Greg Smith:** [\[684\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when she plans to respond to the call for evidence entitled Registering historic, classic, rebuilt vehicles and vehicles converted to electric: call for evidence which closed on 4 July 2024.

**Lilian Greenwood:**

The Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency is currently analysing the responses to the call for evidence and a response will be published in due course.

#### ■ Motorcycles

**Gill Furniss:** [\[639\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent assessment she has made of the adequacy of regulations on motorcycles towing trailers; and whether she plans to (a) review and (b) amend those regulations.

**Lilian Greenwood:**

There has not been a recent assessment of the adequacy of regulations on towing of trailers by motorcycles, and there are no plans to review or amend the Road Vehicles (Construction and Use) Regulations in relation to these matters. Nothing has been identified to the Department to indicate that there is a need to amend Regulations at this time.



## ■ Newquay Cornwall Airport

**Ben Maguire:**

[423]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent discussions her Department has held with Cornwall Council about the future ownership of Cornwall Newquay Airport.

**Mike Kane:**

This government strongly recognises the importance of regional airports and their contribution to economic growth and connectivity. Department for Transport officials regularly engage with both Cornwall Council and Cornwall Newquay Airport and continue to do so during this period of seeking a commercial partner.

## ■ Railways: Seaham

**Grahame Morris:**

[50]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether she has made an assessment of the potential merits of expediting the application by Grand Central Rail for four daily calls at Seaham train station on Grand Central's North East services.

**Simon Lightwood:**

Access to the rail network is ultimately a decision for the ORR in its role as regulator for the rail industry. We will continue to work with ORR through the consultation process.

## ■ Railways: Surrey

**Dr Al Pinkerton:**

[283]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if she will take steps to improve the (a) speed and (b) connectivity of rail services (i) within Surrey Heath constituency and (ii) between Camberley and London.

**Simon Lightwood:**

Department officials work closely with South Western Railway and Network Rail to ensure that any areas of potential improvement that provide a positive outcome for both passenger and taxpayer are regularly considered and are introduced where possible. This includes within the Surrey Heath constituency, as well as between Camberley and London.

## ■ Roads: Safety

**Lisa Smart:**

[269]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when she next plans to update the guidance entitled Strategic road network and the delivery of sustainable development, published on 23 December 2022; and if she will take steps to include new guidance on the placement of fixed speed cameras.

**Lilian Greenwood:**

I can confirm to the honourable member that my department continuously monitors the impact of the circular 'Strategic road network and the delivery of sustainable

development' (Circular 01/2022), published by my department, to consider whether updates are needed. This Circular sets out National Highways' relationship with the planning system. There is guidance on the placing of speed cameras contained in the document 'Using speed and red-light cameras for traffic enforcement: deployment, visibility and signing' (Circular 01/2007), also published by my department.

## ■ Roads: South Shropshire

**Stuart Anderson:**

[319]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what her Department's policy is on using the Local Transport Fund to help fix potholes across South Shropshire constituency; and what progress her Department has made on fixing potholes since the Local Transport Fund's inception.

**Lilian Greenwood:**

The previous Government made a number of funding commitments in the Network North Command Paper and these will be examined closely by this Government in the coming months.

## ■ Vehicles: Contracts

**Mark Pritchard:**

[37]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if she will make an assessment of the potential impact of ensuring that companies that sub-contract vehicles to (a) delivery, (b) utility and (c) construction companies display the livery of (i) their organisation and (ii) the organisation to which they have subcontracted their vehicles on (A) road and (B) public safety.

**Lilian Greenwood:**

There are no requirements in the goods vehicle operator licensing regime for vehicles used by delivery companies, utility companies, or construction companies to have livery displaying the details of the owning business, and the company using the vehicles at the time.

The goods vehicle operator licensing regime applies to vehicles weighing 3.5 tonnes or more used domestically, and those weighing more than 2.5 tonnes used for the purposes of hire and reward in the European Union.

Vehicles subject to operator licensing must have a disc with the operator licence number displayed. This can be checked on GOV.UK at <https://www.gov.uk/find-vehicle-operators> to identify the operator responsible for the operation of the vehicle, and the type of licence held.

**TREASURY****■ Bank Services: British Nationals Abroad****Helen Hayes:**[\[112\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate she has made of the number of UK bank accounts held by UK citizens living in European Union member States that have been closed since the UK's withdrawal from the European Union.

