



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 26 July 2024 and the information is correct at the time of publication (03:33 P.M., 26 July 2024). For the latest information on written questions and answers, ministerial corrections, and written statements, please visit: <http://www.parliament.uk/writtenanswers/>

### CONTENTS

|                                                                |           |                                       |           |
|----------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|---------------------------------------|-----------|
| <b>ANSWERS</b>                                                 | <b>7</b>  | <b>CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT</b>       | <b>11</b> |
| <b>BUSINESS AND TRADE</b>                                      | <b>7</b>  | ■ Culture: Scotland                   | 11        |
| ■ Arms Trade: Israel                                           | 7         | ■ Parthenon Sculptures                | 12        |
| ■ Collective Bargaining: Industrial Disputes                   | 7         | ■ Public Libraries: Aylesbury         | 12        |
| ■ Companies: Audit                                             | 7         | ■ Sports: Women                       | 13        |
| ■ Conditions of Employment: Regulation                         | 8         | <b>DEFENCE</b>                        | <b>13</b> |
| ■ Department for Business and Trade: Disclosure of Information | 8         | ■ Ajax Vehicles: Finance              | 13        |
| ■ Employment: Bullying                                         | 8         | ■ Armed Forces: Housing               | 14        |
| ■ Harland and Wolff: Export Credit Guarantees                  | 9         | ■ Defence                             | 15        |
| ■ Import Controls: Forced Labour                               | 9         | ■ Defence: Buildings                  | 15        |
| ■ Public Holidays                                              | 9         | ■ Forces Help to Buy Scheme           | 16        |
| ■ UK Internal Trade: Northern Ireland                          | 9         | ■ Ministry of Defence: Mental Health  | 16        |
| <b>CABINET OFFICE</b>                                          | <b>10</b> | ■ Ministry of Defence: Weather        | 17        |
| ■ Cabinet Office: Disclosure of Information                    | 10        | <b>EDUCATION</b>                      | <b>17</b> |
| ■ Elizabeth Emblem                                             | 10        | ■ Alternative Education               | 17        |
| ■ Senior Civil Servants: Recruitment                           | 11        | ■ Childcare: Hitchin                  | 17        |
|                                                                |           | ■ Free School Meals                   | 18        |
|                                                                |           | ■ Non-teaching Staff: Halifax         | 18        |
|                                                                |           | ■ Non-teaching Staff: Labour Turnover | 19        |
|                                                                |           | ■ Pupils: Per Capita Costs            | 20        |
|                                                                |           | ■ Schools: Absenteeism                | 21        |
|                                                                |           | ■ Schools: Cheshire East              | 22        |
|                                                                |           | ■ Schools: Liverpool                  | 23        |

|                                                                                                    |    |                                                                        |    |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| ■ Schools: Mental Health Services                                                                  | 24 | ■ Fuels: Prices                                                        | 36 |
| ■ Special Educational Needs                                                                        | 24 | ■ Fuels: Retail Trade                                                  | 36 |
| ■ Special Educational Needs: Aylesbury                                                             | 25 | ■ Great British Energy                                                 | 37 |
| ■ Special Educational Needs: Central Bedfordshire Council and North Hertfordshire District Council | 26 | ■ Offshore Industry: Licensing                                         | 37 |
| ■ Special Educational Needs: Dorset                                                                | 27 | ■ Renewable Energy: Infrastructure                                     | 38 |
| ■ Special Educational Needs: Hampshire and Surrey                                                  | 27 | ■ Sizewell C Power Station: Investment                                 | 39 |
| ■ Special Educational Needs: Hertfordshire                                                         | 28 | ■ Small Modular Reactors                                               | 39 |
| ■ Special Educational Needs: North East Hertfordshire                                              | 28 | ■ Solar Power: Buckinghamshire                                         | 39 |
| ■ Special Educational Needs: Trafford                                                              | 29 | ■ Solar Power: Land Use                                                | 39 |
| ■ Students                                                                                         | 30 | ■ Solar Power: Supply Chains                                           | 41 |
| ■ Teachers: East of England                                                                        | 30 | ■ Wind Power: Bats and Birds                                           | 42 |
| ■ Teachers: South Shropshire                                                                       | 31 | ■ Wind Power: Infrastructure                                           | 43 |
| ENERGY SECURITY AND NET ZERO                                                                       | 32 | ■ Wind Power: Tilbury                                                  | 43 |
| ■ Electric Cables                                                                                  | 32 | ■ Wylfa Power Station                                                  | 43 |
| ■ Electric Cables and Electricity Generation: Planning Permission                                  | 32 | ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS                                    | 44 |
| ■ Electric Cables: Buckinghamshire                                                                 | 33 | ■ Agriculture: Rain                                                    | 44 |
| ■ Electric Cables: Costs                                                                           | 33 | ■ Animal Housing: Pigs                                                 | 44 |
| ■ Electric Cables: Infrastructure                                                                  | 34 | ■ Animal Welfare                                                       | 44 |
| ■ Electricity: Rural Areas                                                                         | 35 | ■ Avian Influenza: Disease Control                                     | 45 |
| ■ Energy Supply and Fuel Poverty: Staffordshire                                                    | 35 | ■ Dairy Products: Labelling                                            | 46 |
| ■ Energy Supply: East of England                                                                   | 36 | ■ Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs: Northern Ireland | 46 |
|                                                                                                    |    | ■ Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs: Scotland         | 46 |
|                                                                                                    |    | ■ Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs: Wales            | 46 |
|                                                                                                    |    | ■ Farmers: Finance                                                     | 47 |
|                                                                                                    |    | ■ Flood Control: Finance                                               | 47 |
|                                                                                                    |    | ■ Fly-tipping: Cramlington and Killingworth                            | 48 |

|                                                           |    |                                                                                   |    |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|----|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| ■ Fruit and Vegetables: Horticulture                      | 48 | ■ Health Services: Private Sector                                                 | 57 |
| ■ Pigs: Livestock Industry                                | 48 | ■ Heart Diseases                                                                  | 57 |
| ■ Plastics: Waste                                         | 49 | ■ Hospitals: Parking                                                              | 57 |
| ■ Rights of Way                                           | 49 | ■ NHS: Capital Investment                                                         | 58 |
| ■ UK Internal Trade: Northern Ireland                     | 49 | ■ Pancreatin                                                                      | 58 |
| FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE              | 49 | ■ Royal Bolton Hospital: Accident and Emergency Departments                       | 59 |
| ■ Balkans: Security                                       | 49 | ■ Shingles: Vaccination                                                           | 60 |
| ■ British Nationals Abroad: Detainees                     | 50 | HOME OFFICE                                                                       | 60 |
| ■ Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting                | 51 | ■ Action Fraud and the National Fraud Intelligence Bureau: Criminal Investigation | 60 |
| ■ Deep Sea Mining                                         | 51 | ■ Alternatives to Prison: Pilot Schemes                                           | 61 |
| ■ Gaza: Israel                                            | 51 | ■ Asset Recovery Incentivisation Scheme                                           | 61 |
| ■ Georgia: Politics and Government                        | 51 | ■ Border Security Command: Finance                                                | 61 |
| ■ Israel: UNRWA                                           | 52 | ■ British National (Overseas): Airports                                           | 62 |
| ■ Russia: Shipping                                        | 52 | ■ Burglary: Cornwall and Devon                                                    | 62 |
| ■ Spain: British Nationals Abroad                         | 52 | ■ Confiscation Orders                                                             | 62 |
| ■ Sudan: Famine                                           | 53 | ■ Crime: Rural Areas                                                              | 63 |
| ■ UK-Africa Investment Summit                             | 53 | ■ Crossbows                                                                       | 64 |
| ■ UNRWA                                                   | 54 | ■ Demonstrations: Prison Sentences                                                | 64 |
| ■ Zimbabwe: Economic Cooperation                          | 54 | ■ Electronic Travel Authorisations: Tourism                                       | 65 |
| HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE                                    | 55 | ■ Emergency Services: Medals                                                      | 65 |
| ■ Cheltenham Hospital: Accident and Emergency Departments | 55 | ■ Fraud: Older People                                                             | 66 |
| ■ Cystic Fibrosis: Medical Treatments                     | 55 | ■ Immigration Controls: Airports                                                  | 66 |
| ■ Gynaecology                                             | 56 | ■ Immigration Controls: Undocumented Migrants                                     | 67 |
| ■ Health Insurance: Private Sector                        | 56 | ■ Iran and Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps                                      | 68 |

|                                                      |    |                                                                                        |    |
|------------------------------------------------------|----|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| ■ Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps                  | 68 | ■ General Election 2024: Absent Voting                                                 | 79 |
| ■ Motor Vehicles: Theft                              | 68 | ■ Holiday Accommodation: Business Rates                                                | 80 |
| ■ Motorcycles: Anti-social Behaviour and Crime       | 69 | ■ Homelessness                                                                         | 80 |
| ■ National Security: China                           | 69 | ■ Housing First: North West and West Midlands                                          | 81 |
| ■ Orgreave                                           | 70 | ■ Housing: Change of Use                                                               | 81 |
| ■ Passports                                          | 70 | ■ Housing: Construction                                                                | 82 |
| ■ Police Patrolling: Urban Areas                     | 70 | ■ Housing: Migrants                                                                    | 84 |
| ■ Police: Termination of Employment                  | 71 | ■ Local Government Finance                                                             | 84 |
| ■ Refugees: Ukraine                                  | 71 | ■ Local Government: Devolution                                                         | 85 |
| ■ Retail Trade: Crimes of Violence                   | 72 | ■ Local Plans: York                                                                    | 86 |
| ■ Shoplifting: Prosecutions                          | 72 | ■ Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government: Departmental Responsibilities | 86 |
| ■ UK Border Force: ICT                               | 72 | ■ Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government: Environment Protection        | 86 |
| ■ UK Border Force: Staff                             | 73 | ■ National Policy Statements                                                           | 87 |
| ■ Visas: Gaza                                        | 73 | ■ New Towns                                                                            | 87 |
| ■ Visas: Skilled Workers                             | 74 | ■ Parking: Codes of Practice                                                           | 87 |
| ■ Visas: Sponsorship                                 | 75 | ■ Permitted Development Rights                                                         | 88 |
| HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT            | 75 | ■ Planning: Reform                                                                     | 88 |
| ■ Affordable Housing: Construction                   | 75 | ■ Planning: Staff                                                                      | 89 |
| ■ Affordable Housing: Finance                        | 76 | ■ Regeneration: Basildon                                                               | 89 |
| ■ Business: Innovation                               | 76 | ■ Second Homes: Council Tax                                                            | 89 |
| ■ Combined Authorities: Cornwall and Isles of Scilly | 77 | ■ Stoke-on-Trent City Council: Government Assistance                                   | 89 |
| ■ Community Ownership Fund                           | 77 | ■ Temporary Accommodation: Costs                                                       | 90 |
| ■ Community Ownership Fund: Marhamchurch             | 78 | ■ UK Shared Prosperity Fund                                                            | 90 |
| ■ Council Tax                                        | 78 | ■ Unadopted Roads                                                                      | 90 |
| ■ Derelict Land                                      | 78 |                                                                                        |    |
| ■ Empty Property: Dudley                             | 79 |                                                                                        |    |
| ■ Flats: Leasehold                                   | 79 |                                                                                        |    |

|                                                  |    |                                                                                                |            |
|--------------------------------------------------|----|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| JUSTICE                                          | 91 | ■ Railways: Fares                                                                              | 99         |
| ■ Cammell Laird: Strikes                         | 91 | ■ Roads: Birmingham                                                                            | 99         |
| ■ Electronic Tagging                             | 91 | ■ Roads: Repairs and Maintenance                                                               | 99         |
| ■ Prisoners' Release: Alcoholic Drinks and Drugs | 91 | ■ Roads: Shropshire                                                                            | 100        |
| ■ Prisons: Empty Property                        | 92 | ■ Shrewsbury-Wolverhampton Railway Line: Electrification                                       | 100        |
| SCIENCE, INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY               | 92 | ■ Taxis: Licensing                                                                             | 100        |
| ■ Broadband: East Midlands                       | 92 | ■ Wymondham Station: Access                                                                    | 101        |
| ■ Mobile Phones: Housing Estates                 | 93 | TREASURY                                                                                       | 101        |
| ■ Public Sector: Artificial Intelligence         | 93 | ■ Private Education: VAT                                                                       | 101        |
| TRANSPORT                                        | 93 | WORK AND PENSIONS                                                                              | 102        |
| ■ A30                                            | 93 | ■ Child Benefit                                                                                | 102        |
| ■ Abellio Greater Anglia: Standards              | 94 | ■ Health Services: Children                                                                    | 102        |
| ■ Active Travel: Rural Areas                     | 94 | ■ Poverty                                                                                      | 102        |
| ■ Avanti West Coast: Standards                   | 94 | ■ Social Security Benefits: Children                                                           | 103        |
| ■ Bus Services and Roads: Finance                | 95 | ■ Unemployment                                                                                 | 103        |
| ■ Bus Services: Concessions                      | 95 | ■ Working Conditions: Temperature                                                              | 103        |
| ■ Bus Services: Fares                            | 95 | <b>WRITTEN STATEMENTS</b>                                                                      | <b>105</b> |
| ■ Bus Services: Newcastle-under-Lyme             | 96 | BUSINESS AND TRADE                                                                             | 105        |
| ■ Heathrow Airport                               | 96 | ■ Digital Trade Agreement: WTO Joint Initiative on Electronic Commerce                         | 105        |
| ■ High Speed 2 Line: Aylesbury                   | 96 | EDUCATION                                                                                      | 106        |
| ■ Large Goods Vehicles: Concrete                 | 97 | ■ Higher Education Regulation Update                                                           | 106        |
| ■ London Northwestern Railway                    | 97 | ENERGY SECURITY AND NET ZERO                                                                   | 107        |
| ■ London, Tilbury and Southend Line: Standards   | 97 | ■ Direction to the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority in respect of the Sizewell A Nuclear Site | 107        |
| ■ Motorways: Safety Measures                     | 98 |                                                                                                |            |
| ■ Public Transport                               | 98 |                                                                                                |            |
| ■ Railways: Concessions                          | 98 |                                                                                                |            |
| ■ Railways: East of England                      | 98 |                                                                                                |            |

|                                  |     |                                    |     |
|----------------------------------|-----|------------------------------------|-----|
| HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE           | 107 | SCIENCE, INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY | 109 |
| ■ Care Quality Commission Update | 107 | ■ AI Opportunities Action Plan     | 109 |

**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: Israel

**Colum Eastwood:** [\[1408\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, if he will make an assessment of the potential implications for Government policy on arms export licenses to Israel of the decision of the Chief Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court to issue arrest warrants for the Prime Minister and Minister of Defence of Israel.

**Mr Douglas Alexander:**

The Government assesses export licences against the Strategic Export Licensing Criteria. We will continue to monitor developments as part of the assessment process. 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.

#### ■ Collective Bargaining: Industrial Disputes

**Gareth Bacon:** [\[694\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether it is his policy that trade unions should be able to initiate industrial action across all employers in a sector subject to collective bargaining.

**Justin Madders:**

The Government is committed to bringing in a new era of partnership that sees employers, unions and Government work together in co-operation and through negotiation – putting an end to the worst strikes chaos seen in decades under the previous administration. The Employment Rights Bill will be introduced in the first 100 days in Government and will play a key role in delivering aspects of the Plan to Make Work Pay. This will include legislation on sectoral collective bargaining, with Adult Social Care being the first sector for this to be introduced

#### ■ Companies: Audit

**Jerome Mayhew:** [\[675\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether he plans to introduce new corporate reporting requirements.

**Justin Madders:**

The Government is keen to ensure the UK's corporate reporting requirements support economic growth by providing the information investors need to allocate capital effectively, while helping users of reporting understand how business activities align with the UK's net zero and environmental goals. The King's Speech announced that the Government will take forward a bill to improve UK corporate governance and

auditing and we will provide further information on specific reporting initiatives in due course.

### ■ **Conditions of Employment: Regulation**

**Jerome Mayhew:** [\[677\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, with reference to page 21 of the Kings Speech 2024 background briefing notes, published 17 July 2024, what the projected annual budget will be for the proposed Fair Work Agency.

**Justin Madders:**

The UK's labour market enforcement system is fragmented and ineffective. This is bad for workers and bad for businesses who do the right thing. This government will finally establish a single body, the Fair Work Agency, to enforce workers' rights, including strong powers to inspect workplaces and take action against exploitation.

More details, including proposed budgets for the body, will be provided in due course.

### ■ **Department for Business and Trade: Disclosure of Information**

**Mr Richard Holden:** [\[1383\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what information was provided to him on the public finances prior to taking office; whether he has received any additional information since taking office; and what his policy is on the provision of information to prospective future governments prior to elections.

**Justin Madders:**

The process for access talks is set out in the Cabinet Manual. Access talks are initiated with permission from the Prime Minister of the day and are confidential.

It is a long-established precedent that information about the discussions that have taken place between Cabinet ministers and officials is not shared publicly.

### ■ **Employment: Bullying**

**Rachael Maskell:** [\[1291\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of including measures to enable targets of bullying at work to take cases to an employment tribunal in the proposed Employment Rights Bill.

**Justin Madders:**

This Government is committed to delivering the Plan to Make Work Pay in full and updating Britain's employment protections, so they are fit for our modern economy and the future of work. This includes commitments to support the wellbeing of workers, including their long term physical and mental health, and to ensure employers create and maintain workplaces and working conditions free from harassment. Ministers are identifying the most appropriate delivery mechanisms for the commitments in the Plan, including an Employment Rights Bill that will be introduced to Parliament within 100 days of taking office.



## ■ Harland and Wolff: Export Credit Guarantees

**Sorcha Eastwood:**

[461]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether he has had discussions with Harland and Wolff on their application for an Export Development Guarantee.

**Gareth Thomas:**

The Secretary of State shared an update on the discussions with Harland and Wolff through a Written Ministerial Statement on 22<sup>nd</sup> July. The statement can be found here: <https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-statements/detail/2024-07-22/hcws15>

## ■ Import Controls: Forced Labour

**Alicia Kearns:**

[228]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of introducing controls to prevent the import of products made with Uyghur forced labour.

**Mr Douglas Alexander:**

No company in the UK should have forced labour in its supply chain. The Department for Business and Trade will continue to assess and monitor the effectiveness of the UK's existing measures, alongside the impacts of new policy tools that are emerging, to ensure it can best tackle forced labour in supply chains, and work with businesses and international partners to understand the impact of measures to combat forced labour.

## ■ Public Holidays

**Grahame Morris:**

[1202]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, if he will establish an additional bank holiday to honour veterans on the Monday after Remembrance Sunday.

**Justin Madders:**

The Government recognises the sacrifices made by so many veterans and the huge debt of gratitude owed to those who have served their country.

The current pattern of UK bank holidays is well established and accepted. Whilst an additional bank holiday may benefit some sectors, the cost to the economy of an additional bank holiday remains considerable. The latest analysis estimates the cost to the UK economy for a one-off bank holiday to be around £2bn.

## ■ UK Internal Trade: Northern Ireland

**Jim Allister:**

[1386]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of the introduction of the updated General Product Safety Regulation (GPSR) on SMEs shipping from Great Britain to Northern Ireland.

**Justin Madders:**

The updated GPSR largely formalises the reality of how businesses are already operating in the UK and the measures are therefore likely to have limited impact in practice. Where businesses need to make changes, we expect that they will be adapting anyway to be compliant with the new Regulation to continue trading with the EU. However, we are providing more guidance in this area, will keep this under review and continue to engage businesses directly to ensure we are supporting them to trade freely across the whole of the UK.

**CABINET OFFICE****■ Cabinet Office: Disclosure of Information****Mr Richard Holden:**[\[1380\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what information was provided to him on the public finances prior to taking office; whether he has received any additional information since taking office; and what his policy is on the provision of information to prospective future governments prior to elections.

**Nick Thomas-Symonds:**

The process for access talks is set out in the Cabinet Manual. Access talks are initiated with permission from the Prime Minister of the day and are confidential.

It is a long-established precedent that information about the discussions that have taken place between Cabinet ministers and officials is not shared publicly.

**■ Elizabeth Emblem****Sir John Whittingdale:**[\[589\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will extend eligibility for the Elizabeth Emblem award to all emergency service workers who are severely injured and medically retired from the service.

**Nick Thomas-Symonds:**

The Government recognises the invaluable contribution of emergency service workers to the people of the United Kingdom. The Elizabeth Emblem recognises the sacrifices made by public servants who have lost their lives as a result of their duty within the honours system. The Emblem is awarded to the next-of-kin of public servants who have died in public service since 1948 and who were employed in a role based on the source of a commission on behalf of, or formally funded by, an eligible body. Full details on the award, how to apply and who is eligible are available on GOV.UK. There are currently no plans to extend eligibility.

## ■ Senior Civil Servants: Recruitment

**Steve Barclay:**

[\[1260\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what the Government's policy was on external by default for recruitment to senior civil service roles by (a) department and (b) organisation on (i) 30 May 2024 and (ii) 23 July 2024.

**Georgia Gould:**

The Civil Service advertises all SCS vacancies on the principle of External by Default.

External by Default means that vacancies will be open to external candidates outside the Civil Service, as well as existing civil servants, unless an exception applies. Use of exemptions for any post must be approved by the Departmental Minister or Permanent Secretary in Non-Ministerial Departments.

This policy applies to all Ministerial departments, Non-Ministerial departments, Executive Agencies and Crown Non-Departmental Public Bodies.

This policy was applicable on 30 May 2024 and 23 July 2024.

On the 30 May 2024, in accordance with the General Election Guidance 2024, any appointments that required approval by the Prime Minister, and other Civil Service and public appointments likely to prove sensitive (including those where Ministers have delegated decisions to officials or other authorities) were frozen until after the election, except in exceptional circumstances (General Election Guidance, Section H, para 1-4).

Where an appointment was required to be made, because the role was urgent or critical, and including where necessary sensitive SCS positions, the role could be filled on a temporary basis by exception. The principle of external by default for all SCS recruitment was maintained during the pre-election period. Any temporary appointments were subject to approval via the exemption process (Civil Service Recruitment Framework 2022). During the pre-election period, approval for urgent exemptions to external by default could be made by Permanent Secretaries where Ministerial availability was limited.

Responsibility for adhering to pre-election guidance in relation to recruitment sat with the hiring department.

## CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

### ■ Culture: Scotland

**Martin McCluskey:**

[\[541\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what plans she has to meet with representatives of the Scottish arts and culture sector.

**Chris Bryant:**

I am looking forward to meeting with local stakeholders, including representatives of the Scottish arts and culture sector when I attend the Edinburgh Fringe Festival in August.

■ **Parthenon Sculptures****Andrew George:** [2]

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, if she will have discussions with (a) her Greek counterpart and (b) the Board of the British Museum on the potential merits of returning the portion of the Parthenon sculptures which are held by the Museum to Athens.

**Andrew George:** [3]

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, if she will review the Government's justification to legal title for the Parthenon Sculptures held by the British Museum.

**Chris Bryant:**

Decisions relating to the care and management of the museum's collections, including loaning objects from their collection, are a matter for the Trustees of the British Museum, in accordance with the British Museum Act 1963. The British Museum is operationally independent of the Government.

