



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 11 October 2024 and the information is correct at the time of publication (03:26 P.M., 11 October 2024). For the latest information on written questions and answers, ministerial corrections, and written statements, please visit: <http://www.parliament.uk/writtenanswers/>

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Notes:

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

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

ANSWERS

ATTORNEY GENERAL

■ Attorney General: Public Appointments

John Glen:

[6140]

To ask the Solicitor General, what (a) direct ministerial and (b) other public appointments to her Department and associated bodies have (i) been (A) removed from their posts and (B) asked to resign and (ii) been made since 4 July 2024.

Sarah Sackman:

No direct ministerial appointments to the Attorney General's Office (AGO) or the Law Officers' Departments (the Crown Prosecution Service, Serious Fraud Office, Government Legal Department, and HM Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate) have been made or removed or asked to resign since 4 July 2024. While not direct ministerial appointments, the Law Officers and the Law Officers' Departments routinely seek advice from outside experts on the law, including counsel, solicitors or academic specialists. Arrangements for using counsel, solicitors and academics are principally via panels of counsel, panels of law firms or their academic institutions.

As regards public appointments, following an open competition, two non-executive directors were appointed by the Attorney General to the board of the Serious Fraud Office on 1 October 2024. More information can be found here: [Serious Fraud Office welcomes two new non-executive directors - Serious Fraud Office \(sfo.gov.uk\)](https://www.sfo.gov.uk/news/serious-fraud-office-welcomes-two-new-non-executive-directors).

No other public appointments to the AGO and Law Officers' Departments have been made or removed or asked to resign since 4 July 2024

BUSINESS AND TRADE

■ Cosmetics: Allergies

Dr Beccy Cooper:

[7268]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of encouraging cosmetic retailers to highlight allergens in the ingredient list.

Justin Madders:

The UK Cosmetics Regulation requires manufacturers to provide a full list of ingredients for cosmetics products.

In addition, cosmetics that contain fragrance allergens, must identify the presence of these ingredients by referring to them as 'parfum' or 'aroma' to help people identify and avoid those products which they may be allergic to.

Fragrance allergens are included as entries in Annex III to the Cosmetics Regulation and can only be used at the permitted thresholds and where required when accompanied by the relevant warnings.

■ New Businesses: Ethnic Groups and Women

Callum Anderson:

[\[5486\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what steps he is taking with Cabinet colleagues to help encourage (a) women and (b) people from ethnic minorities to found start-up companies.

Gareth Thomas:

This government is working to advance equality of access to start-up opportunities irrespective of gender or race. Everyone who can and wants to set up a small business should have access to support to do so, whether through direct government support or through programmes delivered by mayors and other institutions. Ensuring this support can be accessed by all is key to the government's mission to secure economic growth and boost productivity throughout the UK. All businesses can access support via, Help to Grow Management, Growth Hubs, and the British Business Bank.

The government's Start Up Loans programme provides finance and mentoring support to founders, with 40% of loans going to women and 21% to people from ethnic minorities.

The government-backed and industry-led Invest in Women Taskforce is working to make entrepreneurship more accessible to women, so that 30% of all businesses are female-powered by 2030.

■ Overseas Trade: Sub-Saharan Africa

Matthew Patrick:

[\[5722\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what steps his Department is taking to (a) reduce barriers to and (b) promote trade with countries in sub-Saharan Africa.

Mr Douglas Alexander:

My Department leads cross-Government efforts to identify and resolve market access barriers in order to unlock opportunities for UK business and drive UK growth. In sectors and markets across the region we have trade promotion teams and programmes to support UK businesses that wish to export or expand into Africa.

In addition, the UK has one of the most generous preferential trade policy offers to sub-Saharan African countries. We provide preferential trade access to over 45 sub-Saharan African countries via our world-leading Developing Countries Trading Scheme and development-focused Economic Partnership Agreements. These focus on strengthening exports to the UK, promoting two-way trade and economic growth.

■ Small Businesses: Audit

Gareth Bacon: [\[5666\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what steps the Department is taking to ensure audit requirements are (a) accessible and (b) affordable for small and mid-sized quoted companies.

Justin Madders:

Audit standards for UK companies are adopted and set by the Financial Reporting Council (FRC), with reference to internationally-agreed standards. The law sets other requirements, such as which companies require audit.

The Government will publish a draft Audit Reform and Corporate Governance Bill. The Bill will include provisions for transitioning the FRC into a new regulator, the Audit, Reporting and Governance Authority (ARGA), with powers to monitor and address the resilience of the audit market. The Government is also considering the case for deregulatory changes to the audit of public interest entities (PIEs), which include all listed companies.

■ Small Businesses: Economic Growth

Gareth Bacon: [\[5663\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, if he will make an estimate of the proportion of economic growth that will be created by small and medium-sized enterprises in the next five years.

Gareth Thomas:

Small and Medium Enterprises make a significant contribution to economic growth, they currently represent 99.9% of the UK's business population, account for 16.7 million jobs (61% of total UK employment), and generate £2.4 trillion in annual turnover (53% of the total) for the UK economy. We continue to expect Small and Medium Sized enterprises to significantly contribute to UK growth.

■ UK Seabed Resources

Charlotte Nichols: [\[5389\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether his Department made an assessment of the potential costs and benefits to the UK of UK Seabed Resources Limited's two International Seabed Authority exploration licences.

Sarah Jones:

The Department for Business and Trade has considered the potential future impacts to the UK in holding two Deep Sea Mining exploration licences and have found there is an opportunity for the UK to take a lead in this emerging market with potential for growth and revenue through taxation. This is subject to the establishment of strong, enforceable environmental regulations, standards and guidelines adopted by the International Seabed Authority (ISA) and where there is sufficient scientific evidence

available to assess the potential impact of deep-sea mining activities on marine ecosystems.

■ **Uk Seabed Resources: Licensing**

Charlotte Nichols: [\[5822\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether there have been changes to the licence agreements issued to UK Seabed Resources Limited since January 2021.

Sarah Jones:

There have been no changes to the licence agreements issued to UK Seabed Resources Limited since January 2021.

CABINET OFFICE

■ **Cabinet Office: Staff**

John Glen: [\[5286\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many (a) headcount and (b) FTE staff are employed by the Prime Minister's Office; how many such staff are (i) special advisers and (ii) fixed term appointments; and how many desks are provided for staff employed by the No10 Political Office.

Georgia Gould:

I refer the Rt Hon Member to my answer of 23 September 2024, Official Report, PQ 5043 and my answer of 13 September 2024, Official Report, PQ 4663.

Sufficient desks are provided to meet the needs of staff in the Prime Minister's Office.

■ **Chequers: Official Visits**

John Glen: [\[5577\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Cabinet Office, who has visited Chequers in an official capacity since 4 July 2024.

Georgia Gould:

Chequers is not a government building; it is run and managed by an independent trust.

As was the practice under the previous Administration, the incumbent Prime Minister uses Chequers consistent with the wishes of the donor, the late Sir Arthur Lee, who gave it to the nation for the use of the serving Prime Minister, for both official and private use. This is set out in the Chequers Estate Act 1917.

Details of official hospitality at Chequers are published on a quarterly basis and are available via gov.uk ([Cabinet Office: ministers' transparency publications - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://gov.uk)).

As was the case under the previous Administration, returns exclude officials and special advisers who attend Chequers in an official capacity and representatives of foreign and devolved governments.

Personal or party political hospitality is not paid for by the public purse.

■ Civil Service: Equality

Julia Buckley: [\[5489\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what progress his Department has made on the implementation of the Civil Service EDI Expenditure Guidance.

Georgia Gould:

The controls outlined in the Civil Service Equality Diversity and Inclusion Expenditure Guidance which was published on 14 May remain in place and apply to all civil servants.

■ Emily Middleton and Ian Corfield

John Glen: [\[5279\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will publish the application to the Civil Service Commission by the (a) Department for Science, Innovation and Technology and (b) Treasury for the appointment by recruitment principles exception of (i) Emily Middleton and (ii) Ian Corfield.

Georgia Gould:

The Civil Service Commission is operationally independent of the Government. Requests for the disclosure of information sent to the Civil Service Commission by departments should be directed to those departments.

■ Government Departments: Communication

Charlie Dewhirst: [\[5744\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, Pursuant to the answer of 6 September 2024, to Question 2630, on Government Departments: Communication, what the timetable is for the review of planned government communications and marketing.

Georgia Gould:

A review of planned government communications and marketing is currently in progress.

■ Government Departments: Equality

Charlie Dewhirst: [\[5743\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, Pursuant to the answer of 6 September 2024 to Question 2639 on Civil Servants: Recruitment and Training, what guidance (a) the Government Equalities Office, (b) his Department and (c) the Government People Group has issued to Departments on reducing consultancy spending on equality, diversity and inclusion.

Georgia Gould:

The [Civil Service Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Expenditure Guidance](#) published on 14 May 2024 remains in place.

■ **Lobbying**

John Glen: [5281]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will issue guidance on the use of Government funding by third-party organisations to seek (a) to influence regulatory changes and (b) further Government funding.

