



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 25 July 2024 and the information is correct at the time of publication (06:39 P.M., 25 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****■ Arms Trade: Export Controls****Rachael Maskell:**[\[633\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what steps his Department is taking to assess impact of international humanitarian law on arms exports.

Mr Douglas Alexander:

The Foreign Secretary met with President Netanyahu in Israel on 14 July and pushed for an immediate ceasefire, the release of all hostages, the upholding of international law, and a rapid increase of aid into Gaza. When it comes to arms exports, this Government will uphold our international legal obligations, ensuring that international law is fully factored into decisions on arms exports in line with the UK's Strategic Export Licensing Criteria. The Government will now review the advice available and come to a considered decision. The Government will update Parliament as appropriate once this decision has been made.

■ Arms Trade: Israel**Claire Hanna:**[\[200\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what steps he plans to take to review arms sales to Israel.

Mr Douglas Alexander:

When it comes to arms exports, this Government will uphold our international legal obligations, ensuring that international law is fully factored into decisions, in line with the UK's Strategic Export Licensing Criteria. The Foreign Secretary met with President Netanyahu in Israel on 14 July and pushed for an immediate ceasefire, the release of all hostages, the upholding of international law, and a rapid increase of aid into Gaza.

The Government will now review the advice available and come to a considered decision. The Government will update Parliament as appropriate once this decision has been made.

Rachael Maskell:[\[634\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, if he will make it his policy to place a moratorium on arms exports to Israel, in the context of the conflict between Israel and Gaza.

Mr Douglas Alexander:

The Foreign Secretary met with President Netanyahu in Israel on 14 July and pushed for an immediate ceasefire, the release of all hostages, the upholding of international law, and a rapid increase of aid into Gaza. When it comes to arms exports, this

Government will uphold our international legal obligations, ensuring that international law is fully factored into decisions on arms exports in line with the UK's Strategic Export Licensing Criteria. The Government will now review the advice available and come to a considered decision. The Government will update Parliament as appropriate once this decision has been made.

■ Exports: Staffordshire

Adam Jogee:

[\[467\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what plans he has to help increase exports from (a) Newcastle-under-Lyme constituency and (b) Staffordshire to European countries.

Gareth Thomas:

We as a government will work to remove unnecessary barriers to trade with the EU.

UK businesses can access DBT's export support services via Great.gov.uk. This comprises a digital self-serve offer and our wider network of support, including Export Champions, the Export Academy, our International Markets network, and UK Export Finance. Alongside this, our international trade advisers use their extensive experience of exporting and knowledge of the needs of SMEs in their sectors and regions to provide one-to-one tailored support to businesses across the UK. The Department are exploring options to improve our export support offer to UK businesses.

CABINET OFFICE

■ Government Departments: Aviation

Mr Richard Holden:

[\[462\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether he has (a) had discussions and (b) taken advice on the use of Government aircraft.

Nick Thomas-Symonds:

The principles around ministerial travel are long-established and have been in place for successive administrations. Ministers take advice on individual travel arrangements as necessary.

CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

■ Gambling: Taxation

Tonia Antoniazzi:

[\[664\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, whether her Department plans to bring forward proposals for a statutory gambling levy.

Stephanie Peacock:

His Majesty's Government recognises the changes to the gambling landscape since 2005 and that while millions of people gamble without experiencing problems, for some it becomes an addiction with serious consequences.

As stated in the Government's manifesto, we are absolutely committed to reducing gambling-related harm. We will ensure responsible gambling and strengthen protections for those at risk.

■ **Lotteries****Tonia Antoniazzi:** [663]

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what data her Department holds on the funding raised for good causes by (a) the National Lottery and (b) society lotteries in each of the last five years.

Stephanie Peacock:

The National Lottery has raised over £49 billion for good causes since 1994. In the last five years, over £6 billion of funding and 120,000 grants were delivered by distributor bodies.

The National Lottery grants database which details the allocations made, is publically available at <https://nationallottery.dcms.gov.uk/charts>.

Data regarding society lottery good causes funding is updated annually by the Gambling Commission. In 2022/23, society lotteries raised £421.72 million for good causes.

■ **Lotteries: Sales****Tonia Antoniazzi:** [661]

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, if she will take steps to remove the annual sale limits for society lotteries.

Tonia Antoniazzi: [662]

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, whether her Department has received representations from charities on annual sale limits for society lotteries.

Stephanie Peacock:

Society lotteries are a vital fundraising tool for many charities, community groups, sports clubs and other non-commercial organisations.

In 2020, the annual sales limit was increased from £10 million to £50 million as part of a wider package of changes to society lottery limits.

My department continues to work closely with the Gambling Commission to monitor society lotteries and the charities they support.

■ Prize Money

Tonia Antoniazzi: [\[665\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, whether her Department plans to ensure that commercial free prizes draws are free to enter by digital means.

Stephanie Peacock:

Prize competitions and free prize draws are not subject to statutory regulatory control under the Gambling Act 2005. However, they must comply with the requirement in the Act to offer a free entry route for participation by post and/or offer paid entries online, in order to avoid being considered as an illegal lottery. Whilst the Gambling Commission has no regulatory responsibilities for these products, it does monitor the boundary between them and lotteries.

Prize draw operators must also comply with relevant consumer protection legislation.

DEFENCE

■ Aircraft Carriers: Procurement

Graeme Downie: [\[775\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the status is of the contract for six new landing and assault craft for the Royal Marines; and when he expects those craft to enter service.

Maria Eagle:

The Multi-Role Support Ship Programme is currently in its concept phase. The Royal Navy and Defence Equipment and Support Teams are currently conducting detailed work on requirements, design, and procurement strategy, informed by early industry engagement. The focus is on setting the programme up for success with work ongoing to ensure affordability.

The Multi-Role Support Ship is anticipated to be in service in the early 2030s. It is too early to confirm details such as the precise in-service dates.

■ Armed Forces: Conditions of Employment

James Cartlidge: [\[191\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether he plans to respond to the review entitled Agency and Agility: Incentivising people in a new era - a review of UK Armed Forces incentivisation, published on 19 June 2023.

James Cartlidge: [\[581\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the Haythornthwaite Review of UK Armed Forces Incentivisation, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of developing "people value propositions" for housing and welfare service.

AI Carns:

People form the core of our Defence capability and we recognise the urgent need to transform the way we support all Defence's people and their families, from recruitment through to retirement and beyond. The new Government has met with Rick Haythornthwaite to explain our approach and emphasise our commitment to meeting the challenges set out in his generational review. The publication of a formal response to the report is now a priority.

The core principles and recommendations of the review will be central to the recently launched Strategic Defence Review. This will require a new and novel approach to determining the requirements for the UK's Defence and the recommendations within the Haythornthwaite Review of UK Armed Forces Incentivisation (HRAFI) are already shaping how we deliver this.

As a core principle of the HRAFI report, the importance of developing a 'People Value Proposition' approach is fully accepted. Consequently, work is underway to map and articulate the 'whole' landscape of tangible and intangible elements of the 'Offer', 'Reward' and 'Fulfilment'. Housing and Welfare are part of this work, as are all other areas that influence how valued and supported our people and their families feel.

■ Armed Forces: Housing

James Cartlidge: [\[156\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to page 5 of the report of the Kerslake Commission on Armed Forces Accommodation entitled Homes unfit for heroes, what estimate he has made of the amount of funding required over this Parliament to comprehensively restore and sustain the provision of service accommodation.

James Cartlidge: [\[167\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will make an assessment of the potential implications for his Department's policies of the report entitled Homes unfit for heroes: The poor condition of armed forces accommodation and what needs to change, published by the The Kerslake Commission on Armed Forces Housing in April 2024.

James Cartlidge: [\[183\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the report by the Kerslake Commission on Armed Forces Housing entitled Homes unfit for heroes: The poor condition of armed forces accommodation and what needs to change, published in April 2024.

James Cartlidge: [\[188\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether he has made an assessment of the adequacy of trends in the level of service family accommodation funding since 2022.

James Cartlidge: [\[196\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the statement in the report of the Kerslake Commission on

Armed Forces Accommodation that decisions on repairs and maintenance for Service Family Accommodation and Single Living Accommodation are too top-down.

James Cartlidge: [197]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to recommendation 1 of the report of the Kerslake Commission on Armed Forces Accommodation, whether he plans to commission an independent survey to (a) review service accommodation and (b) determine steps required to ensure all service accommodation meets standards set by his Department.

James Cartlidge: [562]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the Kerslake Commission on Armed Forces Housing's report entitled Homes unfit for heroes: The poor condition of armed forces accommodation and what needs to change published by, published in April 2024, what plans he has to quickly increase funding for Service Family Accommodation and Single Living Accommodation repair services.

James Cartlidge: [578]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to page 37 of the report by the Kerslake Commission on Armed Forces Housing entitled Homes unfit for heroes: The poor condition of armed forces accommodation and what needs to change, published in April 2024, whether he plans to introduce a preventative maintenance regime.

James Cartlidge: [579]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the potential implications for his policies of Recommendation 8 of the report by the Kerslake Commission on Armed Forces Housing entitled Homes unfit for heroes: The poor condition of armed forces accommodation and what needs to change, published in April 2024.

James Cartlidge: [580]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the potential implications for his policies of Recommendation 5 of the report by the Kerslake Commission on Armed Forces Housing entitled Homes unfit for heroes: The poor condition of armed forces accommodation and what needs to change, published in April 2024.

James Cartlidge: [582]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the potential implications for his policies of Recommendation 2 of the report by the Kerslake Commission on Armed Forces Housing entitled Homes unfit for heroes: The poor condition of armed forces accommodation and what needs to change, published in April 2024.

Maria Eagle:

The Kerslake Commission on Armed Forces Housing was commissioned by the current Secretary of State and launched in February 2023. The Commission was

asked to independently assess the condition of Ministry of Defence (MOD) accommodation and gather evidence to determine what changes are required to deliver lasting improvements.

The Commission's report –titled Homes Unfit for Heroes: the poor condition of Armed Forces accommodation and what needs to change – found that levels of satisfaction with accommodation among Service personnel have fallen to a record low; that poor housing conditions and poor housing services are cited as major reasons for a fall in overall satisfaction with Service life; and that this is affecting morale, recruitment and retention.

The Government has inherited an accommodation provision which is unfit for our Armed Forces. Improving the standard of military housing is a priority for this Government. The MOD is now considering the recommendations of the Kerslake Commission report.

In the King's speech the Government announced the establishment of an Armed Forces Commissioner as a first step in improving service life. The Commissioner will be a direct point of contact for Serving personnel and their families to raise issues which impact Service life, including housing.

James Cartlidge: [\[171\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what role the Armed Forces Commissioner will play in delivering his Department's response to the Kerslake Commission.

Luke Pollard:

The new Government is grateful for the work and contribution of the Kerslake Commission. Improving the condition of military housing is a priority for this Government. The Armed Forces Commissioner's remit will include all aspects of Service life which are raised by Service personnel and their family, including Service accommodation, however, responsibility for implementation and improvements to Service accommodation is for the Ministry of Defence.

James Cartlidge: [\[179\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much his Department plans to spend on service family accommodation in each financial year of this Parliament.

Maria Eagle:

For Financial Year 2024-25, the funding allocated to the Department for Service Family Accommodation is circa £439 million.

The funding allocation beyond Financial Year 2024-25 is not yet known.

■ Armed Forces: Public Appointments

James Cartlidge: [\[172\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what his planned timetable is for establishing an Armed Forces Commissioner.

James Cartlidge: [173]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, when he expects the new Armed Forces Commissioner to be appointed.

James Cartlidge: [175]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what (a) salary, (b) pension and (c) relevant benefits does he expect the Armed Forces Commissioner to receive.

James Cartlidge: [176]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether the office of the Armed Forces Commissioner will be located within the Ministry of Defence Main Building on Whitehall.

James Cartlidge: [177]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many staff will support the Armed Forces Commissioner; and what the annual cost of those staff will be.

James Cartlidge: [178]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, where the Armed Forces Commissioner will sit in his Department's command structure; whether the Commissioner will be a military role; and what grade they will be.

James Cartlidge: [180]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps he plans to take to ensure that the Armed Forces Commissioner (a) is accountable to Parliament and (b) operates in a transparent manner.

James Cartlidge: [559]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will take steps to review the resources and powers available to the Service Complaints Ombudsman for the Armed Forces.

Luke Pollard:

The Armed Forces Commissioner is the first in a series of steps that will be taken by the new Government to improve Service life and renew the contract between the nation and those who serve.

The Armed Forces Commissioner will be a direct point of contact for Service personnel and their families to raise issues which impact on service life.

The Armed Forces Commissioner will have the power to investigate individual complaints and to proactively launch independent reviews into issues affecting Service personnel and their families more widely, and to lay those reports before Parliament. The new Commissioner will have a right of access to information, sites and personnel in order to fulfil their role. The Commissioner will incorporate the functions currently undertaken by the Service Complaints Ombudsman.

The Armed Forces Commissioner will strengthen Parliamentary oversight of issues facing our Armed Forces personnel and their families. The Commissioner will be

subject to pre-appointment scrutiny by the Defence Select Committee and will report directly to Parliament, not ministers, via an annual report.

There will be opportunities to debate all aspects of the role, remit and operation of Armed Forces Commissioner when the Government brings forward the Legislation outlined in the King's Speech. Details on budget, pay, grade, staffing and office location will be set out in due course.

Jim Shannon:

[72]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what will be the (a) role and (b) remit of the proposed new Armed Forces Commissioner.

Luke Pollard:

The Armed Forces Commissioner will be a strong independent champion of our Armed Forces and their families, to improve service life. The new Commissioner will be a direct point of contact for service personnel and their families to raise issues impacting service life. They will have the power to proactively launch independent reviews into issues affecting Service personnel and their families more widely, and to lay those reports before Parliament. The Commissioner will also incorporate the functions currently undertaken by the Service Complaints Ombudsman

The Armed Forces Commissioner will strengthen Parliamentary oversight of issues facing our Armed Forces personnel and their families. The Commissioner will be subject to pre-appointment scrutiny by the Defence Select Committee and will report directly to Parliament, not Ministers, via an annual report.

There will be opportunities to fully debate the role and remit of the Armed Forces Commissioner when the Government brings forward the relevant Legislation referenced in the King's Speech.

Tim Roca:

[778]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what his planned timetable is for the appointment of the Armed Forces Commissioner.

Luke Pollard:

The Armed Forces Commissioner is the first in a series of steps that will be taken by the new Government to improve Service life and renew the contract between the nation and those who serve.

The Armed Forces Commissioner Bill was included in the King's Speech and will be published in due course.

■ Armed Forces: Reviews

James Cartlidge:

[558]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to his Department's press release entitled New era for defence: government launches root and branch review of UK Armed Forces, published on 16 July 2024, how his Department defines a NATO-first defence policy.

Luke Pollard:

NATO is the cornerstone of UK and Euro-Atlantic security and our commitment to the Alliance is unshakeable. The UK will continue to make a leading contribution to NATO through our commitment of forces and capabilities, contribution to NATO exercises and operations and defence investment. Further details of our approach will be set out in the Strategic Defence Review.

Armed Forces: Visas**James Cartlidge:**[\[121\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what his Department's timetable is for ending visa fees for non-UK dependents who have served four or more years in the armed forces.

Al Carns:

This Government is committed to scrapping visa fees for non-UK veterans who have served our country for four or more years, and their dependants.

The Ministry of Defence has started work with the Home Office to deliver this manifesto commitment.

Army: York**Rachael Maskell:**[\[632\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will take steps to ensure that the Army continue to have a presence in the city of York.

Luke Pollard:

The Army remains committed to retaining an Army Regular, Reserve and Cadets presence in and around York in Yeomanry and Worsley Barracks, Queen Elizabeth Barracks and Towthorpe Lines.

AWACS: Procurement**Luke Akehurst:**[\[432\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether he plans to increase from three to five the number of E-7 Wedgetail airborne early warning and control aircraft on order for the Royal Air Force.

Maria Eagle:

There are currently no plans to order further E-7 Wedgetail aircraft for the Royal Air Force.

The upcoming Strategic Defence Review will consider the threats Britain faces, the capabilities needed to meet them, the state of UK Armed Forces and the resources available.

■ Bomb Disposal: Procurement

James Cartlidge: [\[161\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what he plans to continue with the procurement of T4 bomb disposal robots.

Maria Eagle:

I am answering the question as 'to ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether he plans to continue with the procurement of T4 bomb disposal robots.'

The Ministry of Defence is continuing its procurement of the T4 bomb disposal robot through Defence Equipment and Support, with the first of 50 T4 units being delivered by the end of 2024.

■ Boxer Vehicles

James Cartlidge: [\[166\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what is the expected delivery date for the Boxer programme.

Maria Eagle:

The delivery of Boxer is well underway. Initial prototypes were delivered in December 2023 and the first series production vehicles were delivered in June 2024. The Initial Operating Capability is planned for Quarter four 2025, however, wider global supply chain issues remain a delivery risk which are being closely managed.