We are aware that the Chair of the Trustees, George Osborne, has had talks with Greek Ministers on the issue, seeking a constructive partnership. We value the work that the British Museum does internationally, and welcome the success of their partnerships, such as the recent collaboration between the British Museum, the V&A, and the Manhyia Palace Museum in Ghana.

With regards to the legal title for the Parthenon Sculptures, the removal of the sculptures was lawful and well-documented. They were transferred to the British Museum in 1816 and have been the legal property of the British Museum, not the UK Government, since then.

■ **Public Libraries: Aylesbury****Laura Kyrke-Smith:** [1413]

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what steps she is taking to protect library services in Aylesbury constituency.

**Chris Bryant:**

Public libraries are funded by local authorities and each local authority is responsible for assessing the needs of their local communities and designing a library service to meet those needs within available resources.

DCMS is aware of the current consultation on proposed changes to opening hours at a number of libraries in Buckinghamshire, including Aylesbury. DCMS officials have met with Buckinghamshire County Council officers to ensure that they are aware of

the Council's statutory duty under the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service, and to advise officers on the Secretary of State's duty of superintendence, which includes the consideration of formal complaints that a library authority is not carrying out their duties under the 1964 Act.

## ■ Sports: Women

**Helen Grant:**

[\[58\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what steps she is taking to increase the participation in sport for women of all ages.

**Stephanie Peacock:**

Sport England's latest Active Lives survey data shows that men are more likely to be active than women and that boys are more likely to be active than girls.

We are dedicated to supporting every aspect of women's sport and ensuring all women and girls, no matter their background, have access to high quality sport. We want to protect time for physical education and support grassroots clubs in expanding access whilst also breaking down the barriers that exist and prevent women and girls from being active.

High-quality, inclusive facilities help clubs to get more people active and by backing these clubs, the Government will support more women and girls to get onto the pitch wherever they live.

The Government has set out its support for grassroots facilities, including through the Multi-Sport Grassroots Facilities programme which provides funding to build and improve grassroots facilities to support a range of sports, and a commitment to support the Football Association's ambition to double their number of gold-standard (3-star) community clubs by EURO 2028. This will deliver more opportunities for women and girls to get on the pitch.

Beyond funding, the Government's commitment includes supporting girls and boys across the country to get more access to sport and physical activity, a review of the curriculum to protect time for PE, and legislation to be brought forward to limit the number of kit items schools can require.

## DEFENCE

### ■ Ajax Vehicles: Finance

**James Cartlidge:**

[\[158\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether he has plans to authorise further funds for ancillary purchases of equipment and enablers for the Ajax programme, beyond the existing firm contract amount.

**Maria Eagle:**

Ministers are closely looking at the inherited plans for the Ajax programme.

**■ Armed Forces: Housing****James Cartlidge:** [185]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether he plans to take steps to improve customer service for (a) single living accommodation and (b) service family accommodation.

**James Cartlidge:** [187]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether he has made an estimate of trends in the number of complaints made about service family accommodation since 2022; and what steps he plans to take to reduce the number of recorded complaints.

**Maria Eagle:**

Improving Service accommodation is a priority for this Government. The Department is committed to improving customer service for Service personnel and families living in Single Living Accommodation (SLA) and Service Family Accommodation (SFA).

As a first step to improving Service life the Government will establish an Armed Forces Commissioner as a direct point of contact for Service personnel and their families, to raise issues including housing.

**SLA**

A SLA Expert Group, including Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO) and Top Level Budget (TLB) representatives and delivery teams, is continuing to evolve Defence Minimum Standard (DMS) measures to improve the quality of SLA.

If the DMS is not met and no other accommodation can be offered, charges for Service Personnel may be abated. A data tool that promotes consistency in DMS assessments is under development and is due to be completed by the end of 2024.

**SFA**

A review of contractual Key Performance Indicators is being initiated in recognition of the concerns raised by Service Families to ensure that they are aligned with and meet their needs. A joint DIO and contractor Case Management Team has been established to deliver targeted intervention for families by providing additional support where immediate action is required. The case management process aims to prevent issues from escalating into complaints.

Additionally, a review of the complaints process is underway to identify where the process might be improved and to make it easier for families to seek swift resolution of reported poor performance.

The attached table shows the number of open complaints made about SFA by Service Personnel since 2022.

As at 1 July 2024, the number of open complaints reduced to 539, down from the peak of 4,190 in early November 2022.

**Attachments:**

1. Service Family Accommodation Complaints [185 - Service Family Accommodation Complaints.docx]

**James Cartlidge:**[\[560\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether he plans to implement recommendation seven of 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 in April 2024.

**Maria Eagle:**

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave him on 25 July 2024 to Question 167.

**Attachments:**

1. Armed Forces: Housing [167 - Armed Forces Housing.docx]

**Defence****James Cartlidge:**[\[198\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the total annual budget for administrative costs associated with conducting the Strategic Defence Review is.

**Luke Pollard:**

The Strategic Defence Review will be conducted in the most cost-effective way possible, within existing budgets. The ultimate outcome of the review is to identify where reprioritisation of roles, capabilities, activities, and support may be made in the current Defence programme, to allow new investment, achieve better value for money, and secure greater economic gain for the UK.

**Defence: Buildings****James Cartlidge:**[\[193\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the maintenance and repairs service provided by private contractors on the defence estate.

**Maria Eagle:**

Improving Service accommodation is a priority for this Government.

The Armed Forces Continuous Attitude survey shows Service personnel have low levels of satisfaction with responses to requests for and the quality maintenance/repair work of Service Family Accommodation, and low levels of satisfaction with the general standard of Single Living Accommodation.

As a first step to improving Service life the Government will establish an Armed Forces Commissioner as a direct point of contact for Service personnel and their families, to raise issues including housing.

Within each built estate Future Defence Infrastructure Services (FDIS) contract, there is an embedded assurance and verification process to check the adequacy of the

maintenance and repair service provided. The assessments are made against Acceptable Levels of Performance.

As part of the National Accommodation Management Services contract, Pinnacle is consistently delivering at or above the minimum Acceptable Level of Performance in all areas where they have sole responsibility for delivery. Performance has either improved or been maintained by both VIVO and Amey in the key areas of reactive maintenance timeframes, and against the Move-In Standard. more progress still needs to be made before both are consistently at or above the Acceptable Level of Performance across the board and to meet the needs of Service families.

All FDIS UK Built Estate suppliers are currently performing as a minimum at the Acceptable Level of Performance in all areas. Where performance falls short of that Acceptable Level of Performance, specific performance Rectification Plans are put in place to recover performance and any subsequent contractual performance withholds applied. Each Region manages this performance rectification with suppliers back to an acceptable level of performance with oversight from the Health Check Forum. In general, the levels of performance have been improving due to Supplier competence and experience building commensurate with contract maturity.

#### ■ Forces Help to Buy Scheme

**James Cartlidge:** [\[151\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether it is his policy to continue the Armed Forces Help to Buy Scheme.

**AI Carns:**  
Yes.

#### ■ Ministry of Defence: Mental Health

**James Cartlidge:** [\[174\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what plans he has to ensure that his Department is a psychologically safe place in which to work.

**AI Carns:**  
This Government is committed to a safe working environment for all. The Secretary of State for Defence set out in his first address to staff that this will be a Government that respects all, will draw on all talents and will have zero tolerance for abuse.

The Ministry of Defence has launched a programme aimed at reaffirming the standards of behaviour that are expected across Defence. The Secretary of State has asked for an update on this work, and will consider what further action is needed across the Department.



## ■ Ministry of Defence: Weather

**James Cartlidge:**

[\[561\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether he plans to review his Department's extreme weather contingency plans.

**Luke Pollard:**

Defence policy requires all Defence establishments to have business continuity and appropriate contingency plans in place to address risks of disruptions and that these plans are reviewed regularly. The effects of climate change on Departmental business resilience is recognised as a risk factor. As such, extreme weather contingency planning is a regular activity on Defence sites.

Defence developed and launched its own Climate Impact Risk Assessment Methodology in 2010 to identify measures to improve the resilience of the Defence estate to climate related hazards, and to ensure continuity of the outputs of Defence establishments.

## EDUCATION

### ■ Alternative Education

**Rachael Maskell:**

[\[793\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to enable the state education system to provide alternative provision without recourse to the private sector.

**Catherine McKinnell:**

The government is committed to meeting children's educational and social needs earlier, so that wherever possible they can remain in their mainstream school. Where alternative provision is required, it should be as part of a planned intervention delivered through local partnerships, with the right educational and welfare expertise to support the child's needs.

### ■ Childcare: Hitchin

**Alistair Strathern:**

[\[1426\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to help increase the availability of childcare in Hitchin constituency.

**Stephen Morgan:**

Delivering high quality affordable childcare is a priority for this government. As an initial step, the department is progressing work to deliver new places in 3,000 nurseries through upgrading space in primary schools. This will help increase the number of places available to parents, whilst also driving high and rising standards and better opportunities for every child.

The department has regular contact with each local authority in England about their sufficiency of childcare and any issues they are facing, including supporting them through the childcare delivery support contract where appropriate.

## ■ Free School Meals

**Rachael Maskell:** [627]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of broadening the eligibility criteria for children to receive free school meals.

**Stephen Morgan:**

This government has not made a formal assessment of the merits of broadening the free school meals (FSM) eligibility criteria.

This adds to the department's programmes which provide over 3 million children with free and nutritious meals. Such programmes include FSM, which 2.1 million disadvantaged pupils are registered to receive, and universal infant free school meals which benefit around 1.3 million pupils in reception, year 1 and year 2.

Additionally, the government is committed to introducing free breakfast clubs in every primary school, to set children up for the day and ensure they are ready to learn.

## ■ Non-teaching Staff: Halifax

**Kate Dearden:** [488]

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

**Catherine McKinnell:**

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

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

School business professionals include roles such as bursar, business manager, finance officer, office manager, premises manager or ICT network manager. The national figures of all FTE support staff from the 2019/20 to 2023/24 academic years are available here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/data-tables/permalink/7b0a17e8-b3ff-403e-687f-08dca70c1109>.

The figures of all FTE support staff in the Halifax constituency from the 2019/20 to 2023/24 academic years are included in the table below:

**HALIFAX****PARLIAMENTARY****CONSTITUENCY 2019/20 2020/21 2021/22 2022/23 2023/34**

| CONSTITUENCY                    | 2019/20 | 2020/21 | 2021/22 | 2022/23 | 2023/34 |
|---------------------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| <b>FTE of all support staff</b> | 1228.75 | 1244.19 | 1221.71 | 1286.96 | 1288.94 |

School support staff play a vital role in children's education and development.

The department will value and recognise the professionalism of the entire school workforce and address recruitment and retention challenges by reinstating the School Support Staff Negotiating Body.

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

#### ■ **Non-teaching Staff: Labour Turnover**

**Mr Connor Rand:**

**[739]**

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

**Catherine McKinnell:**

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

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

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

The FTE of all support staff across state-funded schools in England between 2019/20 and 2023/24 can be found here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/data-tables/permalink/7b0a17e8-b3ff-403e-687f-08dca70c1109>.

The FTE of all support staff in Altrincham and Sale West, Stretford and Urmston and Wythenshawe and Sale East between 2019/20 and 2023/24 can be found here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/data-tables/permalink/0b037abc-203b-42ce-5354-08dca71310d3>.

School support staff play a vital role in children's education and development.

The department will value and recognise the professionalism of the entire school workforce and address recruitment and retention challenges by reinstating the School Support Staff Negotiating Body.

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

## ■ Pupils: Per Capita Costs

**Laurence Turner:**

[\[759\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what the average funding per pupil was in mainstream schools in (a) Birmingham Northfield constituency, (b) Birmingham, (c) the West Midlands and (d) England in each of the last five years.

**Catherine McKinnell:**

The tables below provide average per-pupil funding from 2020/21 to 2024/25.

For Birmingham, the West Midlands and England, the figures represent the funding provided through the schools block of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG). All of the figures in table one exclude growth funding but include premises and additional funding from grants.

The DSG is allocated at local authority level, and as such the equivalent figures are not available for Birmingham Northfield constituency. The constituency level data for Birmingham Northfield is therefore instead calculated based on the notional schools national funding formula (NFF) allocations for all mainstream schools in the constituency. The figures in table two are not comparable to those in table one, not only because DSG funding cannot be aggregated down to constituency level, but also because the context of the funding figures are not the same. The figures in table two do not include the money that schools in the Birmingham Northfield constituency have received through additional grants, such as the Schools Supplementary Grant (SSG) and the Mainstream Schools Additional Grant (MSAG), therefore making the constituency-level funding appear to rise slower than that of the others presented.

**Table one**

| Year    | DSG SCHOOLS BLOCK PER-PUPIL FUNDING |               |         |
|---------|-------------------------------------|---------------|---------|
|         | Birmingham                          | West Midlands | England |
| 2020-21 | £5,162                              | £4,823        | £4,845  |
| 2021-22 | £5,518                              | £5,198        | £5,212  |
| 2022-23 | £5,830                              | £5,506        | £5,534  |
| 2023-24 | £6,144                              | £5,815        | £5,838  |
| 2024-25 | £6,244                              | £5,931        | £5,957  |

Table two

**NFF SCHOOLS BLOCK PER-PUPIL FUNDING \***

| Year    | Birmingham Northfield constituency |
|---------|------------------------------------|
| 2020-21 | £5,429                             |
| 2021-22 | £5,562                             |
| 2022-23 | £5,707                             |
| 2023-24 | £5,991                             |
| 2024-25 | £6,304                             |

\* The allocations that schools within a constituency actually receive are determined by the local funding formula in their area.

### ■ Schools: Absenteeism

**Rachael Maskell:**

[\[1289\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will make an estimate of the number and proportion of (a) children and (b) young people not in school; and if she will commission a review into the reasons behind such absences.

**Stephen Morgan:**

The government is committed to taking steps to better understand how many children of compulsory school age in England are not in school. Beginning October 2022, aggregate data on children in elective home education (EHE) and children missing education (CME) was collected from local authorities for the first time.

Recent data shows on census day in autumn 2023, local authorities reported an estimated 33,000 CME that are not registered at school or otherwise receiving suitable education. This is an increase of approximately 4,900 children from the summer 2023 census day. In the autumn 2023 term, where known by the local authority, primary reasons given for CME included the child having moved out of the country, the child having moved out of the local authority and the child is awaiting a school application outcome.

As at the census date in autumn 2023, an estimated 92,000 children were in EHE. This includes adjustments made for non-response and is based on a figure of 87,700 reported by 95% of local authorities. This is an increase from an estimated 80,900 in the previous autumn term. The leading reasons provided for deciding to home educate were philosophical, mental health, lifestyle and school dissatisfaction.

The government is committed to making it a statutory duty for local authorities to maintain children not in school registers and submit data returns to the department when requested to do so. Additionally, from autumn this year, the department is mandating the collection of aggregate data on EHE and CME from local authorities in

the 2023/24 academic year. This will increase the amount and detail of information available to local authorities and government on local and national levels, allowing the department to identify outlying local data and improve understanding of the drivers.

Alongside better data, the government will help to tackle drivers of children not being in school including via a requirement for school to cooperate with their local authority on school admissions, special educational needs and disabilities inclusion and place planning.

## ■ Schools: Cheshire East

**Tim Roca:**

**[435]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what the real terms per pupil funding was for schools in Cheshire East at (a) primary and (b) secondary level in each financial year since 2010.

**Catherine McKinnell:**

The table below provides per pupil funding units from the 2018/2019 to 2023/2024 financial years. This represents the funding provided for schools in Cheshire East each year in the schools block of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG).

The department cannot provide comparable funding for Cheshire East back to 2010, due to the changes in the funding system since that time. The scope of the per pupil funding before and after 2018/19 are not directly comparable. In particular, in 2018/19 the central services provided by local authorities were split out from the schools block funding, and instead became funded separately through the central school services block from that year onwards.

The figures in the table below are provided on a cash basis. The department also publishes real-terms statistics on schools funding at the national level which does not distinguish by phase. The department uses the GDP deflator to calculate real-terms funding levels. The schools funding statistics for the 2023/24 financial year are available here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/school-funding-statistics>. The methodology used to calculate the statistics is available here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/methodology/school-funding-statistics-methodology>.

|                | YEAR             | DSG<br>SCHOOLS<br>BLOCK<br>UNIT OF<br>FUNDING |
|----------------|------------------|-----------------------------------------------|
| <b>Primary</b> | <b>Secondary</b> |                                               |
| <b>2018/19</b> | £3,842           | £4,909                                        |
| <b>2019/20</b> | £3,863           | £4,931                                        |
| <b>2020/21</b> | £4,019           | £5,134                                        |
| <b>2021/22</b> | £4,373           | £5,562                                        |
| <b>2022/23</b> | £4,488           | £5,700                                        |
| <b>2023/24</b> | £4,686           | £5,962                                        |
| <b>2024/25</b> | £4,923           | £6,275                                        |

These figures do not include funding for growth, premises or additional funding received through supplementary grants.

### ■ Schools: Liverpool

**Paula Barker:**

**[513]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate her Department has made of the number school places in Liverpool.

**Catherine McKinnell:**

Data on state-funded school places is published at local authority level in the annual school capacity statistics publication. The latest data available shows that, as at 1 May 2023, there were 75,150 state-funded school places, (39,570 primary and 35,580 secondary), in Liverpool. The annual school capacity statistics publication can be found here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/school-capacity>.

## ■ Schools: Mental Health Services

**Alistair Strathern:**

[1427]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many Mental Health Support Teams there were in (a) Hitchin constituency, (b) Bedfordshire and (c) North Hertfordshire in each year since 2010.

**Stephen Morgan:**

Mental Health Support Teams (MHSTs) have three core functions. Firstly, to deliver evidence-based early interventions for emerging and actual mental health issues, 1 to 1 and in groups. Secondly, to support a school or college's mental health lead to embed an effective approach to promote and support mental health and wellbeing. Thirdly, to advise school and college staff, and liaise with external specialist services, to help pupils and learners to get the right timely support and stay in education.

Data specifically on how many MHSTs there are in Bedfordshire, Hitchin constituency and North Hertfordshire is not currently available.

However, data published by NHS England shows that since 2018/19, when the first wave of MHSTs were commissioned, 11 MHSTs have been established across Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes. For the first 9 MHSTs established up to 2022/23, this equates to MHST coverage of 43% of pupils and learners and 40% of schools and colleges in these areas

A link to the data can be found here: [https://www.england.nhs.uk/mental-health/cyp/trailblazers/#\\_Mental\\_Health\\_Support](https://www.england.nhs.uk/mental-health/cyp/trailblazers/#_Mental_Health_Support) and [https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=https%3A%2F%2Fassets.publishing.service.gov.uk%2Fmedia%2F6642052bf34f9b5a56adc5dd%2FTransforming\\_children\\_and\\_young\\_people\\_s\\_mental\\_health\\_implementation\\_programme\\_2024\\_data-tables.xlsx&wdOrigin=BROWSELINK](https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=https%3A%2F%2Fassets.publishing.service.gov.uk%2Fmedia%2F6642052bf34f9b5a56adc5dd%2FTransforming_children_and_young_people_s_mental_health_implementation_programme_2024_data-tables.xlsx&wdOrigin=BROWSELINK).

## ■ Special Educational Needs

**Jenny Riddell-Carpenter:**

[325]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many and what proportion of children receive special educational needs and disability services in (a) Suffolk and (b) the UK.

**Catherine McKinnell:**

The department publishes statistics on all children with special educational needs (SEN) in schools here, which can be viewed at local authority level: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/special-educational-needs-in-england>.

The department also publishes statistics on all children and young people that have an education, health and care plan which ranges from ages 0-25 here, which can also be viewed at local authority level: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/education-health-and-care-plans>.



**Daisy Cooper:** [\[402\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the guidance entitled Summer born children: advice for admission authorities, published on 27 April 2023, whether she plans to introduce additional guidance for summer born children with an education, health and care plan.

**Catherine McKinnell:**

The department will be considering whether to publish such additional guidance and will confirm its decision in due course.

**Dan Carden:** [\[673\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether her Department plans to reform the SEND system.

**Catherine McKinnell:**

For too long the education and care system has not meet the needs of all children, particularly those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), with parents struggling to get their children the support they need and deserve.

This government's ambition is that all children and young people with SEND or in alternative provision receive the right support to succeed in their education and as they move into adult life. The department will be focusing on a community-wide approach, improving inclusivity and expertise in mainstream schools, and ensuring that special schools cater to those with the most complex needs. My right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education, and I will work with families and education and care experts to deliver this in the best interests of our children.

## ■ Special Educational Needs: Aylesbury

**Laura Kyrke-Smith:** [\[1409\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to support (a) children with SEND and (b) their parents, families and carers in the Aylesbury constituency.

**Catherine McKinnell:**

The department is continuing to support and challenge Buckinghamshire to improve delivery of special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) services.

The last local area SEND inspection by Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) for Buckinghamshire was in March 2022, during which inspectors identified three areas of significant weakness. A written statement of action to address these areas of weakness was accepted by Ofsted and CQC. The department's regional team has put in place systems to track outcomes against these areas of weakness and the progress made by children and young people with SEND, including regular review meetings. Buckinghamshire Council are committed to working closely with the department to improve services.

Buckinghamshire is taking part in the Delivering Better Value (DBV) in SEND Programme. The DBV in SEND Programme, established under the previous

government, aims to help local authorities provide more effective SEND services by meeting the needs of children and young people at an early stage and with the right level of support.

Buckinghamshire is part of the most recent national competition to find multi-academy trusts to run 18 additional special schools. The competition was launched before the election and the window for application has just closed.

This government's ambition is that all children and young people with SEND or in alternative provision receive the right support to succeed in their education and as they move into adult life. The department will be focusing on a community-wide approach to improve inclusivity and expertise in mainstream schools as well as to ensure that special schools cater to those with the most complex needs.

### ■ **Special Educational Needs: Central Bedfordshire Council and North Hertfordshire District Council**

**Alistair Strathern:**

[\[1424\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she plans to take to support (a) Central Bedfordshire Council (b) North Hertfordshire Council with SEND provision.

**Catherine McKinnell:**

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

Ofsted inspected local arrangements for children with SEND in Central Bedfordshire in November 2019 and found six areas of significant weakness. The local area was required to produce a written statement of action, which was approved by Ofsted in September 2020. A follow up revisit in July 2022 found the local area had made sufficient progress in three of the six areas of significant weakness. The department monitors progress against Central Bedfordshire's improvement plan and provides support and challenge, including from a SEND expert advisor.

Ofsted inspected local arrangements for children with SEND in Hertfordshire in July 2023. Its report, published in November 2023, 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. Hertfordshire local area partnership has established a SEND improvement board which is independently chaired by Dame Christine Lenehan to oversee progress and provide appropriate challenge. The department monitors progress against Hertfordshire's improvement plan and priority action plan and provides support and challenge, including from a SEND expert advisor.

## ■ Special Educational Needs: Dorset

**Neil Duncan-Jordan:**

[787]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the adequacy of SEND provision in Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole; and what steps she plans to take to support the local authority in that area to improve the funding and delivery of SEND services.