Georgia Gould:

There are existing instructions to Government Funders on the use of government grant funding by third-party organisations. The guidance that the Right Honourable Gentleman is looking for can be found in [The Functional Standard for GovS 015: Grants](#), and associated guidance [Minimum Requirements: Standard SIX \(MR6\)](#).

■ **Prime Minister: Arden Strategies**

Kit Malthouse: [5597]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what (a) meetings and (b) communications via electronic messaging (i) the Prime Minister and (ii) his special advisers have had with representatives of Arden Strategies.

Georgia Gould:

Details of ministers' meetings with external organisations and individuals are published quarterly in arrears on GOV.UK.

Special advisers are required to comply with the Special Adviser Code of Conduct at all times and are required to make declarations on meetings with senior media figures in line with published transparency guidance.

Where a special adviser accompanies their minister to an official meeting with a senior media figure, the special adviser's attendance does not need to be separately recorded as the minister will be the main attendee.

Where an informal lobbying approach is granted time or resource by Government, it should result in a diarised engagement and therefore be recorded.

■ **Prime Minister: Special Advisers**

John Glen: [5300]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps the Prime Minister is taking to ensure productive working relations between special advisers in 10 Downing Street.

Georgia Gould:

Day to day management of special advisers in No10 is delegated to senior Special Advisers who work collaboratively to ensure there are positive working relationships between teams.

■ Special Advisers: Collective Bargaining

John Glen:

[\[5303\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the answer of 9 August 2024 to Question 1667 on Prime Minister: Special Advisers, whether the Government plans to introduce collective bargaining agreements for special advisers.

Georgia Gould:

No collective bargaining agreements currently apply to special advisers.

CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

■ Arts: Investment

Shivani Raja:

[\[5438\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, whether her Department has had recent discussions with industry stakeholders on increasing investment in the creative industries; and what steps her Department is taking to support new investors.

Chris Bryant:

Yes, ministers and officials have had many such discussions and we are committed to increasing investment in the creative industries from a variety of sources.

One of the ways that the Government incentivises investment in the sector is through the creative industry tax reliefs, which provide generous support for production costs of theatres, orchestras, museums and galleries and film, TV and video games companies. The reliefs delivered £2.2 billion of support to these industries in the financial year 2022-23.

DCMS also works with other government departments and bodies including the Department for Business and Trade and UK Research and Innovation to encourage new investors to consider investing in the creative industries. This includes work through the activity of DCMS's Create Growth Programme and the Seed Enterprise Investment and Enterprise Investors Schemes, which are available for those looking to invest in start-up and scale-up creative industries businesses, offering tax reliefs to individual investors.

■ BBC: Political Impartiality

Dr Luke Evans:

[\[5370\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment she has made of the implications for her policies of the Asserson report into the BBC, published in September 2024.

Stephanie Peacock:

The BBC has a duty, outlined in its Charter, to provide accurate and impartial news and information. That is particularly important when it comes to coverage of highly sensitive issues such as the conflict in Gaza. However, the BBC is independent from

the Government and its editorial decisions are rightly not something for the Government to interfere with.

Responsibility for ensuring the BBC fulfils its obligations to audiences as outlined in its Charter falls with Ofcom, the independent regulator.

■ Charities: International Law

Chris Law: [\[5588\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, whether she has had discussions with the Charity Commission on guidance it provides to UK-registered charities on ensuring compliance with international law.

Stephanie Peacock:

The Charity Commission for England and Wales has produced guidance for charities on managing risks when working internationally, which can be found on its website here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/charities-how-to-manage-risks-when-working-internationally>.

Ministers and officials meet regularly with the Charity Commission to discuss matters of mutual interest.

Charities in Scotland are registered with, and regulated by, the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR). The Charity Commission for Northern Ireland is the registrar and regulator of charities in Northern Ireland.

■ Film and Television: Overseas Workers

Tom Hayes: [\[5451\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what steps her Department is taking to support British citizens working in Quebec's (a) visual effects and (b) animation industry to return to the United Kingdom's creative industries.

Tom Hayes: [\[5452\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, if he will make an assessment of trends in the level of the contribution of visual effects and animation industry to the economy in the last ten years.

Chris Bryant:

The government is committed to supporting the UK's visual effects and animation industries, ensuring that they are able to remain competitive nationally and internationally. We will continue to focus on maintaining a strong and globally competitive sector by keeping tax incentives modern, agile, competitive and attractive; investing in infrastructure; supporting innovation; working with industry on skills development; and promoting independent content.

The audio-visual tax reliefs play a key role in boosting competitiveness, incentivising the production of culturally British content, and contributing to the industry's - and the nation's - economic growth. The Government values the UK's visual effects and

animations sectors and the important role they play in the fabric of the creative industries; and is committed to giving creators security and a regulatory and fiscal environment where creativity can flourish and help the UK's creative industries maximise their economic potential.

During 2019 the VFX industry added £1.68bn in GVA to the UK economy and supported 27,430 jobs. This is likely an underestimate due to the spillover impacts of advertising and brand promotion work that were not captured in BFI's analysis.

2018	25,790 FTE AND £1.58BN
2017	22,500 FTE and £1.31bn
2016	18,880 FTE and £1.08bn

The total economic impact for the parts of the sector supported by Animation Tax Relief amounted to:

2017	£258.1 MILLION IN GVA
2018	£261.0 million
2019	£254.6 million in GVA

■ Music: Reviews

Daisy Cooper:

[\[5653\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, whether she has made an assessment of the potential merits of a fan-led review of the music industry.

Chris Bryant:

The Government will respond to the Culture, Media and Sport Select Committee's report on Grassroots music venues as soon as we can in the autumn, including its recommendation on a fan-led review of live and electronic music. As part of our commitment to putting fans at the heart of our policy on music, we will launch a consultation on the secondary ticket market in the autumn alongside a call for evidence on dynamic pricing.

■ Sports: Children

Paula Barker:

[\[3209\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what steps her Department is taking to help ensure children from deprived backgrounds can participate in sport.

Stephanie Peacock:

The Government believes that every child - no matter their background or ability - should have the opportunity to play sport and be physically active.

We provide the majority of our funding for grassroots sport through our Arm's Length Body, Sport England - which invests over £250 million in Exchequer and Lottery funding each year. The expansion of Sport England's Place Partnerships will invest up to £250 million of National Lottery and Exchequer funding and enhance engagement in areas of greatest need to tackle inactivity levels through community-led solutions.

The Government has also committed to continued funding for grassroots facilities which will ensure that children and young people have access to high-quality, inclusive facilities, no matter where they live.

■ Sports: Reigate

Rebecca Paul:

[\[5779\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what steps she is taking to promote access to sports for (a) young people and (b) people with disabilities in Reigate constituency.

Stephanie Peacock:

The Inclusion 2024 programme is available to all schools in the country, including Reigate. It provides both expert support and free resources, and can help schools enhance opportunities for young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) to engage in P.E. and school sports.

The Government is committed to doing more to ensure that everyone, including children, young people, and those with disabilities, has access to and benefits from quality sport and physical activity opportunities. Sport and physical activity is central to achieving our health and opportunity manifesto missions, with the biggest gains coming from supporting those who are inactive to move more.

The Culture Secretary recently attended the launch of ParalympicGB's Equal Play Campaign where she expressed her determination to put sport at the heart of the school curriculum. This includes opening up opportunities for all young people, including those with disabilities, to be able to access sport and physical activity at school.

The Government provides the majority of support for grassroots sport through Sport England - which annually invests over £250 million in Exchequer and Lottery funding. Sport England's work focuses on bringing the health and sport sectors together at community level and to champion physical activity with local leaders to develop interventions tailored to communities. Since 2020, Sport England has invested over £548,525 in Reigate for grassroots sport & physical activity.

Sport England also works to ensure that each of their programmes impact directly on disabled people and those with a long-term health condition, with initiatives like the 'We are Undefeatable' campaign and partnerships with disability organisations.

■ Sports: South Holland and the Deepings

Sir John Hayes:

[\[5255\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what steps she is taking to promote access to sports for (a) young people and (b) people with disabilities in South Holland and the Deepings constituency.

Stephanie Peacock:

The Government is committed to doing more to ensure that everyone, including children and young people and those with disabilities, has access to and benefits from quality sport and physical activity opportunities. Sport and physical activity is central to achieving our health and opportunity manifesto missions, with the biggest gains coming from supporting those who are inactive to move more.

The Government-funded Inclusion 2024 programme is available to all schools in the country, including South Holland and the Deepings. It provides both expert support and free resources, and can help schools enhance opportunities for young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) to engage in P.E. and school sports.

We provide the majority of our funding for grassroots sport through our Arm's Length Body, Sport England - which invests over £250 million in Exchequer and Lottery funding each year. Since 2020, South Holland and the Deepings has received over £300,000 of Sport England funding to provide opportunities for the local community to get active. This includes funding for the delivery of the School Games programme within the constituency, which provides school children with the opportunity to engage in local and inclusive sporting competitions across 40 different sports and activities, including adapted and accessible formats for children with SEND.