■ Defence

James Cartlidge: [\[189\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps his Department plans to take to ensure the Strategic Defence Review engages with each nation of the UK.

Luke Pollard:

Defence is central not only to the security of the UK, but also to our shared prosperity and economic growth. This Strategic Defence Review is to be the UK's review - not just the Government's. The reviewers will consult widely including serving military, veterans, elected representatives, the Defence community, academia and industry across the entirety of the UK.

James Cartlidge: [\[557\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many high level experts will participate in the Strategic Defence Review.

Luke Pollard:

The Prime Minister has commissioned the Strategic Defence Review, which will be overseen by the Defence Secretary and headed by three external Reviewers. The lead Reviewer will be Lord Robertson of Port Ellen, with General Sir Richard Barrons and Dr Fiona Hill CMG as the other Reviewers. The Reviewers will select a small Defence Review Team (DRT) to support their work. The DRT will comprise of senior

experts from inside and outside Defence, working closely with other Government Departments, notably HM Treasury.

■ Defence: Expenditure

James Cartlidge: [\[120\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of the time taken to publish a timescale within which the UK will spend 2.5 per cent of its GDP on defence on the morale of armed forces personnel.

AI Carns:

This Government is totally committed 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.

Renewing the nation's contract with those who serve is a priority for this Government. Morale of our Armed Forces is at a record low – the Armed Forces Continuous Attitude Survey published in May 2024 reported that satisfaction with Service life remained at the lowest reported level.

In the King's speech the Government announced that we will establish an Armed Forces Commissioner as an independent champion for Service personnel and their families, as a first step to improving Service life.

■ Defence: Industry

James Cartlidge: [\[195\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps he plans to take to ensure the Strategic Defence Review team engages fully with UK defence industry (a) primes and (b) SMEs.

Maria Eagle:

The Strategic Defence Review will determine the roles, capabilities and reforms required by UK Defence to meet the challenges, threats and opportunities of the twenty-first century. It will consider the state of the defence technological and industrial base, and the contribution of Defence to the Government's growth mission.

The reviewers will consult widely, including with Parliament, the Defence community, academia, and industry including Primes and SMEs. Defence Ministers met with industry primes and SMEs as a priority in the first weeks of this new Government.

■ DMRC Headley Court: Medical Equipment

Alex Sobel: [\[363\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what information his Department holds on the extent to which medical equipment that was used at Headley Court Defence Medical Rehabilitation Centre has been repurposed since that centre's closure.

AI Carns:

The table below provides a breakdown of the medical equipment from Defence Medical Rehabilitation Centre (DMRC) Headley Court that was either transferred to

another Defence location, or relocated to DMRC Stanford Hall, as it was still serviceable.

| EQUIPMENT TRANSFERRED FROM DMRC HEADLEY COURT | NUMBER |
|--|---------------|
| Ice machine | 1 |
| Wet bulb globe test (WGBT) | 3 |
| Continuous passive motion system | 1 |
| Sling suspension | 1 |
| Standing frame | 2 |
| Neuro stimulator | 1 |
| Doppler | 2 |
| Dynamic compression system | 1 |
| Functional electrical stimulation device (FES) | 11 |
| FES bike | 1 |
| Neuromuscular electrical stimulation (NMES) | 4 |
| Handheld NMES | 11 |
| Infusion pump | 2 |
| Pressure testing system | 1 |
| Socket tester | 1 |
| Soft tissue mobiliser | 1 |
| Tilt table | 1 |
| Water bath | 2 |
| Parallel bars | 5 |
| Sitting scales | 1 |
| Targeted negative pressure device | 1 |
| Image intensifier | 1 |

■ EU Countries: Security

James Cartlidge: [\[134\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what his expected timetable is to negotiate a new UK-EU security agreement.

Luke Pollard:

As we reset our relations with European partners, the Prime Minister and Ministers have already held positive discussions with EU counterparts, including at the European Political Community Summit at Blenheim. Agreeing an ambitious and broad-ranging new security pact with the EU, is a cross-Government priority, and the Government will seek to negotiate in due course. The Ministry of Defence will ensure the pact strengthens security for the UK and EU, underpins closer cooperation between us on threats we collectively face, and complements our unshakable commitment to NATO.

■ Gaza: Humanitarian Aid

Rachael Maskell: [\[635\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will increase the use of Armed Forces personnel in supporting movements of humanitarian aid into Gaza.

Luke Pollard:

The Foreign and Commonwealth Development Office leads on coordinating the HMG's humanitarian response to deliver lifesaving assistance to the civilian population in Gaza.

The Ministry of Defence has provided military support when requested to facilitate the delivery of lifesaving assistance. Royal Fleet Auxiliary Cardigan Bay is in the Eastern Mediterranean and tasked with providing support to the Cypriot Maritime Aid Corridor.

We continue to monitor the situation and consider what further assistance Defence could contribute to the HMG and international efforts.

■ Germany: Military Alliances

James Cartlidge: [\[130\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what his planned timetable is for securing a defence and security agreement with Germany.

Luke Pollard:

The Secretary of State for Defence travelled to Berlin on 24 July to sign a joint declaration with German Minister of Defence on enhanced defence cooperation between the UK and Germany. The UK and Germany have agreed shared priority objects for cooperation, including strengthening defence industries, reinforcing Euro-Atlantic security, enhancing inter-operability, addressing emerging threats, supporting Ukraine, and cooperation on long-range capabilities

Our nations consider closer defence cooperation as an important first step in a new relationship between Germany and the United Kingdom.

■ **Global Combat Air Programme: Finance**

Luke Akehurst: [\[437\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what funding has been (a) allocated to and (b) spent on the Future Combat Air System Tempest programme.

Maria Eagle:

The UK has invested over £2 billion already in Future Combat Air System / Global Combat Air Programme (GCAP) and the associated Team Tempest R&D programme, which has positioned us to play a leading role in the GCAP. The Secretary of State this week hosted with his Japanese and Italian Ministerial counterparts to discuss progress made on GCAP, including the skills we are developing in our respective nations and the economic growth potential for the programme.

■ **Independent Review of UK Government Welfare Services for Veterans**

Andrew Bowie: [\[496\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what recent progress his Department has made on implementing the recommendations of the Independent Review of UK Government Welfare Services for Veterans, published on 17 July 2023.

Al Carns:

The response to the independent review of UK Government Welfare Services for Veterans was published in December 2023. The response accepted the principle and intended outcome of all the review's recommendations. Work is ongoing to implement changes to meet the review's intent, which include transforming the way Ministry of Defence Welfare Services are delivered and improving the Veterans' Gateway digital offer. An implementation timeline spanning the next 12-18 months has been developed to make the changes required to meet the review's recommendations.

■ **Indo-Pacific Region: Aircraft Carriers**

James Cartlidge: [\[145\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether his Department plans to deploy the Royal Navy's Carrier Strike Group to the Indo-Pacific in 2025.

Luke Pollard:

Yes, the Ministry of Defence plans to deploy HMS Prince of Wales to the Indo-Pacific in 2025.

■ Indo-Pacific Region: Defence

James Cartlidge: [118]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether he will make an assessment of the potential merits of including an Indo-Pacific defence strategy in his planned Strategic Review.

Luke Pollard:

The threats we face are growing and diversifying: war in Europe, conflict in the Middle East, and global threats increasing. The review will consider the threats Britain faces and the capabilities needed to meet them. As part of this, the SDR will identify ways to nurture the UK's defence ties to the Indo Pacific region including the delivery of the AUKUS partnership with the US and Australia.

James Cartlidge: [152]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the policy paper entitled Integrated Review Refresh 2023: Responding to a more contested and volatile world, published on 13 March 2023, if he will make an assessment of the adequacy of the policies set out in that paper on the Indo-Pacific.

Luke Pollard:

As an early priority for this Government the Defence Secretary hosted the Deputy Prime Minister and Defence Minister of Australia to reaffirm the Government's commitment to AUKUS and our Indo-pacific partners. The Strategic Defence Review (SDR) will identify ways to nurture the UK's defence ties to the Indo-Pacific region, and to do this will consider existing policy and consult widely, drawing on expertise including from the Defence community, Parliament, academia and industry.

■ LGBT Veterans Independent Review

Andrew Bowie: [495]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what recent progress his Department has made in implementing the remaining recommendations of the LGBT Veterans Independent Review. published in May 2023.

Al Carns:

Since the publication of Lord Etherton's Independent Review in June 2023, and the Government response in December 2024, Defence continues to work at pace to deliver the intent behind the report's recommendations. As of 18 July 2024, 30 of the 49 recommendations have already been made available to those affected.

Work to implement the intent behind the remaining 19 recommendations is underway, including the recommendations for the memorial at the National Arboretum and the financial award for which the Government intend to begin accepting applications by the end of 2024.

Defence encourages those affected to register their interest in applying for restorative measures by completing the LGBT veterans: support and next steps - <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/lgbt-veterans-support-and-next-steps>.

■ Military Aircraft: Sanctions

Mark Pritchard: [\[38\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will take steps to increase the sanctions for flying over (a) military establishments, (b) facilities providing (i) equipment, (ii) goods and (iii) services to the armed forces and (c) other restricted areas.

Luke Pollard:

The National Security Act 2023 introduced new and specific sanctions in relation to unauthorised overflying of Defence sites by both conventional and unmanned aircraft. The sanctions range from those applicable to a summary offence for simple, unauthorised flights, up to 14 years imprisonment where the purpose of the flight is one that is prejudicial to the safety or interests of the UK. There are no current plans to review these sanctions.

■ Military Bases: Closures

Rachael Maskell: [\[631\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will review the proposed closure of (a) Imphal Barracks in York and (b) other barracks.

Maria Eagle:

There are no plans to review the closure of barracks identified as becoming surplus to military requirements under the Defence Estate Optimisation Portfolio, which are due to release enough land for over 32,000 new homes as well as supporting schools, offices, shops and parks.

This includes Imphal Barracks which has been identified in the emerging City of York Local Plan to deliver over 750 new homes when it is due for disposal from 2030.

■ Ministry of Defence: ICT

James Cartlidge: [\[585\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what his planned timetable is for delivering improved technology and data management in his Department's maintenance regime.

Maria Eagle:

The Department seeks to continually improve our technology and data management. We have technology and data strategies which are driving improvements over a number of years and are associated with a large number of individual projects and changes.

By its nature this leads to continual, incremental improvement. In the next 12 months we should have largely achieved a review of the condition of our estate and that, combined with new technology to monitor and capture data, and an improved ability to analyse and use data to make decisions, is significantly enhancing how we manage the estate and direct our investment in the most effective manner.

A new decision support tool is planned to go live by the end of this year.

■ Nuclear Submarines: Repairs and Maintenance

James Cartlidge: [\[169\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the current Prime Minister's announcement of the nuclear triple lock and his statement on the delivery of all future upgrades needed for submarines of 2 June 2024, what is meant by the phrase all future upgrades.

James Cartlidge: [\[170\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the current Prime Minister's announcement of the nuclear triple lock and his statement on the delivery of all future upgrades needed for submarines of 2 June 2024, what estimate he has made of the potential cost of the triple lock in relation to all future upgrades of the nuclear deterrent.

Maria Eagle:

The Government is totally committed to the UK's independent nuclear deterrent, and will take all steps necessary to ensure it remains credible and effective. We are building four new Dreadnought Class submarines to replace the current Vanguard Class and developing a replacement nuclear warhead, while also maintaining our existing stockpile. We are recapitalising critical elements of our supporting infrastructure to modernise our naval bases and manufacturing capabilities to meet future fleet and weapons requirements.

■ Office for Veterans' Affairs: Finance

Andrew Bowie: [\[497\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the operating budget will be for the Office for Veterans Affairs in each financial year of this Parliament.

Al Carns:

The resource budget for the Office for Veterans' Affairs for financial year 2024-25 is £9.956 million.

The budget for the remainder of this Parliament will be determined by the next Spending Review, which has not yet commenced.

■ RAF Halton: Closures

Greg Smith: [\[681\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will take steps to review the proposed closure of RAF Halton.

Maria Eagle:

There is no planned review of the proposed closure of RAF Halton. Defence continues to work towards the planned closure of RAF Halton, which forms part of a major investment project in RAF Cranwell to enhance the initial Air training capability.

■ Ukraine: Defence**James Cartlidge:** [\[127\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what plans he has to strengthen ties between the UK and Ukrainian defence industry.

Luke Pollard:

The UK Defence and Business Secretaries met with President Zelenskyy, Defence Minister Umerov and UK industry leaders on 18 July 2024, to discuss deeper cooperation and how to boost industrial production for Ukraine.

During this visit, the Defence Secretary and Ukrainian Defence Minister Umerov signed the UK/Ukraine Defence Industrial Support Treaty, which will unlock export finance to enable Ukraine to procure UK-produced equipment and support. This Treaty goes beyond immediate assistance to a long-term partnership between the UK's and Ukraine's military and industrial resilience and is a further demonstration of this Government's unwavering support to Ukraine.

It also builds on the three successful Trade Missions to Ukraine, and one inward mission to the UK, with more planned, and the annual £1.5 billion of goods and services trade between the UK and Ukraine.

■ Ukraine: Guided Weapons**James Cartlidge:** [\[129\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what his policy is on the use of Storm Shadow missiles by Ukrainian armed forces.

Luke Pollard:

There has been no change in the UK's position on Storm Shadow. I am sure that the hon. Member will understand that I will not go into further detail.

We continue to provide military aid to support Ukraine's clear right of self-defence against Russia's illegal attacks in accordance with international humanitarian law. We are clear that equipment provided by the UK is intended for the defence of Ukraine.

■ Ukraine: Military Aid**James Cartlidge:** [\[122\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether it is his policy that the UK will spend at least £3bn on support for Ukraine in each financial year of this Parliament.

Luke Pollard:

Yes. The Ministry of Defence is committed to spending £3 billion a year on military support for Ukraine until 2030-31 or for as long as support is needed.

James Cartlidge: [\[123\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether it is his Department's policy to maintain support for Operation Interflex.

Luke Pollard:

Yes, the UK remains committed to supporting Operation INTERFLEX. The next tranche of trainees have arrived in the UK and are undergoing training and we aim to train up to 10,000 personnel in this tranche, subject to Ukrainian demands. We continue to work with international partners to look at where we can work together to improve our training offer to the Armed Forces of Ukraine.

James Cartlidge: [\[125\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many recruits have been trained under Operation Interflex since its inception.

Luke Pollard:

Under Op INTERFLEX the UK has, with support from 12 partner nations, provided training to over 43,500 Ukrainian personnel since June 2022.

James Cartlidge: [\[126\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many Ukrainian Armed Forces recruits have been trained by (a) UK armed forces and (b) international partners in the UK since 2014.

Luke Pollard:

This Government is proud of the role UK forces have played in training Ukrainian Armed Forces recruits.

Since Putin's invasion of Crimea in 2014, the UK has trained over 70,000 Ukrainian personnel. This includes;

- Op ORBITAL (2015-2022) - Over 22,000 Ukrainian personnel.
- Op INTERFLEX (2022-ongoing) - Over 43,500 Ukrainian personnel.
- Wider medical, specialist, air, and maritime training (2022-ongoing) - Over 5,000 Ukrainian personnel.

This training has been provided in collaboration with twelve partner nations. We do not hold data for the total number of Ukrainian personnel trained by international partners since 2014.

James Cartlidge: [\[181\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many artillery shells were procured by his Department for Ukraine (a) directly and (b) through international routes since the outbreak of that country's conflict with Russia.

Luke Pollard:

The Ministry of Defence has supplied 400,000 artillery shells to Ukraine since the outbreak of that country's conflict with Russia.

On behalf of the International Fund for Ukraine, a substantial ammunition package was announced by the Prime Minister at the NATO summit on 11 July 2024. This package will provide up to 120,000 rounds of 152mm artillery ammunition. The

ammunition will be newly manufactured by a European supplier, stimulating new industrial capacity to provide Ukraine with high priority ammunition.

James Cartlidge: [182]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many small arms ammunition his Department has procured for Ukraine (a) directly and (b) via international routes since the outbreak of the conflict.

Luke Pollard:

The Ministry of Defence has supplied 6,000,000 rounds of small arms ammunition to Ukraine since the outbreak of that country's conflict with Russia.

We will continue to work with international Allies and partners to cohere and coordinate our support to Ukraine. This includes through the International Fund for Ukraine and through the international Capability Coalitions, as a demonstration of our collective enduring commitment to build a Ukrainian force capable of deterring Russian aggression for the long term.

James Cartlidge: [184]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many air defence systems were procured by his Department for Ukraine (a) directly and (b) through international routes since the outbreak of that country's conflict with Russia.

Luke Pollard:

The Ministry of Defence has delivered over 2,100 air defence systems and over 5,000 sets of night vision devices since the outbreak of the conflict with Russia.