**Catherine McKinnell:**

The department has been working closely with all statutory partners involved in delivering special educational needs and disability (SEND) services in Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole since their local area SEND inspection in June 2021.

The department holds regular formal monitoring meetings with the local authority and partners as part of holding the local area to account for making the necessary improvements in services. The latest monitoring meeting highlighted that the local authority and partners are taking positive steps to improve services, with some evidence of early impact, but that there are still ways to go to ensure that all children and families receive the service they require and deserve.

The department has put in place robust support for the local authority and their partners through the appointment of a Sector Led Improvement Partner and SEND advisor support. The department will continue to work with the local area to ensure they deliver further improvements in services.

It is also important that the department has a fair education funding system that directs funding to where it is needed. Budgets for the 2025/26 financial year have not been set. This means that decisions on high needs funding for children and young people with complex SEND, and the publication of allocations to local authorities for that year, will not be to the usual timescales.

## ■ Special Educational Needs: Hampshire and Surrey

**Gregory Stafford:**

[386]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the adequacy of SEND provision in Surrey and Hampshire; and what steps she plans to take to support local authorities in those areas to improve delivery of SEND services.

**Catherine McKinnell:**

The department is continuing to support and challenge Surrey and Hampshire to improve the delivery of special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) services.

The last local area SEND inspection by Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) for Surrey was in September 2023. The department's regional team has put in place systems to track outcomes against the areas for improvement that were identified by inspectors and to track the progress made by children and young people with SEND. Surrey County Council are committed to working closely with the department to improve services.

Surrey County Council entered into a Safety Valve agreement with the department in March 2022. Safety Valve agreements were established under the previous government with the aim of improving the effectiveness of local authority high needs systems and ensure their long-term financial sustainability.

Hampshire were last inspected under the previous Ofsted and CQC framework in March 2020. As with all local areas, the department has continued to provide support to Hampshire through a regional case lead, who seeks regular assurances on the adequacy of SEND provision. Hampshire will be assessed under the new Ofsted and CQC Area Inspection Framework, with all local authorities due to be inspected by the end of 2027.

Hampshire is taking part in the Delivering Better Value (DBV) in SEND Programme. The DBV in SEND Programme, which is currently under review, was established under the previous government with the aim of helping local authorities provide more effective SEND services by meeting the needs of children and young people at an early stage and with the right level of support.

#### ■ **Special Educational Needs: Hertfordshire**

**Daisy Cooper:** [\[407\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will review the SEND funding formula allocations for pupils in Hertfordshire.

**Daisy Cooper:** [\[408\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she plans to hold discussions with the F40 campaign group on SEND funding allocations.

**Catherine McKinnell:**

The department will take time to consider the high needs national funding formula (NFF) that it uses to allocate funding for children and young people with complex special educational needs and disabilities. The department is considering the impact of the formula on local authorities, including Hertfordshire County Council and those in the F40 group. It is important that there is a fair education funding system that directs funding to where it is needed.

Budgets for the 2025/26 financial year have not been set, which means that decisions on the high needs and mainstream schools NFF and the publication of allocations for that year will not be to the usual timescales.

#### ■ **Special Educational Needs: North East Hertfordshire**

**Chris Hinchliff:** [\[1442\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to support (a) children with SEND and (b) their parents, families and carers in North East Hertfordshire constituency.

**Catherine McKinnell:**

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

Ofsted inspected local arrangements for children with SEND in Hertfordshire in July 2023. Their report, published on 10 November 2023, 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 Hertfordshire local area partnership by monitoring progress against its priority action plan and improvement plan, and by providing advice and guidance via a SEND expert advisor. The partnership has also established a SEND Improvement Board, independently chaired by Dame Christine Lenehan to oversee progress and provide appropriate challenge.

**Special Educational Needs: Trafford****Mr Connor Rand:****[740]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many and what proportion of children (a) with an education, health and care plan and (b) who had previously been identified in the SEN Support category by their school were not in school in Trafford in each of the last five years.

**Catherine McKinnell:**

The department publishes statistics on education, health and care (EHC) plans at local authority level. This includes information on children and young people not in school or further education, for example those awaiting provision, in elective home education, in other arrangements, having had notice of their plan to cease, or not in education, employment or training. The number and proportion of children and young people with an EHC plan who were elsewhere than at school in Trafford from 2020 to 2024, which is the last five years of data available, can be found here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/data-tables/permalink/6cdcf6c0-e28a-4a72-68e5-08dca70c1109>.

The data collection for EHC plans does not include information on previous special educational needs (SEN) support identification.

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

## ■ Students

**Damian Hinds:** [46]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will make an estimate of the (a) (i) capacity of and (ii) number of students aged 16-19 enrolled in state-funded (A) sixth forms and (B) colleges and (b) number of students aged 16-19 enrolled in independent schools, broken down by local authority in the latest period for which data is available.

**Catherine McKinnell:**

The capacity of state-funded school sixth forms and the number of students on roll in these sixth forms, as at May 2023, is published in the annual school capacity official statistics publication, which is available here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/school-capacity> and <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/data-tables/fast-track/cfb70ec9-6e0a-4405-befa-08dc3901786a>.

Information on the number of students aged 16-19 enrolled in independent schools, broken down by local authority, is published in the June 'Schools, pupils and their characteristics' report. This can be found here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/data-tables/permalink/9b2df1d1-0559-463c-531c-08dca71310d3>

Information on further education colleges and sixth form colleges is not available in the format requested.

## ■ Teachers: East of England

**Alistair Strathern:** [1428]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to improve the (a) recruitment and (b) retention of teachers in (i) Hitchin constituency and (ii) East of England.

**Catherine McKinnell:**

High-quality teaching is the factor that makes the biggest difference to a child's education.

There are now 468,693 full-time equivalent (FTE) teachers in state-funded schools in England, but the department must do more to recruit additional teachers, especially in shortage subjects in secondary. This is why the government has set out the ambition to recruit 6,500 new expert teachers.

Numbers of teachers in Hitchin and East of England have increased slightly in the last year with 1,102 teachers in Hitchin and Harpenden in 2023/24 (up from 1,087 in 2022/23), and 52,995 teachers in East of England (up from 52,308 in 2022/23). The department is doing more to attract teachers in these areas. Financial incentives are one of the most effective ways to increase teacher supply, and the department is continuing to support teacher trainees with bursaries in shortage subjects, and with retention payments for mathematics, physics, chemistry and computing teachers in

the first five years of their careers, who chose to work in disadvantaged schools. In 2023/24, 286 schools in the East of England were eligible for these payments.

To further help retention to ensure teachers stay and thrive in the profession, the department is also addressing teacher workload and wellbeing, and supporting schools to introduce flexible working practices. For example, Thomas Gainsborough School of Unity Schools Partnership, as one of the Flexible Working Ambassador Schools, is helping schools across the East of England to introduce flexible working practices.

In addition, Chiltern Teaching School Hub in Hitchin, and the 10 Teaching School Hubs across the East of England, are centres of excellence, supporting teacher training and development.

## ■ Teachers: South Shropshire

**Stuart Anderson:**

[\[531\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many of the planned 6,500 new teachers will be delivered in South Shropshire constituency.

**Catherine McKinnell:**

Delivering the government's agenda to break down the barriers to opportunity relies on a highly skilled workforce in schools. There are now 468,693 full-time equivalent teachers in state-funded schools in England, but the department needs to do more to recruit additional teachers, especially in shortage subjects in secondary schools.

The department knows that high quality teaching is the factor that makes the biggest difference to a child's education, which is why the government has set out the ambition to recruit an additional 6,500 new expert teachers. The department has taken the first steps towards this mission by restarting and expanding the teacher recruitment campaign, 'Every Lesson Shapes a Life'. The Secretary of State for Education and her ministerial team are dedicated to working alongside education partners and have already begun restoring the relationship with the sector. The Secretary of State has already addressed over 14,000 people from the workforce in the first of many regular engagements and has committed to working alongside them to re-establish teaching as an attractive and expert profession.

The number of teachers in South Shropshire has remained stable, with 526 teachers in the 2023/24 academic year. The department is doing more to attract teachers in this area. Financial incentives are one of the most effective ways to increase teacher supply. The minimum starting salary for teachers in South Shropshire increased to £30,000 from the start of the 2023/24 academic year. Mathematics, physics, chemistry and computing teachers in the first five years of their careers, who chose to work in disadvantaged schools, receive retention payments worth up to £3,000 after tax. As the department works towards its ambition of recruiting 6,500 more teachers, it will do more to ensure teachers are attracted to the areas with the highest levels of need.

Alongside recruiting more teachers, the government is also committed to tackling retention challenges, making work pay, and supporting teachers to stay in the profession and thrive. We will be making further announcements on these issues in due course.

The department has published a range of resources to help address teacher workload and wellbeing and to support schools to introduce flexible working practices. The department's 'Improve workload and wellbeing for school staff service', which was developed alongside school leaders, includes a workload reduction toolkit to support schools to identify opportunities to cut excessive workload. The Education Staff Wellbeing Charter also sets out commitments from the government, Ofsted, schools and colleges to protect and promote the wellbeing of staff.

## ENERGY SECURITY AND NET ZERO

### ■ Electric Cables

**Andrew Bowie:**

[649]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if he will undertake a review of overhead lines; and if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of introducing a presumption in favour of undergrounding where appropriate.

**Michael Shanks:**

Proposed changes to the energy National Policy Statements (NPSs) were consulted on between 30 March 2023 to 23 June 2023 under the previous administration. Following this, a revised version of the National Policy Statement for electricity networks infrastructure was designated on 17 January 2024. This sets out that overhead lines should be the strong starting presumption for electricity networks developments in general, except in nationally designated landscapes where undergrounding is the starting presumption. The Government will ensure that the National Policy Statements are kept up to date.

### ■ Electric Cables and Electricity Generation: Planning Permission

**Andrew Bowie:**

[321]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, with reference to sections 8 and 62 of the Electricity Act 1989, what his policy is on ensuring the right to public enquiry for Scottish communities in the event that a relevant planning authority objects to the (a) proposed construction, extension of operation of an onshore electricity generating station or (b) installation of an overhead electricity line.

**Michael Shanks:**

Under the Electricity Act 1989, if a relevant planning authority objects to a section 36 or 37 application within the relevant time periods, Scottish Ministers must cause a public inquiry to be held and the application will be passed to the Scottish Government Planning and Environmental Appeals Division to consider. A public inquiry is not required where Scottish Ministers propose to grant the application



subject to modifications or conditions that will give effect to the planning authority's objection. Where the planning authority has not objected but other parties have, Scottish Ministers will consider those objections together with all other material considerations and determine whether a public inquiry should be held.

The UK Government is committed to reforming the planning system to meet the needs of a modern economy and provide necessary economic growth. Whilst doing so, it remains committed to giving communities a role in engaging with proposals for developments in their local area.

### ■ **Electric Cables: Buckinghamshire**

**Greg Smith:** [\[682\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether he has had recent discussions with National Grid on the East Claydon substation.

**Michael Shanks:**

The government recognises the need to upgrade and reinforce the grid at pace to achieve clean power by 2030.

Ministers and officials engage regularly with Transmission Owners, including National Grid Electricity Transmission, as part of the normal policymaking process. This includes but is not limited to discussing network infrastructure.

### ■ **Electric Cables: Costs**

**Andrew Bowie:** [\[320\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, with reference to the oral contribution of the then Minister for Energy Security and Net Zero of 23 May 2024, Official Report, column 1122, if he will make it his policy to conduct a review of the presumption for overhead power lines in the context of the comparative merits and costs of (a) undergrounding and (b) offshore energy cabling.

**Michael Shanks:**

Proposed changes to the energy National Policy Statements (NPSs) were consulted on between 30 March 2023 to 23 June 2023 under the previous government. Following this a revised version of the National Policy Statement for electricity networks infrastructure was designated on 17 January 2024. This sets out that overhead lines should be the strong starting presumption for electricity networks developments in general, except in nationally designated landscapes where undergrounding is the starting presumption. The government does not make assessments for specific projects until they come to the Secretary of State for final planning decision.

**■ Electric Cables: Infrastructure****Ben Goldsborough:** [294]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of providing long-term financial compensation to communities which host the installation of pylons to improve the transmission of renewable energy.

**Michael Shanks:**

The heart of the Government's agenda is to make Britain a clean energy superpower, boost energy independence and reduce bills through clean power by 2030, and our electricity network is key to this success. It is important for this Government that where communities host clean energy infrastructure, they should directly benefit from it. We are currently considering ways that ensure communities benefit from living near new onshore electricity transmission infrastructure and are committed to ensuring fair and beneficial outcomes in alignment with our overall mission.

**Ben Goldsborough:** [504]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of providing (a) £50,000, (b) £200,000 and (c) £500,000 per kilometre of overhead line to local authorities affected by new electricity infrastructure projects.

**Michael Shanks:**

The previous government's response to the consultation on community benefits for transmission network infrastructure was published in November 2023. This document outlines that, when combined with bill discounts and additional benefits for underground cables and substations, these levels of wider benefits could lead to benefits to society with an estimated value between £1.5bn - £7.8bn if improved acceptability reduces delays to network build. These benefits come from reduced network constraint costs and emissions savings.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/community-benefits-for-electricity-transmission-network-infrastructure>

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.

**Ben Goldsborough:** [505]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of providing (a) £10,000, (b) £40,000 and (c) £100,000 per kilometre of underground line to local authorities affected by new electricity infrastructure projects.

**Michael Shanks:**

The previous government's response to the consultation on community benefits for transmission network infrastructure was published in November 2023. This document outlines that, when combined with bill discounts and additional benefits for overhead cables and substations, these levels of wider benefits could lead to benefits to society with an estimated value between £1.5bn - £7.8bn if improved acceptability reduces delays to network build. These benefits come from reduced network constraint costs and emissions savings.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/community-benefits-for-electricity-transmission-network-infrastructure>

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.

**■ Electricity: Rural Areas****Andrew Bowie:****[648]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps he plans to take with Scottish and Southern Electricity Networks to help ensure the resilience of the electricity network in rural areas, in the context of trends in the number of (a) extreme weather events and (b) power cuts.

**Michael Shanks:**

The Government is working with the industry to continually improve and maintain the resilience of old and new energy infrastructure, networks and assets, to reduce vulnerabilities, and ensure an effective response to actual or potentially disruptive incidents - taking into account future system changes and climate change risks.

We are also working with Ofgem to provide funding to Distribution Network Operators to improve the service experienced by those customers who experience the poorest levels of performance. This often occurs where the cost of improving the reliability of a part of the network is particularly high, in part due to the low volume of customers served by that part of the network.

**■ Energy Supply and Fuel Poverty: Staffordshire****Adam Jogee:****[464]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what assessment he has made of levels of energy (a) poverty and (b) security in (i) Newcastle-under-Lyme constituency and (ii) Staffordshire.

**Miatta Fahnbulleh:**

The latest statistics for the number of households in fuel poverty in parliamentary constituencies in England, can be found in the published sub-regional fuel poverty Official Statistics, in Table 4: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/fuel-poverty-statistics>.

Whilst we cannot comment on specific constituencies, the energy security outlook for GB is positive for this upcoming winter - in their Early Winter Outlook (<https://www.nationalgrideso.com/research-and-publications/winter-outlook>), the National Grid Electricity System Operator (ESO) provisionally expects the margin between supply and demand for GB to be 5.6GW / 9.4%, which is an improved position from last winter (4.4 GW / 7.4%). We continue to work with Ofgem and the gas and electricity system operators to monitor our energy security.

## ■ Energy Supply: East of England

**Ben Goldsborough:** [295]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of promoting community-owned energy projects in the East of England to (a) help achieve Net Zero targets and (b) provide greater support for infrastructure construction in localities affected.

**Michael Shanks:**

Community projects will play a crucial role in the Government's mission to make the UK a clean energy superpower, by saving families money and improving communities' energy security.

Through the Government's Local Power Plan, which will be delivered by Great British Energy, we will put local communities and stakeholders at the heart of the energy transition. Great British Energy will collaborate with private energy companies, local authorities, and cooperatives to roll-out small and medium-scale clean energy projects. This will save families money and ensure communities directly benefit from local developments.

## ■ Fuels: Prices

**Blair McDougall:** [342]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether he plans to take legislative steps to protect consumers of (a) petrol and (b) diesel from uncompetitive practices by retailers.

**Miatta Fahnbulleh:**

The government welcomes the CMA's work to investigate fuel prices and we will continue to monitor the situation closely.

## ■ Fuels: Retail Trade

**Grahame Morris:** [1201]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if he will introduce a statutory fuel finder scheme as recommended by the Competition and Markets Authority's Road Fuel Market Study.

**Miatta Fahnbulleh:**

The government welcomes the CMA's work to investigate fuel prices and we will continue to monitor the situation closely.

■ **Great British Energy****Martin McCluskey:** [\[318\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps he is taking to establish GB Energy.

**Michael Shanks:**

The Government has taken immediate action towards establishing Great British Energy – a new publicly-owned energy company, headquartered in Scotland.

The Government has now published the launch statement for Great British Energy, announced a chair and Great British Energy's first major partnership with The Crown Estate. The Government is also introducing the Great British Energy Bill to Parliament, establishing Great British Energy so it can turbocharge investment in clean, home-grown power – boosting energy independence, creating jobs and tackling climate change.

**Andrew Bowie:** [\[643\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, when he plans to announce the location of the headquarters for GB Energy.

**Michael Shanks:**

Scotland plays an incredibly important role in the energy industry in Great Britain and in recognition of the leading role that it plays in the UK's clean energy revolution, Great British Energy will be headquartered and run from Scotland.

We will set out further detail on Great British Energy, including announcing the location in Scotland of its headquarters, in the coming weeks.

■ **Offshore Industry: Licensing****Andrew Bowie:** [\[642\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what his policy is on new offshore licensing applications.

**Michael Shanks:**

We do not intend to issue new licences to explore new fields because they will not take a penny off bills, cannot make us energy secure, and will only accelerate the worsening climate crisis.

The government does not intend to revoke existing licences, and we will partner with business and workers to manage our existing fields for the entirety of their lifespan.

We will embrace the future of energy production and storage, which will make use of existing offshore infrastructure and the skills of our workforce.

**Andrew Bowie:** [\[645\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether he has carried out an economic impact assessment on banning new oil and gas exploration licences.

**Michael Shanks:**

This Government will ensure a phased and responsible North Sea transition. We will manage the North Sea in a way that does not jeopardise jobs.

The Government is taking action to coordinate our approach to ensure a just transition where workers are able to benefit from the economic opportunities from our transition to net zero.

We will share more details on our plans for oil and gas exploration in due course. Any future legislative changes would follow the relevant processes, including an impact assessment where appropriate.

**Andrew Bowie:** [\[647\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what assessment his Department has made of the potential impact of his decision to not approve new oil and gas exploration licences on the Scottish economy.

**Michael Shanks:**

This Government will ensure a phased and responsible North Sea transition. We will manage the North Sea in a way that does not jeopardise jobs.

The Government is taking action to coordinate our approach to ensure a just transition where workers are able to benefit from the economic opportunities from our transition to net zero, particularly in Scotland.

We will share more details on our plans for oil and gas in due course. Any future legislative changes would follow the relevant processes, including an impact assessment where appropriate.

## ■ Renewable Energy: Infrastructure

**Ben Goldsborough:** [\[502\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps he is taking to encourage communities to support renewable energy network connection infrastructure in their localities.

**Michael Shanks:**

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

Strategic network planning will reduce the overall impact of infrastructure through coordination where appropriate. Networks plans take account of environmental and community impacts, alongside deliverability and economic cost, at every stage of network planning.

National Grid Electricity System Operator is developing the Electricity Transmission Design Principles.

#### ■ **Sizewell C Power Station: Investment**

**Andrew Bowie:** [\[387\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, when he plans to announce the amount of private investment raised for Sizewell C.

**Michael Shanks:**

Discussions with potential investors participating in the equity raise process are ongoing. We cannot comment further on the process, as it is commercially sensitive.

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

#### ■ **Small Modular Reactors**

**Andrew Bowie:** [\[388\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what his planned timeline is for downselecting small modular reactor technologies for UK deployment.

**Michael Shanks:**

Great British Nuclear, the Department's arm's-length body responsible for helping deliver the government's nuclear programme. is currently running a small modular reactor technology selection process for UK deployment.

This is a live procurement and is on-going. The window for submitting tenders has now closed and Great British Nuclear is currently evaluating bids. We look forward to providing further information in due course.

#### ■ **Solar Power: Buckinghamshire**

**Greg Smith:** [\[683\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if he will publish all correspondence his Department has had on the Rosefield solar proposal in Buckinghamshire.

**Michael Shanks:**

The Department does not routinely publish correspondence that it receives and sends as part of the normal course of business.

#### ■ **Solar Power: Land Use**

**Alicia Kearns:** [\[220\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if he will make it his policy to bring forward legislative proposals to require the solar industry to pay a standardised level of compensation to affected communities.

**Michael Shanks:**

It is important for this Government that where communities host clean energy infrastructure, they should directly benefit from it.

We are aware that solar and other renewable developers currently offer a range of community benefit schemes including providing funding for environmental enhancements, job schemes, energy discounts, and investment in local infrastructure such as faster broadband, EV charging points or energy efficiency measures.

Government does not currently have a formal role with regards to community benefits for solar.

**Alicia Kearns:**[\[221\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether his Department (a) monitors and (b) plans to monitor the (i) area, (ii) type by agricultural grade and (iii) geographical location of land proposed for solar development.

**Michael Shanks:**

The Department currently monitors the geographical location of solar developments through the Renewable Energy Planning Database. We plan to broaden the scope of this database to provide information on the area and types of agricultural land used by existing solar projects and those in the planning pipeline.

**Andrew Bowie:**[\[389\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what assessment he has made of the potential implications for his policies on applications for large scale solar farms of the Written Ministerial Statement entitled Solar and protecting our Food Security and Best and Most Versatile (BMV) Land, dated 15 May 2024, UIN HCWS466.

**Michael Shanks:**

The Written Ministerial Statement made in May by the previous government did not change the policy on this matter that is set out in the relevant parts of the National Policy Statement (NPS) for Renewable Energy and the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). It quoted extracts from that NPS and the NPPF. Decisions on solar that is Nationally Significant Infrastructure will be guided by the NPS in full, noting there are transitional provisions in place as the NPS was only designated this January. The NPPF will continue to be a material consideration for Local Authority planning decisions on solar.

**Andrew Bowie:**[\[390\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether he plans to expand the Renewable Energy Planning Database to include additional information on the types of agricultural land used by (a) existing solar projects and (b) solar projects in the planning pipeline, in the context of the Written Ministerial Statement entitled Solar and protecting our Food Security and Best and Most Versatile (BMV) Land, dated 15 May 2024, UIN HCWS466.



**Michael Shanks:**

The Department plans to broaden the scope of the Renewable Energy Planning Database to provide information on the types of agricultural land used by existing solar projects and those in the planning pipeline, as set out in the Written Ministerial Statement, 'Solar and protecting our Food Security and Best and Most Versatile (BMV) Land' dated 15 May.