The Culture Secretary recently attended the launch of ParalympicGB's Equal Play Campaign where she expressed her determination to put sport at the heart of the school curriculum. This includes opening up opportunities for all young people, including those with disabilities, to be able to access sport and physical activity at school.

Sport England also works to ensure that each of their programmes impact directly on disabled people and those with a long-term health condition, with initiatives like the 'We are Undefeatable' campaign and partnerships with disability organisations.

DEFENCE

■ Ajax Vehicles: Procurement

Danny Kruger:

[\[5401\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what progress his Department has made on the Ajax armoured fighting vehicle programme trials.

Danny Kruger: [\[5402\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, when he expects that the initial operating capacity of Ajax armoured fighting vehicles will be delivered.

Luke Pollard:

The Armoured Fighting Vehicle AJAX Programme trials continue to progress and remain ongoing. Reliability Growth Trials (RGT) are ongoing and on schedule to complete by December 2026.

Regarding the Armoured Vehicle Programme (AJAX) Initial Operating Capability, I refer the hon. Member to the answer that the Minister for Defence Procurement and Industry gave to Question 438 dated 22 July 2024, which remains extant.

Attachments:

1. Ajax Vehicles [438 - Ajax Vehicles.docx]

■ Challenger Tanks: Procurement

Danny Kruger: [\[5407\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of the Strategic Defence Review on the Challenger 3 programme.

Luke Pollard:

The Challenger 3 programme is an important programme and is on schedule to achieve Initial Operating Capability in 2027 and Full Operating Capability in 2030.

The Strategic Defence Review will guide future capability development priorities, to ensure the United Kingdom is both secure at home and strong abroad - now and for the years to come.

The Reviewers will report regularly on progress to the Prime Minister, the Chancellor of the Exchequer and Secretary of State for Defence and will make their final report to the Prime Minister, the Chancellor and the Defence Secretary - with recommendations - in the first half of 2025.

Danny Kruger: [\[5408\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what discussions he has had with the Army Board on the future of the Challenger 3 programme.

Luke Pollard:

During his visit to Army HQ on 19 September, the Secretary of State for Defence met members of the Army Board and discussed a range of issues including the Army's Equipment Plan supporting the Army's modernisation.

The Challenger 3 programme remains an important programme and remains on schedule to achieve Initial Operating Capability in 2027 and Full Operating Capability in 2030.

■ Dstl

James Cartlidge: [\[5337\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what estimate he has made of how many UK-based supply chain jobs are supported by DSTL's Air Systems Programme.

Luke Pollard:

Dstl has not made an assessment of the UK-based supply chain jobs supported (either exclusively or in part) by the Air Systems Programme delivered through Dstl.

Over recent years, Dstl has significantly increased the value of science and technology research delivered externally through its diverse supplier base within UK industry and academia.

James Cartlidge: [\[5338\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many people are employed by DSTL's Biological, Radiological and Nuclear Defence Programme.

James Cartlidge: [\[5340\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many people are employed by DSTL's Communications and Networks Programme.

James Cartlidge: [\[5342\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many people are employed by DSTL's Cyber Security Programme.

Luke Pollard:

Dstl delivers science and technology for its customers in the Ministry of Defence (MOD) and across Government, working with industry, academia and government to ensure the UK has the right capabilities for defence and security. An overview of Dstl's Science and Technology (S&T) Programmes can be found on its website, highlighting the wide range of expertise within the organisation. This breadth of knowledge allows expertise to be diverted, as required, to support dedicated programme technical teams to deliver its S&T Programmes.

Information relating to Dstl's workforce is routinely published in its Annual Report and Accounts. The Programme's title is Chemical, Biological and Radiological (CBR) Defence. Detailed staffing data in respect of Dstl's CBR Defence programme cannot be provided in the interests of National Security.

James Cartlidge: [\[5339\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what estimate he has made of how many UK-based supply chain jobs are supported by DSTL's Biological, Radiological and Nuclear Defence Programme.

Luke Pollard:

Dstl has not made an assessment of the UK-based supply chain jobs supported (either exclusively or in part) by the Chemical Biological and Radiological Defence Programme delivered through Dstl.

Over recent years, Dstl has significantly increased the value of science and technology research delivered externally through its diverse supplier base within UK industry and academia.

James Carlidge: [\[5341\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what estimate he has made of how many UK-based supply chain jobs are supported by DSTL's Communications and Networks Programme.

Luke Pollard:

Dstl has not made an assessment of the UK-based supply chain jobs supported (either exclusively or in part) by the Communications and Networks Programme delivered through Dstl.

Over recent years, Dstl has significantly increased the value of science and technology research delivered externally through its diverse supplier base within UK industry and academia.

■ **F-35 Aircraft: Israel**

Andy McDonald: [\[5323\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will make it his policy to negotiate an end-use agreement with F-35 programme supply chain and electronic stockpile management system counterparts to end the re-export of F-35s to Israel.

Luke Pollard:

The UK Government has made an amendment to the F-35 Open General Export Licence (F-35 OGEL) in relation to F-35 items manufactured in the UK, which now cannot be directly exported to Israel. The US Government manages the sale of F-35 aircraft to Israel and the F-35 Global Supply Chain.

■ **Israel: Military Intelligence**

Andrew Bowie: [\[5345\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of the UK's decision to suspend some arms exports licenses with Israel on intelligence-sharing with that country.

Luke Pollard:

It is a long-standing policy that we do not discuss detailed intelligence matters and so I regret I am unable to provide any additional detail.

■ **Ukraine: Military Aid**

Stuart Anderson: [\[5359\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what his policy is on the future of Operation Interflex.

Luke Pollard:

On 6 September 2024 at the Ukraine Defence Contact Group the Defence Secretary announced that the hugely successful UK led Op INTERFLEX, which has trained over 47,000 Ukrainian personnel, will continue until at least the end of 2025.

The announcement highlights that the UK remains ironclad in its commitment to meeting Ukraine's training requirements now and in future.

Stuart Anderson:[\[5360\]](#)

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

Luke Pollard:

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

Since Putin's invasion of Crimea in 2014, the UK has trained over 77,000 Ukrainian personnel. This includes.

- Op ORBITAL (2015-2022) - Over 22,000 Ukrainian personnel.
- Op INTERFLEX (2022-ongoing) - Over 47,000 Ukrainian personnel.
- Wider medical, specialist, air, and maritime training (2022-ongoing) - Over 8,000 Ukrainian personnel.

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

■ Unmanned Air Vehicles: Procurement**Danny Kruger:**[\[5399\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what recent progress his Department has made on the procurement of swarming drones for No. 216 Squadron of the Royal Air Force.

Danny Kruger:[\[5400\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether the purpose of No. 216 Squadron of the Royal Air Force is to (a) test and (b) operate swarming drones.

Luke Pollard:

216 Squadron was initially formed as a swarming drone trials squadron; however, the role of drone testing and evaluation will now be conducted by 744 Naval Air Squadron as the Joint Uncrewed Air System Test and Evaluation Squadron.

216 Squadron is intended to become the operational delivery squadron for an Autonomous Collaborative Platforms capability in 2025.

Danny Kruger: [5403]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of changes to the defence spending uplift on the Hydra 400 jet-propelled drone development programme.

Danny Kruger: [5404]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of the Strategic Defence Review on the Hydra 400 jet-propelled drone development programme.

Danny Kruger: [5405]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what discussions he has had with the Army Board on the future of the Hydra 400 jet-propelled drone development programme.

Luke Pollard:

There is not, and has never been, a dedicated Hydra 400 programme in the Army. The capability was assessed in early 2024, and the Army has no current plans to pursue it further.

Work continues to develop the Army's strike capabilities. As part of this ongoing work, the Army will refine the concept for a layered approach to deliver strike capabilities at the Battlegroup, Brigade and Divisional levels.

■ Veterans: Northern Ireland

Robin Swann: [5516]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 11 September 2024 to Question 4577 on Northern Ireland Veterans Commissioner: Resignations, what recent steps the Veterans Welfare Service NI has taken to support veterans.

Al Carns:

The Veterans Welfare Service in Northern Ireland (VWS NI) delivers professional one-to-one support to veterans and their families, Service leavers and the bereaved families of Service personnel. Their role focuses on providing information, guidance and support to members of the Armed Forces community. This includes, but is not limited to, transitioning from service, bereavement, or changes affected income, finance, or housing.

VWS NI also work alongside voluntary organisations, Service charities, other Government Departments, the devolved administrations and local authorities to ensure a joined-up approach which ensures our veterans, and their families receive the information and assistance they need.

EDUCATION

■ Adoption

Freddie van Mierlo:

[\[7239\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the Third Report of the Joint Committee on Human Rights of Session 2022-23 on The Violation of Family Life: Adoption of Children of Unmarried Women 1949–1976, HC270, published on 6 July 2022, if she will apologise for the historic role of the Government in forced adoptions; and if she will have discussions with the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care on ensuring that suitable mental health support is made available for adult adoptees.