On behalf of the International Fund for Ukraine, the UK Ministry of Defence has placed contracts for over 500 air defence systems.

James Cartlidge: [186]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many anti-tank missiles were procured by his Department for Ukraine (a) directly and (b) through international routes since the outbreak of that country's conflict with Russia.

Luke Pollard:

The Ministry of Defence has supplied over 12,000 anti-tank weapons to Ukraine since the outbreak of that country's conflict with Russia.

We will continue to work with international Allies and partners to cohere and coordinate our support to Ukraine. This includes through the International Fund for Ukraine and through international Capability Coalitions, as a demonstration of our collective enduring commitment to build a Ukrainian force capable of deterring Russian aggression for the long term.

Blair McDougall: [274]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps his Department is taking to help increase the manufacture of artillery shells to be supplied to the Ukrainian government.

Luke Pollard:

The Ministry of Defence (MOD) has supported Ukraine by the granting in kind of both artillery munitions and systems. As a result of lessons from Ukraine, the MOD has significantly increased its order of artillery munitions through the multi-billion pound Next Generation Munitions Solution contract with BAE Systems. Through our Task Force Hirst and the signing of the Framework Arrangement on defence and industrial cooperation we have also created a mechanism for Defence Equipment and Support to place contracts on behalf of Ukraine with UK, and international, manufacturers. The MOD continues to work closely with the Department of Business and Trade to expedite export licencing decisions for Ukraine, and has provided additional resource to the Export Control Joint Unit to support this.

■ Veterans: Cost of Living

Andrew Bowie: [\[657\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps he is taking to support veterans with the cost of living.

AI Carns:

The Government is fully committed to delivering for veterans as an integral part of our Armed Forces community. I am leading work across Government to look at the best ways to ensure veterans and their families get access to the support they need.

■ Veterans: Employment Schemes

Andrew Bowie: [\[651\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether it is his policy to continue the Operation Prosper campaign.

Andrew Bowie: [\[652\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will make it his policy to support the previous Government's Op Restore, the Veterans Physical Health and Wellbeing Service.

Andrew Bowie: [\[653\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will make it his policy to continue the previous Government's work on Op Courage, the veterans' mental health service.

Andrew Bowie: [\[654\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will make it his policy to support the previous Government's Op Fortitude campaign.

AI Carns:

The Government is fully committed to delivering for veterans as an integral part of our Armed Forces community. I am leading work across Government to look at the best ways to ensure veterans and their families get access to the health, housing, employment and other support they need.

Andrew Bowie: [\[655\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much funding he plans to allocate to Op Prosper over this Parliament.

Andrew Bowie: [\[656\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much his Department plans to spend on Op Fortitude in each financial year of this Parliament.

AI Carns:

The Government is fully committed to delivering for veterans as an integral part of our Armed Forces community. I am leading work across Government to look at the best ways to ensure veterans and their families get access to the health, housing, employment and other support they need.

Work is ongoing to determine the spend for Operation PROSPER and Operation FORTITUDE for the current financial year. The budget for the remainder of this Parliament will be determined by the next Spending Review, which has not yet commenced.

■ Veterans: Identity Cards

Sir John Hayes: [\[20\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many people have (a) applied for and (b) received a Veterans' ID Card in (a) South Holland and the Deepings constituency and (b) Lincolnshire.

AI Carns:

The HM Armed Forces Veteran Card has had a two-phase rollout.

Phase 1 is complete; all Service leavers since December 2018 automatically receive a Veteran Card from MOD as part of their discharge process.

Phase 2 extended access to the Veteran Card to those who left before December 2018. The new digital application and verification service launched at 00:01 on 28 January 2024 allowing pre-2018 veterans to apply for the card.

Under Phase 2, for South Holland and the Deepings, as at 17 July 2024, 127 applications have been received and 122 cards posted.

Under Phase 2, for Lincolnshire, as at 17 July 2024, 3,683 applications have been received and 3,637 cards posted.

Andrew Bowie: [\[493\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many applications have been received for Veterans' ID cards.

AI Carns:

The HM Armed Forces Veteran Card has had a two-phase rollout. Phase 1 is complete; all Service leavers since December 2018 automatically receive a Veteran Card from Ministry of Defence as part of their discharge process.

Phase 2 extended access to the Veteran Card to those who left before December 2018. The new digital application and verification service launched at 00:01 on 28 January 2024 allowing pre-2018 veterans to apply for the card.

Under Phase 2, as at 17 July 2024, 132,536 applications had been received for the HM Armed Forces Veteran Card and 117,924 card applications had been processed and posted.

Andrew Bowie: [\[494\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many Veterans' ID cards have been delivered.

AI Carns:

The HM Armed Forces Veteran Card has had a two-phase rollout. Phase 1 is complete; all Service leavers since December 2018 automatically receive a Veteran Card from MOD as part of their discharge process.

Phase 2 extended access to the Veteran Card to those who left before December 2018. The new digital application and verification service launched at 00:01 on 28 January 2024 allowing pre-2018 veterans to apply for the card.

Under Phase 2, as at 17 July 2024, 132,536 applications had been received for the HM Armed Forces Veteran Card and 117,924 card applications had been processed and posted.

■ **Veterans: Newcastle-under-Lyme**

Adam Jogee: [\[419\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps he plans to take to support veterans in Newcastle-under-Lyme constituency.

AI Carns:

This is a Government of service that will always stand up for those who serve our country. I am working across Government and with civil society to ensure veterans, including those in Newcastle-under-Lyme, get access to the health, housing, employment and other support they need

A range of support is in place to help veterans access services, including an accreditation scheme for NHS Trusts and Primary Care Networks across England to ensure they can best support veterans access health care; Government funded housing support for veterans; Armed Forces Champions across the UK's Job Centre Plus network to help support members of the armed forces community into work; and the veterans' railcard offering discounts on most rail travel.

■ **Veterans: Public Appointments**

Andrew Bowie: [\[498\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether he plans to appoint a National Veterans Commissioner.

AI Carns:

The Ministry of Defence is leading work across Government to look at the best ways to ensure veterans and their families get access to the health, housing, employment and other support they need.

The role of Veterans Commissioner is already established across the nations of the UK. The Ministry of Defence will work closely with our Veterans Commissioners to improve support for those who have served our country, including work to put the Armed Forces covenant fully into law.

■ Veterans: Public Sector**James Cartlidge:**[\[128\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps his Department are taking to ensure veterans are effectively supported to access public services.

AI Carns:

This is a Government of service that will always stand up for those who serve our country. I am working across Government and with civil society to ensure veterans get access to the health, housing, employment and other support they need.

A range of support is in place to help veterans access services, including an accreditation scheme for NHS Trusts and Primary Care Networks across England to ensure they can best support veterans access health care; Government funded housing support for veterans; Armed Forces Champions across the UK's Job Centre Plus network to help support members of the Armed Forces community into work; and the veterans' railcard offering discounts on most rail travel.

EDUCATION**■ Breakfast Clubs****Rachael Maskell:**[\[626\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to introduce breakfast clubs in every school; and what her planned timescale is for the introduction of breakfast clubs in every school.

Stephen Morgan:

The government is committed to making quick progress to deliver on its commitment to offer breakfast clubs in every primary school. Breakfast clubs will remove barriers to opportunity by ensuring every child, no matter their circumstances, is well prepared for school and set-up to achieve by providing a supportive start to the day.

The government has already taken decisive action by announcing in the King's Speech that, under the Children's Wellbeing Bill, every primary school will offer a free breakfast club. Legislating for breakfast club provision will give schools the certainty they need to plan for the future. Before the legislation comes into force, the

department will work with schools to make sure the right support, including funding, is in place.

■ Frankley Hill School Birmingham

Laurence Turner: [264]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to her Department's transparency data, entitled Local authority applications to open a special free school: waves 3 and 4, updated on 16 May 2024, what the expected opening date is of the Frankley Hill School in Birmingham.

Catherine McKinnell:

The school, which is planned to be a 400 place, co-educational school for pupils aged 4 to 19 with Autistic Spectrum Disorders, was approved into the pre-opening stage in March 2024. Departmental officials are working closely with the local authority and the trust to agree an opening date.

■ Holiday Activities and Food Programme

Rachael Maskell: [972]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will make it her policy to extend the Holiday Activities Fund.

Stephen Morgan:

The government is committed to breaking down barriers to opportunity and giving every child the best start in life.

The department will be providing over 3 million holiday clubs places this summer and these places will support children from disadvantaged backgrounds to access free healthy meals and enriching activities.

The department will also be providing over 500,000 holiday places over Christmas to ensure children get access to food through the school holidays and to the activities benefiting their health, wellbeing and learning that we know make such a difference.

Funding beyond the end of March 2025 is subject to the forthcoming Spending Review.

■ Pupils

Damian Hinds: [45]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will make an estimate of the (a) (i) capacity of and (ii) number of pupils up to the end of Key Stage 4 enrolled in state-funded schools and (b) number of pupils up to the end of Key Stage 4 enrolled in independent schools, broken down by (A) local authority and (B) Key Stage in the latest period for which data is available.

Catherine McKinnell:

The capacity of state-funded schools as at May 2023 is published in the annual school capacity official statistics publication and is available here: <https://explore->

education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/school-capacity. The data is available at local authority level and by phase (primary and secondary).

Pupil numbers up to age 16 are published in the 'Schools, pupils and their characteristics' official statistics publication and are available here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/school-pupils-and-their-characteristics>. The data is available by local authority, age and school type. Please note that statistics from the school census are on the base of age, rather than key stage.

■ Schools: Hastings and Rye

Helena Dollimore: [1060]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will hold discussions with the University of Brighton Academies Trust on the proportion of the public funding it receives that is passed on to schools in Hastings and Rye constituency.

Helena Dollimore: [1162]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will direct the University of Brighton Academies Trust to increase the proportion of the public funding it receives that is passed on to schools in Hastings and Rye constituency.

Catherine McKinnell:

Academy trusts are the responsible, accountable body for all the money allocated to their individual academies, and the 2023 Academy Trust Handbook permits academy trusts to amalgamate academies' General Annual Grant (GAG) to form one central fund. This allows academy trusts to direct funds in line with improvement priorities and needs across their schools.

The handbook also sets out that, where a trust decides to pool GAG, it must consider the funding needs and allocations of each constituent academy. The academy trust must also have an appeals mechanism in place. If an appeal is not resolved, an appeal can be escalated to Education and Skills Funding Agency.

The government is clear that 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 to enable intervention when schools and trusts are not performing to the required standards.

■ Skilled Workers: Training

Sarah Green: [1062]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will make an assessment of the adequacy of the (a) inspection process for Skills Bootcamp providers and (b) education inspection framework for skills providers.

Catherine McKinnell:

Ofsted inspections independently assess the quality of adult learning providers and Skills Bootcamps have been part of this remit since April 2023. Ofsted inspection

reports help support providers to improve the quality of their provision. The department can, at its discretion, take appropriate contractual action where performance is below the standard expected of providers.

The government is committed to reforming Ofsted and improving the inspection system and has set out a series of commitments to reforming accountability, such as moving away from the single headline grade to a richer system through a report card. The government will want to engage with Ofsted, including looking closely at the results of its 'Big Listen' and will work in partnership with those from the range of sectors that Ofsted works in, including skills, to look at opportunities to improve the current arrangements.

■ **Special Educational Needs: Birmingham City Council**

Laurence Turner: [\[265\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she expects a third independent report into Birmingham City Council's SEND service to be published in 2024.

Catherine McKinnell:

The department aims to publish the report within the coming months, in line with existing practice.

■ **Special Educational Needs: North Cornwall**

Ben Maguire: [\[258\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to reduce the time taken for children in North Cornwall constituency to receive an Education, Health and Care needs assessment.

Catherine McKinnell:

The department is aware that the SEN2 Data for the 2023 calendar year, which was published on 13 June 2024 and includes data on the rate that education, health and care plans are issued within the statutory 20 week period, showed that Cornwall had issued 1.6% of plans on time, which is well below the national average of 50.3%.

The department is focussed on ensuring the local area partnership works at pace to improve the timeliness of plans for children and young people in Cornwall. This support includes departmental officials carrying out monthly monitoring, a department appointed special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) advisor and department funded training workshops delivered by the Research and Improvement for SEND Excellence (RISE) consortium.

■ **Special Educational Needs: Suffolk**

Jenny Riddell-Carpenter: [\[324\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment her Department has made of the adequacy of the provision of special educational needs and disability services for children in Suffolk.

Catherine McKinnell:

Ofsted inspected local arrangements for children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) in Suffolk in November 2023. Its report, which was published on 30 January 2024, concluded that there are widespread and/or systemic failings, leading to significant concerns about the experiences and outcomes of children and young people with SEND, which the local area partnership must address urgently.

The department provides support and challenge to the Suffolk local area partnership by monitoring progress against its Priority Action Plan and improvement plan, and by providing advice and guidance through a SEND expert adviser. The partnership has also established an independently chaired SEND Improvement Board, to oversee progress.

This government is committed to providing the necessary support to improve the experiences for children and young people with SEND and their families. The department is committed to taking a community-wide approach, to improving inclusivity and expertise in mainstream schools and alternative provision settings, and to ensure that special schools cater to those with the most complex needs.

ENERGY SECURITY AND NET ZERO**■ Electricity Generation****Ben Goldsborough:****[503]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if he is undertaking a review of the eligibility criteria for community benefits for electricity transmission.

Michael Shanks:

It is the Government's priority to build support for developments by ensuring communities directly benefit, as per the commitments set out in the election manifesto. As such we are reviewing how to most effectively deliver community benefits for communities living near new electricity transmission network infrastructure.

■ Energy Supply: Infrastructure**Ben Goldsborough:****[506]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of introducing energy bill discounts of (a) £10,000 over ten years to people within 200 metres and (b) £20,000 over 20 years for people within 500 metres of an energy infrastructure project.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

It is important for this Government that where communities host clean energy infrastructure, they should directly benefit from it. We are currently considering how to ensure communities benefit from living near new onshore electricity transmission infrastructure.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS**■ African Swine Fever****Charlie Dewhirst:****[385]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the potential threat of an outbreak of African swine fever in the pig population.

Daniel Zeichner:

Defra and its agencies keep the spread of African swine fever (ASF) under continuous review and is prepared to rapidly implement import restrictions based on changing scientific and risk data. A finding of ASF in a wild boar in western Germany in 2024 represented a further move in disease distribution towards the United Kingdom, following similar movements elsewhere in Europe. While we consider that the overall risk of entry of ASF virus into the UK from all combined pathways remains at medium, the particular pathway of human-mediated transport of non-commercial, infected products from the EU is considered to be high risk (please see the latest Animal and Plant Health Agency's risk assessment from June 2024 for more detail: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/667444bb64e554df3bd0dbed/Update_ASF_in_Europe_35.pdf).

UK safeguard measures are in place prohibiting live pigs, wild boar, or pork products from affected EU areas from entering Great Britain. There is also enforcement carried out by Border Force and Port Health Authority officers at seaports and airports.

To further safeguard Britain's biosecurity and pig industry, travellers are no longer allowed to bring pork products weighing over two kilograms into Great Britain, unless they are produced to the EU's commercial standards and commercially packaged with an identification mark. These measures help limit possibly infected pig meat being brought into Great Britain through various means, such as in passengers' luggage or in vehicles.

■ Air Pollution: EU Law**Jim Allister:****[1120]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of the EU Industrial Emission Directive on Northern Ireland; and what the associated costs are.

Emma Hardy:

As set out in the Northern Ireland Protocol in the EU-UK Withdrawal Agreement, the Industrial Emissions Directive will only apply to those installations in Northern Ireland that contribute to the Single Electricity Market. As of 2022 this was four installations.

Industrial emissions policy is devolved to Northern Ireland. Defra continues to engage with the Northern Ireland Executive on industrial emissions policy through the 'Integrated Pollution Prevention and Control – The Developing and Setting of Best Available Techniques Common Framework. Where rules in Northern Ireland change

in alignment with the EU, the Framework provides governance structures and consensus-based processes for considering and managing the impact of these changes.

■ Air Pollution: North Staffordshire

Adam Jogee: [1093]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent assessment his Department has made of the potential impact of air pollution on the (a) natural environment in Newcastle-under-Lyme constituency and (b) economy in North Staffordshire.

Emma Hardy:

Air pollution has a significant impact on our economy every year by reducing labour productivity and growth.

No specific assessment of air pollution and its impact on the natural environment in Newcastle-under-Lyme has been made recently nor the impact on the economy in North Staffordshire. However, a UK-wide risk assessment of the environmental impacts of the pollutants, ammonia, oxides of nitrogen and sulphur dioxide is made annually.

The results are summarised in the Air Pollution Trends Report (see: https://uk-air.defra.gov.uk/assets/documents/reports/cat09/2401111009_Air_Pollution_Trends_Report_2023.pdf).

Specific results for UK designated habitats are viewable on the Air Pollution Information System website (see: <https://www.apis.ac.uk/app>).