**■ Solar Power: Supply Chains****Alicia Kearns:**[\[1372\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, pursuant to the Answer of 22 July 2024 to Question 373 on Solar Power: Supply Chains, which section of the Decision Letter addresses the (a) ethical sourcing of solar panels for the Mallard Pass development and (b) issues raised in section 3.9.92 of the report by the Planning Inspectorate entitled Mallard Pass Solar Farm: Examining Authority's Report of Findings and Conclusions and Recommendation to the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, published on 16 February 2024.

**Michael Shanks:**

(a) The issue of ethical sourcing of solar panels for the Mallard Pass development are set out in paragraphs 4.104 to 4.107 of the Secretary of State's Decision Letter.

(b) Issues raised in section 3.9.92 of the Examining Authority's Report are considered in paragraphs 4.104 to 4.107 of the Secretary of State's Decision Letter.

**Alicia Kearns:**[\[1373\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, pursuant to the Answer of 22 July 2024 to Question 384 on Solar Power: Supply Chains, which section of the Decision Letter sets out the Secretary of State's views on the adequacy of the measures in the Mallard Pass Solar Farm Outline Employment, Skills, and Supply Chain Plan (Clean) published on 19 September 2023 on the ethical sourcing of solar panels.

**Michael Shanks:**

The Secretary of State's conclusions are set out at paragraphs 4.107 and 4.109 of the Decision Letter.

It is important to note that the question for the Secretary of State was whether this issue was a relevant planning matter, which is a different question from whether, as Ministers agree, this is an important matter more broadly. The Decision Letter references other regulatory routes that are available to control the ethical and legal sourcing of solar panels.

Given the Secretary of State's quasi-judicial role in taking such decisions and the fact that a legal challenge to the decision could be made, Ministers cannot comment on this case beyond what is in the Decision Letter. This approach is set out in the Planning Propriety Guidance on nationally significant infrastructure decisions.

**Alicia Kearns:** [\[222\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if he will take steps with Cabinet colleagues to help tackle the use of Uyghur forced labour in the supply chains of the solar industry.

**Michael Shanks:**

No company in the UK should have forced labour in its supply chain. We will be working with colleagues across Government to tackle the issue of Uyghur forced labour in supply chains.

We are also relaunching the Solar Taskforce, which will focus on identifying and taking forward the actions needed to develop supply chains that are resilient, sustainable and free from forced labour. This will support the significant increases in deployment of solar panels needed to meet our ambition of tripling the UK's solar power capacity by 2030.

**Blair McDougall:** [\[R\]](#) [\[271\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps his Department is taking to help ensure that solar panels installed in the UK do not contain polysilicon manufactured through the slave labour of Uyghurs and other Turkic Muslims in China.

**Michael Shanks:**

No company in the UK should have forced labour in its supply chain. We will be working with colleagues across Government to tackle the issue of Uyghur forced labour in supply chains.

We are also relaunching the Solar Taskforce, which will focus on identifying and taking forward the actions needed to develop supply chains that are resilient, sustainable and free from forced labour. This will support the significant increases in deployment of solar panels needed to meet our ambition of tripling the UK's solar power capacity by 2030.

## ■ Wind Power: Bats and Birds

**Sir John Hayes:** [\[23\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential impact of his policy on onshore wind on (a) bats and (b) birds.

**Michael Shanks:**

The planning system provides important checks and balances when new onshore wind farms are built, including environmental surveying and statutory environmental and habitat impact assessments.

The biggest risk to native bird and bat populations is the climate and nature crisis. That is why the government is committed to 2030 clean power, including rapidly expanding onshore wind power generation in the UK.

## ■ Wind Power: Infrastructure

**Andrew Bowie:**

[650]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what assessment his Department has made of the potential impact of quadrupling offshore wind capacity on communities that will host the necessary transmission infrastructure.

**Michael Shanks:**

Strategic planning will help ensure the overall impact of network infrastructure is minimised, by considering the impact on communities from the outset, alongside environmental impact, cost and deliverability.

However, this will not eliminate the need for new infrastructure. It is therefore important that where communities host clean energy infrastructure, they directly benefit from it. We are currently considering options for this.

All projects are subject to the independent planning system, which includes consideration of community impact.

## ■ Wind Power: Tilbury

**Mr Richard Holden:**

[475]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of an underground first approach to new electricity infrastructure connecting offshore North Sea wind farms to Tilbury.

**Michael Shanks:**

Proposed changes to the energy National Policy Statements (NPSs) were consulted on between 30 March 2023 to 23 June 2023 under the previous government. Following this a revised version of the National Policy Statement for electricity networks infrastructure was designated on 17 January 2024. This sets out that overhead lines should be the strong starting presumption for electricity networks developments in general, except in nationally designated landscapes where undergrounding is the starting presumption. The government does not make assessments for specific projects until they come to the Secretary of State for final planning decision.

## ■ Wylfa Power Station

**Andrew Bowie:**

[501]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if he will proceed with the planned GW-scale nuclear power plant at Wylfa, as announced by the previous Government on 22 May 2024.

**Michael Shanks:**

Nuclear can play an important role in helping to achieve energy security and clean power while securing thousands of skilled jobs. As a site which has previously hosted a nuclear power station, and is now owned by Great British Nuclear, Wylfa can play

an important role in new nuclear in the UK, and we will set out our plans for the site in due course.

## ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

### ■ Agriculture: Rain

**Helen Morgan:**

[\[1376\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether his Department has made an assessment of the impact of the recent period of prolonged and increased rainfall on the agricultural sector.

**Daniel Zeichner:**

The actual impact on yield and quality of several arable crops will not be known until harvest; from mid-August onwards, but the Department expects some impact and is assessing what that might be. Early indications from the June AHDB Planting and Variety Survey suggests that, while the 2024 cropping area has reduced compared with 2023, the magnitude of the reduction is smaller than was projected in March 2024. Yields and productivity is also dependent on individual farmer decisions, region, area and in the case of the arable sector, crop.

The UK agricultural sector is highly resilient and adaptable and operates in an open market with the value of commodities established by those in the supply chain.

Following the recent period of prolonged wet weather the Department's current assessment is that while there may be implications for certain commodities, price rises are likely to be within a normal range and should not cause significant issues with business viability or overall supply, with any possible shortfalls being met by imports.

### ■ Animal Housing: Pigs

**Sarah Champion:**

[\[959\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he plans to ban the use of farrowing crates for pigs.

**Daniel Zeichner:**

I refer the hon. Member to the answer given on 22 July 2024 to the hon. Member for Battersea, [PQ UIN 414](#).

### ■ Animal Welfare

**Sarah Champion:**

[\[957\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if his Department will produce an animal protection strategy.

**Daniel Zeichner:**

The welfare of animals is currently protected by a suite of legislation including the Animal Welfare Act 2006.

The Government has committed to introducing the most ambitious programme for animal welfare in a generation. As outlined in their manifesto, the Government intends to ban trail hunting and the import of hunting trophies, to end puppy smuggling and farming and to stop the use of snare traps.

Ministers are considering the most effective way to deliver these commitments and will set out next steps in due course.

## ■ Avian Influenza: Disease Control

**Danny Beales:**

**[790]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to (a) help prevent the dairy-cattle H5N1 virus strain from (i) entering and (ii) spreading among the UK population and (b) prepare for potential outbreaks of that virus in UK cattle.

**Daniel Zeichner:**

The Government is in close contact with counterparts in the United States on the incidents of influenza of avian origin in cattle in the USA. We know that the strain of virus (Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) strain B3.13) involved has not been detected in the UK from our bulk milk testing and wider surveillance.

Defra is working closely with the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC), the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA), the Food Standards Agency (FSA), the Cabinet Office and with international partners to consider the potential routes of incursion, evidence of animal-to-animal spread and risks of animal-to-human spillover and to reviewed our well-tested surveillance and preparedness activities to detect and respond to any infection of cattle from influenza of avian origin in the future.

The Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) has assessed the risk to livestock in Great Britain from this outbreak of Influenza A (H5N1) of avian origin in livestock in the USA, as very low (event is very rare but cannot be excluded) ( [Avian influenza in cattle in USA \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#) ). The FSA have assessed the risk to UK consumers from HPAI strain B3.13 in imported milk, dairy products, colostrum and colostrum-based products originating from US dairy cattle as very low with medium uncertainty ( [Rapid Risk Assessment: Risk to UK consumers from Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza \(HPAI\) H5N1 B3.13 in US dairy products | Food Standards Agency](#) ). The [Human Animal Infections and Risk Surveillance group \(HAIRS\)](#) consider that the HPAI B3.13 strain presents at most a very low risk with regard to spread from animals-to-humans in the UK HAIRS risk statement: Avian influenza A(H5N1) in livestock - GOV.UK ( [www.gov.uk](#) ).

Defra has funded a research consortium at led by The Pirbright Institute and Imperial College to understand this unusual situation. In addition, we have published an [Influenza A \(H5N1\) infection in mammals: suspect case definition and diagnostic testing criteria'](#) on gov.uk to support veterinary professionals and others in knowing when to report suspicion.

**■ Dairy Products: Labelling****Helen Morgan:** [\[1375\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether his Department has made an assessment of the impact of changes to labelling costs on dairy businesses after 1 October 2024.

**Daniel Zeichner:**

This government has considered the impact of changes to labelling costs across a range of sectors. The Government is committed to implementing the Windsor Framework in good faith, including commitments on the use of 'Not for EU labels', as well as taking all steps necessary to protect the UK internal market.

**■ Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs: Northern Ireland****Adam Jogee:** [\[741\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with the Minister for the Environment in the Northern Ireland Executive on his departmental priorities.

**Daniel Zeichner:**

The Secretary of State had a call with Andrew Muir MLA, Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs on his second full day (9 July) where they committed to constructive partnership working and identified early shared priorities to collaborate on including tackling water quality issues, and reducing waste and pollution in order to protect our natural resources and grow the economy.

**■ Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs: Scotland****Adam Jogee:** [\[743\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with the Minister for the Environment in the Scottish Government on his departmental priorities.

**Daniel Zeichner:**

The Secretary of State had a call with Mairi Gougeon MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform and Islands on his second full day (9 July) where they committed to constructive partnership working and identified early shared priorities to collaborate on including protecting our natural resources to grow the economy through circular economy measures; supporting farmers and improving food security; and, sharing information on land use reform and access to nature.

**■ Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs: Wales****Adam Jogee:** [\[742\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with the Minister for the Environment in the Welsh Government on his departmental priorities.

**Daniel Zeichner:**

The Secretary of State had a call with Huw Irranca-Davies MS, Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change and Rural Affairs on his second full day (9 July) where they committed to constructive partnership working, and identified early shared priorities to collaborate on to protect our natural resources and grow the economy, including initiatives to build a circular economy and measures to improve the water quality in our shared rivers.

■ **Farmers: Finance****Helen Morgan:**[\[1374\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department plans to take to provide financial assistance to farmers in debt.

**Daniel Zeichner:**

The recent 'Balance Sheet Analysis' publication highlights that average liquidity in the sector has been consistently improving over the latest five years of data and reached a 10-year high in the latest year of data (2022/23). This suggests that levels of debt in the farming sector are lower than average.

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

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

■ **Flood Control: Finance****Jess Asato:**[\[734\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how much his Department plans to spend on flood defences in each of the next three financial years.

**Emma Hardy:**

This Government is committed to protecting communities across the country from the dangers of flooding. We will launch a Flood Resilience Taskforce to turbocharge the delivery of flood defences, drainage systems and natural flood management schemes.

We have inherited a floods investment programme which is behind schedule. Since 2021, around 300 flood defence schemes have been completed, investing £2.3bn to protect more than 88,000 properties. In addition, an aging asset base, inflation and last winter's storms have affected the condition of our existing flood defences. Where a flood defence is below the required condition, the Environment Agency take measures to ensure that communities are not put at risk of flooding.

Moving forwards, we will be reviewing the programme with a view to ensuring flood risk management is fit for the challenges we face now and in the future within the constraints of an economically tight outlook.

### ■ Fly-tipping: Cramlington and Killingworth

**Emma Foody:** [1118]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what information his Department holds on the number of instances of fly tipping in Cramlington and Killingworth constituency in each year since 2010.

**Mary Creagh:**

Local authorities are required to report fly-tipping incidents and enforcement actions to Defra, which the department have published annually since 2012, at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/env24-fly-tipping-incidents-and-actions-taken-in-england>. This data isn't available at a constituency level and

excludes the majority of private-land incidents.

### ■ Fruit and Vegetables: Horticulture

**Ben Goldsborough:** [1399]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether his Department has undertaken a review of the accessibility of the Fruit and Vegetable aid scheme.

**Daniel Zeichner:**

The Fruit and Vegetable Aid Scheme is an EU legacy scheme and legislation is in place which will close it on the 31st of December 2025. The Government has committed to championing British farming, whilst protecting the environment, and is currently considering the best way to support our farming sectors in the future, including horticulture.

### ■ Pigs: Livestock Industry

**Charlie Dewhirst:** [236]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to the Government response to the consultation entitled Contractual practice in the UK pig sector, published on 6 April 2023, whether it is his policy to implement the next steps set out in that Government response.

**Daniel Zeichner:**

We will deliver a resilient and healthy food system, with a new deal that ensures fairness for farmers. We recognise that fairness in the supply chain is critical for farmers across all sectors. We want all farmers to get a fair price for their products and are committed to tackle contractual unfairness where it exists.

We will continue the work closely with the pig sector, and all farming sectors, on the best way to achieve this.



**■ Plastics: Waste**

**Paula Barker:** [\[716\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking with business to reduce the (a) manufacture and (b) distribution of single use plastic products.

**Mary Creagh:**

This Government is committed to banning the sale, supply and manufacture of wet wipes containing plastic.

**■ Rights of Way**

**Phil Brickell:** [\[1069\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of expanding the right to roam.

**Mary Creagh:**

The Government does not believe the Scottish or Scandinavian models are the right approach in England. The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 provides the public a right of access to areas of mountain, moor, heath, down, registered common land and coastal margin in England. We will be considering whether any changes are required to the current right to roam regime in due course.

**■ UK Internal Trade: Northern Ireland**

**Jim Allister:** [\[1379\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to the Official Controls Regulation (EU) 2017/625, what charges are due to be placed on Northern Ireland businesses under the Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland.

**Daniel Zeichner:**

This Government is committed to implementing the Windsor Framework, and work is ongoing to consider the introduction of charges on goods entering the EU via Northern Ireland ports to recoup the costs of carrying out required sanitary and phytosanitary checks. There will be no fees or charges for businesses using the Northern Ireland Retail Movement Scheme.

**FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE****■ Balkans: Security**

**Alicia Kearns:** [\[230\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to help ensure stability in the Western Balkans.

**Stephen Doughty:**

The stability and security of the Western Balkans is a key priority for the new government. The Prime Minister, Foreign Secretary and I recently met a number of Western Balkans leaders, including at the European Political Community and NATO Summits; discussions included efforts to promote stability, security and prosperity for mutual interests.

We are also working with European and US allies to strengthen collective international engagement on the Western Balkans to resolve conflict legacies and risks, promote economic development, tackle organised crime and help to build stable, inclusive and prosperous societies - including through approaches empowering women. We continue to play a key role in KFOR.

I recently met the EU Special Representative Miroslav Lajcak to discuss these issues, and welcomed Bosnia and Herzegovina Presidency Chair Becirovic to the FCDO.

**■ British Nationals Abroad: Detainees****Layla Moran:****[1338]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps the Government is taking to help free (a) Alaa Abd El-Fattah, (b) Jagtar Johal Singh, (c) Jimmy Lai and (d) other British nationals detained overseas.

**Mr Hamish Falconer:**

FCDO consular staff are currently providing consular assistance in over 1600 cases relating to arrest or detention. Consular staff aim to stay in regular contact with British Nationals in detention and do what they can to support their health and welfare. The UK Government cannot interfere in criminal or civil court proceedings in other countries. However, where there are human rights concerns such as allegations of torture or mistreatment, with the consent of the person affected, we raise these-- concerns with the local authorities, highlighting the detaining state's obligations under international human rights law.

You asked about three cases:

- The UK government continues to raise Mr Alaa Abd El-Fattah's case at the highest levels with the Egyptian government. We have been consistently clear in calling for his release and continue to press for urgent consular access.
- We remain committed to pushing the Government of India for faster progress to resolve Jagtar Singh Johal's case. The Foreign Secretary raised Mr Johal's case this week (24 July) during a bilateral meeting with the Indian Minister of External Affairs, during his first official visit to India as Foreign Secretary.
- We call on the Hong Kong authorities to end their politically motivated prosecution and immediately release British national Jimmy Lai.

## ■ Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting

**Adam Jogee:** [\[420\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, which Ministers will attend CHOGM 2024.

**Anneliese Dodds:**

The UK Government is committed to the Commonwealth and is working closely with Commonwealth partners ahead of this year's Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in Samoa, the first to take place in a Pacific Small Island Developing State. Ministerial attendance will be confirmed in due course.

## ■ Deep Sea Mining

**Jim Shannon:** [\[79\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to prevent deep sea mining.

**Anneliese Dodds:**

This Government supports a moratorium on the granting of exploration licences for deep sea mining projects by the International Seabed Authority (ISA). The UK recognises the impacts of deep sea mining are not fully understood and supports a moratorium on the granting of mining licences by the ISA until sufficient scientific evidence is available to assess the potential impact of deep-sea mining activities on marine ecosystems, and strong, enforceable environmental regulations, standards and guidelines are adopted by the ISA.

## ■ Gaza: Israel

**Laura Kyrke-Smith:** [\[1423\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to assess Israel's compliance with international humanitarian law in Gaza.

**Mr Hamish Falconer:**

We are clear that International Humanitarian Law must be upheld, and we are following the necessary processes.

As soon as the Foreign Secretary took office, he tasked officials with a comprehensive review of Israel's compliance with International Humanitarian Law, and that process is now under way. We will update the House again once the process is complete.

## ■ Georgia: Politics and Government

**Blair McDougall:** [\[R\]](#) [\[272\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has made recent representations to his counterpart in Georgia on the passing of the law on the transparency of foreign influence in that country.

**Stephen Doughty:**

The UK is committed to supporting a vibrant civil society in Georgia as an essential attribute of a healthy democracy. The Foreign Secretary met Georgian Foreign Minister Darchiashvili on 18 July at the European Political Community summit at Blenheim Palace. He urged the Georgian Government to return to its path of progressive democracy, in line with the Euro-Atlantic aspirations of over 80 per cent of the Georgian people.

We continue to closely monitor developments.

■ **Israel: UNRWA**

**Brendan O'Hara:** [\[1281\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he plans to have discussions with his Israeli counterpart on reports of (a) torture and (b) other ill-treatment of staff members of UNRWA; and whether he plans to review how information received from Israel is used in the future.

**Mr Hamish Falconer:**

The Government is committed to upholding our international obligations and has raised these with Israeli counterparts. The Foreign Secretary discussed International Humanitarian Law compliance in Gaza with Prime Minister Netanyahu directly during his visit to Israel on 14 July. The protection of civilians is a vital part of this.

■ **Russia: Shipping**

**Mark Pritchard:** [\[34\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will take steps to ensure that companies that (a) manage and (b) insure the shipping of liquefied natural gas are compliant with the UK's sanctions against Russia.

**Stephen Doughty:**

The UK has taken extensive action to limit Russian energy revenues, including prohibiting the import of Russian liquid natural gas (LNG) and an export ban on energy-related goods to target Russia's longer-term LNG production. The new Government is committed to rigorously enforcing our sanctions, cracking down on those who seek to circumvent them, and to working with partners to constrain Russian revenue which is supporting Putin's illegal war in Ukraine.

We took robust action against Russia's "shadow fleet", alongside allies, at the European Political Community, and will continue to explore further options to strengthen our sanctions regime and enforcement, including in the energy sector.

■ **Spain: British Nationals Abroad**

**Blair McDougall:** [\[343\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of negotiating a reciprocal agreement with

the Government of Spain that will allow British citizens with holiday properties in Spain to spend six months in that country.

**Stephen Doughty:**

Both the UK and the EU allow for visa-free short-term travel in line with their arrangements for Third Country Nationals. The UK allows EU citizens short-term visa-free travel for up to six months. Meanwhile, the Schengen Borders Code allows for Third Country Nationals to travel within the Schengen Area for up to 90 days in any 180-day period; this is standard for third countries travelling to the EU. While we recognise that extending the 90-180 day period is a matter for Member States and the EU, the Government will continue to listen to and advocate for UK nationals abroad.

■ **Sudan: Famine**

**Mark Pritchard:**

[36]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to help reduce famine in Sudan.

**Anneliese Dodds:**

The conflict in Sudan has created a manmade humanitarian disaster with 8.5 million people facing emergency or famine conditions, more than Gaza, South Sudan, Mali, Bangladesh, and Afghanistan combined. This financial year, UK bilateral ODA to Sudan will increase to £92 million. UK support is being delivered through the UN and other trusted partners, and is providing nutrition, safe drinking water, medical care and shelter. The UK continues to pursue all diplomatic avenues to press the warring parties into a permanent ceasefire, allow unrestricted humanitarian access, protect civilians and commit to a sustained and meaningful peace process.

■ **UK-Africa Investment Summit**

**Adam Jogee:**

[468]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he plans to re-schedule the UK-African Investment Summit.

**Anneliese Dodds:**

The UK-African Investment Summit, due to take place in April 2024, was postponed owing to scheduling issues in the international calendar.

The UK is committed to reconnecting with African countries, listening to our African partners and putting trade and growth at the heart of our partnerships. This includes working with South Africa next year under their G20 Presidency.

**■ UNRWA****Andrew Pakes:** [\[395\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, when his Department last met representatives of the UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA); and whether he plans to meet UNRWA in future.

**Mr Hamish Falconer:**

The Foreign Secretary called UNRWA Commissioner General Lazzarini on 19 July to discuss the reinstatement of UK funding. Development Minister Anneliese Dodds also met with Lazzarini following the announcement on 19 July. They discussed how the UK's £21 million of new funding will support UNRWA's lifesaving work in Gaza and the provision of basic services in the region. We also condemned the killing of almost 200 UNRWA workers in the conflict. The Foreign Secretary also spoke with UNRWA Gaza Director Scott Anderson on 15 July during his visit to Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories. They also discussed the need for further protection of civilians in Gaza.

**Sir John Hayes:** [\[868\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to his oral statement on 19 July 2024, Official Report, column 300 on Israel and Gaza, if his Department will take steps to monitor the neutrality of the UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA).

**Mr Hamish Falconer:**

When the Foreign Secretary announced the resumption of funding on 19 July 2024, he said that UNRWA had taken serious action in response to the appalling allegations that UNRWA staff were involved in the 7 October attack against Israel.

The Government is confident that UNRWA is now taking action to ensure it meets the highest standards of neutrality and strengthening its procedures. £1 million of the £21 million of new UK funding will be earmarked to support UNRWA to implement the management reforms recommended by the independent Colonna review. Together with other donors, we will continue to monitor UNRWA's progress to implement the action plan. The FCDO will also continue to conduct our own annual assessment of UK funding to UNRWA.

**■ Zimbabwe: Economic Cooperation****Adam Jogie:** [\[472\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what plans he has to promote economic cooperation between the United Kingdom and Zimbabwe.