Janet Daby:

The department has the deepest sympathy with everyone affected by historic forced adoption. The practice was abhorrent and should never have taken place.

The department is committed to supporting adopted adults. Regulations have already been changed to make it easier for adults to access therapy, and we are providing funding to Adoption England's Improving Adoption Services for Adults project, which is designed to maintain relationships and offer support.

The department will continue to review the offer, including looking to learn from the approach of the devolved nations and will consider how we can collaborate across the government to provide support.

■ Carers and Foster Care: Training

Ian Lavery:

[\[6240\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will take steps to provide the same level of access to (a) training and (b) support to (i) kinship and (ii) foster carers.

Janet Daby:

Reforming children's social care is critical to giving hundreds of thousands of children and young people the start in life they deserve. It is also necessary to achieve financial stability for local authorities.

This government is committed to helping children thrive, and we want the best for every child and family. We want to build on the foundations laid by local authorities to create a care system that works for everyone.

This government recognises the valuable and important role that kinship and foster carers play in caring for some of the most vulnerable children. Our manifesto committed to working with local government to support children in care, including through kinship and fostering arrangements.

The government is extending the delivery of over 140 peer support groups across England, available for all kinship carers to access, where they can come together to share stories, exchange advice and support each other. The department is also delivering a package of training and support that all kinship carers across England can access.

It is important that foster carers receive the support they need to fulfil this role and to meet the needs of the children in their care. The department is investing over £36 million this spending review to deliver 10 local authority regional fostering recruitment and retention hubs, covering 64% of local authorities in England. The majority of hubs launched this summer and include rollout of the Mockingbird programme in all local authorities, which offers peer-support to foster carers and the children in their care.

The department is also funding Fosterlink, a new support service for local authority fostering services not in the regional programme. This identifies areas for improvement and creates a national network to share best practice.

The department also encourages fostering service providers to adhere to the Foster Carer Charter. The Charter sets out clear principles for how foster carers should be treated and recognises their invaluable work. This was refreshed in February 2022 and sets out the responsibilities of foster carers, fostering services and the corporate parent. It aims to deliver best practice in fostering for all involved, including carers and children.

The Charter can be accessed here: <https://www.thefosteringnetwork.org.uk/get-involved/our-campaigns/foster-carers-charter-0>.

■ Children in Care

Gareth Snell: [6372]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to prevent the recurrence of child removals from the same families.

Gareth Snell: [6373]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to ensure that parents receive appropriate support after children are removed from their care to prevent recurrence.

Gareth Snell: [6374]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment her Department has made of the potential (a) merits and (b) financial savings of increasing investment in support for parents following the removal of a child from their care to prevent repeat removals.

Janet Daby:

This government is committed to whole-system reform of children's social care to give hundreds of thousands of children and young people the start in life they deserve. We recognise that there is a strong evidence base for early intervention and whole family working to support families with multiple issues before they reach crisis point, to stay together and thrive. This is at the heart of our reform agenda to rebalance the children's social care system toward earlier intervention, which is aimed at improving families' lives today, their outcomes in the future, and reducing costs to public services.

Central to this ambition is testing a new model of Family Help which builds on best practice from well-evidenced programmes such as Supporting Families and Pause,

which feature whole-family working and lead practitioners providing dedicated support to prevent re-referrals.

The independent evaluation of the Supporting Families programme showed improved outcomes and positive returns on investment where every £1 spent on the programme delivered £2.28 of benefits. It also found a reduction of one third in the likelihood of children going into care two years after joining the programme, as well as reduced youth and adult crime, reduced domestic abuse, reduced benefits claims, reduced substance misuse, improved mental health, improved school attendance and reduced exclusions (evaluated between 2015 and 2020).

Through the Families First for Children Pathfinder and Family network pilot the government is testing the implementation of intensive whole-family support in 10 pathfinder local authorities, where multi-disciplinary teams are providing targeted support to help families overcome challenges at the earliest opportunity.

These local authorities are also making greater use of family networks, involving them in decision-making at an earlier stage, and providing practical and financial support via family network support packages to help keep children safe at home. The pathfinder is being independently evaluated. Early evaluation findings are expected in spring 2025.

Gareth Snell: [\[6375\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether the Children's Wellbeing Bill will include provisions to tackle repeat removals of children from the same families.

Janet Daby:

The Children's Wellbeing Bill will ensure our education and children's social care systems transform life chances for millions of children and young people in England. The department will deliver our manifesto commitments on children's social care to ensure that all children can thrive in safe, loving homes. More information will be shared about the Bill in due course.

Gareth Snell: [\[6377\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many children entering care each year are from a family who have previously had a child removed from their care.

Janet Daby:

The department is unable to answer the question. We only collect data on individual children and do not collect data on families.

■ Children in Care: Per Capita Costs

Richard Baker: [\[7174\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what the average annual cost per child of looked-after children in residential care is in (a) England, (b) Scotland, (c) Wales and (d) Northern Ireland.

Janet Daby:

Education is a devolved matter and this response outlines the information for England only. The average cost for a looked after child in private residential care in 2020/21 was approximately £254,000 per annum and £217,000 for a child in an local authority placement: <https://www.pssru.ac.uk/pub/uc/uc2021/services.pdf>.

Costs may vary depending on factors such as location and the child's level of need.

■ Children: Carers**Ian Lavery:****[6244]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what progress her Department has made on implementing the national kinship care strategy in schools

Janet Daby:

This department is determined to give every child the opportunities they deserve, and kinship carers play a crucial role in delivering this. We know that many children who receive care from relatives and friends need extra support, including in school. The department is working to ensure their needs are met, and that they have the best possible opportunity to succeed.

In September 2024, the role of virtual school heads was expanded to include championing the education, attendance, and attainment of children in kinship care, to ensure they receive the help they need to thrive at school.

All children in kinship arrangements, regardless of legal status, will benefit from the adaptation of the strategic virtual school head role. This will be a systemwide approach, bringing greater focus and visibility to the distinct needs of children in kinship care.

Andy McDonald:**[6255]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will make it her policy to introduce a right to paid employment leave to support kinship carers.

Janet Daby:

The department recognises the challenges that many kinship carers face in continuing to work alongside the pressures of taking in a child, and we believe they should be supported to remain in work where possible.

Kinship carers are likely to benefit from additional support and flexibility from their employers to help them balance work with providing the best possible care. Our guidance for employers, 'Kinship Carers in the Workplace', sets out best practice for supporting kinship carers at work.

The department will join a small number of private sector employers in offering a pay and leave entitlement to all eligible staff who become kinship carers.

Melanie Onn:

[\[6313\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans her Department has to take forward the commitments in the Championing kinship care: national kinship care strategy, published on 15 December 2023.

Janet Daby:

This department recognises the valuable and important role that kinship carers play in caring for some of the most vulnerable children.

The department is determined to give every child the opportunities they deserve, and kinship carers play a crucial role in delivering this. We know that many children who receive care from relatives and friends need extra support, including in school. We are working to ensure their needs are met, and that they have the best possible opportunity to succeed.

The government has expanded the role of virtual school heads to include specific responsibilities to promote the education outcomes of children in kinship care and recently announced the appointment of the first National Kinship Care Ambassador.

The government has extended the delivery of over 140 peer support groups across England, available for all kinship carers to access, where they can come together to share stories, exchange advice and support each other. A package of training and support is being delivered to kinship carers across England.

This government is considering how to most effectively transform the children's social care system to deliver better outcomes for children and families, including how best to support kinship families.

Wendy Chamberlain:

[\[6519\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to help support young carers in full-time education to access financial support.

Janet Daby:

The department is dedicated to making education fairer for all. Funding is provided to educational institutions to administer discretionary 16-19 bursaries for vulnerable students, including those who may have caring responsibilities.

Additionally, young carers under 18 and their families have the right to request a holistic assessment of their support needs, ensuring the whole family receive coordinated support from their local authority wherever necessary.

The department continues to encourage schools and local authorities to work closely with young carers and families to identify their needs and provide tailored support for them, ensuring they do not miss out on vital educational opportunities.

■ Financial Services: Education

Callum Anderson:

[\[5487\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to provide financial education in schools.

Catherine McKinnell:

Financial education currently forms a compulsory part of the National Curriculum for mathematics (at key stages 1 to 4) and citizenship (at key stages 3 and 4). The primary mathematics curriculum includes arithmetic knowledge that supports pupils' ability to manage budgets and money, including, for example, calculations with money and percentages. In secondary mathematics, pupils are taught topics such as how to calculate compound interest, which is relevant for personal finance. In citizenship, pupils are taught the function and uses of money, how to budget and manage credit and debt, as well as concepts like insurance, savings and pensions.

High and rising school standards are at the heart of the government's mission to break down barriers to opportunity and give every child the best start in life. The government's ambition is for a broad, rich and cutting-edge curriculum that equips children and young people with the essential knowledge and skills required to thrive as citizens, in work and throughout life. This is why the government announced a Curriculum and Assessment Review on 19 July 2024, chaired by Professor Becky Francis CBE.