■ Chemicals: Regulation

Adam Jogee: [1095]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the adequacy of chemical regulations.

Emma Hardy:

The Government is committed to protecting human health and the environment. We are currently considering the best approach to chemicals regulation in the UK.

■ Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs: Departmental Responsibilities

Jim Allister: [339]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether his Department has issued instructions to the Department for Agriculture Environment and Rural Affairs in Northern Ireland relating to the operation of the Windsor Framework (Implementation) Regulations 2024.

Daniel Zeichner:

The Windsor Framework (Implementation) Regulations 2024 were published along with accompanying Statutory Guidance for Northern Ireland departments. In line with this guidance, Defra is working with the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs in Northern Ireland on the targeted subset of agri-food matters for which the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs has responsibility.

Jim Allister:[\[341\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, to whom staff in the Department for Agriculture Environment and Rural Affairs in Northern Ireland are accountable following the implementation of the Windsor Framework (Implementation) Regulation; and whether steps have been taken to ensure effective operation of lines of accountability to the (a) local Northern Ireland Executive minister and (b) Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.

Daniel Zeichner:

In line with the Statutory Guidance that accompanied the Windsor Framework (Implementation) Regulations 2024, officials in the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs are currently accountable to the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs for a targeted subset of agri-food matters focused on the movement of goods from Great Britain to Northern Ireland.

■ Fisheries: Cornwall**Ben Maguire:**[\[257\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to support the Cornish under ten-metre fishing fleet.

Daniel Zeichner:

Appreciating the importance of the u10m fleet to our coastal communities, including those in Cornwall, Defra will look at ways to help the fleet to thrive and contribute more to economic growth and our food security.

■ Fisheries: Government Assistance**Jim Shannon:**[\[R\]](#) [\[68\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will take steps with the European Commission to allow the Northern Ireland Executive to allocate state aid to fisheries projects in the same manner as other UK nations.

Daniel Zeichner:

A key aim for this administration is to reset the UK government's relationship with devolved governments in Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland and EU and therefore look forward to discussions on a range of issues relating to the Windsor Framework, including State aid.

■ Flood Control: Central Bedfordshire

Alex Mayer:

[\[731\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to help reduce the risk of flooding in central Bedfordshire.

Emma Hardy:

The Environment Agency (EA)'s current Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Capital Programme (2021-2027) includes 10 projects within the central Bedfordshire area, with a current estimated total project value of £3.5 million. This includes several schemes delivered by Central Bedfordshire Council to better manage surface water in locations which have experienced surface water flooding historically, including Blunham and Shefford. The EA is also completing a first stage appraisal of the flood risk to Leighton Buzzard to better understand the case for flood risk mitigation and the likelihood of achieving a cost beneficial solution. It expects this to be completed by autumn 2024.

The EA's annual maintenance programme for main rivers in the catchment includes desiltation projects, vegetation clearance and flood defence improvements, and is funded by a combination of Government grant in aid and local flood funding.

The EA is also working in partnership with Central Bedfordshire Council, the Internal Drainage Board and Anglian Water to gather evidence about flooding during January 2024, following one of the wettest winters on record. This work will identify the causes of flooding and determine any necessary actions. The EA has also been engaging with communities to understand the impacts from these events.

■ Flood Control: Hastings

Helena Dollimore:

[\[368\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to tackle the causes of repeated flooding of Hastings town centre by Southern Water.

Emma Hardy:

The kind of surface water flooding that Hastings experienced in 2023 generally occurs after extreme rainfall when water cannot immediately drain away or soak into the ground. It can happen very quickly, be difficult to predict and can be exacerbated by impermeable built environment and overwhelmed drainage capacity.

The responsibility for local flood risk management falls to lead local flood authorities (LLFA), in collaboration with water companies. The Government's Flood Resilience Taskforce will deliver flood defences, drainage systems and natural flood management schemes. In addition, our Water Bill will put water companies under tough special measures where they do not meet performance expectations, by strengthening regulation as a first legislative step towards improving the sector.

When a flood occurs, LLFAs investigate which risk management authorities have relevant flood risk management functions and whether they have exercised those functions.

■ Floods: Hastings and Rye

Helena Dollimore: [\[369\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking with Southern Water to fix their water infrastructure.

Helena Dollimore: [\[370\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will have discussions with Southern Water on the level of compensation due to (a) businesses and (b) residents in Hastings and Rye constituency after two incidents of flooding in the town centre.

Helena Dollimore: [\[371\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will have discussions with Southern Water on the level of compensation due to (a) residents and (b) businesses in Hastings and Rye constituency after the loss of water supply in (i) September 2023 and (ii) May 2024.

Helena Dollimore: [\[372\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of Southern Water's compensation fund for losses incurred by (a) residents and (b) businesses during the water outage in May 2024.

Emma Hardy:

The Secretary of State has already met with CEOs of all 16 water companies, including Southern Water, setting out his expectations from government going forward. He will have further conversations with water company chief executives in due course, including with Southern Water, on a range of issues, and will be sure to raise the experiences of those impacted by flooding and supply interruptions and scrutinise their plans to improve.

■ Floods: Lowestoft

Jess Asato: [\[416\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether his Department has made a cost estimate of the potential economic damage of a future flooding event in Lowestoft.

Emma Hardy:

Coastal Partnership East is partnership of three local authorities responsible for part of the Norfolk and Suffolk coastline (East Suffolk Council, North Norfolk District Council and Great Yarmouth Borough Council), including Lowestoft. Coastal Partnership East made an estimate of the potential economic damages from future

flooding events in Lowestoft. This was completed as part of a business case for a new barrier at Lowestoft submitted in April 2023, prepared by Coastal Partnership East using standard Environment Agency guidance and methodologies.

This estimated the future economic damages from tidal flooding, without the investment proposed in the business case, to be approximately £150m over the next 100 years. The economic damages from river and surface water flood risk was approximately £50m over 100 years.

■ Food Supply

Greg Smith: [685]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what his Department's policy is on the future of the UK Food Resilience Forum.

Daniel Zeichner:

The UK has a highly resilient food supply chain, which has coped well in responding to unprecedented challenges. Defra maintains a collaborative relationship with industry which allows us to effectively respond to disruption. This includes a Food Resilience Industry Forum, which can be stood-up at short notice should the need arise.

■ Furs: Trade

Marsha De Cordova: [413]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he plans to publish the results of his Department's consultation entitled 'The Fur Market in Great Britain', which closed on 31 May 2021.

Daniel Zeichner:

I refer the hon. Member to the answer given on 23 July 2024 to the Rt Hon Member for Islington North, PQ [592](#).

■ Landfill: Regulation

Adam Jogee: [466]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the regulation of landfill sites.

Emma Hardy:

No recent formal assessment has been made, although published Environment Agency data (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/review-of-activities-regulated-by-the-environment-agency-2022/review-of-activities-regulated-by-the-environment-agency-2022>) shows that there are only a handful of serious pollution incidents from landfill sites each year. The regulatory framework in place is designed to serve operators and protect the local community. Where poor performance does occur the Environment Agency has a range of powers to bring sites back into compliance and, where necessary, to take enforcement action against operators.

These enforcement powers include the use of civil sanction Stop Notices under the Regulatory and Enforcement Sanctions Act 2008, and the ability to suspend or revoke an environmental permit, or to close a site down where there is evidence of harm or risk to the environment or human health under the Environmental Permitting (England and Wales) 2016 Regulations, as well as to take criminal prosecutions under that legislation.

■ Northern Ireland Retail Movement Scheme

Jim Allister:

[\[1061\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to regulation 13 of the Windsor Framework (Retail Movement Scheme) Regulations 2023, how many checks have been conducted on retail goods moved from Great Britain to Northern Ireland in each month since 1 January 2024, broken down by the number of each type of check undertaken.

Daniel Zeichner:

In line with the commitments we have made, as we move to our new UK internal market system we will ensure that the only checks when goods move within the UK internal market system are those conducted by UK authorities as part of a risk-based or intelligence-led approach to tackle criminality, abuse of the scheme, smuggling and disease risks. But in order not to undermine that approach, as is the case across the UK we do not disclose the specific number or nature of interventions made by UK authorities.

■ Pesticides: Northern Ireland

Jim Allister:

[\[1121\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of the Plant Protection Product regulations on (a) supply issues, (b) the variety of products available and (c) the farming industry.

Emma Hardy:

The Windsor Framework maintains the free flow of trade from GB to NI in the UK internal market. We are committed to implementing the Windsor Framework and protecting the UK internal market.

DAERA as the responsible administration, and the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) as the regulator, liaise with manufacturers and grower groups on issues around Plant Protection Products (PPPs) availability to ensure the impacts on the farming industry in both NI and GB are minimised where possible.

■ Pollution Control: Water Companies

Helen Grant:

[\[56\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he will take to reduce pollution from water companies.

Emma Hardy:

The Water (Special Measures) Bill delivers on our manifesto commitment to put water companies under tough special measures by strengthening regulation and begin the work of cleaning up our rivers, lakes and seas.

As an immediate step, this Government will strengthen regulation to reverse the tide on the unacceptable destruction of our waterways, ensuring water companies deliver for customers and the environment and attract private-sector investment to upgrade our crumbling infrastructure.

Change will take time. The Government will outline further legislation to fundamentally transform our water industry and restore our rivers, lakes and seas to good health.

■ Pollution: River Frome**Anna Sabine:**[\[393\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential implications for his policies of pollution levels in the River Frome.

Emma Hardy:

The Environment Agency (EA) undertake a programme of ecological, water quality and chemical monitoring on the Somerset Frome according to the requirements defined by the Water Environment (Water Framework Directive) (England and Wales) Regulations 2017 (WFD). This provides an understanding of the overall Ecological Status of the river. The EA act on the findings of this monitoring, to investigate any failures to meet the status required.

The WFD monitoring classification shows the Frome from its source to the confluence with the Maiden Bradley Brook as achieving poor ecological status. The Frome from Maiden Bradley Brook to the River Mells is achieving a moderate ecological status.

The reasons for not achieving good ecological status are a mixture of point and diffuse source pollution. This is elevating the nutrient levels in the water which in turn are affecting the plant and algal communities in the river. The results of the Environment Agency's monitoring work indicate that sources are a mixture of treated sewage discharges from water company assets and from agricultural and land management practices.

Cleaning up our rivers, lakes and seas is a top government priority. Change has already begun – the Water (Special Measures) Bill, announced during the King's Speech, delivers on our manifesto commitment to put water companies under special measures by strengthening regulation to clean up our waters. That change will take time. Over the coming weeks and months, the Government will outline further steps to reform the water sector and restore our rivers, lakes and seas to good health.

■ Public Bodies: Science

Andrew George: [\[4\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will take steps to ensure that public bodies sponsored by his Department will be free to fulfil their duties based on evidence and scientific fact.

Daniel Zeichner:

Several of Defra's public bodies are Public Sector Research Establishments and form an integral part of the Defra group science system. They share, as part of their remit, a role in providing quality scientific evidence and expert advice to Government in their respective disciplines.

■ Sewage: North Cornwall

Ben Maguire: [\[252\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to reduce sewage discharges into (a) rivers in and (b) the sea off the coast of the North Cornwall constituency.

Emma Hardy:

The Government's new Water (Special Measures) Bill delivers on Labour's manifesto commitment to put water companies under tough special measures by strengthening regulation to clean up our rivers, lakes and seas more broadly, lakes and seas. Further legislation will build on this to fundamentally transform our water industry and protect British rivers and seas.

■ UK Internal Trade: Northern Ireland

Jim Allister: [\[337\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what the competent authority is for the Official Controls Regulation (EU) 2017/625 in respect of Northern Ireland following the coming into force of the Windsor Framework (Implementation) Regulations 2024.

Daniel Zeichner:

The relevant competent authority is the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs.

Jim Allister: [\[340\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will take steps to ease restrictions set out under the Northern Ireland Protocol on (a) poultry exhibitors and (b) livestock owners from Northern Ireland who travel to and from shows and sales in Great Britain.

Daniel Zeichner:

The Movement Assistance Scheme is available to support with the costs of moving live animals. The Government engages regularly with Northern Ireland stakeholders

and would welcome engagement with those transporting poultry and livestock between Northern Ireland and Great Britain to understand how we can best support the sector.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

■ **British Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies: Money Laundering and Tax Evasion**

Daisy Cooper:

[\[400\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he plans to take to help tackle (a) money laundering and (b) tax evasion in the Crown Dependencies and Overseas Territories (CDOTs), in the context of the number of CDOTs that have created a publicly accessible register of company ownership.

Stephen Doughty:

Financial secrecy facilitates illicit finance including money laundering as well as tax and sanctions evasion. It enables serious and organised crime, undermines our national security by supporting kleptocracies around the world, and it diverts resources needed for vital public services.

Tackling illicit finance in the UK, as well as in our Overseas Territories and the Crown Dependencies, is a priority for the new Government.

We will be working closely with the UK Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies to increase transparency, including through publicly accessible registers of company beneficial ownership. We note the progress made in a number of jurisdictions, but will be looking to work with UKOTs and CDs to urgently accelerate progress in others.

■ **Colombia: Politics and Government**

Paula Barker:

[\[708\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the political situation in Colombia.

Catherine West:

Colombia is an important partner for the UK, with our shared priorities including the environment and security. We are working with the Colombian Government and others on implementation of the 2016 Peace Agreement. President Petro is committed to implementing the 2016 Agreement as well as establishing dialogues with other armed groups - what he terms 'Paz Total' (Total Peace). The UK remains committed to supporting Colombia in establishing long term conditions for stability in the country. We will also work with Colombia on the climate and nature emergency - as they host the important Biodiversity Conference of the Parties meeting later this year.

■ Gaza: Water**Chris Law:** [\[617\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will make representations to the Israeli Government on increasing the flow of water to Gaza through the Mekorot water supply lines.

Chris Law: [\[618\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential implications for his policies of the Oxfam report entitled Water War Crimes, published on 18 July 2024.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

International Humanitarian Law provides for the protection of civilians and civilian objects, which includes water supply. Israel must take steps working with humanitarian agencies to fully restore water supplies and to significantly increase the flow of aid into and through Gaza. We have consistently raised water supplies and the opening of vital water lines with Israel throughout the conflict. During the Foreign Secretary's visit to Israel on 14-15 July, he made clear to Prime Minister Netanyahu and other interlocutors that Israel must meet its commitment to "flood Gaza with aid".

■ Russia: Oil**Mr Luke Charters:** [R] [\[1063\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will hold discussions with his international counterparts on helping to implement sanctions on Russian crude oil exports.

Stephen Doughty:

Sanctions are at their most effective when countries work together. We continue to work closely with G7 and other partners to ensure our sanctions have the maximum impact on Russia, including by restricting the energy revenues fuelling its war machine. The Government has already taken action to that end.

At the recent European Political Community Summit, the UK secured the agreement of 44 European countries plus the European Union to work together to disrupt and deter Russia's 'shadow fleet', which is undermining our sanctions and poses environmental and security threats. We continue to explore a range of options to deepen our sanctions regime, and enforcement, including in the energy sector.

■ St Vincent and the Grenadines: Hurricanes and Tornadoes**Ms Stella Creasy:** [\[944\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to help residents of the Union Island.

Catherine West:

Hurricane Beryl passed through the Caribbean at the beginning of July, devastating several islands in the Grenadines, including Union. On 5th July, the Foreign Secretary responded by increasing available UK response funding up to £500,000. This money has allowed us to send emergency shelter kits (capable of supporting up to 4,000 people) and freshwater storage solutions (for over 1,600 families) to affected islands, which included Union Island. The UK also supported the deployment of *Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA)* emergency response teams to assess needs and assist with relief, logistics and telecoms. St Vincent and the Grenadines also received US\$1.86 million from the Caribbean Catastrophe Risk Insurance Facility (CCRIF), to which the UK was a founder donor.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE**Ambulance Services: North Cornwall****Ben Maguire:**[\[245\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to reduce ambulance waiting times in (a) North Cornwall constituency and (b) the South Western Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust area.

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.

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder: Health Services**Danny Beales:**[\[410\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the (a) adequacy of the provision of attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder reviews by the NHS and (b) potential merits of commissioning a review of how these assessments are (i) performed and (ii) resourced.

Stephen Kinnock:

We are supporting NHS England in establishing a taskforce to look at attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) service provision, and its impact on patient experience. The taskforce will bring together expertise from across a broad range of sectors, including the National Health Service, education, and justice, to better understand the challenges affecting people with ADHD and to help provide a joined-up approach in response to concerns around rising demand.

Alongside the work of the taskforce, NHS England will continue to develop a national ADHD data improvement plan, carry out more detailed work to understand the provider and commissioning landscape, and capture examples from local health systems which are trialling innovative ways of delivering ADHD services to ensure best practice is captured and shared across the system.

■ Autism and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder: Diagnosis

Rachael Maskell: [\[106\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he plans to take to tackle the backlog in autism and ADHD assessments.