**Anneliese Dodds:**

The Foreign Secretary is putting growth at the heart of our foreign policy making, including improving relationships with the fastest growing markets of the future across the Global South. Trade between Zimbabwe and the UK was worth £633 million in

2023 and increasing economic growth between the UK and Zimbabwe is a top priority for our Embassy in Harare. We are pursuing this through a range of channels, including by supporting UK businesses to enter and navigate the Zimbabwean market and engaging with firms interested in the mining, horticulture, renewable energy and wider sustainability sectors. On 10 July, the UK's development finance institution, British International Investment, signed an agreement to invest \$10 million in a Zimbabwean bank, for lending to the agriculture sector.

## HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

### ■ Cheltenham Hospital: Accident and Emergency Departments

**Max Wilkinson:**

[\[1161\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether the accident and emergency department in Cheltenham General Hospital will continue to be a Type 1 consultant-led A&E department between 8am and 8pm, in the context of proposed changes to the provision of acute medical take in that hospital.

**Karin Smyth:**

The Gloucestershire health system carried out public consultation in 2020, as well as further engagement between 2022 and 2023, on shaping the future of hospital services. As set out in the proposals, Cheltenham General Hospital will continue to provide a consultant-led emergency department from 8:00am to 8:00pm, and a nurse-led minor injuries and illness unit from 8:00pm to 8:00am, with an intensive care service for critically unwell patients.

### ■ Cystic Fibrosis: Medical Treatments

**Sir John Hayes:**

[\[1189\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will take steps to ensure the supply of pancreatic enzyme replacement therapies for people with cystic fibrosis.

**Karin Smyth:**

The Department has been working with suppliers to address current supply issues with pancreatic enzyme replacement therapy (PERT), including Creon, used in the treatment of cystic fibrosis and certain cancers, including pancreatic cancer. The supply issues are impacting countries throughout Europe, and have been caused by the limited availability of raw ingredients and manufacturing capacity constraints in producing the volumes needed to meet demand. The Department is continuing to work with all suppliers of PERT to help resolve the supply issues in the short and longer term. This includes asking that they expedite deliveries, source stock from other markets, and increase production.

We have issued comprehensive guidance to healthcare professionals about these supply issues, which provides advice on how to manage patients whilst there is disruption to supply. This guidance is being kept under review, and updates will be made as necessary. Serious Shortage Protocols are in place for Creon 10,000 and

25,000 capsules to limit prescriptions to one months' supply, to allow demand management.

We understand how frustrating and distressing medicine supply issues can be. While we can't always prevent supply issues from occurring, the Department has a range of well-established processes and tools to manage them when they arise, and to help mitigate risks to patients.

## ■ Gynaecology

**Mr Richard Holden:** [\[481\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the impact of banning (a) virginity testing and (b) hymenoplasty on women.

**Karin Smyth:**

No specific assessment has been made. The legislation to ban virginity testing and hymenoplasty was introduced through the Health and Social Act 2022. In April 2024 the department published the virginity testing and hymenoplasty multi-agency guidance which provides advice to anyone who may come in to contact with women and girls affected by virginity testing and hymenoplasty. The guidance is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/virginity-testing-and-hymenoplasty-multi-agency-guidance/virginity-testing-and-hymenoplasty-multi-agency-guidance>

## ■ Health Insurance: Private Sector

**Sir Christopher Chope:** [\[1183\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of fee setting and de-recognition procedures on the (a) cost and (b) availability of private medical insurance.

**Karin Smyth:**

Insurers make commercial decisions about pricing and the terms of cover they offer based on their assessment of the relevant risks. This is usually informed by the insurer's claims experience and other industry-wide statistics. The respective capabilities of insurers to assess risk is a key element on which they compete, and the Government does not intend to intervene in these commercial decisions, as this could damage competition in the market. This competition is important and should lead to better products and lower prices for consumers overall.

Price is an important factor on which insurers compete to win customers, and that competition should push insurers to continuously improve their assessment of risks in order to lower prices and create better products for consumers. The Government intervening in insurance markets could damage that competition and, therefore, we do not generally intervene in the commercial pricing decisions of insurers.



## ■ Health Services: Private Sector

**Andrew George:**

[7]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what NHS services he plans to commission through private providers in the next 12 months.

**Karin Smyth:**

Services are commissioned either by integrated care boards or by NHS England. Commissioners have always worked with private providers to deliver primary and secondary services for the National Health Service, and make decisions based on the specifics of their areas and populations.

This government is committed to driving down waiting times for patients and will use all levers, including spare capacity in the system whether that is in independent or NHS providers, to ensure patients are treated faster. Our first step will be the delivery of 40,000 more appointments per week, and we will support the system to deliver these in the most productive and cost-efficient way.

## ■ Heart Diseases

**Claire Hanna:**

[1047]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department plans to (a) help increase the survival rate of out-of-hospital cardiac arrests and (b) increase the availability of defibrillators in public settings.

**Karin Smyth:**

As of July 2024, there are 93,113 automated external defibrillators registered in the United Kingdom on the National Defibrillator Network, also known as The Circuit, including 73,682 in England. Moving forward, the Department has asked Professor Lord Darzi to investigate the state of the National Health Service. The Department will then set out its 10-year plan for the NHS.

## ■ Hospitals: Parking

**Sojan Joseph:**

[507]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make it his policy to abolish parking charges for NHS staff.

**Karin Smyth:**

There are no plans to abolish parking charges for National Health Service staff.

All trusts that charge for hospital car parking provide free parking to 'in-need groups', which include NHS staff working overnight, frequent outpatient attenders, disabled people and parents of children staying overnight in hospital.

## ■ NHS: Capital Investment

**Mr Richard Holden:**

[\[456\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what his timeline is for reviewing (a) the hospital building programme, (b) the new diagnostics centres programme, (c) primary care programmes and (d) other capital projects.

**Karin Smyth:**

*[Holding answer 22 July 2024]:* All capital spending activity is kept under regular review to ensure that it continues to meet the needs of patients and delivers value for money.

This Government recognises that strategic, value for money investments in capital projects are critical to providing good quality care. In line with this Government's plans to deliver a National Health Service fit for the future and as part of our internal Spending Review preparations, the Department is reviewing capital requirements, including through NHS England's assessment of long-term NHS estate needs across a range of areas. Timescales associated with the Spending Review are yet to be confirmed.

The Secretary of State has asked for an urgent report on the degree to which the New Hospital Programme is funded and a realistic timetable for delivery.

## ■ Pancreatin

**Sorcha Eastwood:**

[\[1163\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that (a) pancreatic cancer and (b) cystic fibrosis patients have access to Creon.

**Karin Smyth:**

The Department has been working with suppliers to address current supply issues with pancreatic enzyme replacement therapy (PERT), including Creon, used in the treatment of cystic fibrosis and certain cancers, including pancreatic cancer. The supply issues are impacting countries throughout Europe, and have been caused by the limited availability of raw ingredients and manufacturing capacity constraints in producing the volumes needed to meet demand. The Department is continuing to work with all suppliers of PERT to help resolve the supply issues in the short and longer term. This includes asking that they expedite deliveries, source stock from other markets, and increase production.

We have issued comprehensive guidance to healthcare professionals about these supply issues, which provides advice on how to manage patients whilst there is disruption to supply. This guidance is being kept under review, and updates will be made as necessary. Serious Shortage Protocols are in place for Creon 10,000 and 25,000 capsules to limit prescriptions to one month's supply, to allow demand management.

We understand how frustrating and distressing medicine supply issues can be. While we can't always prevent supply issues from occurring, the Department has a range of well-established processes and tools to manage them when they arise, and to help mitigate risks to patients.

**Chris Bloore:**

[\[1452\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to help increase the supply of Creon.

**Karin Smyth:**

The Department has been working with suppliers to address current supply issues with pancreatic enzyme replacement therapy (PERT), including Creon, used in the treatment of cystic fibrosis and certain cancers, including pancreatic cancer. The supply issues are impacting countries throughout Europe, and have been caused by the limited availability of raw ingredients and manufacturing capacity constraints in producing the volumes needed to meet demand. The Department is continuing to work with all suppliers of PERT to help resolve the supply issues in the short and longer term. This includes asking that they expedite deliveries, source stock from other markets, and increase production.

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We understand how frustrating and distressing medicine supply issues can be. While we can't always prevent supply issues from occurring, the Department has a range of well-established processes and tools to manage them when they arise, and to help mitigate risks to patients.

## ■ Royal Bolton Hospital: Accident and Emergency Departments

**Phil Brickell:**

[\[1068\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the average waiting time was for patients at the Royal Bolton Hospital Emergency Department in the latest period for which data is available.

**Karin Smyth:**

This information is not available in the format requested. The latest published National Health Service data, from June 2024, shows that 61.8% of patients were admitted, transferred, or discharged within four hours at Bolton NHS Foundation Trust.

The Government is committed to supporting the NHS in reducing accident and emergency waiting times, and returning to the standards patients should expect as set out in the NHS Constitution.

## ■ Shingles: Vaccination

**Deirdre Costigan:**

[\[1397\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of offering shingles vaccines to everyone aged 60 and over.

**Andrew Gwynne:**

From September 2023, the routine shingles vaccination programme changed from the Zostavax vaccine to the more effective two dose Shingrix vaccine, to better protect individuals from the effects of shingles, provide better clinical outcomes, and reduce pressures on the health system. As a result, almost 1 million more people became eligible for the shingles vaccination.

When a vaccination programme is expanded, decisions must be made regarding who to offer the vaccine to first. These decisions are based on advice given by the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI), and include evidence on the impact of the vaccine in different age groups as well as the capacity of the National Health Service to deliver the vaccination programme alongside other important healthcare priorities.

The expansion of the shingles programme currently includes those turning 65 years old on or after 1 September 2023, as well as those aged 50 years old and over who are at increased risk of serious complications. Phasing the roll-out of the shingles vaccination over time to everyone 60 years old and over is in line with the JCVI's recommendation and maximises cost effectiveness and population benefit, ensures consistent messaging over time to maximise coverage, and takes account of NHS capacity, all while being consistent with the approach taken by all four nations in the United Kingdom. This is a newly expanded programme and anyone unsure if they are eligible for the shingles vaccination should check online, on the NHS.UK website, or should speak to their general practice.

## HOME OFFICE

### ■ Action Fraud and the National Fraud Intelligence Bureau: Criminal Investigation

**Sir Christopher Chope:**

[\[1182\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will hold discussions with Action Fraud and the National Fraud Intelligence Bureau on the potential merits of opening a criminal investigation into crimes with reference numbers NFRC240606737247 and NFRC240606733631.

**Dan Jarvis:**

Due to the operational independence of law enforcement partners, the government is not able to comment on any specific case that is currently under review.

Action Fraud and the National Fraud Intelligence Bureau will ensure that any case is dealt with appropriately with the necessary action taken.

## ■ Alternatives to Prison: Pilot Schemes

**Olivia Blake:**

[R] [1403]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the (a) effectiveness and (b) cost efficiency of alternative to detention pilot projects operated by her Department; and what assessment she has made of the potential merits of introducing further pilots for (i) women, (ii) LGBTQI+ people and (iii) other people likely to be vulnerable in detention.

**Dame Angela Eagle:**

The Department will keep under review the feasibility of alternative to detention pilots, taking account of effectiveness and cost efficiency, as part of our plans to transform the asylum and returns system.

## ■ Asset Recovery Incentivisation Scheme

**Ben Goldsborough:**

[299]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how much was allocated to (a) each police force in England and Wales, (b) each government department, (c) each local authority and (d) other bodies through the Asset Recovery Incentivisation Scheme in each year since 2010.

**Dame Diana Johnson:**

Allocations from the Asset Recovery Incentivisation Scheme (ARIS) with breakdowns for police forces, government departments, local authority and other bodies that participate in ARIS is only available from financial year 2016/17 to 2022/23

Published data from financial year 2016/17 to 2021/22 can be found in tab 9 of the data tables: [Reporting force and agency data - assets recovered: September 2022.](#)

Published data from financial year 2017/18 to 2022/23 can be found in tab 10 of the data tables: [Asset Recovery Statistics, financial years ending 2018 to 2023: Data Tables.](#)

The total value of ARIS allocations to police forces, government departments, local authority and other bodies from 2016/17 to 2022/23 is £679.7m

The next publication covering financial year 2023/24 is due to be published in September.

## ■ Border Security Command: Finance

**Sir John Hayes:**

[597]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how much funding her Department plans to allocate to the Border Security Command in each of the next three financial years.

**Dame Angela Eagle:**

We are exploring appropriate funding options and models for the new Border Security Command (BSC) moving forward. More detail on the costing will be available after a spending review.

We are working closely with stakeholders including operational partners to determine how much funding will be needed to achieve the objectives of the BSC, ensuring that value for money is achieved for taxpayers. We will smash the gangs – disrupting the supply chain of their boats and engines and prosecuting those responsible.

### ■ **British National (Overseas): Airports**

**Daisy Cooper:** [\[529\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will set a target date for British National (Overseas) passport holders to be able to use eGates at the UK border.

**Seema Malhotra:**

The introduction of eGates has been part of the Home Office's wider approach to transforming our borders. Currently, there are over 270 eGates in place at 15 air and rail ports, open to British citizens and a range of other nationalities.

We are in the process of reviewing our approach to eGate eligibility policy and will announce our decision in due course.

### ■ **Burglary: Cornwall and Devon**

**Ben Maguire:** [\[254\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she plans to take to improve response times for burglaries in (a) North Cornwall constituency and (b) the Devon and Cornwall police force area.

**Dame Diana Johnson:**

The latest Crime Survey for England and Wales data (year to December 2023) shows an estimated 391,000 incidents of domestic burglary. We recognise the impact these invasive crimes can have and are committed to tackling them as part of our mission to take back our streets and make our communities safer.

This is why we have been clear, when you call the police, they should come; and when you report a crime it should be properly investigated no matter who you are, or where you live.

We welcome the police's commitment across England and Wales to attending the scene of every home burglary, and the specific College of Policing good practice guidance on conducting residential burglary investigations; setting the standard for the entire investigation, not just initial attendance, including victim care.

Response times in Devon and Cornwall are a matter for the Chief Constable for Devon and Cornwall Police.

### ■ **Confiscation Orders**

**Ben Goldsborough:** [\[298\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how much money has accrued to the public purse in confiscation orders in each year since 2010; and how much of that money was allocated in compensation to victims of crime in each year.

**Dame Diana Johnson:**

THE TOTAL VALUE OF CONFISCATION ORDER RECEIPTS AND COMPENSATION PAID TO VICTIMS THROUGH CONFISCATION ORDER RECEIPTS FOR 2011/12 TO 2022/23 IS £1.7 BILLION AND £281.7 MILLION RESPECTIVELY, WITH THE ANNUAL BREAKDOWN GIVEN BELOW. DATA FOR FINANCIAL YEARS 2011/12 TO 2022/23 CAN BE FOUND IN THE ANNUALLY PUBLISHED [ASSET RECOVERY STATISTICS - GOV.UK \(WWW.GOV.UK\)](#) WE DO NOT HOLD 2010/11 IN A READILY ACCESSIBLE FORMAT. THE NEXT PUBLICATION COVERING FINANCIAL YEAR 2023/24 IS DUE TO BE PUBLISHED IN SEPTEMBER.

TABLE 1: VALUE OF PROCEEDS OF CRIME RECOVERED FROM CONFISCATION ORDERS AND VALUE OF COMPENSATION PAID TO VICTIMS THROUGH CONFISCATION ORDER RECEIPTS IN THE JURISDICTIONS OF ENGLAND AND WALES AND NORTHERN IRELAND, FINANCIAL YEARS 2011/12 TO 2022/23

| FINANCIAL YEAR | CONFISCATION ORDER RECEIPTS (MILLIONS) | COMPENSATION PAID (MILLIONS) |
|----------------|----------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 2011/12        | £124.6                                 | £22.7                        |
| 2012/13        | £134.9                                 | £25.3                        |
| 2013/14        | £139.1                                 | £28.5                        |
| 2014/15        | £157.1                                 | £23.6                        |
| 2015/16        | £207.0                                 | £38.4                        |
| 2016/17        | £161.0                                 | £36.2                        |
| 2017/18        | £142.6                                 | £30.7                        |
| 2018/19        | £167.5                                 | £36.9                        |
| 2019/20        | £137.4                                 | £30.9                        |
| 2020/21        | £98.9                                  | £16.6                        |
| 2021/22        | £153.9                                 | £22.7                        |
| 2022/23        | £179.0                                 | £15.5                        |

■ **Crime: Rural Areas**

**Ben Goldsborough:****[301]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what estimate she has made of the financial impact of rural crime on the agriculture sector in Norfolk.

**Dame Diana Johnson:**

We are committed to stamping out crime and disorder in rural areas and we will ensure countryside communities blighted by organised crime, rural theft and antisocial behaviour will be protected.

The Home Office provided a startup grant of £300,000 to set up the National Rural Crime Unit (NRCU).

The NRCU supports forces nationally in their responses to rural crime, such as the theft of farming or construction machinery, livestock theft, rural fly tipping, rural fuel theft and equine crime. The unit aims to help police forces tackle rural crime priorities through the provision of specialist operational support, as well as through sharing best practice and encouraging regional and national approaches to tackling rural crime. The NRCU helps police across the country tackle organised theft and disrupt organised crime groups, as well as working closely with the National Crime Agency.

The Home Office also directly funds the National Wildlife Crime Unit to provide intelligence, analysis and investigative assistance to forces and other law enforcement agencies across the UK to support them in investigating wildlife crime which can affect the agriculture sector.

**■ Crossbows**

**Sir John Hayes:** [24]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department has made an assessment of trends in the use of crossbows in violent crime.

**Sir John Hayes:** [25]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if her Department will make an assessment of the potential merits of introducing a licensing regime for the sale and purchase of crossbows.

**Sir John Hayes:** [26]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will urgently publish the findings of her Department's call for evidence on Controls on the use of crossbows on public safety grounds.

**Dame Diana Johnson:**

A call for evidence on strengthening controls on crossbows on public safety grounds ran from 14 February to 9 April 2024. It tested ideas for whether there should be some form of licensing regime that would provide further controls on the use, ownership and supply of crossbows. The call for evidence also asked whether broadhead arrows should be prohibited.

The call for evidence received 2,991 responses. We are reviewing the responses and considering whether further controls on crossbows need to be introduced,

**■ Demonstrations: Prison Sentences**

**Rachael Maskell:** [808]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to her Oral Statement of 18 July 2024 on Prison Capacity, Official Report columns 175-177, if she will commission a review into the adequacy of (a) the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022, (b) the Public Order Act 2023 and (c) sentencing guidelines for protesters arrested following climate protests.

**Dame Diana Johnson:**

The Government is currently preparing a report on the operation of a number of the public order measures in the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022 (PCSC Act). This was a commitment made in parliament when the Act was passed. All other measures in the PCSC Act 2022 will be subject to the standard post-legislative scrutiny period, which will be carried out according to the standard timeframe of three to five years after Royal Assent.

In addition, the previous Government committed to carrying out post-legislative scrutiny of the Public Order Act 2023 two years after it received Royal Assent rather than the usual three to five years, in line with the recommendation made by the Home Affairs Select Committee. That work will begin in May 2025.



Sentencing guidelines are developed by the independent Sentencing Council for England and Wales. The guidelines produced provide the Court with guidance on factors that should be considered, which may affect the sentence given. The Council monitors and evaluates all definitive guidelines, as per its statutory duty to do so. The Sentencing Council is independent of parliament and Government, and therefore set its own workplan; an indicative business plan is published annually online.

#### ■ **Electronic Travel Authorisations: Tourism**

**Sorcha Eastwood:** [\[309\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what discussions she has had with the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland on the potential impact of the Electronic Travel Authorisation scheme on the tourism industry in Northern Ireland.

**Sorcha Eastwood:** [\[310\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she has made an assessment of the potential merits of providing an exemption to the Electronic Travel Authorisation scheme for tourists travelling from the Republic of Ireland to Northern Ireland.

**Sorcha Eastwood:** [\[311\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make an assessment of the impact of Electronic Travel Authorisation on tourism in (a) Northern Ireland and (b) Great Britain.

**Seema Malhotra:**

The Government is in the process of reviewing a number of Home Office policies including this one and will make a decision in due course.

**Claire Hanna:** [\[323\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department plans to take to review the impact of the Electronic Travel Authorisation on (a) movement and (b) the tourism industry on the island of Ireland.

**Seema Malhotra:**

The Government is in the process of reviewing a number of Home Office policies including this one.

#### ■ **Emergency Services: Medals**

**Alex Mayer:** [\[726\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of establishing a medal for seriously injured and medically retired emergency service personnel.

**Dame Diana Johnson:**

We owe a tremendous gratitude to dedicated emergency service workers for their continued hard work and sacrifice to protect the public. There is no doubt that those

who have their service cut short have made, and in many cases will continue to make, an invaluable contribution to the emergency services.

Medals are awarded by the Government, on behalf of His Majesty The King to recognise individuals within the service. The creation of a new medal requires a cross Government consensus before advice is put to HM The King, the implementation of a fair set of criteria and processes, and the allocation of funding. Ultimately, these decisions sit with The Monarch but the Government is happy to consider the case for any new medal or award, subject to comprehensive assessment across government to consider whether a medal of this kind would be feasible.

## ■ Fraud: Older People

**Sir John Hayes:**

[\[596\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to help tackle online fraud targeted at elderly people.

**Dan Jarvis:**

The Government takes the issue of online fraud seriously and is dedicated to protecting all members of the public from this devastating crime. We are acutely aware of the impact fraud can have on the lives of vulnerable people, including the elderly.

The Online Safety Act (OSA) will make tech companies responsible for blocking fraud and fraudulent adverts on their platforms, to better prevent the public from encountering fraud at source. The OSA's final Codes of Practice on illegal harms are expected by end of 2024 with tech firms needing to be compliant a year after (2025). Codes on the Act's fraudulent advertising duties are set to follow in 2026.

The City of London Police have also created a new police Fraud Protect Network, designed to reduce the threat of fraud and revictimisation by providing consistent advice to victims of fraud. The network will provide targeted safeguarding advice, with a key focus on vulnerable groups.

## ■ Immigration Controls: Airports

**Mr Alistair Carmichael:**

[\[1196\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make an assessment of the adequacy of the treatment that people with similar names to other individuals on watchlists receive during border checks at airports.

**Seema Malhotra:**

Our priority is to maintain a secure border. Border Force performs checks on all passengers arriving at the UK border on scheduled services to identify individuals who pose, or are suspected to pose, a risk to the national interest.

Identities, and combinations of names and dates of birth, are not necessarily unique. Individuals who share names with persons of interest may experience closer examination than would otherwise be the case.

The Home Office is making significant investment to improve the underlying technical infrastructure which performs border checks to identify individuals more precisely. This will reduce the number of individuals incorrectly matched to persons of interest and enable Border Force to identify more quickly individuals who are not to be confused with persons of interest. We expect these improvements to start having effect over the summer.

**Mr Alistair Carmichael:**

[\[1197\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to improve the accuracy of individual identification carried out by the technical infrastructure which performs border checks.

**Seema Malhotra:**

This Government's priority is to maintain strong border security and steps are always taken to constantly improve the accuracy of individual identification before arrival and at the border.

Border Force checks all passengers arriving at the UK border on scheduled services to identify individuals who pose, or are suspected to pose, a risk to the national interest.