**Helen Hayes:**[\[113\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether she is taking steps to protect access to UK banking services for UK citizens living in European Union member States.

**Tulip Siddiq:**

The Government recognises the importance of a bank account for day-to-day life and understands the frustration of UK citizens living in the EU who have had their accounts closed.

The Government does not hold statistics on account closures for UK citizens living abroad. UK banks take these decisions on closures according to a variety of factors including the local law and regulation in individual countries, an assessment of profitability, or other commercial drivers.

Some UK banks offer specific accounts aimed at citizens living abroad, which may provide an alternative option. People who have had their accounts closed may also wish to refer to MoneyHelper - which offers free, impartial guidance on financial decisions - for further advice on their options.

**■ Banks: Closures****Sarah Dyke:**[\[306\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether she has made an estimate of the number of bank branches that have closed in England in the last 10 years.

**Tulip Siddiq:**

According to consumer website Which?, UK banks and building societies closed over 6000 branches across the UK from January 2015 to May 2024.

The Government recognises the importance of banking to communities and high streets. The Government has therefore committed to work closely with banks to roll out at least 350 banking hubs, which provide individuals and businesses up and down the country with critical cash and banking services.

**■ Development Aid****Layla Moran:**[\[210\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will restore the Official Development Assistance budget to 0.7% of gross national income.

**Darren Jones:**

This Government is committed to restoring ODA spending at the level of 0.7 per cent of GNI as soon as fiscal circumstances allow. The Government will set out its approach to the House in due course.

■ **Employment: Veterans****Andrew Bowie:** [\[499\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether it is her policy to provide National Insurance relief for eligible employers recruiting veterans in their first civilian role after leaving military service.

**James Murray:**

The National Insurance contributions (NICs) relief for veterans means that businesses pay no employer NICs on salaries of up to £50,270 for one year of a veteran's first civilian employment. Businesses can claim the relief until April 2025.

■ **Import Duties: Northern Ireland****Jim Allister:** [\[378\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, for what reason goods imported to Northern Ireland from (a) China and (b) other non-EU countries are charged a higher third country duty tariff than goods imported from those countries to Great Britain.

**James Murray:**

Under the terms of the Windsor Framework, goods being brought into Northern Ireland from non-EU countries attract customs duty at the relevant EU rate if they are deemed 'at risk' of entering the EU. In some circumstances those duties can be waived or the difference between the EU and UK rate reimbursed. If the goods are not regarded as 'at risk' of entering the EU they will attract customs duty at UK rates.

■ **Private Education: VAT****Sarah Green:** [\[261\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps she plans to take to ensure that the needs of children receiving specific provision for SEND within the private school system are taken into account as part of any consultation to introduce VAT on fees.

**Sarah Green:** [\[262\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what plans she has for consultation of key stakeholders that may be affected by the introduction of VAT on private school fees.

**Richard Fuller:** [\[43\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether the Government plans to impose VAT on private school fees for any part of the academic school year commencing in September 2024.

**Gregory Stafford:**[\[588\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will make it her policy to not charge VAT on independent schools.

**James Murray:**

The Government is committed to breaking down barriers to opportunity, ensuring every child has access to high-quality education, which is why we have made the tough decision to end tax breaks for private schools. This will raise revenue for essential public services, including investing in the state education system.

The Prime Minister has been clear that if a child has an Education, Health and Care Plan that requires them to attend a private school because their needs cannot be met in the state sector, they will not feel an impact from VAT being charged on fees. The Chancellor has also been clear that changes will not come into force until 2025.

Further details on this policy will be set out in due course. The Government engages with a wide range of stakeholders with an interest in Government policy, including VAT, as part of the policy development and implementation process as a matter of course.

**Public Expenditure: Northern Ireland****Jim Allister:**[\[336\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what bids have been submitted by the Northern Ireland Executive Department of Finance for 2024-25 based on the operation of the (a) Windsor Framework and (b) Windsor Framework (Implementation) Regulations 2024; and what available funding has been confirmed for implementation of the Windsor Framework arrangements for 2024-25.

**Darren Jones:**

As set out in the Statement of Funding Policy, the UK Government has committed to fund the direct costs associated with reaching the required level of compliance to implement its obligations under the Windsor Framework.

The provision under this commitment is set out in the Northern Ireland Office's Main Estimates 2024-25 Memoranda.