Stephen Kinnock:

It is the responsibility of integrated care boards (ICBs) to make available appropriate provision to meet the health and care needs of their local population, including autism and attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) assessments, in line with the relevant National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) guidelines.

On 5 April 2023, NHS England published a national framework and operational guidance to deliver improved outcomes in all-age autism assessment pathways. This guidance will help ICBs and the National Health Service to deliver improved outcomes for children, young people and adults referred to an autism assessment service.

The Department are supporting a cross-sector taskforce that NHS England has launched into challenges in ADHD service provision. The taskforce is expected to report on its findings and recommendations later this year.

■ Cancer

Grahame Morris: [\[900\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make it his policy to publish a national cancer plan.

Andrew Gwynne:

The NHS Long Term Plan, published in January 2019, sets out the National Health Service's key ambitions on cancer. The plan sets out the NHS ambition to increase the number of cancers diagnosed at stages 1 and 2 to 75% by 2028, and to increase the number of people surviving cancer for five years by 55,000 as a result.

Professor Lord Darzi is currently undertaking an independent investigation into the state of the NHS, the findings of which will feed into the Government's 10-year plan to build a health service that is fit for the future. The Government will set out any further priorities on cancer and health in due course.

■ Cancer: Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin Integrated Care System**Helen Morgan:****[331]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department plans to take to improve waiting times for cancer treatment in the Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin Integrated Care Board following an urgent GP referral.

Karin Smyth:

[Holding answer 22 July 2024]: Cancer patients are being failed, waiting too long for a diagnosis and treatment. The latest cancer waiting times data from NHS England shows Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin Integrated Care Board performance is below both the 31-day treatment standard and the 62-day diagnosis and treatment standard. This data is publicly available and can be accessed via NHS England's website, which is available at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/statistics/statistical-work-areas/cancer-waiting-times/>

The Department is committed to improving waiting times for cancer treatment across England, including within the Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin Integrated Care Board. We will start by delivering an extra 40,000 operations, scans, and appointments each week, as the first step to ensuring early diagnosis and faster treatment. Additionally, Lord Darzi is currently undertaking an independent investigation into the state of the National Health Service, the findings of which will feed into the government's 10-year plan to build a health service that is fit for the future.

■ Chronic Fatigue Syndrome: Health Services**Sonia Kumar:****[1395]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to improve (a) diagnosis, (b) treatment and (c) awareness of Myalgic Encephalomyelitis (ME) in the NHS.

Andrew Gwynne:

The Department, through the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR), provides funding for research projects which aim to understand the underlying causes of myalgic encephalomyelitis, also known as chronic fatigue syndrome (ME/CFS), and find new treatments for the condition. For example, the NIHR, together with the Medical Research Council, have funded the world's largest genome-wide association study of ME/CFS. This £3.2 million study, termed DecodeME, will analyse samples from 25,000 people with ME/CFS to search for genetic differences that may indicate underlying causes or an increased risk of developing the condition. By helping us to understand ME/CFS better, this research has the potential to lead to new treatments for the condition.

Integrated care boards (ICBs) are responsible for commissioning specialist ME/CFS services that meet the needs of their population, subject to local prioritisation and funding. The process of commissioning services should take into account best practice guidance such as the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence's

(NICE) guidance on ME/CFS diagnosis and management, published in October 2021.

It is the duty of clinicians to keep themselves apprised of best practice, in particular guidance issued by the NICE. Whilst guidelines are not mandatory, clinicians and commissioners are expected to take them fully into account when designing services to meet the needs of their local population. The NICE promotes its guidance via its website, newsletters, and other media.

In October 2023, the British Association of Clinicians in ME/CFS published the ME/CFS National Services Survey. This report provides insight into the services being delivered for adults, children, and young people with ME/CFS.

The Department has been working with NHS England to develop an e-learning course on ME/CFS for healthcare professionals, to support staff to be able to provide better care and improve patient outcomes. This has involved feedback and input from patients. The Medical Schools Council will promote the NHS England e-learning package on ME/CFS to all United Kingdom medical schools, and encourage medical schools to provide undergraduates with direct patient experience of ME/CFS. A decision on next steps on ME/CFS at the national level will be taken in the coming weeks.

■ Congenital Disorder of Glycosylation

Daisy Cooper: [\[679\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of including a dedicated Congenital Disorders of Glycosylation section in the UK Strategy for Rare Diseases.

Andrew Gwynne:

No assessment has been made of the potential merits of including a dedicated section on congenital disorders of glycosylation in the UK Rare Diseases Framework. The framework was published in 2021, and provides a national vision for how to improve the lives of those living with rare diseases by addressing shared challenges, and does not focus on specific rare conditions.

Daisy Cooper: [\[680\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of establishing a national patient register for Congenital Disorders of Glycosylation.

Andrew Gwynne:

No assessment has been made of the potential merits of establishing a national patient register for congenital disorders of glycosylation. There are no plans in England for a specific registry for this condition. Metabolic patients are included in the National Disease Registration Service, which is now part of NHS England.

■ Coronavirus: Medical Treatments**Daisy Cooper:** [\[1036\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will take steps to reinstate the Covid Medicines Delivery Unit to provide access to antiviral drugs for people with covid-19 infections who are clinically vulnerable.

Andrew Gwynne:

Integrated care boards (ICBs) are responsible for arranging access to the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence's (NICE) recommended treatments, therefore it is not driven by the Department. It is up to ICBs to determine the best model of access for their eligible population.

Antiviral treatments for COVID-19 are now routinely available for National Health Service patients at highest risk of serious illness from COVID-19, in line with the approach to the rollout set out in the NICE's guidance published last year.

■ Dental Health: Hitchin**Alistair Strathern:** [\[1166\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many children aged 11 and under with tooth decay were admitted to hospital for a tooth extraction in Hitchin constituency in each of the last five years.

Stephen Kinnock:

he information requested is not available on a constituency basis, or for the desired age band.

Alistair Strathern: [\[1168\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what information his Department holds on the number and proportion of children aged four and under who were admitted to hospital for a tooth extraction due to decay in Hitchin constituency in each of the last five years.

Stephen Kinnock:

The information requested is not available on a constituency basis, or for the desired age band for each of the last five years.

■ Dental Services: Finance**Rachael Maskell:** [\[107\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of a per capita funding arrangement for NHS dentistry.

Stephen Kinnock:

One of our missions is to rescue and rebuild National Health Service dentistry. To do this, we will reform the dental contract, with a shift to focus on prevention and the retention of NHS dentists.

There are no perfect payment systems, and careful consideration needs to be given to any potential changes to the complex dental system, so that we deliver a system better for patients and professionals.

Between 2011 and 2022, the Department tested a prototype system which included a mix of capitation and activity payments. The results of that trial are available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dental-contract-reform-evaluating-the-results-of-the-prototype-scheme/dental-contract-reform-a-report-on-learnings-from-the-dental-contract-prototype-test-between-april-2016-and-march-2019>

■ Dental Services: Hitchin

Alistair Strathern:

[1167]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to help reduce the time taken to access dental services in Hitchin constituency.

Stephen Kinnock:

The Government plans to tackle the challenges patients face when trying to access National Health Service dental care with a rescue plan to provide 700,000 more urgent dental appointments, and to recruit new dentists to areas that need them most. To rebuild dentistry in the long term and increase access to NHS dental care, we will reform the dental contract, with a shift to focus on prevention and the retention of NHS dentists.

The local integrated care boards (ICBs) for Hitchin are also taking actions to support access to dental services. In May 2024, the Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes ICB introduced a Dental Access Pilot which all patients can access via the NHS111 service. This pilot involves a small cohort of dental contractors working across four areas, providing additional dental sessions on evenings, weekends, and bank holidays.

The Hertfordshire and West Essex ICB has been running a pilot scheme since December 2023 which provides additional urgent appointments during the day and in the evenings, as well as over weekends, to patients who are referred via NHS111.

■ Dental Services: Lincolnshire

Sir John Hayes:

[600]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to increase access to NHS dental services in (a) South Holland and the Deepings constituency and (b) Lincolnshire.

Stephen Kinnock:

The Government plans to tackle the challenges patients face when trying to access National Health Service dental care with a rescue plan to provide 700,000 more urgent dental appointments, and to recruit new dentists to areas that need them most. To rebuild dentistry in the long term and increase access to NHS dental care,

we will reform the dental contract, with a shift to focus on prevention and retention of NHS dentists.

We recognise that access to NHS dental care in Lincolnshire has been challenging over recent years. The Lincolnshire Integrated Care Board (ICB), which includes South Holland and the Deepings constituency, has taken a number of steps to help improve access in this area, but we know more must be done. The steps that the Lincolnshire ICB has recently taken to improve access includes uplifting the minimum Unit of Dental Activity rate to £28 across the region, to help recruit and retain staff, and implementing the New Patient Premium.

■ Dental Services: Macclesfield

Tim Roca: **[781]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate his Department has made of the number of open dentistry practices in Macclesfield constituency accepting adult NHS patients (a) on the most recent date for which figures are available and (b) in 2010.

Stephen Kinnock:

While there is no data available for 2010, as of 10 July 2024, there were 20 open dentistry practices in the Macclesfield constituency, six of which stated they were accepting new adult National Health Service patients when availability allows. This data is sourced from the Find a Dentist website, and is matched to constituencies based on the postcode data shown on the website, with further information available at the following link:

<https://www.nhs.uk/service-search/find-a-dentist>

■ Dental Services: North Shropshire

Helen Morgan: **[330]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department plans to take to improve access to NHS dentist appointments in North Shropshire.

Stephen Kinnock:

This Government plans to tackle the challenges for patients trying to access National Health Service dental care with a rescue plan to provide 700,000 more urgent dental appointments and recruit new dentists to areas that need them most. To rebuild dentistry in the long term and increase access to NHS dental care, we will reform the dental contract, with a shift to focus on prevention and the retention of NHS dentists.

The Integrated Care Board (ICB) has taken steps to improve access to NHS dental care in North Shropshire, but we know more needs to be done. The ICB is ensuring that undelivered NHS dental activity is redistributed to other practices to help support access to care.

Four practices across the North Shropshire parliamentary constituency recently saw an uplift to their Unit of Dental Activity (UDA) rate to £28. This should help support

recruitment and retention of NHS dentists in this area. In addition, a new dental practice in Oswestry has increased their contracted UDAs and will do so again in April 2025.

■ **Dental Services: North West Norfolk**

James Wild: [\[687\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to improve access to NHS dentistry in North West Norfolk constituency.

Jess Asato: [\[733\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department plans to take to increase access to NHS dentists in (a) Lowestoft and (b) Beccles.

Stephen Kinnock:

The Government plans to tackle the challenges patients face when trying to access National Health Service dental care with a rescue plan to provide 700,000 more urgent dental appointments, and to recruit new dentists to areas that need them most. To rebuild dentistry in the long term and increase access to NHS dental care, we will reform the dental contract, with a shift to focus on prevention and retention of NHS dentists.

The Norfolk and Waveney Integrated Care Board has been working with 23 dental practices to introduce a new Urgent Treatment Service, which is now treating 1,800 people per month, and will be investing in Child Focused Dental Practices to offer treatment to vulnerable children and young people.

■ **Fractures: Health Services**

Jim Shannon: [\[73\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to roll out Fracture Liaison Services.

Andrew Gwynne:

More than 500,000 fragility fractures occur every year, and up to 40% of fracture patients will suffer another fracture. I am pleased to reiterate the Government's commitment to expanding access to fracture liaison services. The Department is working closely with NHS England to develop plans to ensure better quality and access to these important preventive services.

■ **Gender Dysphoria: Children**

Jim Allister: [\[333\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has a planned timetable for making the ban on administering puberty blockers to children permanent.

Karin Smyth:

[Holding answer 22 July 2024]: The Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, has made clear his intention to consult on putting in place a permanent ban subject to the outcome of legal proceedings.

As this matter is subject to legal proceedings, it would not be appropriate to comment further at this time.

■ General Practitioners**Blake Stephenson:**[\[900029\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to help ensure new GP surgeries are established in areas of population growth.

Stephen Kinnock:

GPs have been neglected for too long. They are under-resourced, struggling to cope, and patients pay the price.

We know that there is pressure on primary care estates and service provision in areas of high population growth.

General practice provides high quality care, and we are committed to shifting the focus of care out of hospitals and into the community.

■ General Practitioners: Hitchin**Alistair Strathern:**[\[1165\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an estimate of the number of people who have been waiting more than four weeks for a GP appointment in Hitchin constituency.

Stephen Kinnock:

The Hitchin constituency sits within the Hertfordshire and West Essex Integrated Care Board where, in May 2024, 649,000 general practice appointments were delivered. Of those, 29,000 appointments, or 4.1%, were delivered 28 days after booking, 0.7% less than the national average.

In the 12 months up to May 2024, more than 156,000 appointments, which are not usually booked in advance, were delivered more than 28 days after they were booked. There are a number of factors which can influence the timing of appointments, and it is not possible to estimate the time between the patient's first attempt to contact their surgery and an appointment.

■ General Practitioners: Recruitment**Tim Roca:**[\[780\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to review the Additional Roles Reimbursement Scheme in relation to general practice.

Stephen Kinnock:

The Additional Roles Reimbursement Scheme is subject to annual review as part of the consultation on the general practice contract with professional and patient representatives. NHS England works closely with the Department to implement any changes identified as part of this process.

Health Professions: Regulation**Daisy Cooper:**[\[403\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the report entitled Regulating healthcare professionals, protecting the public, consultation response: analysis, published on 17 February 2023, if he will make it his policy to remove the five-year rule in relation to regulators being able to consider fitness to practise concerns.

Karin Smyth:

The Government will consider this issue as part of wider policy work on regulations for healthcare professionals.

Hospices: Finance**Julia Buckley:**[\[900034\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment his Department has made of the adequacy of the level of funding for hospices.

Stephen Kinnock:

We want a society where every person receives high-quality, compassionate care, including at the end of their life. I know that hospices provide fantastic services to many people.

The government is going to shift the focus of healthcare out of the hospital and into the community.

We recognise the value of the voluntary sector, including hospices, and we will continue to work closely with the sector to understand the pressures they are under.

Hospitals: Shropshire**Stuart Anderson:**[\[239\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department plans to provide £312 million in funding for Shropshire's Hospital Transformation programme.

Karin Smyth:

We are committed to delivering the Shrewsbury and Telford Hospital Transformation Programme as part of the wider National Health Service upgrades programme.

This is backed by £312 million of capital investment and will improve services and patient flow across Royal Shrewsbury Hospital in Shrewsbury and Princess Royal Hospital in Telford.

■ Medical Equipment: Waste Disposal

Dr Rupa Huq:

[\[116\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to tackle equipment waste in the NHS.

Karin Smyth:

[Holding answer 24 July 2024]: In 2020, NHS England set out its commitment to reducing its environmental impact, including by increasing the reuse and recycling of medical equipment. This commitment is then applied locally, taking into account local priorities, through local Green Plans.

NHS England also collaborates with NHS Supply Chain to increase availability of reusable products and supports local NHS organisations through the publication of guidance and resources to help with implementing changes.

The Department is also currently considering further opportunities for more efficient and sustainable use of medical technology. We look forward to updating the House at the earliest opportunity.

■ North Devon Hospital

Ian Roome:

[\[260\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will expedite delivery of the Our Future Hospital programme funding for North Devon District Hospital to ensure that the new hospital facilities will be completed before 2031.

Karin Smyth:

The National Health Service is broken, and the Government is determined to fix it. We recognise the need for investment in NHS estates across the country, including at the North Devon District Hospital. We will provide the investment and reform needed to get patients the care they deserve.

My Rt hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care has asked for an urgent report on the degree to which the New Hospital Programme is funded, and a realistic timetable for delivery. He will consider this carefully then report back to patients, clinicians, and local communities to confirm any possible revisions to the schedule.

■ Period Poverty

Sonia Kumar:

[\[772\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps her Department is taking to tackle period poverty.

Karin Smyth:

Since 2019 the National Health Service has made free period products available to every hospital patient who needs them, including long-term in-patients. The Department for Education's period product scheme provides access to free period

products for all state-funded primary and secondary schools, as well as Government funded 16- to 19-year-old education organisations in England. Since 1 January 2021, a zero rate of VAT has applied to sanitary products, and in January 2024 this was extended to include period pants.

■ Pharmacy

Rachael Maskell: [\[805\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to respond to the Third Report of the Health and Social Care Committee of Session 2023-24 on Pharmacy, HC 140, published on 29 May 2024.

Stephen Kinnock:

[Holding answer 24 July 2024]: My Rt hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care is committed to responding to the report published by the Health and Social Care Committee ahead of his next appearance before the committee. Together we are considering the report's recommendations, and the Department and NHS England are currently in consultation with Community Pharmacy England on many of the matters raised in the report.

■ Pharmacy: North Cornwall

Ben Maguire: [\[249\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to expand community pharmacy provision in (a) Bodmin and (b) North Cornwall.