Identities, and combinations of names and dates of birth, are not necessarily unique. Individuals who share names with persons of interest may experience closer examination than those who do not, and Border Force Officers may ask them additional questions to establish their identity and allow them to proceed as quickly as possible.

Enhancements to the technical infrastructure for border checks are being rolled out to assist Border Force officers as they make their decisions.

## ■ Immigration Controls: Undocumented Migrants

**Ben Goldsborough:**

[\[286\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many people absconded from ports of entry after being detained by Border Force officers in each year since 2010.

**Ben Goldsborough:**

[\[287\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many people who absconded from ports of entry after being detained by Border Force officers were subsequently recovered in each year since 2010.

**Seema Malhotra:**

The Home Office are unable to provide the requested data. This is on the basis the information requested is not available in a reportable format.

The Home Office are relentless in the pursuit of those who seek to enter the UK illegally. Our extensive security measures include robust, specialist measures from both Border Force and Immigration Enforcement.

## ■ Iran and Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps

**Alicia Kearns:** [\[232\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking with Cabinet colleagues to help tackle the influence of the (a) Iranian regime and (b) Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps in the UK.

**Dan Jarvis:**

The Government does not routinely comment on the detail of operational matters or specific threats. But the UK will always stand up to threats from foreign states. This government will always take threats to the UK incredibly seriously.

Iran's malign activity, including the activities of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), are unacceptable and will not be tolerated in the UK.

In concert with partners, the UK Government will continue to use all tools at our disposal to protect the UK and its overseas interests against any threats from the Iranian state, including malign influence.

## ■ Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps

**Alicia Kearns:** [\[231\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what her planned timetable is for proscribing the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps as a terrorist organisation.

**Dan Jarvis:**

The Government will keep the list of proscribed organisations under close review, as we seek to protect the UK from the threats that we face. However, we will not routinely comment on whether an organisation is or is not being considered for proscription.

The Government is clear that Iran's malign activity, including the activities of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), are unacceptable and will not be tolerated in the UK. The UK already maintains sanctions on over 400 Iranian individuals and entities covering human rights abuses and nuclear proliferation, including sanctioning the IRGC in its entirety. The Government will continue to consider what further steps may be taken to deter Iran's malign activity.

## ■ Motor Vehicles: Theft

**Sonia Kumar:** [\[768\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to help tackle the use of keyless theft equipment in vehicle-related crimes; if she will make an assessment of the effectiveness of existing legislation for tackling the use of that equipment; and whether she plans to bring forward new legislative proposals to tackle this issue.

**Sonia Kumar:**

[\[769\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many keyless vehicle thefts there were in Dudley constituency in the last 12 months; and what methodology her Department uses to collect this information.

**Dame Diana Johnson:**

Estimate from the Crime Survey of England and Wales (for the year ending March 2023) showed the two most common methods of entry in theft of vehicles in England and Wales are “Offender manipulated signal from remote locking device” (40%) and “Offender used a key/electric fob” (32%). This information is published by the Office for National Statistics.

The Government works closely with the National Police Chiefs’ Council lead for vehicle crime and the police-led National Vehicle Crime Working Group, which focuses on tackling vehicle crime through various workstreams. This includes training police officers on the methods used to steal vehicles, focusing on prevention and deterrence of theft of and from vehicles, encouraging vehicle owners to secure their vehicles, and working with industry to address vulnerabilities in vehicles.

The Government keeps all legislation under review. We will be introducing a Crime and Policing Bill and will consider what measures are needed to support efforts to tackle and prevent vehicle crime.

## ■ Motorcycles: Anti-social Behaviour and Crime

**Grahame Morris:**

[\[1200\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to tackle the challenges of policing (a) criminal and (b) anti-social use of off-road bikes.

**Dame Diana Johnson:**

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

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

## ■ National Security: China

**Alicia Kearns:**

[\[229\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make an assessment of the potential security threat from China to the UK.

**Dan Jarvis:**

As a matter of long-standing policy, we do not comment on the detail of security and intelligence issues.

More generally, the government's first duty is to protect our national security and keep our country safe. We keep potential threats to the UK under constant review and, where necessary, we use all the tools at our disposal to mitigate these threats.

When it comes to China this Government will take a consistent, long term and strategic approach, rooted in UK and global interests. We will cooperate where we can, compete where we need to, and challenge where we must, including on issues of national security.

## ■ Orgreave

**Luke Akehurst:** [436]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what her planned timetable is for (a) launching and (b) concluding an investigation or inquiry into the events at Orgreave in 1984.

**Dame Diana Johnson:**

The Government is committed to an investigation or inquiry into the policing of the events at Orgreave on 18 June 1984 and will consider options for delivering this. We will ensure that the House is updated as soon as practicable.

## ■ Passports

**Martin McCluskey:** [539]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent assessment she has made of delays in issuing (a) new passports and (b) renewals.

**Seema Malhotra:**

His Majesty's Passport Office is exceeding its performance indicator of 98.5% of standard UK passport applications, where no further information is required, being processed within three weeks. We are working to ensure that these performance levels continue. Performance data can be found in the most recent Transparency Data release at: [HM Passport Office data: Q1 2024 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/data-releases/hm-passport-office-data-q1-2024).

## ■ Police Patrolling: Urban Areas

**Deirdre Costigan:** [1414]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what her planned timeline is for returning police patrols to town centres.

**Dame Diana Johnson:**

The Government is committed to strengthening neighbourhood policing as part of its Safer Streets Mission, which is a vital part of restoring confidence in policing. That is why we are introducing a Neighbourhood Policing Guarantee, providing a more visible police presence in town centres, recruiting thousands of extra additional police officers, PCSOs and Special Constables, and giving every community a named local officer. We will set out our plans for the Guarantee as soon as is practicable.

The Government is also providing £66.3m funding this financial year (2024/25) to police forces in England and Wales for hotspot policing to tackle anti-social behaviour and serious violence, which is already helping to ensure the public feel safe in town centres.

## ■ Police: Termination of Employment

**Adam Jogee:** **[473]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what estimate she has made of the number of police officers who left the service in (a) Staffordshire and (b) England in each of the last five years.

**Dame Diana Johnson:**

The Home Office collects and publishes data annually on the number of police officer leavers in the 'Police Workforce, England and Wales' statistical bulletin which can be accessed here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/police-workforce-england-and-wales>

Information on the number of police officers leaving the police service, by Police Force Area, between the years ending 31 March 2007 and 2023, can be found in the 'Leavers Open Data Table' here:

<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/64ba76662059dc000d5d27c0/open-data-table-police-workforce-leavers-260723.ods>

The next release of the 'Police Workforce, England and Wales' statistical bulletin, which covers the number of police officer leavers in the year ending 31 March 2024, is scheduled for release at 9:30am on Wednesday 24 July 2024.

## ■ Refugees: Ukraine

**Matt Western:** **[660]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether Ukrainian nationals living in the UK under the Ukraine Sponsorship Scheme will lose any (a) rights and (b) entitlements before the introduction of the Ukrainian Permission Extension Scheme.

**Seema Malhotra:**

In response to Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine in 2022, the UK Government established three Ukraine visa schemes to provide temporary sanctuary to displaced Ukrainians and their families. Those granted under the schemes have the right to work, rent or study and access to benefits and services for the full duration of their permission.

The Ukraine Permission Extension Scheme is due to open for applications in advance of the expiry of the first Ukraine scheme visas in early 2025, providing the same rights and access to benefits and services that individuals on the existing Ukraine schemes have.

**■ Retail Trade: Crimes of Violence****Ben Goldsborough:** [\[289\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what estimate she has made of the extent of (a) violence towards and (b) abuse of (i) shop staff and (ii) volunteers in the charity retail sector.

**Dame Diana Johnson:**

Police recorded crime figures recorded 430,104 shoplifting offences for year ending December 2023, an increase by 37% in the 12 months leading up to. The British Retail Consortium Crime Report 2024 showed there were around 475,000 incidents of violence and abuse in 2022-23. Shoplifting continues to increase at an unsatisfactory level, with more and more offenders using violence and abuse against shopworkers to do this. Violence and abusive behaviour towards any worker, particularly those who provide a valuable service to the public, is never acceptable. The Government will not stand for this.

Through the Crime and Policing Bill, the Government will introduce a new offence of assaulting a retail worker to protect the hardworking and dedicated staff that work in stores. We will also end the effective immunity that has been granted to low level shoplifting of goods under £200.

**■ Shoplifting: Prosecutions****Alex Mayer:** [\[724\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she is taking steps to help ensure that shoplifters who steal goods worth under £200 are charged.

**Dame Diana Johnson:**

Police Recorded Crime figures showed 443,995 shoplifting offences for the year ending March 2024, an increase by 30% in the 12 months leading up to. Shoplifting continues to increase at an unacceptable level, with more and more offenders using violence and abuse against shopworkers to do this. The Government will not stand for this.

Through the Crime and Policing Bill, the Government will end the effective immunity that has been granted to low level shoplifting of goods under £200. We will also introduce a new offence of assaulting a retail worker to protect the hardworking and dedicated staff that work in stores.

**■ UK Border Force: ICT****Ben Goldsborough:** [\[751\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if her Department will review Border Force's use of Police and Reporting Notebook Organiser.

**Seema Malhotra:**

Border Force is currently conducting a small-scale trial of electronic notebooks to better understand whether they will meet the future requirements of the organisation



both operationally and legally as a simplified method of data capture and database checks to help secure our borders.

■ **UK Border Force: Staff**

**Ben Goldsborough:** [749]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if her Department will publish standardised best practice guides for Border Force Operational Support Officers.

**Ben Goldsborough:** [750]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment her Department has made of the effectiveness of the Border Force Operational Notification forms.

**Seema Malhotra:**

The Operation Notification Form (ONF) is used by Immigration, Compliance and Enforcement (ICE) teams outside the Metropolitan Police area

Its purpose is to enable Immigration Enforcement (IE) to request local police assistance for an enforcement visit or notify the police of a planned enforcement visit where no additional local police assistance is required. It is used by IE to gather intelligence held by the police regarding the subjects and addresses they plan to visit. In addition, it enables local police to carry out an equalities and community impact assessment of the proposed visit and allows IE to notify police of the result of the visit using the intelligence feedback report

Operational business assurance standards provide officers with guidance relating to the use of ONFs / equivalent police checks. Assurance checks for ONFs have been conducted in past operational assurance reviews

Published guidance on the ONF can be found at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/powers-and-operational-procedure/enforcement-planning-assessments-accessible>. The role of 'Operational Support Officer' is not a standard position within every operational team / unit within IE, therefore the department would not consider creating a standardised best practice guide for this position

Guidance for officers dealing with immigration enforcement matters is available at the following link: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/enforcement-instructions-and-guidance>.

■ **Visas: Gaza**

**Rachael Maskell:** [98]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of introducing a humanitarian visa for people from Gaza to receive medical aid in the UK.

**Seema Malhotra:**

Currently, those seeking to come to the UK for private medical treatment, along with their family members, can apply for a visitor visa and consideration will be given to compelling, compassionate and exceptional circumstances.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) position is that people who are medically evacuated should stay as close to home as possible, so that they are likely amongst those who understand their language and culture, and so that their return home, when ready, is easier.

The Government will be reviewing the current arrangements as quickly as possible to ensure that, where it is appropriate for children to travel, this route is effective.

**■ Visas: Skilled Workers****Ben Goldsborough:**[\[747\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration's report entitled An inspection of the immigration system as it relates to the social care sector, what assessment she has made of the adequacy of the Skilled Worker route for social care workers; and whether she has plans to (a) review and (b) reform the Skilled Worker visa.

**Seema Malhotra:**

The previous government accepted the recommendations of the ICIBI report and we will continue to take this work forward. The Home Office has undertaken activity since 2023 to address issues in the sector including commissioning the Migration Advisory Committee to undertake a review of the Immigration Salary List and requiring those sponsoring care workers in England to be registered with the Care Quality Commission.

The Government is committed to reducing historically high levels of legal migration and addressing the root causes. We recognise the need to cut reliance on international recruitment in sectors like social care.

We will introduce measures to upskill workers and improve working conditions in the UK, ensuring quicker responses to labour market challenges and reducing the need for international recruitment.

We will continue to work across government, and with the adult social care sector to develop an understanding of the sector to inform our policies and decision making in relation to cases from it.

There are regular engagement sessions between the Home Office and the sector whereby clear examples of good practice are shared alongside the trial of a support process where providers are able to seek a letter of support from the local Director of Adult Social Services confirming any requests are proportionate to the business model.

## ■ Visas: Sponsorship

**Ben Goldsborough:**

[\[748\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration's report entitled An inspection of the immigration system as it relates to the social care sector, if her Department will undertake a review of the (a) sponsor licensing application and (b) decision-making process in collaboration with social care industry leads and sector experts.

**Seema Malhotra:**

Prior to the report from the ICIBI, work was underway between UKVI and the social care sector to improve and develop their processes. This focussed on both the development of the sponsor licencing application process, and improvement of decision-making processes in relation to adult social care cases.

Regular engagement sessions between the Home Office and the sector also allow clear examples of good practice to be shared. This is happening alongside the trial of a support process whereby providers are able to seek a letter of support from the local Director of Adult Social Services confirming any requests are proportionate to the business model. We will continue to examine new ways to tackle exploitation in the immigration system, including in social care.

## HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

### ■ Affordable Housing: Construction

**Mrs Kemi Badenoch:**

[\[569\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether her Department will set affordable housing targets.

**Matthew Pennycook:**

The Government will reverse the damaging changes to national planning policy introduced in December 2023 and consult on other changes to the National Planning Policy Framework to boost the supply of housing of all tenures, including affordable homes, and support sustainable economic growth. Further details will be provided in due course.

**Andrew George:**

[\[6\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will make an assessment of the potential impact of the use of (a) rural exceptions planning policies and permissions and (b) S106 agreements on the successful delivery of (i) secure and (ii) affordable homes which meet a registered or demonstrable need.

**Matthew Pennycook:**

Our manifesto committed to increasing the supply of affordable, including social rented, housing. It is up to local planning authorities to identify and evidence their affordable housing need at the plan-making stage. The Government publishes

affordable housing statistics annually. In 2022/23, 30,048 affordable homes (completions) were delivered in England through section 106 (nil grant) agreements, which is 47% of the total affordable homes delivered, compared to 44% in the previous year.

Local authorities that receive developer contributions are required to publish Infrastructure Funding Statements annually. These report on what the authority has received and spent through developer contributions, including section 106 agreements. This provides transparency for communities and allows for scrutiny on how councils have chosen to spend funding.

The National Planning Policy Framework states that planning policies and decisions should be responsive to local circumstances in rural areas. This includes supporting housing developments that reflect local needs and going further with opportunities to bring forward small sites for affordable housing in rural areas, such as through rural exception sites. These sites should help meet the local housing needs of rural communities, enabling local people, those with a family connection or those with an employment connection, to live locally and help sustain thriving places.

We are working at pace on various revisions to the NPPF and will launch a public consultation on a new draft Framework, including those aspects that relate to rural housing.

#### ■ Affordable Housing: Finance

**Mrs Kemi Badenoch:** [\[794\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what estimate she has made of the funding required to meet levels of demand for affordable housing.

**Matthew Pennycook:**

We are reviewing the Affordable Homes Programme inherited from the last Government, and will make further announcements in due course.

#### ■ Business: Innovation

**Max Wilkinson:** [\[206\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to the £20 million funding provided to the National Cyber Innovation Centre in Cheltenham under the Levelling Up Fund Round 3, whether his Department plans to provide (a) further funding and (b) support for (i) the National Cyber Innovation Centre and (ii) wider development in the Golden Valley in Cheltenham constituency.

**Graeme Downie:** [\[774\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, when the provisional levelling-up cultural funding awarded to Dunfermline will be delivered; and whether there will be changes to the (a) process and (b) criteria for spending.

**Alex Norris:**

Local places will rightly be seeking clarity on existing funding commitments. The Government is giving full consideration to this matter, including the hard work undertaken on projects to date, and will continue dialogue with local leaders.

**■ Combined Authorities: Cornwall and Isles of Scilly****Andrew George:**[\[9\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether she plans to invite representatives of (a) Cornwall and (b) the Isles of Scilly to the Council of the Nations and Regions.

**Alex Norris:**

The Council of Nations and Regions will bring together the Prime Minister, the First Ministers of Scotland and Wales, the First and deputy First Minister of Northern Ireland, and the Mayors of Combined Authorities. On 16 July 2024 the Deputy Prime Minister wrote to all areas that do not have a devolution deal to invite them to come forward with a proposal. New Mayors established through this process would be eligible to sit on the Council of Nations and Regions. The Government is committed to working productively with local government in Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly, including as part of regular, sustained engagement with councils across England.

**■ Community Ownership Fund****Alex Easton:**[\[463\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps she plans to take to (a) support communities across the UK in taking ownership of assets at risk of closure and (b) ensure their continued use for community benefit through the Community Ownership Fund.

**Alex Norris:**

The English Devolution Bill will empower communities with a strong new 'right to buy' beloved community assets, such as empty shops, pubs and community spaces. We will make further announcements in due course.

**Joe Morris:**[\[719\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what the status is of applications submitted to the Community Ownership Fund Round 4 Window 1.

**Alex Norris:**

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

We will make further announcements in due course.

**■ Community Ownership Fund: Marhamchurch****Ben Maguire:** [\[424\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, when she plans to make a decision about the application to the Community Ownership Fund from Marhamchurch Parish Council in relation to the Hele Valley Trail (application reference COF-EOI-R1-ZBEYTK).

**Alex Norris:**

We will confirm plans on the Community Ownership Fund in due course.

**■ Council Tax****Dan Carden:** [\[670\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether her Department has plans to reform council tax.

**Jim McMahon:**

Future local authority funding decisions will be a matter for the next Spending Review and Local Government Finance Settlement in which we are engaged.

**■ Derelict Land****Mrs Kemi Badenoch:** [\[564\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how the grey belt will be designated; and whether she plans Ministerial involvement in such designation.

**Mrs Kemi Badenoch:** [\[565\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what plans her Department plans to take to ensure local residents are consulted on any proposed construction on designated grey belt land.

**Matthew Pennycook:**

The Government is committed to preserving the greenbelt which has served England's towns and cities well over many decades.

We intend to move away from a system that allows greenbelt land to regularly be released for development in a haphazard manner and often for speculative development that does not meet housing need.

Without changing its purpose or general extent, Labour will take a more strategic approach to greenbelt land designation and release to build more homes in the right places.

The release of lower quality grey belt land will be prioritised, and we will introduce 'golden rules' to ensure development benefits communities and nature.

Further details on how grey belt land will be designated and the methods by which it might be released will be provided in due course.

## ■ Empty Property: Dudley

**Sonia Kumar:**

[770]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps her Department plans to take to help (a) revitalize commercial areas and (b) encourage new businesses to occupy vacant properties in Dudley constituency.

**Sonia Kumar:**

[771]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what data her Department holds on investment in Dudley town centre in the last 10 years.

**Alex Norris:**

This Government is fully committed to rejuvenating our high streets and supporting the businesses and communities that make our town centres successful.

Through the English Devolution Bill we will introduce a strong new 'right to buy' for valued community assets which will help this Government safeguard our high streets. This measure will empower local communities to reclaim and revitalise empty shops, pubs, and community spaces, helping to revamp our high streets and eliminate the blight of vacant premises.

Outside of local government grants Dudley as a borough has received over £182 million of central government funding over the last ten years, in addition to devolved funding and powers worth £1.1 billion as part of the WMCA.

## ■ Flats: Leasehold

**Clive Lewis:**

[1309]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what her planned timescales are for banning new leasehold flats and ensuring that commonhold is the default tenure.

**Matthew Pennycook:**

The Government is committed to bringing the feudal leasehold system to an end.

As part of that commitment, we intend to reinvigorate commonhold through a comprehensive new legal framework and ban the sale of new leasehold flats so commonhold becomes the default tenure.

As set out in the King's Speech, draft legislation will be published on leasehold and commonhold reform during this session.

## ■ General Election 2024: Absent Voting

**Claire Hanna:**

[199]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will take steps to review the effectiveness of the administration of postal votes during the General Election on 4 July 2024.

**Alex Norris:**

The Electoral Commission will publish a report on the administration of the General Election held on 4 July later this year, and the Government will give careful consideration to any findings or recommendations made in the report in relation to the current arrangements for postal voting.

**Daisy Cooper:** [398]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will make an assessment of the implications for her policies of the number of electors registered for a postal vote who were unable to vote in the General Election because of postal delays.

**Daisy Cooper:** [399]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many postal ballots requested by overseas electors for the General Election were returned by post and received by their local council (a) before and (b) after the deadline to have the vote counted.

**Alex Norris:**

Returning Officers are required at elections to record the number of postal ballot packs received before and after the close of poll and this information is available for public inspection after the election. No separate record is kept by Returning Officers in Great Britain in respect of overseas electors.

The Electoral Commission will publish a report on the administration of the General Election held on 4 July later this year, and the Government will give careful consideration to any findings or recommendations made in the report in relation to the current arrangements for postal voting.

**■ Holiday Accommodation: Business Rates****Andrew George:** [5]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how much public funding has been granted to provide subsidies to holiday homes which have applied for small business rate relief in each year since 2012, broken down by local authority area.

**Jim McMahon:**

The department does not hold data on the amount of small business rates relief that has been granted to businesses that operate as holiday homes.

**■ Homelessness****Paula Barker:** [517]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, when her Department will publish its expected timeline for establishing a unit to end homelessness.



**Paula Barker:** [\[518\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps her Department plans to take to prevent households with children being placed in bed and breakfast accommodation for longer than six weeks.

**Alex Norris:**

The Government is clear that homelessness has a devastating impact on those affected. We want to take a long-term approach and, working with Mayors and councils across the country, we will develop a new cross-government strategy to get us back on track to ending homelessness.

MHCLG's homelessness advice and support team (HAST) continue to work closely with local authorities under the highest pressures to reduce the number of households being placed in bed and breakfast accommodation for longer than six weeks.

#### ■ **Housing First: North West and West Midlands**

**Paula Barker:** [\[522\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, when she plans to confirm the future of the Housing First pilots in (a) the Liverpool City Region, (b) Greater Manchester and (c) the West Midlands combined authority areas.

**Alex Norris:**

The Government is clear that homelessness has a devastating impact on those affected. We want to take a long-term approach and, working with Mayors and councils across the country, we will develop a new cross-government strategy to get us back on track to ending homelessness.

The Government's spending plans will be set out at the next Spending Review.

#### ■ **Housing: Change of Use**

**Ben Maguire:** [\[253\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of requiring planning permission for converting permanent accommodation into non-permanent accommodation.

**Ben Maguire:** [\[426\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will make it her policy to introduce a new planning use class for (a) second homes and (b) short-term lets.

**Matthew Pennycook:**

We recognise that whilst short-term lets and second homes can benefit the tourist economy, we need to protect local communities, including ensuring the availability of housing to rent or buy. We are currently considering how best to achieve these aims.

**■ Housing: Construction****Daisy Cooper:** [411]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will make it her policy to reduce housing targets for local planning authorities in the metropolitan greenbelt where nationally-imposed transport infrastructure is designated and built on land which could otherwise have been used to deliver housing.