The review will be undertaken in close consultation with education professionals and other experts, parents, children and young people, and stakeholders. A call for evidence will be launched in the coming weeks, to direct the focus of engagement with the sector and stakeholders over the autumn term.

Following the independent review, the government will legislate to require all state schools teach the reformed national curriculum. This will give parents certainty over the core of their children's education.

■ Special Educational Needs: Buckinghamshire**Callum Anderson:**[\[5465\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent discussions her Department has had with Buckinghamshire Council on the provision of specialist school places for children with special educational needs; and what steps she plans to take to increase capacity in that county.

Catherine McKinnell:

The department is engaging with Buckinghamshire Council to discuss the current provision of and future demand for specialist school places, with a view to supporting them in delivering places where needed and improving outcomes for children with special educational needs.

This includes working with Buckinghamshire on the authority's successful application to be part of the national free school competition, and on the provision of new specialist units within mainstream schools.

ENERGY SECURITY AND NET ZERO

■ Batteries: Storage

Alison Bennett:

[\[5519\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether he has made a recent assessment of the effectiveness of regulations on battery energy storage systems.

Michael Shanks:

There is a robust regulatory framework that addresses the health and safety risks associated with grid-scale battery storage. Specifically, the Health and Safety at Work Act and secondary legislation places legal duties on employers to manage risks to employees and anyone else who may be affected. It is the policy of the Health and Safety Executive to continue to review its regulatory framework to make sure it works in a time of innovation.

■ Boiler Upgrade Scheme

Carla Denyer:

[\[5773\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if he will expand the Boiler Upgrade Scheme grant to cover the costs of connecting to a low-carbon heat network.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

The Boiler Upgrade Scheme is intended to cover the cost of installations of heat pumps and biomass boilers in individual properties.

However, the Government recognise that heat networks will be one of the primary low-carbon technologies for decarbonising home heating over the next decade and will play a key role in all pathways to 2050.

The Government is working with industry and local authorities and has invested over £500 million to transform the heat network market, protect consumers, improve existing networks, and build new low-carbon ones.

■ Climate Change and Nuclear Energy

Andrew Bowie:

[\[5640\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps he is taking to support (a) international climate commitments and (b) other global nuclear energy initiatives.

Michael Shanks:

The Government is committed to restoring the UK's global climate leadership, building on its mission to make Britain a clean energy superpower. We will work with countries to deliver on the Global Stocktake agreed at COP28. We intend to announce our own ambitious Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) for 2035 at COP29, accelerate action through initiatives such as the Global Clean Power Alliance and push for an ambitious new global climate finance goal at COP29. The UK

actively supports the safe and secure use of nuclear energy through our work at the International Atomic Energy Agency, Nuclear Energy Agency and International Energy Agency.

■ Coal: Mining

Mr Richard Holden: [5668]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy, Security and Net Zero, pursuant to the Answer of 26 July 2024 to Question 1982 on Coal: Imports and Production and the Answer of 30 August 2024 to Question 3169 on Coal: Railways, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of granting further coal mining licenses, in the context of trends in the level of demand for coal in the rail industry.

Michael Shanks:

Our manifesto was clear on our intention to not grant new coal licences and we are exploring avenues to achieve this.

■ Energy: Consumers

Wera Hobhouse: [5820]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy and Net Zero, what assessment he has made with Cabinet colleagues of the potential impact of flexible energy systems on consumers.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

The transition to a smarter energy system can bring benefits for many consumers. This was a key factor in a call for evidence carried out earlier this year on the future of default tariffs in a more flexible market <https://www.gov.uk/government/calls-for-evidence/default-energy-tariffs-for-households-call-for-evidence>

DESNZ and Ofgem will continue to work closely to ensure that consumers can benefit from a more flexible energy system whilst being protected from unfair or inefficient pricing.

■ Energy: Costs

Dr Luke Evans: [5379]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, with reference to the meeting between the Minister for Energy and energy firms on Wednesday 28 August 2024, what assessment he has made of the [a] potential impact of the costs of energy on pensioners who will not be eligible for the Winter Fuel Payment in Winter 2024-25 and [ii] adequacy of the steps taken by energy firms to support pensioners in advance of the eligibility changes for the payment.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

The Government has not made this specific assessment. However, the most recent statistical projections of rates of fuel poverty can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/fuel-poverty-and-winter-fuel-payment-in-england-ad-hoc-statistics-2023-and-2024>.

This Government is absolutely committed to ensuring pensioners are supported. Everyone in our society, no matter their working history or savings deserves a comfortable and dignified retirement. The Government expects energy suppliers to do everything they can to support customers who are struggling with bills, especially vulnerable customers. It is important that anyone who is struggling to pay their energy bills contact their supplier.

I am working closely with Ofgem and energy suppliers to ensure they are doing everything they can to support all vulnerable consumers and those struggling to pay their bills.

■ Energy: Housing

Mr Luke Charters:

[\[5816\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps his Department is taking to work with local authorities on implementing the warm homes plan.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

On 23rd September the Secretary of State announced the Warm Homes: Local Grant which will provide energy performance measures and low carbon heating to low-income households in England. The scheme will allocate funding to local authorities following the outcome of an expression of interest, opening in October.

The Government also launched the Warm Homes: Social Housing Fund, which replaces the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund. Eligible social housing landlords can apply as of 30th September 2024.

Local Authorities within the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) and the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) will be receiving an allocation of funding for these national schemes as part of our commitment to the pilots announced in the trailblazer devolution deals.

The Retrofit Insight Support and Expertise (RISE) web service provides free support to help local authorities deliver these retrofit programmes.

■ Energy: Infrastructure

Andrew Bowie:

[\[5634\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if he will make an estimate of the quantity and proportion of energy infrastructure that will be required to meet his solar power targets that will be sourced from Chinese companies.

Michael Shanks:

Solar power is a mature technology with well-established and competitive global supply chains, with industrial-scale solar panel manufacturing mainly concentrated in Asia, the US and EU.

We have relaunched the Solar Taskforce which will be focusing on identifying and taking forward the actions needed to develop resilient, sustainable and innovative

solar supply chains, to support our ambition of radically increasing the UK's solar power capacity by 2030.

Andrew Bowie:

[5635]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if he will make an estimate of the quantity and proportion of energy infrastructure that will be required to meet his (a) onshore and (b) offshore power targets that will be sourced from Chinese companies.

Michael Shanks:

This Government will take a consistent, long term and strategic approach to managing the UK's relations with China. We will co-operate where we can, compete where we have different interests, and challenge where we must. Alongside efforts to de-risk our supply chains, we will therefore also continue to work with our international partners to manage the continued implications of overreliance on any one actor.

Andrew Bowie:

[5636]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of trends in the level of reliance on China-owned companies for the supply of energy infrastructure on national security.

Michael Shanks:

The Government will carry out an audit of the UK's relationship with China as a bilateral and global actor, to improve our ability to understand and respond to the challenges and opportunities China poses.

■ Energy: Pensioners

Mary Kelly Foy:

[5361]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what plans has he to support pensioners with the cost of energy in (a) City of Durham and (b) County Durham.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

The Government is committed to supporting all consumers, including pensioners in the City of Durham and County Durham. We believe that the only way to protect billpayers permanently and to guarantee our energy security is to speed up our transition away from volatile, foreign, fossil fuel markets towards clean homegrown energy.

In the short-term, we are continuing to deliver the Warm Home Discount which provides a £150 rebate off energy bills to eligible low-income households. In August, I met with energy suppliers to discuss additional support they can provide this winter and we are working together to ensure vulnerable consumers, including pensioners, are supported this winter.

■ Heat Batteries: Housing

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[5547\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what assessment his Department has made on the potential merits of the use of heat batteries in decarbonising homes.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

Heat batteries are one of the most promising alternative electric heating technologies: they utilise time of use tariffs, do not require outside space and are cheaper to install than heat pumps in some circumstances.

However, they are less efficient than heat pumps and use more energy to meet the same heating demand. Although they can generally be charged off-peak, if a battery does not have sufficient storage capacity to meet heat demand it could draw electricity at peak times and add to the burden on the electricity network.

The government will continue to assess the evidence base as it develops.

■ Heat Pumps: Housing

Carla Denyer:

[\[5772\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps he is taking to reduce the upfront cost of heat pumps for households.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

The Government's Warm Homes Plan will set out a range of measures to support upgrading millions of homes over this parliament, including grants and low interest loans to support investment in low carbon heating, focusing on incentivising people to transition to clean sources of heat.

The Government is also continuing with the Boiler Upgrade Scheme which offers grant payments of £7,500 towards the cost of installing heat pumps, supporting property owners transition away from fossil fuel heating. These grants are in addition to the 0% rate of VAT on the purchase of heat pumps, which will last until March 2027.