Stephen Kinnock:

Pharmacies play a vital role in our healthcare system. We are committed to expanding the role of pharmacies and to better utilising the skills of pharmacists and pharmacy technicians, including by cutting red tape. That includes making prescribing part of the services delivered by community pharmacists.

Local Authorities are required to publish Pharmaceutical Needs Assessments every three years to assess the need for pharmaceutical services in their area. Intergrated care boards are required to consider these assessments when commissioning services to meet their population's need.

■ Primary Health Care

Fred Thomas: [\[900028\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the adequacy of access to primary care services.

Stephen Kinnock:

Too many patients are finding it impossible to access care. In May, a staggering 1.4 million patients waited for over a month for an appointment.

That is why we are committed to: fix the front door to the NHS; bring back the family doctor; and shift the focus of care away from hospitals and into the community.

Sarah Coombes:

[\[900030\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the adequacy of access to primary care services.

Stephen Kinnock:

Too many patients are finding it impossible to access care. In May, a staggering 1.4 million patients waited for over a month for an appointment.

That is why we are committed to: fix the front door to the NHS; bring back the family doctor; and shift the focus of care away from hospitals and into the community.

■ Social Services: Labour Turnover and Recruitment

Paula Barker:

[\[508\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to improve recruitment and retention in the adult social care sector.

Stephen Kinnock:

[Holding answer 24 July 2024]: The government recognises that there are ongoing challenges with domestic recruitment in adult social care and that the sector has become overly reliant on international recruitment. While the adult social care workforce in England grew by 4.2% in 2023/24, the number of posts in adult social care filled by people with a British nationality has decreased.

The government recognises the scale of reforms needed to make the adult social care sector attractive, to support sustainable workforce growth and reduce the reliance on international recruitment.

■ Social Services: Pay

Paula Barker:

[\[512\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to improve pay across the adult social care sector.

Stephen Kinnock:

Ensuring workers in the United Kingdom receive fair pay for their work is a key pillar of the Plan to Make Work Pay. Building on the foundations of the creation of the National Minimum Wage, we will make sure that that minimum wage is a real living wage that people can live on. We will change the Low Pay Commission's remit so that wages will reflect the need for pay to consider the cost of living. The Government has also committed to removing age bands so that every adult worker benefits, and we will work to ensure that the living wage is properly enforced.

In addition to these changes, we know that those working in social care have been ignored for too long. They will be at the heart of our initial reforms and we will start by engaging with the sector to deliver a long overdue new deal for care workers. This will include establishing the first ever Fair Pay Agreement for care professionals, working with trade unions and workers, and learning from countries where Fair Pay Agreements operate successfully.

■ Tobacco and Vapes Bill

Tracy Gilbert:

[\[1132\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions he has had with the Scottish Government on the Tobacco and Vapes Bill.

Andrew Gwynne:

My Rt hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care has been discussing the new United Kingdom-wide Tobacco and Vapes Bill with Neil Gray, the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care for Scotland, and will send formal correspondence prior to its introduction. As the bill covers the whole of the UK, the Department will stay in close contact with all our devolved government counterparts, throughout the passage of the bill.

Department officials have engaged frequently with officials from Public Health Scotland, and the rest of the devolved governments, to help shape and develop proposals for new legislation. Each of the devolved governments, including the Scottish Government, are in support of a new and strengthened bill, and the benefits it will provide to the health of our nations. Once the bill has been introduced to the UK Parliament, the devolved governments will seek consent motions from their respective legislatures, including the Scottish Parliament.

■ Watford Hospital: Construction

Daisy Cooper:

[\[404\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will visit West Hertfordshire Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust within his first 100 days to be briefed on plans for the construction of the new hospital at Watford General.

Daisy Cooper:

[\[405\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he will retain the previous Government's commitment to release funds to West Hertfordshire Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust for the purpose of commencing construction of the new hospital at Watford General before the end of 2026.

Karin Smyth:

The National Health Service is broken, and the Government is determined to fix it. We recognise the need for investment in NHS estates across the country, including at Watford General Hospital. We will provide the investment and reform needed to get patients the care they deserve.

My Rt hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care has asked for an urgent report on the degree to which the New Hospital Programme is funded, and a realistic timetable for delivery. He will consider this carefully then report back to patients, clinicians, and local communities to confirm any possible revisions to the schedule.

HOME OFFICE**■ Asylum: Hotels****Martin McCluskey:**[\[538\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what plans she has to end the use of hotels for asylum seekers.

Dame Angela Eagle:

This government will end the costly chaos in the asylum system by cleaning the previous government's backlog of claims, in order to end hotel use and save the taxpayer billions. We aim to return to the use of long-standing dispersed accommodation as soon as possible.

■ Asylum: Temporary Accommodation**Mr Jonathan Brash:**[\[359\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department makes an assessment of the socio-economic background of an area when determining the location of asylum accommodation.

Dame Angela Eagle:

The Home Office has a set of asylum accommodation plans which set out how much Dispersal Accommodation is appropriate for each local authority. The Home office has developed an indexing tool which has helped to ensure that this is done in an evidence-based manner, factoring in a range of socio-economic factors, for example homelessness, pressures on GPs and hate crime. When procuring accommodation in line with those plans, our accommodation providers consult with local authorities who have the opportunity to set out any concerns and to signpost our accommodation providers to possible alternative properties.

The Home Office will continue to review the appropriateness of sites for use as asylum accommodation and remains committed to regularly engaging with local authorities and key stakeholders as part of this process.

■ Care Workers: Migrant Workers**Paula Barker:**[\[713\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will undertake a review of the treatment by agencies of staff recruited from overseas to work in the adult social care sector through the Health and Care Worker Visa scheme in respect of (a) working arrangements, (b) living conditions and (c) modern slavery practices.

Seema Malhotra:

The Home Office keeps all its policies under review, including the Health and Care visa. We will work across government to carefully consider policies relating to the treatment of internationally recruited care workers.

The Government will ensure that those who commit significant offences under UK employment law are not able to sponsor overseas workers to come to the UK. Workplace exploitation which allows migration to undercut British workers will end.

The Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC) has issued a code of practice for recruiters in the health and social care sector, as well as detailed guidance for overseas candidates on their rights in the UK and how to avoid being exploited by employers and third-party agencies.

- Code of practice: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/applying-for-health-and-social-care-jobs-in-the-uk-from-abroad>.
- Guidance for candidates: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/applying-for-health-and-social-care-jobs-in-the-uk-from-abroad>.

■ Fire and Rescue Services: Safety

Paula Barker: [709]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department will take to ensure that Fire Authorities maintain nationally agreed safety standards.

Paula Barker: [711]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what guidance has been issued by her Department to Fire Authorities on the impact to safety standards of riding (a) three, (b) four and (c) five firefighters on an appliance.

Dame Diana Johnson:

Expectations of FRAs from Government are set out in the Fire and Rescue National Framework, which all FRAs must have due regard to. Whilst the National Framework does not include explicit reference to operational safety standards, I will consider if this should be included in due course.

Safety standards in the workplace, and when responding to incidents are, of course, extremely important operational issues which we would expect Fire and Rescue Authorities to pay due attention to.

■ Fire and Rescue Services: Standards

Paula Barker: [710]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment her Department has made of the adequacy of the governance of fire and rescue services.

Dame Diana Johnson:

We have not undertaken an assessment of the governance of Fire and Rescue Services but recognise its importance in ensuring effective delivery of public safety outcomes.

We continue to work with Fire and Rescue Authorities, the Local Government Association and the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners to seek governance improvements.

■ Migration Impacts Fund

Paula Barker:

[712]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment her Department has made of the potential merits of introducing a migration impacts fund.

Seema Malhotra:

The Government has not made a recent assessment of a migration impacts fund.

The Home Office is continuing to work with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government on supporting those who have resettled in the United Kingdom.

■ Undocumented Migrants: English Channel

Jim Shannon:

[80]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she plans to take to tackle the number of small boat crossings.

Dame Angela Eagle:

Dangerous small boat crossings are undermining our border security and putting lives at risk. The recent tragic incidents in the Channel underscore that danger and show why it is imperative to tackle the criminal gangs responsible for facilitating them.

The new Border Security Command (BSC) has been launched. It will be led by a new Border Security Commander, reporting directly to the Home Secretary, who will provide strategic direction to the National Crime Agency, police, intelligence agencies, Immigration Enforcement, and Border Force to relentlessly pursue and smash the criminal gangs.

Through the new BSC, work is already underway to recruit more investigators, experts and analysts, and new counter-terrorism style powers will equip law enforcement partners to pursue, disrupt and arrest those responsible for this vile trade.

We will continue to work closely with our French counterparts and seek closer cooperation with our European and International partners to prevent further dangerous crossings and reduce risk to life at sea.

HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

■ Affordable Housing

Grahame Morris:

[899]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will (a) review the definition of affordable housing and (b) ensure that definition is linked to average wages by region.

Matthew Pennycook:

Affordable housing is defined for planning purposes in the National Planning Policy Framework. The Government will be publishing a consultation on national planning policy before the end of July.

We are committed to the biggest increase in social and affordable housebuilding in a generation. New development will allow us to deliver thousands of affordable homes, including more for Social Rent. We will work with councils and housing associations to build capacity and ensure we build the homes people need.

Anglesey Freeport**Llinos Medi:**[\[1070\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what her planned timetable is for making a decision on the Anglesey Freeport draft Outline Business Case.

Alex Norris:

The new administration's priority is to fully understand the impacts of interventions in places before taking any major decisions. Officials will be in touch with local stakeholders as soon as Ministers have confirmed their future plans. Details of the agreed process for appraising Welsh Freeport business cases is published on gov.uk.

Council Housing: Construction**Grahame Morris:**[\[898\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what proportion of national house building targets will be for council housing in the next five years.

Matthew Pennycook:

The Government is committed to the biggest increase in social and affordable housebuilding in a generation and we will work with councils and housing associations to achieve this. More announcements will be made in due course.

Housing: Construction**Mrs Kemi Badenoch:**[\[1002\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to the speech by the Chancellor of the Exchequer on 8 July 2024, how her Department defines stalled housing sites.

Mrs Kemi Badenoch:[\[1003\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to the speech of the Chancellor of the Exchequer on 8 July 2024, for what reasons the project at Langley Sutton Coldfield was stalled; and whether her Department plans to provide additional funding to that project.

Mrs Kemi Badenoch: [\[1008\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to the speech of the Chancellor of the Exchequer on 8 July 2024, for what reasons the project at Liverpool Central Docks was stalled; and whether her Department plans to provide additional funding to that project.

Mrs Kemi Badenoch: [\[1009\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to the speech of the Chancellor of the Exchequer on 8 July 2024, for what reasons the project at Worcester Parkway was stalled; and whether her Department plans to provide additional funding to that project.

Mrs Kemi Badenoch: [\[1010\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to the speech of the Chancellor of the Exchequer on 8 July 2024, for what reason the project at Northstowe was stalled; and whether her Department plans to provide additional funding to that project.

Matthew Pennycook:

The Government has identified a large number of housing schemes where progress is behind plan.

There are a wide variety of site-specific reasons as to why the schemes in question are either not progressing at the pace required or have stalled entirely.

Through the accelerator taskforce, barriers to development on such schemes will be identified and where appropriate the necessary support will then be provided to accelerate delivery, including funding in some instances.

■ Planning: Staff

Mrs Kemi Badenoch: [\[1004\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to the speech by the Chancellor of the Exchequer on 8 July 2024, how much funding will be allocated by her Department to support the recruitment of 300 more planning officers.

Mrs Kemi Badenoch: [\[1005\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to the speech by the Chancellor of the Exchequer on 8 July 2024, when local authorities will be given additional funding to recruit planning officers.

Mrs Kemi Badenoch: [\[1006\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to the speech of the Chancellor of the Exchequer on 8 July 2024, whether additional funding will be provided for the recruitment of 300 planning officers.

Mrs Kemi Badenoch:

[1007]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to the speech of the Chancellor of the Exchequer on 8 July 2024, how many additional planning officers will be recruited in each local authority.

Matthew Pennycook:

In our manifesto, we committed to hiring 300 planners over the next five years. We are looking at a variety of options to ensure that these are recruited in a way that best supports housing delivery. We will update Parliament on our progress in the usual manner, including on funding.

The department's wider Planning Capability and Capacity programme continues to provide the direct support to Local Planning Authorities that is needed now and to develop the recruitment pipeline into the planning profession.

■ Waking Watch Replacement Fund

Ruth Cadbury:

[964]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how much and what proportion of the Waking Watch Replacement Fund was spent.

Ruth Cadbury:

[965]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many residential flats in Brentford and Isleworth constituency have received funding from the Building Safety Fund.

Ruth Cadbury:

[966]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what estimate she has made of the number of residential buildings in (a) London and (b) England which have been granted funding from the building safety fund where work has not begun.

Alex Norris:

Data on the progress and costs of the Waking Watch Relief and Replacement Funds, launched prior to 2023, are published as part of the [Building Safety Remediation: monthly data release - June 2024 - GOV.UK](#). The Waking Watch Replacement Fund 2023 opened on 25 May 2023 and closed for new applications on 31 March 2024. Waking Watch Replacement Fund 2023 data is not currently reported as part of the Building Safety Remediation Monthly Data Release, however we will include full fund data within future releases in due course.

As of the end of June 2024, there are currently 14 buildings eligible for remediation through the Building Safety Fund in the constituency of Brentford and Isleworth. Of these 14, it is estimated that 11 buildings have received funding for their remediation, covering approximately 700 residential units across the constituency.

As of the end of June 2024, there are 423 London buildings that have had grant funding approved, of these 169 have not started on site building remediation. Outside

of London, there are 315 buildings that have had grant funding approved. Of these, 76 have not started on site building remediation.

JUSTICE

■ Community Orders: Staffordshire

Adam Jogee: [744]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment she has made of the effectiveness of community service sentencing in reducing levels of reoffending in (a) Newcastle-under-Lyme constituency and (b) Staffordshire.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

Across England and Wales, community service, now known as Unpaid Work (UPW), is primarily a punitive measure, however it can contribute to an individual's rehabilitation by providing an opportunity to gain vocational or skills-based on the job training while giving back to the society they have offended in. For those with an identified skills or training need, a percentage of their UPW hours can also be spent on education, training and employment activities to support their desistance from crime.

As it is primarily intended and used as a punitive part of a sentence, we do not measure the impact of having an UPW requirement on reoffending rates. This information could only be obtained at a disproportionate cost.

Tackling reoffending is crucial to reducing crime, reducing demand on prison and probation services and protecting the public. This Government will continue to work with partners across the criminal justice systems to reduce reoffending and giving offenders the tools to move away from crime.

■ Crossbows: Convictions

Sir John Hayes: [27]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many people have been convicted of violent crimes involving a crossbow in the last five years.

Heidi Alexander:

The Ministry of Justice publishes information on the number of defendants convicted for a wide range of offences against specific Home Office offence codes in the [Outcomes by Offence data tool: December 2023](#).

However, it is not possible to separately identify offences specifically involving a crossbow from a range of other violent offences. This information to enable such a split may be held on court records, but to examine individual court records would be of disproportionate cost.

■ Domestic Abuse: Family Proceedings

Rachael Maskell:

[969]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps she is taking to ensure that the family court system (a) provides adequate support for court users who have experienced abuse by their (i) partner and (ii) former partner and (b) cannot be misused by perpetrators of domestic abuse.

Alex Davies-Jones:

This Government is committed to halving incidences of violence against women and girls; a key element of this is ensuring that the courts are safe and supportive environments for victims, including within the family court.

We are committed to supporting children, parents and carers throughout the family justice system, and will set out a package of measures to see this done across the course of this Parliament.

Rachael Maskell:

[970]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if she will take steps to ensure that legal aid is available to people using the family courts who have been subject to (a) financial control and (b) domestic abuse.

Heidi Alexander:

The Government is committed to supporting victims of domestic abuse.

In private family proceedings, legal aid is available for child arrangements, financial remedy proceedings and divorce for domestic abuse victims, including those subjected to economic abuse, and where the child is at risk of abuse, subject to providing the required evidence and meeting the means and merits tests.

Emergency representation is available for the purpose of obtaining urgent protection, such as non-molestation orders. We understand how important it is that anyone who needs a protective order can access legal advice and representation quickly, whatever their means. An eligibility waiver is available for victims of domestic abuse applying for an injunction or other protective order, which means they can receive legal aid even if they would not otherwise pass the means test, though they may then have to pay a financial contribution towards their legal costs.

In public family proceedings, means-free legal aid is available for parents and children in public family law children cases, including care proceedings and adoption proceedings under the Children Act 1989 and in related proceedings. Legal aid is also available to prospective kinship carers, subject to the means and merits test. Victims of domestic abuse do not need to provide evidence of abuse when accessing legal aid for public family matters.

■ Legal Aid Scheme

Jim Shannon:

[947]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether she has had discussions with the devolved Administrations on ensuring value for money in legal aid provision.