**Helen Grant:** [53]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will take steps to protect the greenbelt in Maidstone and Malling constituency.

**Helen Grant:** [55]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will take steps to ensure that housing targets do not adversely impact the green belt.

**Matthew Pennycook:**

Housing targets are an important tool to ensure housing is delivered in the right places – this is critical in tackling the chronic shortage that the country is facing that means owning a home is a distant reality for much of the public.

We cannot local a generation out of homeownership, we must build the homes the next generation needs.

As set out in the manifesto, the Government will restore mandatory housing targets. We will reverse the damaging changes introduced in December 2023 that undermine our growth ambitions and commitment to delivering 1.5 million homes. We will set out more detail in the forthcoming National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) update.

We will take a brownfield first approach, prioritising the development of previously used land wherever possible and fast-tracking approval of urban brownfield sites.

Brownfield alone will never be enough to build the homes we need– which is why we will look to lower quality ‘grey belt’ land where necessary to meet local housing needs.

By enabling democratic engagement with how, not if, homes and infrastructure are built – the major brakes on the planning system will be addressed to support sustainable growth.

We are working at pace on various revisions to the NPPF, with a view to public consultation on a new draft Framework in due course.

**Helen Grant:** [54]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will take steps to ensure that infrastructure is improved before housing developments are proposed in the South East.

**Matthew Pennycook:**

As set out in the National Planning Policy Framework, the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development, including the provision of supporting infrastructure in a sustainable manner.

Local planning authorities are required to plan for infrastructure delivery as part of plan-making and report on their use of developer contributions in Infrastructure Funding Statements.

The Government will keep the provision of local infrastructure under review, including when considering revisions to national planning policy.

**Mrs Kemi Badenoch:**[\[556\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether she plans to reform nutrient neutrality rules to meet her Department's housing targets.

**Matthew Pennycook:**

The Government is committed to finding a solution that unlocks the building of homes affected by nutrient neutrality without weakening environmental protections.

We will work with nature organisations, other stakeholders, and the sector to determine the best way forward and have already had initial conversations to that end.

We will only act in legislation where we can confirm to Parliament that the steps we are taking will deliver positive environmental outcomes.

If legislation is required for the purposes of enabling development to fund nature recovery where currently both are stalled, the Planning and Infrastructure Bill will provide the necessary legislative underpinning to unlock that win-win outcome for the economy and for nature.

**Neil Coyle:**[\[963\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what plans her Department has to (a) engage and (b) work with (i) cooperatives and (ii) community-led not-for-profit organisations to build new homes.

**Matthew Pennycook:**

The Government recognises that community-led housing delivers a wide range of benefits, including additional housing supply, empowering communities, achieving high quality design and strengthening the co-operative economy.

I am committed to working with representatives of the sector - including the Co-operative housing movement and Community Land Trust Network - to consider how the Government may support the growth of community led housing over the long term.

We will shortly launch a review of the National Planning Policy Framework, and this will provide an opportunity for all organisations with an interest in community-led housing to express their views on how the planning system can support this important sector.

**■ Housing: Migrants****Mrs Kemi Badenoch:** [\[563\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment she has made of the impact of net immigration on housing supply.

**Matthew Pennycook:**

Immigration is one of a number of factors that impacts on housing demand and future housing supply. We will continue to monitor both and update Parliament on our commitment to build 1.5m homes over five years.

**■ Local Government Finance****Rachael Maskell:** [\[104\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps she is taking to review the (a) distribution and (b) quantum of local government funding.

**Paula Barker:** [\[524\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps his Department plans to take to stabilise local authority revenue budgets.

**Jim McMahon:**

Future local authority funding decisions will be a matter for the next Spending Review and Local Government Finance Settlement.

We understand that improving how local government is funded is crucial to enabling councils to deliver for local residents and ensuring we can deliver our missions. We will provide councils with more stability and certainty through multi-year funding settlements and by ending wasteful competitive bidding. This will ensure councils can plan their finances for the future properly, delivering better value for money for taxpayers.

We want to hear from councils about the financial challenges they are facing and we are committed to improving the local government finance landscape in this Parliament.

**Dan Carden:** [\[669\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether her Department has plans to reform local government finance to ensure funding allocations take greater account of local need.

**Jim McMahon:**

Future local authority funding decisions will be a matter for the next Spending Review and Local Government Finance Settlement in which we are engaged. The department will work with local government leaders to ensure they are better able to fulfil their statutory duties.

We want to hear from councils about the financial challenges they are facing and we are committed to stabilising the local government finance landscape in this Parliament.

## ■ Local Government: Devolution

**Charlie Dewhirst:**

[235]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of implementing a Hull and East Yorkshire devolution deal.

**Jim McMahon:**

We want to see devolution extended to every corner of England, and have invited local areas without a devolution agreement to come forward with proposals on a sensible geography.

We recognise that in some parts of the country, such as Hull and East Yorkshire, local authorities had already worked with the previous government to develop devolution deals, which were put on hold over the general election.

We will work with local leaders, members of parliament and stakeholders, including those in Hull and East Yorkshire over the coming months, to ensure that our ambition for deeper and impactful devolution is expanded across the country.

**Mrs Kemi Badenoch:**

[570]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to her Department's press release entitled, Deputy Prime Minister kickstarts new devolution revolution to boost local power, published on 16 July 2024, what her expected timetable is for signing off the first local growth plan.

**Mrs Kemi Badenoch:**

[571]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to her Department's press release entitled Deputy Prime Minister kickstarts new devolution revolution to boost local power, published on 16 July 2024, whether there will be penalties for areas that do not sign local growth plans.

**Mrs Kemi Badenoch:**

[572]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to her Department's press release entitled Deputy Prime Minister kickstarts new devolution revolution to boost local power, published on 16 July 2024, how she plans to assess local growth plans; and over what timeframe such assessments will be made.

**Jim McMahon:**

The Government has set out its intention to work with Combined Authorities to develop ambitious, long-term Local Growth Plans, setting out how local leaders will put their powers to use to deliver growth in every corner of the country.

Local Growth Plans will be delivered through partnership, and my department will provide further detail on the approach to developing these Plans to local leaders in due course.

Ministers have already spoken with metro Mayors about the possibilities of local growth plans and the benefits they can provide for residents and businesses alike.

#### ■ **Local Plans: York**

**Rachael Maskell:** [\[791\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, when she expects the consultation on the York Local Plan to be concluded.

**Alex Norris:**

The York Local Plan remains at examination, consultation on main modifications to a policy H5 (Gypsies and Travellers) will end on 30 August. The full timetable for the York Local Plan examination can be viewed publicly on the examination website.

#### ■ **Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government: Departmental Responsibilities**

**Mrs Kemi Badenoch:** [\[554\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what proportion of her time she plans to allocate to her responsibilities relating to (a) housing, (b) communities, (c) local government, (d) deputy Prime Minister, (e) the future of work and (f) government coordination.

**Matthew Pennycook:**

The Deputy Prime Minister and Secretary of State, alongside the Department's ministerial team and colleagues across Government, are working full time to deliver the housing our country needs, renew our local communities and public services, and deliver the New Deal for Working People among other ministerial responsibilities.

#### ■ **Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government: Environment Protection**

**Mrs Kemi Badenoch:** [\[1315\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what her Department's policy is on (a) Strategic Environmental Assessments and (b) Environmental Impact Assessments.

**Matthew Pennycook:**

The powers secured through the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023 would allow Strategic Environmental Assessment and Environmental Impact Assessment to be replaced with a new framework of Environmental Outcomes Reports.

The government is committed to securing better environmental outcomes alongside securing the development we need, and will consider how best to reform environmental assessment with this objective in mind. In the meantime, the current

legislation on environmental assessment and its supporting guidance continues to apply.

## ■ National Policy Statements

**Mrs Kemi Badenoch:** [\[1314\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what her planned timetable is for completion of each of the revised National Policy Statements.

**Matthew Pennycook:**

As the Chancellor set out on 8 July, the Government will review relevant National Policy Statements over the next twelve months, ensuring the planning system is simplified and improved to deliver Government missions around growth and clean energy. This is one of a number of changes the Government intends to make to build the infrastructure that we need.

## ■ New Towns

**Mrs Kemi Badenoch:** [\[566\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many new towns the Government plans on building.

**Mrs Kemi Badenoch:** [\[567\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether her Department plans to take steps to consult local residents on the (a) location, (b) design, (c) infrastructure and amenities available for proposed new towns.

**Matthew Pennycook:**

The Government has committed to delivering the next generation of new towns in partnership with local leaders and communities. We will take steps to ensure they contain high-quality, well-designed, and sustainable homes and the necessary infrastructure, amenities and services to thrive.

Further details on the next generation of new towns will be provided in due course.

## ■ Parking: Codes of Practice

**Kim Leadbeater:** [\[717\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether it is her policy to publish a statutory code of practice under the Parking (Code of Practice) Act 2019.

**Alex Norris:**

We will set out policies on the Private Parking Code of Practice in due course.

## ■ Permitted Development Rights

**Mrs Kemi Badenoch:** [\[1316\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether she plans to (a) remove or (b) curtail permitted development rights that were introduced since May 2010; and what her policy is on Article 4 directions.

**Matthew Pennycook:**

The Government has not announced plans to remove or curtail permitted development rights.

We intend to set out proposed changes to national planning policy in the forthcoming National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) update.

## ■ Planning: Reform

**Max Wilkinson:** [\[345\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps she plans to take to ensure that (a) conservation areas and (b) listed buildings are treated sensitively during planning reform.

**Matthew Pennycook:**

The Government will set out proposed changes to national planning policy in the forthcoming National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) update. We remain committed to conserving and enhancing areas of special architectural or historic interest and buildings of the highest significance.

**Mr Richard Holden:** [\[476\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps her Department plans to take to assess the adequacy of (a) roads, (b) other physical infrastructure, (c) GP services, (d) schools and (e) other service infrastructure in the reform of planning restrictions.

**Matthew Pennycook:**

As set out in the National Planning Policy Framework, the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development, including the provision of supporting infrastructure in a sustainable manner.

Local planning authorities are required to plan for infrastructure delivery as part of plan-making and report on their use of developer contributions in Infrastructure Funding Statements.

The Government will keep the provision of local infrastructure under review, including when considering revisions to national planning policy.



**■ Planning: Staff****Mrs Kemi Badenoch:** [\[1313\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether she plans to recruit additional planning inspectors to support the Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project process.

**Matthew Pennycook:**

The Government is committed to ensuring that the Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects regime is capable of delivering the UK's infrastructure needs, including sufficient resourcing in the Planning Inspectorate and government expert bodies to support infrastructure consenting.

**■ Regeneration: Basildon****Mr Richard Holden:** [\[702\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether her Department has discussed the Laindon Centre with Basildon Council.

**Matthew Pennycook:**

Officials at Homes England, the Government's housing and regeneration agency, are in dialogue with Basildon Council to discuss where their programmes, capacity and funding may be able to support the Council's priorities.

**■ Second Homes: Council Tax****Ben Maguire:** [\[425\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will make it her policy to allow local authorities to increase Council Tax by up to 500% on second homes.

**Jim McMahon:**

From April 2025 councils will have the power to charge a premium of up to 100% on second homes.

Future local authority funding decisions will be a matter for the next Spending Review and Local Government Finance Settlement in which we are engaged.

**■ Stoke-on-Trent City Council: Government Assistance****Gareth Snell:** [\[346\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will publish the terms of the financial support package given by her Department to Stoke-on-Trent City Council in February 2024.

**Gareth Snell:** [\[357\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will make an assessment of the potential impact of the terms of the financial support

package given by her Department to Stoke-on-Trent City Council in February 2024 on the Council's future financial stability.

**Jim McMahon:**

This Government is under no illusions about the scale of the pressures that councils are facing, and is committed to providing councils with greater certainty and stability. In February 2024, Stoke-on-Trent City Council received in-principle capitalisation support of £21.7 million and £20.5 million, for financial years 2023/24 and 2024/25, under the previous Government's Exceptional Financial Support framework. Details of this support were published on gov.uk.

Under the previous Government's framework, financial support was agreed in-principle, with formal support and any associated conditions to be confirmed at a later date, subject to the outcome of an external assurance review of the council. The Government will consider the overall impact of any support provided when final decisions are taken.

■ **Temporary Accommodation: Costs**

**Paula Barker:**

[520]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what estimate her Department has made of the cost to local authorities of providing temporary accommodation.

**Alex Norris:**

The Government recognises that homelessness has a devastating impact on those affected as well as placing financial strain on councils. Local authorities have reported the mounting costs of providing temporary accommodation. This information can be accessed [here](#).

In 2022 – 23 the net cost to local authorities of providing temporary accommodation (after housing benefit) was £699 million.

■ **UK Shared Prosperity Fund**

**Graeme Downie:**

[773]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether funding through the Shared Prosperity Scheme will continue after March 2025.

**Alex Norris:**

The government is committed to structural or economic development funding and we will provide further details regarding funding beyond March 2025 at the next Spending Review.

■ **Unadopted Roads**

**Alistair Strathern:**

[1429]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will make an estimate of the number of households in (a) the UK and (b) Hitchin

constituency that are located on estate roads that have not been adopted by their local authority as of 23 July 2023.

**Matthew Pennycook:**

The requested information is not held by the department.

The Government is committed to taking steps to bring the injustice of ‘fleecehold’ private estates and unfair maintenance costs to an end and we will consult on the best way to achieve this.

In the interim, we will act quickly to provide residential freeholders with greater protections by implementing the relevant provisions of the Leasehold and Freehold Reform Act 2024.

## JUSTICE

### ■ **Cammell Laird: Strikes**

**Laurence Turner:**

[R] [\[267\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of undertaking a review of the jailing of the Cammell Laird workers who took strike action in 1984.

**Heidi Alexander:**

I can confirm that my department will consider and explore options for carrying out a review into these events. If the member wishes to write with more information I will provide him with a further update once this matter has been considered.

### ■ **Electronic Tagging**

**Sir John Hayes:**

[\[19\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many and what proportion of people under electronic monitoring broke the conditions of their release in each year since 2015.

**Sir Nicholas Dakin:**

To establish the number and proportion of those with an electronic monitoring requirement that have broken their electronic monitoring condition, or other licence conditions, since 2015 would require a trawl through thousands of individual case records held on prison and probation systems. Such information could only be obtained at a disproportionate cost.

### ■ **Prisoners' Release: Alcoholic Drinks and Drugs**

**Grahame Morris:**

[\[1203\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps her Department plans to take to help ensure a continuity of care for individuals released from prison via the early release scheme that were receiving treatment for (a) drug and (b) alcohol issues.

**Sir Nicholas Dakin:**

The Ministry of Justice is committed to working in partnership with the Department of Health and Social Care and NHS England to ensure that continuity of care is in place for individuals leaving prison under the ECSL scheme and who have an ongoing drug and or alcohol treatment need.

**■ Prisons: Empty Property****Sir John Hayes:**[\[18\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of repurposing empty buildings for use as prisons.

**Sir Nicholas Dakin:**

We are committed to delivering 20,000 prison places and accelerating the prison building programme to ensure we have the cells we need. In relation to repurposing empty buildings for use as prisons, we continue to investigate any options which present viable ways to increase the number of places in the estate, which are also compliant with security standards. This enables us to deliver a secure environment which provides a prison regime that is safe for both prisoners and staff, and ultimately keeps the public safe.

The government has committed to a 10-year capacity strategy which will include the steps we will take to ensure we have a sustainable pipeline of prison places in delivery over the next decade, and ultimately reduce reoffending and drive down the prison population.

**SCIENCE, INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY****■ Broadband: East Midlands****Alicia Kearns:**[\[233\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, whether it is his Department's policy to provide £71.5 million funding for the roll-out of fast broadband to rural areas in Stamford, Rutland and Leicestershire.

**Chris Bryant:**

The award of a £71.5 million Project Gigabit contract to the broadband supplier CityFibre to connect around 38,600 rural and hard-to-reach premises across Leicestershire and Warwickshire will deliver fast, reliable broadband, with the work due to commence in August. This contract includes homes and businesses in the Rutland and Stamford constituency that would otherwise miss out on a gigabit-capable connection. Parts of Rutland and Stamford are also set to benefit from other Project Gigabit contracts, including the £68.6 million contract that CityFibre is delivering across Cambridgeshire and surrounding areas.

## ■ **Mobile Phones: Housing Estates**

**Alex Mayer:**

[725]

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, if he will make an assessment of the of the potential merits of minimum standards for mobile phone signal on new-build housing estates.

**Chris Bryant:**

Regulations are in place which require developers of new build homes, including new-build housing estates, in England to install the infrastructure necessary for gigabit-capable broadband connectivity. There is currently no equivalent provision relating to mobile coverage. The government is committed to updating national planning policy to ensure the planning system meets the needs of a modern economy, and this includes making it easier to build digital and mobile infrastructure.

## ■ **Public Sector: Artificial Intelligence**

**Jim Shannon:**

[74]

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of AI on public sector productivity.

**Feryal Clark:**

The Central Digital and Data Office (CDDO) is working with departments to assess the potential of digital transformation on key public facing services, and to improve them. CDDO continues to assess the potential impacts of AI on public service productivity, and is collaborating with departments to explore AI opportunities aimed at enhancing Civil Service productivity, looking to then trial the products to assess the real-world impact.

## TRANSPORT

### ■ **A30**

**Ben Maguire:**

[785]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether her Department has had discussions with (a) Cornwall Council and (b) National Highways on road safety on the (a) A30 and (b) B3257 junction at Plusha.

**Lilian Greenwood:**

The Department is aware of the safety issues at the junction between the A30 and B3257 at Plusha. National Highways maintains regular contact with the officers and local Members of Cornwall Council, as well as emergency services and other key stakeholders, including Vision Zero South West, regarding possible safety improvements for this stretch of the A30 as part of its A30 Kennards House to Five Lanes Safety Study.

**■ Abellio Greater Anglia: Standards****Mr Richard Holden:**[\[482\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps her Department is taking to improve the reliability of the Greater Anglia service from Liverpool Street to Southend Victoria via Billericay.

**Simon Lightwood:**

In the most recent rail industry period, 25 May to 21 June, the Public Performance Measure (PPM) across the Greater Anglia network was at 94.9 per cent. In relation to the Southend line the annual PPM was 96.4 per cent. Customers taking Greater Anglia services have recently benefitted from a complete fleet of new trains and Network Rail has carried out replacement of overhead lines along sections of the route. Greater Anglia and Network Rail continue to work closely together on maintaining and further improving performance levels.

**■ Active Travel: Rural Areas****Ben Goldsborough:**[\[285\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps her Department is taking to help people living in rural villages to benefit from safe active travel routes to larger urban areas to access (a) schools and (b) retail and other services.

**Simon Lightwood:**

Active Travel England (ATE) provides funding and support to all local authorities in England, including those in rural areas. For example, ATE provides training on infrastructure design guidance and is developing specific guidance for good practice application in rural areas. In 2024, ATE also provided £1 million to the ten National Parks in England to help them develop better links to rural towns and villages.

**■ Avanti West Coast: Standards****Adam Jogee:**[\[465\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent assessment she has made of the adequacy of the service provided by Avanti West Coast.

**Simon Lightwood:**

The performance of Avanti West Coast (AWC) has been inadequate, with too many cancellations and delays. Poor Network Rail infrastructure reliability has also contributed to the disruption experienced by passengers. The Secretary of State met with the Managing Director of AWC and the Network Rail Route Director on 16 July to challenge them on poor performance and demand immediate action to deliver urgent improvements.

## ■ Bus Services and Roads: Finance

**Mr Richard Holden:**

[478]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of using capital expenditure released by the cancellation of elements of HS2 project for (a) roads, (b) buses and (c) potholes.

**Lilian Greenwood:**

This Government is committed to ensuring that people have access to transport that enables them to travel to the destinations they want to reach and meets their needs. As my Right Honourable Friend the Chancellor has set out, the first step is undertaking an assessment of the spending inheritance from the previous Government. This includes examining the funding commitments made in the Network North Command Paper.

The assessment of spending inheritance will be set out before the summer recess.

## ■ Bus Services: Concessions

**Alex Mayer:**

[721]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if she will publish the average cost per passenger journey to the public purse of the £2 bus fare cap in each local transport authority.

**Simon Lightwood:**

The £2 National Bus Fare Cap is a voluntary scheme for eligible bus operators, who are provided a bespoke funding allocation to reimburse the difference between the cap and the shadow commercial fare. This is calculated using the Department for Transport's methodology which uses each operator's historic and present data to predict ticket sales for each period of the scheme.

It is not possible to calculate the average cost per passenger journey in each Local Transport Authority (LTA) because the reimbursement is provided directly to bus operators, who do not operate exclusively within LTA boundaries. The total government investment to cap bus fares at £2 between 1 January 2023 and 31 December 2024 is around £600 million.

## ■ Bus Services: Fares

**Rachael Maskell:**

[637]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what her policy is on the bus fare cap post 2024.

**Simon Lightwood:**

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

**■ Bus Services: Newcastle-under-Lyme****Adam Jogee:** [\[421\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what plans she has to improve the bus network in Newcastle-under-Lyme constituency.

**Simon Lightwood:**

The government knows that Britain needs a modern transport network to help kickstart economic growth. Good local bus services are an essential part of prosperous and sustainable communities. As announced in the King's Speech, the government will pass the Better Buses Bill to put the power over local bus services back in the hands of local leaders right across England, to ensure networks can meet the needs to the communities who rely on them, including in Newcastle-under-Lyme.

We also plan to empower local transport authorities through reforming bus funding. By giving local leaders more control and flexibility over bus funding they can plan ahead to deliver their local transport priorities. The Department will work closely with local leaders and bus operators to deliver on the government's ambitions.

**■ Heathrow Airport****Munira Wilson:** [\[1037\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what her Department's policy is on the proposed third runway at Heathrow Airport.

**Mike Kane:**

This Government is committed to securing the long-term future of the aviation sector in the UK and recognises the benefits of the connectivity it creates between the UK and the rest of the world.

We have been clear that any expansion proposals at Heathrow Airport would need to demonstrate that they contribute to country-wide economic growth, are compatible with the UK's legally binding climate change commitments and meet strict environmental standards on air quality and noise pollution.

**■ High Speed 2 Line: Aylesbury****Laura Kyrke-Smith:** [\[1411\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if she will have discussions with HS2 Ltd to ensure that HS2 works in Aylesbury constituency result in minimal disruption.

**Lilian Greenwood:**

The Department and I are working closely with HS2 Ltd to ensure that, as we deliver the railway, local communities are involved, informed, and treated with the respect they deserve. Construction of a project on the scale of HS2 will inevitably affect many people, including residents of Aylesbury, but a wide range of controls are in place, including a comprehensive Code of Construction Practice, and independent Commissioners, to minimise disruption as far as possible and to respond to any concerns raised. In recognition of those impacts that remain, however, local people



may be interested in applying to the HS2 Community and Environment Fund, which provides grant funding for beneficial projects along the line of the route, and to mitigate the impact of HS2 works.

### ■ Large Goods Vehicles: Concrete

**Sir Desmond Swayne:** [\[1178\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if she will make it her policy to bring forward legislative proposals to make permanent the temporary weigh limits for volumetric mobile concrete plants.