■ Housing: Carbon Emissions

Mr Luke Charters:

[\[5814\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what assessment his Department have made of the potential impact of retrofitting new homes on net zero targets.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

The Government has dual ambitions of delivering 1.5 million new homes by the end of this Parliament and achieving clean power by 2030. These objectives are not mutually exclusive, and with good planning and smart design we can build the high quality, low carbon homes we need.

Future standards next year will set our new homes and buildings on a path that moves away from relying on volatile fossil fuels and ensures they are fit for a net zero future. The department will continue to work with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government on this matter.

■ Housing: Energy

Alicia Kearns:

[5392]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps he is taking to (a) help tackle reductions in the effectiveness of loft insulation during its lifetime and (b) increase (i) awareness of and (ii) access to new technologies to help improve energy efficiency within homes.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

Loft insulation installed under government schemes must be compliant with the Publicly Available Specification (PAS) 2030 and 2035 standard documents to reduce the risks and unintended consequences associated with poor-quality installations. The British Standards Institute (BSI), who publish PAS 2030 and 2035, will consider how to address more innovative products that do not fit within existing annexes in their next update.

Independent impartial government advice in relation to energy efficiency measures and clean heat technologies is available at <https://www.gov.uk/improve-energy-efficiency>, a national phonenumber and over 30 in-person advice projects across England.

Alicia Kearns:

[5395]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether he plans to respond to the consultation entitled Home Energy Model: Future Homes Standard assessment which closed on 27 March 2024.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

The Department for Energy Security and Net Zero officials are analysing the responses received for the Home Energy Model: Future Homes Standard assessment consultation. The Government will publish the government response to the consultation in due course.

■ National Energy System Operator

Wera Hobhouse:

[5350]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that the National Energy System Operator (NESO) integrates demand side flexibility into its market design.

Michael Shanks:

NESO's role is set out in legislation and licences and is regulated by Ofgem. It has a statutory duty to have regard to the Strategy and Policy Statement, which was issued earlier this year and sets out the government's intention for NESO to consider

‘opportunities to shift and manage demand through smart solutions, such as electricity or hydrogen storage, demand side response and low carbon generation.’

Demand side flexibility has a key role to play in delivering clean power by 2030 and making Britain a clean energy superpower. Such opportunities will include the potential to further integrate demand side response through changes to the design and operation of the markets that NESO operates.

■ Nuclear Energy: Skilled Workers

Andrew Bowie:

[\[5639\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps he is taking to ensure that the UK has the (a) skills and (b) workforce to support the expansion of nuclear energy as part of the net-zero transition.

Michael Shanks:

The Government is committed to ensuring that the UK nuclear industry has the necessary skills needed to deliver our nuclear ambitions.

Recognising the need for urgent action, the nuclear sector across civil and defence are responding collaboratively to deliver sustained long-term action that will develop a robust nuclear skills base, including through the delivery of the National Nuclear Strategic Plan for Skills.

■ Nuclear Power: Regulation

Andrew Bowie:

[\[5638\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether his Department is taking steps to streamline regulatory approval processes for new nuclear projects.

Michael Shanks:

The UK has an enabling, robust and rigorous energy regulatory regime. The Government is taking steps towards speeding up and streamlining the planning process and will continue to work with the regulators to understand the potential for additional streamlining or removing of duplication from the regulation of energy projects including new nuclear projects. Evidence received from the Alternative Routes to Market for New Nuclear Projects consultation will allow us to further explore how the existing nuclear regulatory framework can accommodate new technologies and new use-cases.

■ Refineries: Grangemouth

Stephen Flynn:

[\[5650\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, how many times he has met the workforce at Grangemouth oil refinery since his appointment.

Michael Shanks:

It was deeply disappointing that Petroineos confirmed its previous decision to close the oil refining operation at Grangemouth.

Since taking office, the Secretary of State and I have taken joint action with the Scottish Government to urgently engage with the company and its shareholders, and to engage with unions to discuss the needs of the workforce.

In response to the company's decision, the UK and Scottish Governments announced a joint £100 million investment package for Falkirk and Grangemouth; immediate career support to help the workforce; and a joint-funded £1.5 million project to find viable long-term options for the site, with potential for future support from the National Wealth Fund.

Details of Ministers' meetings with external individuals and organisations are published quarterly in arrears on GOV.UK.

■ **Small Modular Reactors**

Andrew Griffith: [\[5701\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy, Security and Net Zero, whether he has had discussions with the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government on easing planning rules for SMR reactors.

Michael Shanks:

A new nuclear National Policy Statement (EN-7) is being developed which will provide updated planning guidance and set out any specific assessment criteria for the siting of new nuclear power stations, including Small Modular Reactors (SMR).

■ **Small Modular Reactors: Carbon Emissions**

Andrew Bowie: [\[5637\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of deploying Small Modular Reactors on the Government's net-zero targets.

Michael Shanks:

The government is clear that new nuclear power stations, such as Hinkley Point C, Sizewell C, and small modular reactors (SMRs), will play an important role in helping the UK achieve energy security and clean power while securing thousands of good, skilled jobs. Great British Nuclear (GBN), the government's expert nuclear delivery body, is running an SMR technology selection process procurement. In September 2024, GBN concluded the initial tender phase of the procurement and down-selected to four companies. In the next stage of the process, bidders will be invited to enter negotiations with GBN.

■ **Solar Power**

Sir Ashley Fox: [\[5442\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether he plans to include in his Solar Roadmap a target for the proportion of UK solar energy that should

be generated through the installation of solar panels on industrial or commercial roofs; and what incentives his Department plans to provide to encourage such installations.

Michael Shanks:

The Solar Roadmap will be published after consultation with the relaunched Solar Taskforce, which will bring together Government and industry to discuss barriers to solar deployment. The nature of any targets included in the Roadmap will be for the Taskforce to consider.

At present, many smaller-scale commercial rooftop projects are covered by permitted development rights, which allow them to be installed without an application for planning consent. From next year, Future Buildings Standards will ensure that all newly-built commercial buildings are fit for a net zero future. Further measures to encourage rooftop installations will be considered by the Solar Taskforce.

■ **Solar Power: Housing**

Daisy Cooper:

[5655]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, pursuant to the Answer of 10 September 2024 to Question 3784 on Solar Power: Housing, if he will make it his policy to regulate the Smart Export Guarantee market to ensure that (a) residential and (b) small commercial exporters of energy are paid the same price per unit as large commercial providers.

Michael Shanks:

To encourage innovation and competition, the Smart Export Guarantee is a market-led mechanism in which energy suppliers, rather than the government, set both the tariff levels and structure. The scheme's success should therefore be gauged by the diversity and creativity of the offerings. To date there is a good range of offers for both residential and commercial exporters which is evident in Ofgem's latest SEG annual report (<https://www.ofgem.gov.uk/environmental-and-social-schemes/smart-export-guarantee-seg/smart-export-guarantee-seg-contacts-guidance-and-resources>). This demonstrates the scheme's growth in terms of tariff variety, innovation, and prices. We will continue to keep this under review.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

■ **Agriculture: Capital Investment**

David Baines:

[6858]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of (a) financial incentives and (b) other support for (i) farmers and (ii) the wider agricultural sector for investment in (A) machinery and (B) infrastructure.

Daniel Zeichner:

We are committed to supporting all farming sectors to increase levels of productivity whilst increasing their sustainability and resilience. We are looking carefully at how to position further investment and support to enable the delivery of this Government's objectives, including a range of existing and new fiscal and non-fiscal support. We will confirm plans for the rollout of schemes and our wider approach as soon as possible, and the farming budget beyond this year will be part of the government's spending review.

■ **Air Pollution: Health Education****Adam Jogee:**[\[6981\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 30 July 2024 to Question 1094 on Air Pollution, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of a national public awareness campaign on the health impacts of air pollution.

Emma Hardy:

We recognise the importance of raising awareness of air pollution and associated health impacts. In addition to our commitment to deliver a new Clean Air Strategy, we are undertaking a review of how we communicate air quality information to ensure members of the public, and vulnerable groups in particular, have what they need to protect themselves.

■ **Animal Welfare****Caroline Voaden:**[\[7135\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he plans to reintroduce the Animal Welfare (Kept Animals) Bill; and whether he plans to ban the use of snares.

Mary Creagh:

The Government will introduce the most ambitious programme for animal welfare in a generation. As outlined in our manifesto, we will bring an end to the use of snare traps. We are considering the most effective way to deliver this commitment and will be setting out next steps in due course.

■ **Badgers: Lincolnshire****Sir John Hayes:**[\[5858\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many badgers have been culled in Lincolnshire since the beginning of the current cull regime.

Daniel Zeichner:

The number of badgers removed during culling operations are published annually on GOV.UK.

■ Bluetongue Disease

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[5908\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to help tackle cases of bluetongue virus in farm animals.