**Retirement: Public Sector****Mr Richard Holden:**[\[455\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what compulsory retirement ages exist in the public sector; what changes have been made to compulsory retirement ages in the public sector in the last ten years; and whether the Government plans to (a) introduce and (b) change mandatory retirement ages in the public sector.

**Darren Jones:**

The judiciary have a compulsory retirement age of 75, which was increased from age 70 by the Public Service Pensions and Judicial Offices Act 2022.

For the Armed Forces, each service has responsibility for setting retirement ages but in all cases, there is discretion to extend service beyond this age.

There are no compulsory retirement ages in the NHS, Teachers, Police, Fire, Local Government or Civil Service public service workforces.

The Police previously had a compulsory retirement age of 60 for constables, sergeants and inspectors, and a compulsory retirement age of 65 for higher ranks, although officers could serve beyond these ages with agreement. The Police Pension Scheme Regulations 2015 (SI 2015, No.445) introduced new pension arrangements from 1 April 2015 that no longer provide compulsory retirement ages.

The government has no plans to introduce or change mandatory retirement ages for the public service workforces.

### ■ UK Internal Trade: Northern Ireland

**Jim Allister:** [\[379\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what the (a) volume and (b) value was of (i) goods and (ii) other materials sent from Great Britain to Northern Ireland in each of the last five years.

**James Murray:**

Data on goods moved into Northern Ireland from Great Britain can be obtained from the official statistics produced on the GOV.UK website.

HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC) has published a [Summary of movements of goods into Northern Ireland from Great Britain covering 2023](#). Details for [2022](#) and [2021](#) are also available.

HMRC do not have details prior to 2021 as this information was not collected before EU-Exit .

## WORK AND PENSIONS

### ■ Children: Maintenance

**Sarah Green:** [\[242\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether she plans to review the Child Maintenance Service's treatment of income from foreign assets held by paying parents.

**Andrew Western:**

Income, including income from assets as well as earned income, needs to be declared to the UK tax authorities and subject to UK tax in order to be included in the maintenance calculation.

The Government is now considering next steps on the child maintenance service.

**Sarah Green:** [\[243\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the effectiveness of the Child Maintenance Service in securing maintenance from paying parents.

**Andrew Western:**

A principle of child maintenance is to increase levels of cooperation between separated parents and encourage parents to meet their responsibilities to provide their children with financial support. Where a family-based child maintenance arrangement is not suitable the Child Maintenance Service offers a statutory scheme for those parents who need it.

The Government is dedicated to ensuring parents meet their obligations to children and the Child Maintenance Service will do everything within its powers to make sure parents comply. Where parents fail to pay their child maintenance, the Service will not hesitate to use its enforcement powers, including deductions from earnings orders, removal of driving licences, disqualification from holding a passport, and committal to prison. The Service is committed to using these powers fairly and in the best interests of children and separated families.

Statistics on child maintenance arrangements and collections are part of the CMS quarterly statistics published on gov.uk in tables 4, 5 and 6 of the National Tables. The below information is from the latest publication for data up to March 2024.

- In the 12 months up to March 2024 the child maintenance service arranged £1.4 billion child maintenance, an increase from £1.2 billion during the previous 12 months.
- 61% of all CMS arrangements use Direct Pay, with 37% using Collect and Pay and just over one billion pounds was arranged through the Direct Pay service in the last 12 months (we do not measure the compliance of Paying Parents on the Direct Pay service).
- Since March 2023, the percentage of parents paying something towards their maintenance through collect & pay has increased to 69% from 65%.
- In the period April 2023 to March 2024 £316.8 million was arranged through the Collect & Pay service:
  - o £224.9 million was paid
  - o £91.9 million was unpaid

#### ■ **Disposable Income: Cowdenbeath and Kirkcaldy**

**Melanie Ward:** [\[546\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what the average disposable income was in Cowdenbeath and Kirkcaldy constituency in each of the last 10 years.

**Alison McGovern:**

The Department for Work and Pensions produces household income statistics on both a before housing costs and after housing costs basis, published in its Households Below Average Income publication. However, these are not available at constituency level: [Households below average income \(HBAI\) statistics - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/households-below-average-income)

The Office for National Statistics produces household disposable income statistics. However, these are also not available at constituency level. The latest regional gross disposable household income statistics can be found here: [Regional gross disposable household income, UK - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://ons.gov.uk/government/statistics/regional-gross-disposable-household-income)

**■ Jobcentres: Rural Areas**

**Jim Shannon:** [84]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make an assessment of the sustainability of job centres in rural areas.