**Lilian Greenwood:**

A temporary arrangement has been in place since 2018. The previous administration held a call for evidence last year and we will consider the evidence carefully before coming to a view.

### ■ London Northwestern Railway

**Alex Mayer:** [\[732\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent assessment she has made of (a) the adequacy of services provided by London Northwestern Railway and (b) whether London Northwestern Railway is meeting its obligations set out in the West Midlands Trains Limited 2021 rail contract.

**Simon Lightwood:**

The Department continues to work closely with West Midlands Trains (WMT), which operates London Northwestern Railway services to monitor its adequacy.

The Department also monitors compliance with WMT's contractual obligations. Although operational performance has recently been impacted by a significant number of infrastructure and weather-related incident. WMT's performance was above expectations and other contractual metrics have also been within acceptable levels overall.

### ■ London, Tilbury and Southend Line: Standards

**Mr Richard Holden:** [\[483\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps her Department is taking to improve the reliability of the C2C service from Fenchurch Street to Shoeburyness via Laindon and Basildon.

**Simon Lightwood:**

c2c are an operationally high performing train operating company. From 1 January to 31 March 2024, c2c were the highest performing train operating company in terms of cancellations (1.5 per cent) and third highest for on-time punctuality (81.3 per cent). The Department, Network Rail and c2c are focused on both maintaining high performance, as well as delivering incremental improvements. To deliver incremental

improvements, c2c are developing joint performance plans with Network Rail, which has greater emphasis on key parts of the route.

### ■ Motorways: Safety Measures

**Sarah Champion:** [\[960\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many new emergency refuges will be constructed as part of the programme of retrofitting to existing smart motorways.

**Lilian Greenwood:**

National Highways is constructing 150 additional Emergency Refuge Areas across the All Lane Running smart motorway network. Construction, which is already well underway, began in 2022. The project is expected to be completed by the end of March 2025.

### ■ Public Transport

**Alex Mayer:** [\[722\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many Demand Responsive Transport schemes in which locations have been funded under the Bus service improvement plan..

**Simon Lightwood:**

We estimate around 19 Local Transport Authorities are using or planning to use Bus Service Improvement Plan funding to fund Demand Responsive Transport schemes around England.

### ■ Railways: Concessions

**Andrew Bowie:** [\[641\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will make it his policy that the Veterans Railcard should cost the same as the HM Forces Railcard.

**Simon Lightwood:**

We recognise the contribution of current and former members of the armed forces, with both the HM Forces Railcard and the Veteran's Railcard offering excellent value for money. The Veteran's Railcard is managed by the Rail Delivery Group whereas the HM Forces Railcard is administered by the Ministry of Defence. There are no current plans to change the cost of the Veteran's Railcard.

### ■ Railways: East of England

**Ben Goldsborough:** [\[284\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions she has had with Network Rail on (a) the status of the Ely area capacity enhancement and (b) its potential impact on rail capacity for the Cambridge to Norwich route.

**Lilian Greenwood:**

Both the Rail Minister and I are early in our tenure as Transport Ministers, and he is yet to speak to Network Rail regarding the Ely Area Capacity Enhancement.

However, as Transport Ministers we recognise the benefits the scheme could bring for freight and passenger rail services in East Anglia, including the Cambridge to Norwich route. The Rail Minister looks forward to discussing these proposals with Network Rail and other stakeholders in due course.

## ■ Railways: Fares

**Rachael Maskell:** [\[636\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether she is taking steps to (a) improve transparency of rail fares and (b) make rail travel more accessible through lower ticket cost options.

**Simon Lightwood:**

As Passenger-in-Chief, affordability is one of the Secretary of State's key priorities for the rail network. As part of our plan for urgent action for the railways, we are committed to reviewing the overcomplicated fares system with a view to simplifying it and introducing digital innovations. We will explore the options for expanding ticketing innovations like digital pay as you go, and digital season tickets across the network.

## ■ Roads: Birmingham

**Laurence Turner:** [\[266\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the independent report entitled Birmingham City Council: Statutory intervention update letter from Commissioners of 9 January 2024, published on 22 February 2024, whether her Department responded to the separate letter on the Birmingham Highways PFI contract; and if she will place a copy of that letter in the House of Commons Library.

**Lilian Greenwood:**

Department for Transport officials sent a letter to Birmingham City Council's chief executive to acknowledge receipt of the letter in question and to offer a meeting to discuss the PFI contract. The letter from DfT officials will be deposited in the House of Commons Library.

## ■ Roads: Repairs and Maintenance

**Mr Richard Holden:** [\[470\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether her Department plans to review future capital expenditure on the concrete roads programme.

**Lilian Greenwood:**

In the second Road Investment Strategy (RIS2), National Highways committed to invest £400 million between 2020 and 2025 on the replacement and repair of England's remaining concrete roads. The programme of replacing worn-out concrete roads is expected to continue into the 2030s. The scale of future investment in the concrete roads programme will be determined as part of the third Road Investment Strategy (RIS3) setting process for 2025-2030.

**■ Roads: Shropshire****Stuart Anderson:**[\[240\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether her Department plans to provide £153 million funding for local highways maintenance in Shropshire.

**Lilian Greenwood:**

This Government takes the condition of local roads very seriously and is committed to maintaining and renewing our road network as a priority, on which Ministers will say more in future.

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

**■ Shrewsbury-Wolverhampton Railway Line: Electrification****Mark Pritchard:**[\[35\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if she will make an assessment of the feasibility of electrifying the railway line between Birmingham, Wellington and Shrewsbury.

**Lilian Greenwood:**

Midlands Connect, a sub-national transport body which researches, develops and progresses transport projects in the Midlands, is prioritising line speed improvements to this railway line over electrification. They are in the process of refreshing the Business Case for line speed improvements, which they plan to submit towards the end of 2024. It will be important to consider a range of options to progress decarbonisation of the rail network, and I expect to receive advice on this matter later this year.

**■ Taxis: Licensing****Chris Vince:**[\[277\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if she will make an assessment of the potential impact of the Deregulation Act 2015 on the number and proportion of licences to operate taxis within local authority areas that were granted by other local authorities; and what information her Department holds on the number and proportion of licences to operate taxis in Harlow that were granted by local authorities other than Harlow Council in each year since 2015.

**Simon Lightwood:**

The Deregulation Act 2015 enabled Private Hire Vehicle (PHV) operators to sub-contract bookings to each other across licensing boundaries, but the legislation has always allowed taxis and PHVs to operate outside of the area in which they are licensed. Taxis can only ply for hire (pick up passengers at taxi ranks or be hailed in the street) in the area in which they are licensed, but pre-booked work by PHVs and taxis can be undertaken anywhere.

The Department for Transport does not hold any information about the number and proportion of PHV drivers operating in the Harlow area but licensed by other licensing authorities. As of 1 April 2023, there were 346,300 licensed taxi and PHV drivers in England, of which 264 were licensed by Harlow Council.

**Rachael Maskell:** [\[638\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether she plans to review the licensing of taxis.

**Simon Lightwood:**

The Government keeps all policies under review. We will be considering what actions can be taken to improve the existing taxi and private hire vehicle licensing system.

#### ■ **Wymondham Station: Access**

**Ben Goldsborough:** [\[282\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether she has had discussions with Network Rail on the status of the Wymondham train station accessibility upgrades.

**Lilian Greenwood:**

Both the Rail Minister and I are early in our tenure as Transport Ministers. As such, he has yet to speak to Network Rail regarding the status of the Wymondham station accessibility project. The Department looks forward to discussing these proposals with Network Rail and other stakeholders in the near future.

## TREASURY

#### ■ **Private Education: VAT**

**Rachael Maskell:** [\[1290\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps she plans to take to consult stakeholders on her Department's proposed policy to implement VAT on private school fees.

**James Murray:**

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

Further details on this policy will be set out in due course. The Government engaged with a wide range of stakeholders with an interest in Government policy as a matter of course, and this will include engagement with stakeholders with an interest in VAT being applied to private school fees.

**WORK AND PENSIONS****■ Child Benefit**

**Jess Asato:** [430]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many exemptions to the two-child benefit limit due to rape have been (a) requested and (b) granted since that exemption was introduced.

**Sir Stephen Timms:**

The requested information is not available. However, figures are published showing the number of households in receipt of an exception for children likely to have been born as a result of non-consensual conception, which for this purpose includes rape or where the claimant was in a controlling or coercive relationship with the child's other biological parent at the time of conception. [Table2](#), provides this information.

The full statistics tables and supporting narrative are published here: [Universal Credit and Child Tax Credit claimants: statistics related to the policy to provide support for a maximum of 2 children, April 2024 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

**■ Health Services: Children**

**Sorcha Eastwood:** [537]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether her Department will continue the work of the Department's Children in Hospital Stakeholder Group.

**Sir Stephen Timms:**

Supporting parents with care and compassion whilst they navigate some of the toughest moments a parent can face is something all in this house would believe in. We will consider the work done by the previous Government before making a decision on next steps.

**■ Poverty**

**Mr Richard Holden:** [1436]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many (a) people, (b) children and (c) pensioners were in absolute poverty in (i) May 2010 and (ii) the last month for which figures are available.

**Alison McGovern:**

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

Figures are produced on an annual basis and available for the breakdowns requested.

## ■ Social Security Benefits: Children

**Ian Lavery:** [\[1499\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many families in Blyth and Ashington constituency are impacted by the two child benefit cap.

**Sir Stephen Timms:**

The number of Universal Credit households affected by the policy to provide support to a maximum of 2 children, in Blyth and Ashington in April 2024 was 770.

The equivalent figure for Child Tax Credits is not held by this department as it is administered by HM Revenue & Customs.

Notes:

1. The new 2024 Parliamentary Constituencies are derived by using postcode lookup data against the claimant address however, this is only available for England and Wales and is not present for all households in this data source.
2. 2024 Parliamentary Constituencies are approximate and therefore figures may not match exactly with the previous 2019 Parliamentary Constituencies they correspond to.

## ■ Unemployment

**Mr Richard Holden:** [\[1432\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 23 July 2024 to Question 706 on Unemployment, what the headline level of economic inactivity was in (a) March-May 2010 and (b) the latest period for which data is available.

**Alison McGovern:**

The headline UK economic inactivity level was 9.433 million in March-May 2010 (based on people aged between 16 and 64). In March-May 2024 (the latest month for which figures are available) the UK economic inactivity level was 9.383 million.

The headline UK economic inactivity rate was 23.4% in March-May 2010 (this is also estimated on a 16-64 basis). In March-May 2024 (the latest month for which figures are available) the UK economic inactivity rate was 22.1%.

The UK has experienced a rise in economic inactivity since the pandemic. The economic inactivity level has risen by 833,000 since the pre-pandemic level, with economic inactivity due to long-term sickness rising to 2.8m. The UK remains the only nation in the G7 with an economic inactivity rate higher than before the COVID-19 pandemic.

## ■ Working Conditions: Temperature

**Alex Mayer:** [\[728\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment her Department has made of the potential merits of introducing a maximum workplace temperature.

**Sir Stephen Timms:**

The Government is committed to modernising health and safety guidance including that addressing workplace temperatures. The Government will work with the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) to bring forward detailed proposals for consultation on workplace temperature.



## WRITTEN STATEMENTS

### BUSINESS AND TRADE

#### ■ **Digital Trade Agreement: WTO Joint Initiative on Electronic Commerce**

**Secretary of State for Business and Trade, and President of the Board of Trade (Jonathan Reynolds):**

[\[HCWS23\]](#)

This Government is ready to lead on the global stage and use every lever at our disposal to tear down unnecessary barriers and give British businesses the access to international markets to achieve economic growth. We are committed to establishing a global trading system fit for the modern era and underpinned by digital technologies to ensure trade is as seamless and efficient as possible.

Today, I am delighted to announce the UK has joined the first global digital trade agreement: the Joint Initiative (JI) on Electronic Commerce, negotiated with 90 other countries at the World Trade Organization (WTO).

The economy-wide agreement, covering trade in goods, services and information, is set to deliver new growth opportunities for the UK, with global digital trade already worth £4 trillion and growing strongly. The JI will deliver new growth opportunities for the UK economy and our businesses, workers and consumers and recognises the importance of supporting developing and least-developed countries to deliver growth and prosperity for all.

Global trade is becoming increasingly digital, and harnessing its potential is central to growing a strong and resilient economy in the UK. The UK is at the forefront of digital trade and has a comparative advantage in digitally-delivered services such as finance, professional business services, creative industries, engineering and much more. UK trade is driven by digitally-enabled businesses, with exports of digitally-delivered services amounting to £252 billion in 2021, or 77% of total UK services exports.

However, until now there has been no common set of global digital trade rules. The G7 Digital Trade Principles brokered under the UK G7 Presidency in 2021 set out shared commitments of G7 countries, but there was no rulebook covering binding commitments for the world. This has led to fragmented approaches to digital trade regulation, resulting in increased barriers for businesses, workers and consumers.

As a comprehensive, economy-wide agreement, the JI will boost global trade in goods, services and information and unlock a wide range of benefits for UK businesses, workers and consumers. Global adoption of digital customs systems, processes and documents, even with partial uptake, could represent a boost to UK GDP. Improvement in trade facilitation can increase the probability of a small business starting to export by up to 3 per cent and increase the value of small business exports. Protection for workers and consumers online will increase their trust and confidence in digital trade.

Key benefits of this agreement include:

- Cheaper, faster and more secure trade for businesses trading goods and services around the world through digitalising interoperable customs systems, processes and documents. This will in many cases end the need to print off forms and hand them over at customs – a slow, expensive and old-fashioned way of working.
- Recognition of electronic contracts, invoices, signatures and authentication, and facilitation of secure, trustworthy electronic payments.
- Permanent ban on customs duties on digital content among JI participants to provide the certainty businesses need to trade openly in the new global digital economy and avoid the price increases the introduction of such tariffs would cause.
- Protection of personal data of workers and consumers in line with the UK's high data protection standards.
- Protection of consumers buying goods and services online from online fraudsters, misleading claims about products and deception.
- Facilitating competition in the telecoms sector through financial independence of telecoms regulators and improved access to telecoms infrastructure.

I expect the process to incorporate the JI into the WTO legal framework to commence shortly. Once incorporated, the JI will be laid before Parliament, in line with usual practice, for domestic ratification.

The Government is committed to rebuilding and strengthening global partnerships and stand up for the rules-based international order. This agreement is an important step in modernising the global trade rulebook and furthering cooperation in the WTO.

## EDUCATION

### ■ Higher Education Regulation Update

**Secretary of State for Education and Minister for Women and Equalities (Bridget Phillipson):** [\[HCWS26\]](#)

The government is committed to ensuring this country develops the skills we need to deliver sustained economic growth, improved prosperity and living standards for working people. Our world leading higher education sector is a key engine at the heart of these growth plans and today I am announcing some of the first steps we are taking to ensure a stable future for higher education, with strong regulation that means students can thrive.

First, today will see the publication of the report for the independent review of the Office for Students, *Fit for the Future: Higher Education Regulation Towards 2035*, which will be made available on Gov.UK.

The review found that the case for bold regulation of higher education is clear but that the OfS should more sharply focus on key priorities, which include monitoring financial sustainability, ensuring quality, protecting public money and regulating in the interests of students.

I would like to thank the lead reviewer, Sir David Behan, for conducting a rigorous and thoughtful review, and all those in the higher education sector who supported and contributed to the review process.

The government accepts the core analysis of the review and as set out in our manifesto, we recognise that strong regulation is a crucial element for a stable, world-leading higher education sector, that delivers for students and the economy.

I will deposit a copy of the report in the Libraries of both Houses.

Following the resignation of Lord Wharton as chair of the OfS earlier this month, I also wish to announce that Sir David has been appointed as interim chair of the OfS. His role will primarily be to work with the current executive to implement the recommendations of the independent review. The process to appoint a permanent chair has started and will conclude next year.

Lastly, I have written to colleagues separately about my decision to stop further commencement of the Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act 2023, in order to consider options, including its repeal. I am aware of concerns that the Act would be burdensome on providers and on the OfS, and I will confirm my long term plans as soon as possible. To enable students to thrive in higher education, I welcome the OfS's plans to introduce strengthened protections for students facing harassment and sexual misconduct, including relating to the use of non-disclosure agreements in such cases by universities and colleges.

## ENERGY SECURITY AND NET ZERO

### ■ **Direction to the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority in respect of the Sizewell A Nuclear Site**

**Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero (Ed Miliband):** [\[HCWS25\]](#)

I am today laying a new designation direction to the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority in respect of the Sizewell A nuclear site, which amends the existing direction. The direction has been given in accordance with sections 3 and 5 of the Energy Act 2004, with the consent of Nuclear Restoration Services Limited, who control the site.

This direction will end the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority's responsibilities under the Energy Act 2004 for specific land and buildings on the Sizewell A nuclear site, so that the land can be sold to EDF and become part of the Sizewell B nuclear site. This will facilitate the development of new nuclear at the Sizewell C Nuclear site.

## HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

### ■ **Care Quality Commission Update**

**Secretary of State for Health and Social Care (Wes Streeting):** [\[HCWS27\]](#)

Today I wish to update the House on the publication of the interim findings of the review into the operational effectiveness of the Care Quality Commission (CQC) that is being

conducted by Dr Penny Dash. I have asked Dr Dash to publish these interim findings as I wish to share with the House and the public the serious failings they expose.

Getting regulation right is critical to ensuring health and social care is not only safe but also high quality. If the way we regulate is not fit for purpose it means that people are not properly supported in their choices about health and care, and there is a lost opportunity to deliver improvements. Dr Dash's interim findings demonstrate that the CQC, as the regulator of health and social care in England, is exactly that: not fit for purpose.

Dr Dash's report has given people across the health and social care system, including from within the CQC, the opportunity to speak-up about what I believe are systemic and cultural problems. I commend the report for creating an environment in which people have been able to speak up; to fix the NHS we must create a culture that values and listens to the voices of those who can see where the problems are.

Dr Dash has heard major concerns from significant groups of stakeholders. There are failings in the way that the CQC assesses organisations (relating to the Single Assessment Framework), which means that we cannot be confident that inspections are looking at all the things the public should rightly expect. There are also concerns about how ratings, which both the public and service providers depend on, are calculated. These failings are compounded by a further finding that the CQC does not have appropriate sector-level expertise throughout the organisation. Dr Dash is clear that all of these concerns mean that the CQC has lost credibility.

As recommended by Dr Dash, the Department of Health and Social Care will work with the Board of the CQC to address the issues raised. The Board will have my full support in ensuring the right leadership is in place to drive through the changes that are needed.

While this is an interim report, I would like to highlight four immediate steps that I will be taking with the CQC.

First, the CQC have asked Professor Sir Mike Richards to review the Single Assessment Framework. This is an important step in addressing the concerns Dr Dash raises about how the safety and quality of hospitals is assessed. Sir Mike is an eminent and highly regarded clinician who was the CQC's first Chief Inspector of Hospitals. The fact that the CQC have asked someone with Sir Mike's significant experience to give detailed and thorough consideration to improving the framework shows that the CQC are now taking seriously the concerns raised in the report and are acting swiftly to address them.

Second, I have asked the CQC to urgently improve the transparency of their ratings. This will include being clearer about what evidence has been considered in reaching their ratings, as well as setting out clearly the dates of the inspections which a rating is based on. This is to address the report's finding about the historical practice of combining inspections over several years to produce a rating. This is important so that members of the public can have confidence that they know what a rating actually means. The action I am taking is a first step to bring in greater transparency, but more work will be required as the CQC looks in more detail at their assessment framework.

Third, the Department of Health and Social Care will increase the level of oversight of the CQC, including the frequency and seniority of that oversight. Over the summer, I will be looking at what is needed to ensure that the recommendations in the interim review are acted upon. This arrangement will continue once the final report is published. Ultimately, the Department's objective must be to ensure that improvements in the delivery of CQC's core functions are achieved for service users and service providers across health and social care. I have requested firm assurance from the Chair that effective and credible appointments are made for a permanent Chief Executive and Chief Inspectorate of Healthcare.

Fourth, the CQC sits within a complex landscape of bodies with responsibility for safety. Pending completion of her final report in autumn 2024, I am asking Dr Dash to undertake further work and make recommendations on how we can maximise the effectiveness of key bodies, individually and collectively, within that landscape. Terms of Reference will be determined in due course. Only by ensuring that we have a health and social care system that works as a whole will we be able to restore the public's confidence in the safety and quality of care and, most importantly, put the voice and experience of patients and service users back at the heart of our regulation and oversight of the whole health and social care system.

The interim findings of the review have been published on GOV.UK. I will provide a further update to the House once Dr Dash's final report has been published.

## SCIENCE, INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY

### ■ AI Opportunities Action Plan

**Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology (Peter Kyle):**

[\[HCWS24\]](#)

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has enormous potential to drive economic growth, through productivity improvements and technological innovation, and to stimulate more effective public service design and delivery. These are opportunities the United Kingdom cannot afford to miss and that is why AI, alongside other technologies, will support the delivery of our five national missions. Through targeted action this Government will support the growth of the AI sector, enable the safe adoption of AI across the economy and lead the way in deploying it responsibly in our public services to make them better.

Today, I am setting out our plans to create an ambitious AI Opportunities Action Plan, and our next steps on the regulation of frontier AI systems.

I have appointed tech entrepreneur and Chair of the Advanced Research Invention Agency (ARIA), Matt Clifford CBE, to develop the AI Opportunities Action Plan. It will set out how government can support the growth of the AI sector and compete on the global stage, while also including actions designed to boost the responsible adoption of AI across all parts of the economy. This Plan will identify ways to accelerate the use of AI to improve people's lives by making services better and developing new products.

The Action Plan will also address key AI enablers such as the UK's compute and broader infrastructure requirements; how this infrastructure is made available to industry as well as researchers; and how to develop, attract and retain top AI talent. To develop the Action Plan, Matt Clifford will engage with academic, industry and civil society experts.

Matt Clifford will deliver a set of recommendations to me by September. To support implementation of the Action Plan, an AI Opportunities Unit will be established within the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology.

Delivering the Plan will play a vital role in driving up productivity and kickstarting economic growth. Estimates from the IMF show that while the exact economic impact hinges on the wider development and adoption of AI, and realisation could be gradual, the UK could ultimately see productivity gains of up to 1.5 percent annually.

While AI has the potential to boost our productivity, unlock new sources of growth, and improve the quality and efficiency of our public services, we know that advanced capabilities also present risks. In the King's Speech on 17 July, the Government set out its intention to legislate in line with our manifesto commitment to place requirements on those working to develop the most powerful artificial intelligence models.

This legislation will place the AI Safety Institute on a statutory footing, providing it with a permanent remit to enhance the safety of AI over the longer term.

Our proposals will be highly targeted and will support growth and innovation by ending regulatory uncertainty for AI developers, strengthening public trust, and boosting business confidence. They will avoid creating new rules for those using AI and will instead apply to the small number of developers of the most powerful AI models with a focus on the AI systems of tomorrow and not today.

We will shortly launch a consultation on these legislative proposals, to harness the insights and expertise of the AI industry, academia and civil society.