Daniel Zeichner:

Defra acted quickly to contain bluetongue serotype 3 (BTV-3) when the first case this season was detected on 26 August, implementing zones with movement controls on susceptible livestock to prevent spread. These disease control restrictions have been adapted in response to new findings and there is now a single restricted zone (RZ) covering the east coast and some inland areas in England. Movement restrictions are in place to prevent the movement of potentially infected susceptible animals (ruminants and camelids) and germinal products transporting disease to new locations outside the zone (premises that have confirmed positive cases or are suspected to have BTV-3 are restricted from moving their animals freely at this time). Some animals were humanely culled to prevent establishment at the outset and infected animals in cases found in free areas outside the restricted zone have also been humanely culled.

Defra has also permitted the use of vaccines for BTV-3 in England. The vaccines are now in the country and available for vets to prescribe.

Defra and APHA continue surveillance of susceptible animals and epidemiological assessments, remaining vigilant for any changes, and will continue to work closely with key industry stakeholders to respond to developments and ensure keepers have the information they need.

■ Climate Change

Alex Mayer:

[\[6927\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what his planned timetable is for the next reviews of the (a) National Adaptation Programme and (b) strategy for climate change adaptation reporting.

Emma Hardy:

The Climate Change Act 2008 requires the Secretary of State to produce a National Adaptation Programme in response to the Government's most recent Climate Change Risk Assessment, on a five-yearly cycle. The third National Adaptation Programme was published in July 2023. The fourth National Adaptation Programme will be published in 2028. The strategy for the fourth round of climate adaptation reporting under the Adaptation Reporting Power was published in July 2023. The fourth round of reporting is currently underway and due to close on 31st December 2024. The review of the use of power will take place in 2025, ahead of a fifth round of reporting.

■ Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs: Arden Strategies**Kit Malthouse:** [5601]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what (a) meetings and (b) communications via electronic messaging (i) he and (ii) his special advisers have had with representatives of Arden Strategies.

Daniel Zeichner:

Details of Ministers' meetings with external organisations and individuals are published quarterly in arrears on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk).

Special Advisers are required to comply with the Special Adviser Code of Conduct at all times and are required to make declarations on meetings with senior media figures in line with published transparency guidance.

Where a Special Adviser accompanies their Minister to an official meeting with a senior media figure, the Special Adviser's attendance does not need to be separately recorded as the Minister will be the main attendee.

Where an 'informal' lobbying approach is granted time or resource by Government, it should result in a diarised engagement and therefore be recorded.

■ Disposable Wipes: Plastics**Daisy Cooper:** [6533]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make it his policy to prohibit the sale and use of wet wipes containing plastic.

Emma Hardy:

This Government has called for the banning of the sale of wet wipes containing plastic.

■ Dogs: Import Controls**Andrew Rosindell:** [5903]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he has made a recent assessment of the potential merits of placing restrictions on the movement of dogs from countries that are endemic for diseases that are not considered endemic in the UK.

Daniel Zeichner:

The Government takes biosecurity very seriously. Disease risk is monitored carefully and is kept under constant review. Where necessary we have the powers in legislation to introduce preventive health measures to protect animal or public health by controlling diseases or infections that are likely to be spread due to the movement of pet animals into Great Britain.

We continue to monitor and consider any further actions as appropriate.

■ Electronic Cigarettes

Claire Hanna:

[\[6605\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what progress his Department has made on introducing a ban on single use vapes.

Mary Creagh:

We are reviewing the current proposals to restrict the sale and supply of single use vapes and will outline next steps as soon as possible.

■ Farms: Flood Control

Anna Sabine:

[\[7228\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to encourage farmers to implement natural flood management measures.

Emma Hardy:

The new Environmental Land Management (ELM) schemes aim to help the environment while supporting farming and food production. These will include support for farmers and land managers to adopt natural flood management approaches in a way that reduces flooding and coastal erosion risks to local communities.

■ Fish Farming: Animal Welfare

Mary Kelly Foy:

[\[6506\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent assessment his Department has made of the standard of welfare of farmed fish in the UK.

Daniel Zeichner:

The Animal Welfare Committee's updated opinion on the welfare of farmed fish at the time of killing was published last year. A GB-wide farmed trout joint Government and industry working group is now examining the issues raised in the report to explore the potential options for more detailed welfare at killing requirements. The Scottish Government are also working closely with the salmon industry.

■ Fish Products: Faroe Islands

Alex Mayer:

[\[6928\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of mandating country-of-origin labelling for fish products originating from the Faroe Islands.

Daniel Zeichner:

A public consultation on fairer food labelling was undertaken between March and May 2024. This sought views on proposals to improve and extend current mandatory methods of production labelling and looked at country of origin for a range of products including fish. The new Government is now carefully considering all responses before deciding on next steps and will publish a response to this consultation in due course.

■ Fisheries

Sarah Champion:

[\[6250\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to the answer of 17 September 2024 to Question 4722 on Fisheries, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of (a) adopting and (b) implementing the Global Charter for Fisheries Transparency.

Daniel Zeichner:

The UK Government welcomes the broad principles set out in the Global Charter for Fisheries Transparency and sees considerable merit in its objective of improving transparency and accountability in global fisheries governance and management.

The UK already implements many of the policies set out in the Charter. These include: requiring the use of identification numbers on fishing vessels; publishing beneficial ownership data within the People with Significant Control register; not permitting transshipment of fish at sea; and ratifying key international agreements such as the Agreement on Port State Measures, International Labour Organization (ILO) Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work and the Work in Fishing Convention (C188).

We will continue to keep under active review the steps we can take to combat illegal fishing and will continue to welcome engagement with the organisations who have produced the Charter.

■ Flood Control

Caroline Voaden:

[\[7131\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to ensure the water industry invests in proven nature-based solutions for natural flood management.

Emma Hardy:

Defra recognises that nature and catchment-based solutions in the water sector have an important role to play. The strategic policy statement in 2022 set out the government's priorities for Ofwat. This set out that water companies should significantly increase their use of nature and catchment-based solutions to achieve multiple benefits for the environment and the public including natural flood management. We expect companies and regulators to work towards delivering these solutions as a matter of preference.

The Working with Natural Processes (NFM) Evidence Directory provides natural flood management information and case studies:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-with-natural-processes-to-reduce-flood-risk>. The Environment Agency is producing new long-term investment scenarios to quantify the benefits of natural flood management for the next 50 to 100 years in England.

■ Food Supply

Mrs Sharon Hodgson: [R] [5960]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether his Department plans to develop a National Food Security Strategy.

Daniel Zeichner:

Food Security is national security which is relevant to all five Government Missions and central to our primary Mission to grow the economy. Boosting Britain's food security is one of the core priorities of this Government.

We need a resilient and healthy food system, that works with nature and supports British Farmers. 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 will consider relevant evidence and analysis, including that contained in Henry Dimbleby's National Food Strategy, as we develop our plans to support our farmers and food and drink businesses, boost food security, invest in rural communities, deliver growth, manage waste more effectively across the supply chain, improve resilience to climate change and tackle biodiversity loss.

■ Food: Lead

Sir Julian Smith: [6211]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the adequacy of the number of food samples tested for lead contamination per year by the Veterinary Medicines Directorate.

Daniel Zeichner:

The levels of lead testing in the United Kingdom are determined in accordance with legislative requirements which provide food safety assurances to both domestic consumers as well as export markets. Sampling levels are reviewed by the Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD) each year to ensure that they are proportionate to livestock production; of note, the VMD has effectively tripled annual lead testing for sheep and bovine animals from 2024 to provide further guarantees on safety of these foodstuffs. The results of said testing are published by VMD on a quarterly basis and can be found on the VMD's GOV.UK webpage [here](#).

■ Food: Waste

Mrs Sharon Hodgson: [5958]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he plans to introduce mandatory food waste reporting as part of his plan to achieve a zero waste economy.

Mrs Sharon Hodgson: [5959]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will introduce mandatory food waste reporting before the end of 2024.

Mary Creagh:

The Government is committed to setting a clear roadmap to a circular economy – a future where our resources are used as efficiently and productively as possible for as long as possible, and waste is reduced. Preventing food waste will be a key part of this work, and the Department is reviewing a range of issues associated with food waste in the supply chain, including mandatory food waste reporting requirements. These will be announced in due course.

■ **Hornets****Dan Norris:**[\[5848\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to help mitigate the risk from Asian hornets to bees.

Mary Creagh:

Contingency action has been taken against the Yellow-Legged Hornet (YLH) since the first GB incursion in 2016. Contingency action is delivered on the ground by the Animal and Plant Health Agency's National Bee Unit (NBU). The NBU have located and destroyed 1-4 nests each year since 2016. However, in 2023 72 nests were located and destroyed.

Genetic analysis of hornet samples is carried out to inform the response for the following year. From the analysis of samples from 2023, some areas were identified where there was a risk that hornet queens may have been released, overwintered and created new nests in the spring.

In 2024 the NBU carried out spring trapping at these locations and caught a small number of lone hornets. Results from analyses of these hornets provided evidence that hornets had overwintered. However, this is not considered to be evidence of YLH being established in GB.

From August 2024 the NBU have been responding to credible sightings of YLH and as of 7th October 2024, have located and destroyed 19 YLH nests.