Heidi Alexander:

Legal aid is a devolved matter in Scotland and Northern Ireland. My Rt. Hon. friend the Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice has not yet had the opportunity to discuss legal aid with the devolved governments. Ministers look forward to working with their counterparts in the devolved governments on a range of issues, including legal aid.

■ Prisoners' Release

Ruth Cadbury:

[967]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many and what proportion of prisoners released between October 2023 and June 2024 under the End of Custody Supervised Licence scheme were subsequently recalled to prison.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

We are constantly monitoring the use of End of Custody Supervised Licence (ECSL) and its impact.

ECSL was implemented in October 2023. Since its operation, the number of ECSL releases between 17 October 2023 and 30 June 2024 was 10,083.

The information requested could only be obtained at a disproportionate cost, because it would require the linkage and reconciliation of multiple administrative datasets.

NORTHERN IRELAND

■ Northern Ireland Office: Special Advisers

Sammy Wilson:

[41]

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, how many ministerial advisers are employed in his Department.

Hilary Benn:

As of 24 July 2024, the Northern Ireland Office employs one ministerial Special Advisor.

Sammy Wilson:

[42]

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, how many Irish citizens are employed as ministerial advisers in his Department.

Hilary Benn:

The Northern Ireland Office does not hold data on citizenship held by staff. As per the terms of the 1998 Agreement, this Government recognises the right of all people of

Northern Ireland to identify themselves and be accepted as Irish or British, or both, according to preference.

■ **Northern Ireland Office: Staff**

Sammy Wilson: [39]

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, how many staff are employed in his Department.

Hilary Benn:

As at 30 June 2024, the Northern Ireland Office employs 172 staff.

Sammy Wilson: [40]

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, how many Irish citizens are employed in his Department.

Hilary Benn:

The Northern Ireland Office does not hold data on citizenship held by staff. As per the terms of the 1998 Agreement, this Government recognises the right of all people of Northern Ireland to identify themselves and be accepted as Irish or British, or both, according to preference.

PRIME MINISTER

■ **Cabinet**

James Cartlidge: [124]

To ask the Prime Minister, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of inviting the Minister for Veterans' Affairs to Cabinet.

Sir Keir Starmer:

My Rt Hon Friend the Defence Secretary represents veterans at Cabinet. He is supported by my Hon Friend the Member for Birmingham Selly Oak, a former distinguished Royal Marine Officer, whose appointment as Minister for Veterans and People reflects this Government's commitment to delivering for veterans alongside the wider Defence community. This Government will work to ensure veterans and their families get access to the health, housing, employment and other support they need.

SCIENCE, INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY

■ **Artificial Intelligence: EU Law**

Andrew Griffith: [1050]

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, whether he has had recent discussions with his European counterparts on the EU Artificial Intelligence Act, EU Regulation 2024/1689.

Feryal Clark:

I am pleased that we committed in the King's Speech to a targeted approach to AI regulation. As we develop these regulations, we recognise the need to engage with a range of international partners. This includes engaging with the EU, who are a key science and technology partner, to discuss our respective approaches, as well as working alongside them and other partners in the G7, OECD, UN, and other international fora.

Artificial Intelligence: Regulation**Andrew Griffith:**[\[1049\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, whether he has had recent discussions with Cabinet colleagues on the potential merits of bringing forward legislative proposals on artificial intelligence.

Feryal Clark:

As set out in the King's Speech, we will establish appropriate legislation to ensure the safe development of AI models by introducing targeted requirements on a handful of companies developing the most powerful AI systems. We will work with other departments and consult publicly on the details of these proposals before legislation is brought forward.

Department for Science, Innovation and Technology: Public Expenditure**Andrew Griffith:**[\[1071\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what funding has been allocated to transfer the (a) Government Digital Service, (b) Central Digital and Data Office and (c) Incubator for AI from the Cabinet Office to his Department.

Andrew Griffith:[\[1072\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what his planned timetable is for completing the transfer of the (a) Government Digital Service, (b) Central Digital and Data Office and (c) Incubator for AI from the Cabinet Office to his Department.

Feryal Clark:

I refer the Honourable Member to the statement made by the Prime Minister about Machinery of Government changes on [24 July 2024](#). Preparations for the planned Machinery of Government change between the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology and the Cabinet Office are underway. This includes the move of Government Digital Service, Central Digital and Data Office and Incubator for AI into Department for Science, Innovation and Technology. The planned timetable and details for completing the transfer of staff as part of this Machinery of Government change has not yet been confirmed and we will advise in due course.

■ ICT: Innovation**Saqib Bhatti:** [\[1042\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what his planned timetable is for delivering the exascale supercomputer facility in Edinburgh.

Feryal Clark:

The programme remains subject to HMG business case approvals, and we will provide further updates in due course.

SCOTLAND**■ Miscarriages of Justice: Scotland****Jamie Stone:** [\[1017\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, what discussions he has had with the Scottish Parliament on tackling the time taken for compensation claims in relation to miscarriages of justice to be processed.

Ian Murray:

The UK Government is committed to the effective delivery of compensation schemes in relation to miscarriages of justice.

Scottish Parliament has been in recess since the formation of the new Government, so no discussions have taken place. However, through the resetting of the relationship between the UK and Scottish Governments, Scotland's two governments will be able to work together in addressing the causes of delays to miscarriages of justice claims in order to bring justice to those affected.

TRANSPORT**■ A361****Anna Sabine:** [\[241\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if she will make an assessment of safety measures in place for the A361 around Frome.

Lilian Greenwood:

Somerset Council are the relevant highways authority for the A361 around Frome and are responsible for any assessments on road safety. However, I am aware that Somerset's Road Safety Team have been active in engaging with the community and are working with the Police over further road safety engagement and enforcement plans for later this year. I understand they are also undertaking a reassessment of traffic engineering measures at certain locations to see if any measures might help to reduce the likelihood of collisions occurring.

■ A39: Bypasses**Ben Maguire:** [250]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether she has made a recent assessment of the potential merits of the proposed A39 Camelford bypass.

Ben Maguire: [251]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if she will visit Camelford to discuss the proposed A39 Camelford bypass with (a) residents, (b) businesses and (c) the Hon. Member for North Cornwall.

Lilian Greenwood:

The Department is committed to putting transport at the heart of mission-driven government to support economic growth, promote social mobility and tackle regional inequality. The Chancellor has committed to presenting to Parliament, before summer recess, an assessment of the state of the new Government's spending inheritance. We will consider proposals for the A39 Camelford bypass alongside other future road projects and will provide an update in due course.

■ Bus Services: Concessions**Mr Richard Holden:** [1040]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 22 July 2024 to Question 459 on Bus Services: Concessions, whether she plans to extend the Get around for £2 bus fare scheme.

Mr Richard Holden: [1041]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 22 July 2024 to Question 459 on Bus Services: Concessions, what her Department's planned timetable is for concluding its urgent consideration on the future of public transport services.

Simon Lightwood:

The government is urgently considering the most effective ways to ensure public transport services are reliable and affordable. We will conclude this as quickly as possible.

Mr Richard Holden: [1388]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 22 July 2024 to Question 459 on Bus Services: Concessions, if her Department will make an assessment of the potential impact of ending the Get around for £2 bus fare scheme this year on levels of (a) national and (b) regional bus use, broken down by bus operator.

Simon Lightwood:

The Department for Transport published an interim report on the £2 fare cap in September 2023 setting out emerging trends in key outcomes from the first two months of the scheme. It is available on GOV.UK at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/evaluation-of-the-2-bus-fare-cap/2-bus-fare-cap-evaluation-interim-report-february-2023>.

Bus patronage appears to be continuing to recover following the COVID-19 pandemic, and people making additional bus trips with the £2 bus fare cap in place are likely to be existing bus users and make a small number of additional trips.

DfT is considering the overall value for money of the £2 fare cap as part of our ongoing evaluation, which will continue over the coming months and provide richer conclusions on its effects and people's attitudes.

■ Cars: Sales

Mr Richard Holden: [\[474\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of bringing forward legislative proposals to restrict the sale of cars to (a) registered UK companies and (b) individuals with driving licences.

Lilian Greenwood:

The Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) has measures in place to ensure that keepers notify them when they buy and sell a vehicle. Based on the latest available data, more than 92 per cent of vehicle keepers are contactable and traceable, based on the information held on the DVLA's records. Of those remaining, the majority will be in the motor trade. There are no current plans to introduce new legislation to restrict the sale of vehicles.

■ Durham Coast Line: Overcrowding

Grahame Morris: [\[896\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps she is taking to help reduce overcrowding on the Durham Coast Line during peak periods.

Grahame Morris: [\[897\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if she will make an assessment of the impact of overcrowding on the Durham Coast Line during peak periods on the health and safety of passengers.

Simon Lightwood:

Rail North Partnership (RNP), through which the department jointly manages Northern Trains' contract with Transport for the North, monitors operators' planned train deployment to ensure this falls within the requirement on them to match capacity to demand. While we have no evidence passengers' safety is being compromised, RNP will discuss the loading on Durham Coast services with Northern and ensure it takes the actions open to it to meet its targets

■ Manchester Metrolink

Mrs Elsie Blundell:

[\[317\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the Draft Greater Manchester Rapid Transit Strategy, published by the Greater Manchester Combined Authority on 10 July 2024, whether she is taking steps to support (a) the extension of the Metrolink to Middleton and (b) delivery of a tram-train link to Heywood.

Simon Lightwood:

The Government has committed to investing £5.7bn in the transport networks of eight city regions in England until 2027 through the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlements (CRSTS). This includes £1.07bn for Greater Manchester. CRSTS supports investments in public and sustainable transport across a range of modes including rail, bus, tram, and walking and cycling. The Greater Manchester CRSTS programme includes the development of a tram-train link to Heywood.

■ Railways

Connor Naismith:

[\[767\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department plans to take to (a) improve connectivity between the North and the Midlands, (b) increase capacity on the West Coast Main Line and (c) utilise Crewe as a transport hub.

Lilian Greenwood:

Transport is an essential part of our mission to rebuild Britain, and this Government is committed to delivering infrastructure that works for the whole country.

We are currently considering options on future rail infrastructure, including how we best support economic growth in the North and Midlands and tackle issues on the West Coast Main Line.

■ Railways: East of England

James Wild:

[\[688\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether his Department plans to provide funding to Network Rail for the Ely Area Capacity Enhancement proposals.

Lilian Greenwood:

Both the Rail Minister and I are early in our tenure as Transport Ministers. As such, he is yet to speak to Network Rail regarding the Ely Area Capacity Enhancement. However, we do recognise the benefits the scheme could bring for freight and passenger rail services in East Anglia. The Department looks forward to discussing these proposals with Network Rail, and other stakeholders, in the near future.

■ Railways: North of England

Paula Barker:

[\[714\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps she plans to take to improve rail connectivity between (a) Liverpool and (b) other northern cities.

Lilian Greenwood:

Transport is an essential part of our mission to rebuild Britain, and this Government is committed to delivering infrastructure that works for the whole country. This includes improving rail connectivity across the north of England.

Re-introducing the High Speed Rail (Crewe – Manchester) Bill is the first step in doing so, by providing powers to develop, construct and operate rail infrastructure that is key to improving inter-regional and northern rail connectivity.

We need a long-term approach to infrastructure and investment which takes account of local transport priorities. We will provide this, and thoroughly review the position we have inherited before setting out more detailed plans in due course.

River Tamar: Bridges

Ben Maguire: [\[783\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what decision she plans to take on the proposed changes to the toll for the Tamar Bridge crossing.

Lilian Greenwood:

An application for revising the Torpoint Crossing tolls (for the Tamar Bridge and the Torpoint Ferry) was made by Cornwall Council and Plymouth City Council on Thursday 2 May 2024. A Public Inquiry in respect of that application is due to begin on 15 October 2024. As this is a live application, I am unable to comment on what the final decision might be.

Ben Maguire: [\[784\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of allocating funding towards the maintenance of the Tamar toll bridge.

Lilian Greenwood:

I recognise that The Tamar Crossings are a very important local issue. The Crossings are funded on a 'user pays' principle from toll income. No funding is received from Government or from the owners of the Tamar Crossings – Plymouth City Council and Cornwall Council. I do not expect this to change.

Roads: Chesterfield

Mr Toby Perkins: [\[884\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what the status is of the Chesterfield Staveley Regeneration route.

Lilian Greenwood:

I am grateful to the Honorable Member for his continued support for the scheme and I would be very happy to meet him to discuss it. The Outline Business Case submitted by Derbyshire County Council has been assessed in detail by officials, who have obtained additional information from Derbyshire County Council to help Ministers in their considerations.

■ Roads: Dunstable and Leighton Buzzard

Alex Mayer:

[729]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what information her Department holds on the number and proportion of miles of roads in (a) Dunstable and (b) Leighton Buzzard that are in poor condition.

Lilian Greenwood:

The Department for Transport collects information on the condition of roads from local highways authorities. Dunstable and Leighton Buzzard make up part of the local highway authority of Central Bedfordshire.

Information on the condition of roads specifically in Dunstable and Leighton Buzzard would be held by the local highway authority of Central Bedfordshire. Unfortunately, it is not held by the Department at this level of granularity.

Information on the condition of roads in England is collected and published by the Department annually here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/road-network-size-and-condition>. However, no information for the condition of roads in Central Bedfordshire has been provided to the Department since the financial year ending March 2019.

The data held by the Department for the financial years ending March 2010 to March 2019 showed that:

- The percentage of A road that should have been considered for maintenance ('red roads') was between 1% and 3% for Central Bedfordshire, while during the same time-period the national level of red road was between 3% and 5%.
- The percentage of red B & C road was between 2% and 5%, whereas the national level was between 6% and 10%.
- The percentage of red Unclassified ('U') road was between 3% and 21%, and the national level was between 15% to 18%.

■ Roads: Graffiti

Sir Christopher Chope:

[865]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if she will take steps to require local highway authorities to remove (a) racist and (b) other offensive graffiti from structures adjacent to the public highway without the authority of the owner.

Lilian Greenwood:

Local highway authorities are responsible for maintaining the highway. This includes the removal of graffiti from publicly owned highway assets, such as bridges, traffic signs, and street furniture, as well as council-owned and other public buildings. The

Department has no plans to extend this requirement to privately owned structures adjacent to the highway.

However, we do expect private owners of structures to act to remove offensive graffiti. If graffiti or flyposting is on private property, councils can issue a Defacement Removal Notice to the property owner, which requires them to remove the graffiti within 28 days.

■ Transport: East Riding

Charlie Dewhirst: [237]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what her policy is on East Riding of Yorkshire Council receiving reallocated HS2 funding.

Lilian Greenwood:

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

TREASURY

■ Banking Hubs

Mr Luke Charters: [347]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps she plans to take to support the provision of bank hubs in local communities across the UK.

Mr Luke Charters: [352]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will make an assessment of the (a) access to and (b) availability of cash for (i) businesses and (ii) consumers in York Outer constituency.

Tulip Siddiq:

The Government is committed to protecting access to cash for individuals and businesses. The most recent analysis undertaken by the FCA on cash access coverage across the UK found that in Q2 2023, over 99% of people in urban areas are within 1 mile of a cash access point offering withdrawals, and over 98% of people in rural areas are within 3 miles of a cash access point offering withdrawals. Further details of this analysis, including a breakdown of cash access coverage by Local Authority District is available on the FCA website:

<https://www.fca.org.uk/publications/data/access-cash-coverage-uk-2023-q2>

The Financial Conduct Authority is the regulator responsible for access to cash further to the Financial Services and Markets Act 2023, with powers to seek to ensure the reasonable provision of cash withdrawal and deposit facilities for individuals and businesses, including free withdrawal services for individuals. The FCA has recently

published its final rules setting out its regulatory approach to protecting access to cash. These can be found on the FCA's website:

<https://www.fca.org.uk/publication/policy/ps24-8.pdf>

The Government also 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.

■ Beer: Excise Duties

Mr Richard Holden: [480]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment her Department has made of the impact of differential duty for draught beer on (a) pubs and (b) clubs.

James Murray:

Under the new alcohol duty system, Draught Relief provides a 9.2% duty reduction on draught beer and cider products below 8.5% alcohol by volume.

The Government is closely monitoring the impact of the recent reforms, including Draught Relief, that took effect on 1 August 2023. It is essential for this evaluation process to allow sufficient time to understand the impacts on the alcohol market, and for HMRC to gather useful and accurate data with which to assess the effects of the reform.

As with all taxes, the Government keeps the alcohol duty system under review during its yearly Budget process.

■ Business Rates

Daisy Cooper: [409]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will make an assessment of the potential impact of existing business rate valuations on (a) high street independent shops and (b) pubs and other hospitality businesses.

James Murray:

The government is committed to a fairer business rates system. In our manifesto, we pledged to level the playing field between the high street and online giants, better incentivise investment, tackle empty properties and support entrepreneurship.