**Alison McGovern:**

We have interpreted 'sustainability' to mean the viability of Jobcentres in rural areas.

DWP has a network of 634 established Jobcentres across the UK. The location of Jobcentres needs to balance customer demand, the range of services it needs to offer and operational efficiency.

If a Jobcentre is relocated, the Department fully assesses the likely impact, including completion of an Equality Assessment.

We will be looking to work with a range of partners, including local areas to further develop and deliver our manifesto commitments which will inform wider thinking on the delivery of employment support.

**■ Poverty: Cowdenbeath and Kirkcaldy**

**Melanie Ward:** [545]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many people were living in (a) relative and (b) absolute poverty in Cowdenbeath and Kirkcaldy constituency in each of the last 10 years.

**Alison McGovern:**

Statistics for the total number of people living in relative and absolute poverty are not available at a constituency level.

Statistics on the total number of people in living in relative and absolute poverty both before and after housing costs at regional level are published annually in the Households Below Average Income statistics [Households below average income \(HBAI\) statistics - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/households-below-average-income)

Statistics on the number of Children living in absolute and relative poverty per constituency are published annually in the "Children in low income families: local area



statistics" publication and can be found in tabs "5\_Relative\_ParIC" and "6\_Absolute\_ParIC". These are only produced on a before housing cost basis.

A link to these statistics can be found here: [Children in low income families: local area statistics 2014 to 2023 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/children-in-low-income-families-local-area-statistics-2014-to-2023)

## ■ State Retirement Pensions: Women

**Claire Hanna:**

[212]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman's report into women's State Pension age changes, published on 21 March 2024, if she will take steps to introduce compensation for women affected by changes to the State Pension age.

**Emma Reynolds:**

As a newly formed Government we will need time to review and consider the Ombudsman's report along with the evidence provided during the investigation.

This Government respects the work of the Ombudsman. Now the election has concluded we need to consider the views that have been expressed on all sides.

The issues outlined in the report are significant and complex, as such they require serious deliberation. Once this work has been undertaken, the Government/we will be in a position to outline its approach.

**Blair McDougall:**

[276]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, when she plans to respond to the report by the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman entitled Women's State Pension age: our findings on injustice and associated issues, published on 21 March 2024.

**Emma Reynolds:**

As a newly formed Government we will need time to review and consider the Ombudsman's report along with the evidence provided during the investigation.

This Government respects the work of the Ombudsman. Now the election has concluded we need to consider the views that have been expressed on all sides.

The issues outlined in the report are significant and complex, as such they require serious deliberation. Once this work has been undertaken, the Government/we will be in a position to outline its approach.

**Manuela Perteghella:**

[302]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make it her policy to bring forward legislative proposals for a compensation scheme for women who are (a) born in the 1950s and (b) not notified of changes to the age at which they could claim the State Pension.

**Emma Reynolds:**

As a newly formed Government we will need time to review and consider the Ombudsman's report along with the evidence provided during the investigation.

This Government respects the work of the Ombudsman. Now the election has concluded we need to consider the views that have been expressed on all sides.

The issues outlined in the report are significant and complex, as such they require serious deliberation. Once this work has been undertaken, the Government/we will be in a position to outline its approach.

**David Mundell:****[33]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, when she plans to respond to the report by the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman entitled Women's State Pension age: our findings on injustice and associated issues, published on 21 March 2024.

**Emma Reynolds:**

As a newly formed Government we will need time to review and consider the Ombudsman's report along with the evidence provided during the investigation.

This Government respects the work of the Ombudsman. Now the election has concluded we need to consider the views that have been expressed on all sides.

The issues outlined in the report are significant and complex, as such they require serious deliberation. Once this work has been undertaken, the Government/we will be in a position to outline its approach.

## WRITTEN STATEMENTS

### BUSINESS AND TRADE

#### ■ Update on Harland and Wolff

**Secretary of State for Business and Trade, and President of the Board of Trade (Jonathan Reynolds):** [\[HCWS15\]](#)

In recent weeks there has been media speculation over the status of Harland and Wolff and the nature of its ongoing discussions with the Government, upon which we have been unable to comment due to the commercially sensitive nature of those discussions. I am now pleased to be able to address the subject and update members of the House. My officials have been working with all parties extensively for a number of weeks to ensure an outcome for Harland and Wolff that delivers shipbuilding and fabrication across the UK and protects jobs.

After a detailed review of an application by Harland and Wolff for a UK Export Finance Export Development Guarantee ('EDG'), His Majesty's Government has decided not to proceed with the provision of a guarantee. This decision was based on a comprehensive assessment of the company's financial profile and the criteria set out in our risk policies. We have also decided not to provide any form of emergency liquidity funding. While such a decision is not easy, it is my assessment, following extensive engagement by my officials with market players, that HM Government funding would not necessarily secure our objectives and there is a very substantial risk that taxpayer money would be lost. The Government believes, in this instance, that the market is best placed to resolve the commercial matters faced by Harland and Wolff.

A statement was published on 19 July by Harland and Wolff indicating that the company has commenced discussions with its existing creditors, Riverstone Credit Management LLC, to secure the additional funding it needs. This should allow the business to continue pursuing its short- and longer-term objectives, in which the Government continues to take an interest. In all our engagements with them, Riverstone Credit Management LLC has recognised the importance of the assets at Harland and Wolff as well as the people who work there, showing a desire to find pragmatic solutions that support HM Government objectives.

Harland and Wolff indicates that these discussions on new financing should conclude in the next few days. This will involve the current CEO taking an immediate leave of absence and the onboarding of new management with a focus on recapitalisation and ensuring sustainable finances.

I know the recent media reports will have been of concern to workers across Harland and Wolff's sites, as well as the wider supply chain. I am working closely with my colleagues the Secretaries of State for Northern Ireland and Scotland, and Ministers are also engaging with the leaders of the Northern Ireland Executive and Scottish Government, alongside the local Members of Parliament, to support a positive outcome for all affected sites across the UK. My ministerial team have also reached out to the Trade Unions

represented across the four sites to reassure them that the steps set out by the company appear to me to hold by far the best prospects of ensuring business continuity, job security and the delivery of important existing contracts.

My officials will continue to work closely with those in the Ministry of Defence and the National Shipbuilding Office on the Fleet Solid Support contract, for which Harland and Wolff remains a key subcontractor. Officials in the Ministry of Defence are also well engaged with the prime contractor, Navantia, UK to monitor delivery of this important contract.

I welcome potential new financing for Harland and Wolff and the appointment of new management and wish them all the best in their continued efforts to build up this business.

Shipbuilding supports 42,600 jobs nationwide, adds £2.4 billion to the economy every single year, and is an important pillar of our civil and defence industrial base. We are committed to supporting vibrant and successful shipbuilding and fabrication industries, and our skilled workforces who deliver them, in all parts of the UK, in which Harland and Wolff has its role to play.

## EDUCATION

### ■ Skills reform update

**Secretary of State for Education and Minister for Women and Equalities (Bridget Phillipson):** [\[HCWS14\]](#)

I am today announcing the creation of Skills England in shadow form, before it is established as an arm's length body within the next twelve months.

The first mission of our new government is to grow the economy, and for that we need a skills system that breaks down barriers to opportunity and delivers for our businesses.

Skill England will build stronger, more coherent connections between skills partners including employers, education and training providers, unions and combined authorities. We need a stronger, more widespread, and more data-driven understanding of the skills needed to deliver regional and national industrial priorities. Where skills gaps are identified, we need the system to support more rapid development and delivery of high-quality training opportunities which employers and learners understand and can access.

Skills England will help ensure we have the highly trained workforce needed to deliver the national, regional and local skills needs of the next decade, aligned with the Government's forthcoming Industrial Strategy. This effort will be central to enabling delivery of the Government's growth mission, filling skills gaps in key industries.

Skills England will convene employers, education and training providers, unions, experts, combined authorities and national government to:

- Develop a single picture of national skills needs, working with industry, other government departments (OGDs), the Migration Advisory Committee (MAC),

unions and the Industrial Strategy Council to build and maintain a comprehensive assessment of current and future skills needs.

- Identify the priority areas for skills training, including the training for which the new Growth and Skills Levy will be accessible – in doing so, it will ensure that businesses are able to use their skills funding more flexibly and effectively, for which so many have been calling.
- Play a crucial role in ensuring that the national and regional skills systems are aligned in meeting skills needs, in constituencies the length and breadth of England.