■ Cash Dispensing: Fees and Charges

Mr Richard Holden: [479]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will take steps to ensure the availability of free access to cash.

Tulip Siddiq:

The Government is committed to protecting access to cash for individuals and businesses. The Financial Conduct Authority is the regulator responsible for access to cash further to the Financial Services and Markets Act 2023, with powers to seek

to ensure the reasonable provision of cash withdrawal and deposit facilities for individuals and businesses, including free withdrawal services for individuals. The FCA has recently published its final rules setting out its regulatory approach to protecting access to cash. These can be found here:

<https://www.fca.org.uk/publication/policy/ps24-8.pdf>

■ Fishguard: Republic of Ireland

Ben Lake: **[1020]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what the volume of trade was between Fishguard and the Republic of Ireland in the (a) latest period for which data is available and (b) corresponding period in 2021.

James Murray:

The volume of trade between Fishguard and the Republic of Ireland from May 2021 and May 2024 is as follows:

Table 1: Republic of Ireland trade with Fishguard port, imports and exports trade value and net mass (1)

| | EXPORTS TO IRELAND | | IMPORTS FROM IRELAND (2) | |
|------------------|-----------------------|---------------|--------------------------|---------------|
| | Statistical Value (£) | Net Mass (kg) | Statistical Value (£) | Net Mass (kg) |
| Fishguard | | | | |
| May 2021 | 14,187,755 | 3,870,278 | - | - |
| May 2024 | 19,796,270 | 8,577,563 | 15,984,165 | 13,047,190 |

Data Source: Overseas Trade in Goods Statistics HMRC

(1) The data is based on customs declarations which have listed "Fishguard" as the port of departure/arrival. Where it has been left blank the movement is not assigned to a port. (2) HMRC trade data does not contain port data for 2021 imports as Staged Customs Controls (SCC) allowed an extended period for businesses to complete their declarations. During this period HMRC sourced intra-EU data from Intrastat declarations which do not collect port/location information.

■ Nurseries

Ms Stella Creasy: **[945]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will make an estimate of the value of income tax exemption under the workplace nursery scheme in each year from (a) 2018-19 to (b) 2023-24.

Ms Stella Creasy:

[946]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will make an estimate of the value of national insurance contributions that were exempted under workplace nursery schemes in each financial year between 2018-19 and 2023-24.

James Murray:

HMRC publishes the estimated cost to the Exchequer and number of claimants of various tax reliefs.

The estimated value of Income Tax and Class 1A National Insurance Contributions relief for “*Employer Supported Childcare including workplace nurseries*” can be found in the “Multiple_tax_types” worksheet of [Estimated cost of non-structural tax reliefs \(December 2023\)](#).

The figures include three forms of employer-supported childcare (ESC): workplace nurseries, childcare vouchers and directly contracted childcare. Use of these reliefs is not reportable to HMRC and so administrative data on their use is not available, nor is a detailed breakdown between the three forms of ESC. The introduction of Tax-Free Childcare and closure of childcare vouchers and directly contracted childcare to new entrants leads to the continuing reduction in the cost of ESC.

■ Tax Avoidance

Sir Iain Duncan Smith:

[864]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will commission an independent review into the loan charge.

James Murray:

The Chancellor and I know that the loan charge is a very important matter for many members and their constituents. We have been considering this matter since taking office and will provide an update in due course.

WORK AND PENSIONS

■ Bereavement Benefits

Mr Luke Charters:

[354]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether her Department plans to implement the second bullet point of recommendation two in section seven of the report by the UK Commission on Bereavement entitled Bereavement is everyone's business, published in October 2022.

Andrew Western:

This recommendation concerns extending Bereavement Support Payment to 6 years or until completion of secondary education for the youngest child, from its current duration of 18 months. However, BSP is not a cost-of-living benefit but is intended to help with the immediate costs of bereavement. Where longer-term income support is needed, individuals can look to benefits such as Universal Credit, which have been

specifically designed to provide ongoing assistance with living costs. Whilst we welcome the report, we have no current plans to change the duration of bereavement support payment.

■ Food Banks

Neil Coyle:

[\[962\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if her Department will make an assessment of the potential merits of setting a target for the level of food bank usage by the end of this Parliament.

Alison McGovern:

We are committed to tackling poverty and ending the mass dependence on emergency food parcels. We will be considering the best way to achieve these important objectives over the coming weeks and months working through the new Ministerial Taskforce on Child Poverty which will oversee the development of a cross-government Child Poverty Strategy.

■ Household Support Fund

Rachael Maskell:

[\[971\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make it her policy to extend the Housing Support Fund.

Alison McGovern:

£500 million is being provided to enable the current Household Support Fund, including funding for Devolved Administrations through the Barnett formula to be spent at their discretion. This means Local Authorities in England are receiving £421 million to support those in need locally.

The current Household Support Fund will be in place until 30 September 2024.

As a new government, we are reviewing all policies, including the Household Support Fund.

■ Pensions and Social Security Benefits: Armed Forces

Andrew Bowie:

[\[500\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will take steps to ensure that (a) War Pensions and (b) Armed Forces Compensation Scheme awards are not counted as income for the purpose of calculating (i) benefits and (ii) pensions.

Andrew Western:

There are no plans to change the ways in which War Pensions and Armed Forces Compensation Scheme (AFCS) awards interact with State Pensions and benefits. They are already fully ignored in the State Pension and in Universal Credit.

The first £10 per week of a War Pension or AFCS award is disregarded in: income-related Employment and Support allowance; income-based Jobseeker's Allowance; and, Income Support. Armed Forces Independence Payments are fully disregarded in

these benefits, and can also allow the recipient to qualify for an additional disability amount. Furthermore, these are legacy benefits, in the process of being replaced by Universal Credit, in which War Pensions and AFCS are ignored.

By default, the first £10 per week of a War Pension or Armed Forces Compensation Scheme is disregarded in Housing Benefit. Furthermore, a discretionary scheme allows local authorities to fully disregard them.

In relation to Pension Credit, the first £10 of any War Pension payments or AFCS award made due to injury or disablement is disregarded. Four additions to the War Disablement Pension are completely disregarded: Constant Attendance Allowance; Mobility Supplement; Severe Disablement Occupational Allowance; and dependency increases for anyone other than the applicant or her/his partner. War Pensions and AFCS awards are a qualifying income for the Savings Credit element of Pension Credit, which is available to those who reached State Pension age before April 2016. Armed Forces Independence Payments are fully disregarded in Pension Credit and can also allow the recipient to qualify for an additional disability amount.

■ Social Security Benefits: Disability

Sorcha Eastwood:

[\[536\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of allowing children and young people with cancer to apply for (a) Personal Independence Payment, (b) Disability Living Allowance and (c) other disability benefits immediately following their diagnosis.

Sir Stephen Timms:

Other than for those who are nearing the end of their life, the extra costs disability benefits, such as Personal Independence Payment (PIP) and Disability Living Allowance (DLA), are assessed on the basis of the needs arising from a long-term health condition or disability rather than a diagnosis. PIP has replaced DLA for working age people. DLA is claimed by children under the age of 16 years old. Children and young people who have been diagnosed with cancer and who face extra costs as a result of their ill health can apply for DLA immediately. The qualifying period does not apply to DLA claimants who are terminally ill and do not have to satisfy the three-month qualifying period. They will have their claim fast tracked and are eligible for the higher-rate care component from the date of claim.

The Department supports people nearing the end of life through the Special Rules for End of Life, as they will incur additional costs for additional care and support. We enable children and young people who are nearing the end of their lives to get faster, easier access to the extra costs disability benefits with a guaranteed entitlement.

■ State Retirement Pensions: Women

Graeme Downie:

[1074]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make an estimate of the number of women there are who were born after 6 April 1950 in (a) Dunfermline and Dollar constituency and (b) Fife.

Emma Reynolds:

The department does not hold the information required to answer this request. Please see below a link to a publication from the National Records of Scotland that holds data pertaining to this request.

[UK Parliamentary Constituency Population Estimates \(2011 Data Zone based\) | National Records of Scotland \(nrscotland.gov.uk\)](#)

■ Unemployment: Young People

Jim Shannon:

[83]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department is taking to help tackle unemployment for people aged between 18 and 24.

Alison McGovern:

The Department understands the negative effects of unemployment can be particularly pronounced for young people and can have longstanding implications on their future earnings potential and life chances. This is why DWP have a particular focus on ensuring young people are supported into employment, whilst also recognising their needs will vary depending on where they live and their own individual circumstances. Existing operations will be reviewed in line with the new government's priorities.

The Government's Back to Work Plan is critical to growing the economy. This includes implementing a new national jobs and career service to help get more people into work alongside a Youth Guarantee, meaning more quality opportunities for training, an apprenticeship or help to find work for all young people aged 18-21 years old, to prevent them becoming excluded from the world of work at a young age.

DWP currently provides young people aged 16-24 with labour market support through an extensive range of interventions at a national and local level. This includes flexible provision driven by local need, nationwide employment programmes and support delivered by work coaches based in our Jobcentres and in local communities working alongside partners.

■ Women against State Pension Inequality

Mary Kelly Foy:

[279]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether her Department plans to meet with representatives from the Women Against State Pension Inequality campaign.

Emma Reynolds:

As a newly formed Government, we need time to review the Ombudsman's report along with the evidence provided during the investigation. We will listen to all views, including those of 1950s-born women as we take this work forward.

The WASPI organisation has written to me and I intend to meet with their representatives in due course.

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

EDUCATION

■ Technical Qualifications Reform update

Secretary of State for Education and Minister for Women and Equalities (Bridget Phillipson): [\[HCWS22\]](#)

I am today announcing a short review of post-16 qualification reforms at level 3 and below, alongside the re-contracting of T Level qualifications to ensure these high-quality qualifications continue to be available to learners.

This government believes all young people and adults should have access to high-quality training that meets their needs and provides them with opportunities to thrive. We know that the current post-16 skills system in England is confusing for young people, adults, and employers. The qualifications system remains complex, and there are many overlapping qualifications including those that overlap with T Levels. Too many young people leave education without the qualifications they need to get into high-quality apprenticeships, higher level education, and good jobs. This is not good for our young people or our nation's prosperity.

Our qualifications must deliver on our two central missions for this government of enhancing and spreading opportunity for everyone and growing our economy. Young people and adults should have a choice of a simpler suite of high-quality qualifications that provide them with the skills they need, and which deliver on our missions.

We will undertake a focused review of the post-16 qualification reforms at level 3 and below to assess how best to improve the quality of the overall qualifications landscape, support the growth of T Levels, and ensure that all young people and adults have high-quality options that meet their needs. This review will begin immediately and will examine the current planned reforms and look at how we can ensure leading technical qualifications like T Levels are open to as many people as possible, whilst ensuring high-quality alternatives.

T Levels are high-quality qualifications which provide young people with a firm foundation for their future. This coming year will see further developments, including rolling out new T Levels in Animal Care and Management, Media, Broadcast and Production, and Craft and Design in September 2024, and Marketing in September 2025, to ensure that young people continue to benefit from these respected qualifications which include direct experience of the workplace. To ensure T Levels continue to be available in the years ahead, we will proceed with re-contracting T Levels where contracts are due to expire.

To allow space for a short review of the current planned reforms, we will place a pause on the planned removal, on 31 July 2024, of 16 to 19 funding from qualifications in Construction and the Built Environment, Digital, Education and Early Years, and Health and Science. This will mean that, subject to any commercial decisions made by awarding

organisations on these qualifications, they can be funded for 16- to 19-year-old new students in the 2024/25 academic year.

We understand that the sector needs certainty so that it can plan its future delivery. We will conclude and communicate the outcomes of this review into qualification reforms at level 3 and below before the turn of the year. Defunding decisions will be taken after the short review, and the Curriculum and Assessment Review will reflect these decisions. The expert-led Curriculum and Assessment Review will be chaired by Professor Becky Francis CBE, announced on 19 July 2024. This review will consider the existing national curriculum and statutory assessment system, and pathways for learners in 16-19 education and recommend changes where necessary.

We will also publish, as soon as possible, a list of reformed level 2 qualifications in Construction and the Built Environment, Education and Early Years, Engineering and Manufacturing, and Health and Science that will be funded from August 2025. These qualifications, alongside those already announced at level 3, will provide the next step to ensuring we deliver the skilled training needed to support key areas of our economy.

ENERGY SECURITY AND NET ZERO

■ Great British Energy update

Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero (Ed Miliband): [\[HCWS20\]](#)

Our country faces huge challenges. More than two years on from Russia's invasion of Ukraine, families and businesses continue to pay the price for Britain's energy insecurity. Bills remain hundreds of pounds higher than before the energy crisis began and are expected to rise again soon. At the same time, we are confronted by the climate crisis all around us, not a future threat but a present reality, and there is an unmet demand for good jobs and economic opportunities all across Britain.

In 2024, the answers to all these challenges point in the same direction: investing in clean energy at speed and scale. That is why making Britain a clean energy superpower by 2030 is one of the Prime Minister's five missions with the biggest investment in home-grown clean energy in British history.

I am pleased to say that we are already delivering on one of the government's first steps for change by setting up Great British Energy, a publicly-owned company headquartered in Scotland to invest in clean, home-grown energy.

Today, we are reaching a major milestone to help establish Great British Energy by introducing the Great British Energy Bill to Parliament. I am also announcing Great British Energy's first major partnership, with The Crown Estate as well as publishing our founding statement to outline Great British Energy's mission and functions.

Great British Energy's first major partnership will bring together two national institutions for the benefit of the British people. The Crown Estate brings a £16 billion portfolio of land and seabed which returns its profits to the government, long-established expertise to enable swift action and new borrowing powers as announced in the King's Speech. Great

British Energy will bring the strategic industrial policy that the state can provide, as well as its own ability to invest.

The Crown Estate estimates this partnership will deliver up to 20-30GW of new offshore wind developments reaching seabed lease stage by 2030. It will help boost Britain's energy independence, and cut the time it takes to get offshore wind projects operating and delivering power to homes by up to half.

The UK Government is in discussions with the Scottish Government and Crown Estate Scotland on how Great British Energy could help to support new development and investment in Scotland.

Today's publication, which I will place in the library of the House later, sets out what Great British Energy is, why it is needed, what its structure will be, what role it will play and what the next steps are. Great British Energy will have five key functions:

- Project development - leading projects through development stages to speed up their delivery, whilst capturing more value for the British public
- Project investment – investing in energy projects alongside the private sector, helping get them off the ground
- Local Power Plan – supporting local energy generation projects through working with local authorities, combined authorities and communities
- Supply chains – building supply chains across the UK, boosting energy independence and creating jobs
- Great British Nuclear – exploring how Great British Energy and Great British Nuclear will work together, including considering how Great British Nuclear functions will fit with Great British Energy

I will ensure that we establish Great British Energy at pace so that it can make an early impact whilst also setting it up for long term success. I will continue to take the important steps to put Great British Energy on a delivery footing, including announcing the location in Scotland of its headquarters and undertaking a programme of stakeholder engagement to further develop our policy approach. I look forward to keeping the House updated throughout this process.

JUSTICE

■ Temporary closure of HMP Dartmoor

Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice (Shabana Mahmood):

[\[HCWS21\]](#)

I would like to announce the decision to close HMP Dartmoor temporarily, as His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service manage the levels of radon at HMP Dartmoor to ensure the safety of staff and prisoners.

Our prisons are in crisis. This is the most recent illustration of why this government was forced to take urgent action to release pressure on the estate. We are committed to

locking up the most dangerous offenders and protecting the public. Public safety will always be this government's priority.

Radon is a colourless, odourless radioactive gas formed by the radioactive decay of the small amounts of uranium that occur naturally in all rocks and soils, and is naturally more prevalent in the South-West of England. Studies have shown that increased exposure to radon increases the risk of lung cancer. His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service has been working with specialist radon experts over the past six months to manage the levels of radon at the prison.

Following the latest readings of radon found in non-accommodation areas of the prison on 12 July, the operational decision was taken by His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service to move all prisoners out of HMP Dartmoor, over a two-week period, and to close the prison temporarily while further mitigation and investigation takes place.

This was an operational decision as it had become unviable to continue with the mitigations to reduce radon while also running an effective prison regime. The Government will continue to work with staff at HMP Dartmoor and Trade Unions to manage the impact on staff, and prisoners are being transferred to other prisons of an appropriate security level.

The Government has already taken decisive action to address prison capacity pressures. While the loss of capacity at HMP Dartmoor will put additional strain on the system, the Government is confident the system can be sustained until the implementation of SDS40 in September, the measure I announced on 12 July which will change the automatic release point for those serving standard determinate sentences from 50% to 40%.

We will publish a ten-year capacity strategy later this year. We will build prison places, acquire land for new prison sites and classify prisons as being of national importance, placing decision making on planning for new prisons in Ministers' hands. The Government is committed to longer-term reform of the system and reducing reoffending – making sure that punishment is effective and prisons make better citizens not better criminals.