Skills England will support employers across the country to shape skills training, and it will identify levers to encourage them to invest in upskilling their workforces. In doing so, it will build on the contribution that thousands of businesses already make to grow the pool of talent from which they can draw.

The functions which currently sit with the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (IfATE) will transfer to Skills England, as part of the new organisation's broader remit. IfATE will continue its important work in the interim as the transition of functions to Skills England is finalised. A permanent board, Chair and CEO will be appointed in due course, to provide Skills England with the best possible leadership.

For us to deliver on the forthcoming Industrial Strategy and the Government's Missions, we will need to boost skills and unlock economic growth in all parts of the United Kingdom, and so Skills England will also engage and work closely with the devolved administrations.

## TRANSPORT

### ■ Sustainable Aviation Update

**Secretary of State for Transport (Louise Haigh):**

[\[HCWS16\]](#)

Sustainable aviation fuel (SAF) is an important part of the strategy to decarbonise air travel. It can be used in existing aircraft, and it emits on average 70 per cent fewer greenhouse gas emissions than using fossil jet fuel on a life cycle basis.

Developing, using and producing SAF will help drive our missions to kickstart economic growth and make Britain a clean energy superpower, delivering the Government's manifesto commitment to secure the UK aviation industry's long-term future, including through promoting sustainable aviation fuels.

Today, in addition to the announcement we have already made in the King's Speech on 17<sup>th</sup> July that a Bill will be introduced to support sustainable aviation fuel production, we are taking a further important step in confirming that, subject to Parliamentary approval, we will introduce a SAF Mandate to start from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2025. We will be one of the first countries in the world to legislate in this way. We are also today confirming the full policy detail of the Mandate.

Today's announcement is good for aviation, the environment and for the UK overall: sustainable aviation fuel production is estimated to add over £1.8 billion to the economy and over 10,000 jobs across the country while supporting decarbonisation. The SAF Mandate will drive demand for SAF in the UK, deliver emission reductions up to 2.7 MtCO<sub>2</sub>e in 2030 and up to 6.3 MtCO<sub>2</sub>e in 2040 and provide investor confidence that the UK will be a place to produce, use and supply SAF.

**SAF Mandate:**

The SAF Mandate will start in 2025 at 2% of total UK jet fuel demand, increase on a linear basis to 10% in 2030 and then to 22% in 2040. From 2040, the obligation will remain at 22% until there is greater certainty regarding SAF supply.

The Mandate will encourage the innovation of advanced fuels that can generate greater emission reductions and the diversification of feedstocks to reduce dependencies on scarce resources, by including in the Mandate:

- a cap on the feedstocks used in the hydroprocessed esters and fatty acids (HEFA) process, but not until other types of SAF are also commercially viable to recognise the important part that HEFA SAF will play in the 2020s. HEFA supply will not be limited under the Mandate for the first two years, fall to 71% in 2030 and still contribute 35% in 2040.
- a separate obligation on power to liquid fuels from 2028 that reaches 3.5% of total jet fuel demand in 2040.

The Mandate will include a buy-out mechanism for both the main and power to liquid obligations to incentivise supply while protecting consumers where suppliers are unable to secure a supply of SAF. These will be set at £4.70 and £5.00 per litre of fuel, respectively. These provide a significant incentive for fuel suppliers to supply SAF into the market rather than pay the buy-out. They also set a maximum price for the scheme, and therefore deliver emission reductions at an acceptable cost. The plan includes a review mechanism to help minimise the impact on ticket fares for passengers.

We will also work closely across Government on feedstock availability to ensure that feedstocks are used in a sustainable and productive way.

**SAF Revenue Certainty Mechanism (RCM)**

The Bill announced on 17<sup>th</sup> July will introduce a revenue certainty mechanism for SAF producers who are looking to invest in new plants in the UK. This builds on the SAF Mandate, which will create demand for SAF by setting targets on fuel suppliers to use a proportion of SAF. This new sector will create jobs and growth opportunities in the UK, help secure a supply of SAF for UK airlines, and enhance energy security.

There are a number of SAF projects being developed across the UK. Bringing in a revenue certainty mechanism will help to reduce risk, giving investors the confidence they need to invest in UK SAF plants. It will increase the likelihood SAF plants will be built in the UK, thereby securing a supply of SAF for the UK aviation sector and supporting the delivery of the SAF Mandate.

These two SAF initiatives will drive the government's mission-driven plan to kick start economic growth and make Britain a clean energy superpower.