Raising awareness is a key aspect of the response, allowing swift and effective action to be taken to stamp out the threat posed by Asian hornets.

■ **Housing: Infrastructure****Jodie Gosling:**[\[6687\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that key water infrastructure is (a) constructed and (b) adopted alongside the development of new housing.

Emma Hardy:

Water companies have a statutory duty to provide a secure supply of water for customers and set out how they plan to do this through Water Resources Management Plans (WRMPs). To develop their plans, water companies must consult

local authorities and consider all demand management and supply options available to meet future water needs, including those for new homes.

Sewerage undertakers have a statutory obligation to prepare, publish and maintain a Drainage and Wastewater Management Plan (DWMP), detailing the actions the company proposes to take to meet current and future demand.

■ Hunting

Perran Moon: [\[7097\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will bring forward legislative proposals to ban trail hunting during this Parliament.

Mary Creagh:

This is a devolved matter with regard to Scotland and Northern Ireland; hunting with dogs is a reserved matter with respect to Wales and therefore, the information provided relates to England and Wales only.

The Government committed to enacting a ban on Trail Hunting in line with our manifesto commitment. Further announcements will be made in due course.

■ Land Drainage: Property Development

Daisy Cooper: [\[6534\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he plans to require sustainable drainage systems for new housing developments under the Flood and Water Management Act 2010.

James Naish: [\[6719\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to the publication entitled The review for implementation of Schedule 3 to The Flood and Water Management Act 2010, published by his Department in January 2023, whether he plans to take steps to implement Schedule 3 of the Flood and Water Management Act 2010 to require the formation of sustainable urban drainage systems (SUDS) approval bodies.

Blake Stephenson: [\[6866\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of sustainable drainage systems in managing flood risk on new housing developments.

Emma Hardy:

Planning policy requires that Sustainable Drainage Systems are included in all new major developments, unless there is clear evidence that this would be inappropriate.

The Government is currently assessing how best to implement its ambitions on sustainable drainage, while also being mindful of the cumulative impact of new regulatory burdens on the development sector.

■ Lead: Contamination

Sir Julian Smith:

[\[6209\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he has made an assessment of the potential impact of recent flooding on areas with historical levels of lead contamination.

Emma Hardy:

The impact of flooding on areas of land with historical levels of lead contamination is a matter for local councils to consider under Part 2A of the Environmental Protection Act 1990. Local councils have the duty to inspect their areas to identify contaminated land including land contaminated by lead. In the context of flooding, this would cover situations where lead is washed from rivers or sediments onto floodplains or existing lead contamination on land is impacted by flooding.

The Environment Agency (EA) does have a role in tackling water pollution, including pollution from metals. Discharges from abandoned metal mines are one of the main sources of metals in our rivers, polluting around 1,500kms (around 3% of English Rivers). In 2023, a target was set to reduce the length of rivers polluted by metals from abandoned metal mines by half by 2038. Lead is one of the 6 target metals. The EA are working with the Coal Authority under Defra's Water and Abandoned Metal Mines (WAMM) Programme to identify and tackle the priority discharges.

So far 140 tonnes of target metals have been prevented from entering rivers through diffuse interventions and treatment schemes, but a 10-fold increase will be required in the WAMM Programme to meet the statutory target by 2038.

■ Litter: Deposit Return Schemes

Deirdre Costigan:

[\[6781\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of a deposit return scheme on levels of (a) litter and (b) public disamenity caused by litter; and if he will make an estimate of the monetary value of that impact.

Mary Creagh:

Across the UK, it is estimated that approximately 4 billion plastic and 2.5 billion metal drinks containers are not recycled every year – a significant amount being littered.

Once the Deposit Return Scheme (DRS) for drinks containers is introduced, the Deposit Management Organisation will be required to reach a collection rate of 90% of DRS containers in year 3 of the scheme.

Further details, including monetary analysis on the reduction of disamenity of litter, will be provided in the DRS Final Impact Assessment. This will be published when the Statutory Instrument is laid in Parliament.

■ Mushrooms: Northern Ireland

Claire Hanna:

[\[5398\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will (a) hold discussions with the (Minister for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs in the Northern Ireland Executive on the potential impact of levels of (i) investment by the Irish Government and (ii) access to labour (A) from the EU and (B) through a bespoke visa on the mushroom sector in Northern Ireland and (b) make an assessment with the Secretary of State for Home Affairs of the potential merits of introducing a bespoke visa to encourage more agricultural workers into Northern Ireland's mushroom sector.

Daniel Zeichner:

This Government is serious about revitalising the relationship between UK and Devolved Governments and partnering to deliver economic growth and stability.

The Seasonal Workers visa route is a bespoke visa currently available for workers outside of the UK to come and work for up to six months in the horticulture sector, and in the run up to Christmas for the poultry sector. The horticulture sector includes both edible and ornamental horticulture, which covers the mushroom sector in Northern Ireland. The number of seasonal worker visas available for horticulture in 2024 is 45,000, with an additional 2,000 for the poultry sector. The same allocation was available in 2023 and comfortably met the sector's needs.

The Migration Advisory Committee (MAC) review of the Seasonal Worker visa was published in July. It recommended the continuation of the visa route because of the sector's unique, highly seasonal and short-term labour requirements and important role in ensuring our food security. The Government will be responding to the MAC this autumn.

Alongside migrant workers arriving through the Seasonal Worker visa route, food and farming businesses can also draw on EU nationals living in the UK with settled or pre-settled status to meet their seasonal worker needs.

I speak regularly to my counterparts in the Northern Ireland Executive on shared priorities.

■ Nature Conservation: Training

Paul Davies:

[\[7285\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether his Department is taking steps to provide training to rangers on the use of firefighting equipment.

Mary Creagh:

Fire Services are responsible for responding to and fighting fires. Defra will not provide training on firefighting equipment beyond the control of managed vegetation fires.

■ Packaging: Recycling

Sally Jameson:

[7042]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of the forthcoming Extended Producer Responsibility scheme on the (a) glass, (b) aluminium and (c) plastic packaging sectors.

Mary Creagh:

Under the previous Government, the [2022 Extended Producer Responsibility for Packaging \(pEPR\) impact assessment](#) made an assessment of the impact of introducing the scheme on packaging producers as a whole. This impact assessment covered glass, aluminium, plastic and other materials, but did not split the assessment by sector.

The new Government has now published two sets of pEPR illustrative base fees and is undertaking engagement with all relevant industries to ensure that they are based on the best evidence to date.

As part of this engagement, the potential impact on specific packaging sectors is being discussed. The pEPR scheme administrator will continue to monitor the impact of implementing the pEPR scheme on the packaging market.

■ Plastics: Pollution

Alex Sobel:

[6434]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 12 September 2024 to Question 3774 on Plastics: EU Law, whether he plans to sign the Bridge to Busan declaration.

Emma Hardy:

On the 24 September in New York, the Foreign Secretary announced the UK had endorsed the Bridge to Busan declaration to support greater ambition on addressing unsustainable levels of primary plastic production in the negotiations for a new treaty to end plastic pollution. Further information, including the full list of signatories to the Bridge to Busan declaration can be found at the following address:

<https://www.bridgetobusan.com>.

■ Plastics: Waste Disposal

Jess Asato:

[6937]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether his Department has targets for the elimination of post-consumer plastic waste.

Mary Creagh:

The Government is committed to moving to a circular economy for plastics - a future where we keep our resources in use for longer; waste is reduced; we accelerate the path to net zero, we see investment in critical infrastructure and green jobs; our economy prospers; and nature thrives. As a part of this transition, managing and reducing plastic waste will be crucial.

While the Government has not yet set targets for the elimination of plastic waste, we will continue to review the latest evidence on problematic products and/or materials to take a systematic approach, in line with circular economy principles, to reducing the use of unnecessary single-use plastic products and encouraging reuse solutions.

■ Recreation Spaces: Disability

Deirdre Costigan:

[\[6780\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will bring forward legislative proposals to introduce design standards that ensure greater accessibility in (a) parks, (b) woodlands and (c) other outdoor spaces for disabled people.

Mary Creagh:

The Public Sector Equality Duty requires public sector organisations to have due regard to the provision of walking and wheeling infrastructure for those who are disabled or have reduced mobility.

The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 introduced the need for local authorities to prepare and publish rights of way improvement plans explaining how improvements made by the local authority to the public rights of way network will provide a better experience for people with mobility problems.

There are no plans to make any further legislative changes in this area at this time.

In addition Natural England's Green Infrastructure Standards for England sets out the principles for planning green infrastructure to deliver multiple benefits for people and nature.

■ Reindeer: Animal Welfare

Cat Smith:

[\[6306\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to help ensure the welfare of reindeer used at seasonal events in winter 2024-25.

Daniel Zeichner:

Under the Animal Welfare Act 2006 (the 2006 Act), owners and keepers of animals, including reindeer, must take reasonable steps to provide for the health and welfare of animals under their care.

Under schedule 7 of the Licensing of Activities Involving Animals (LAIA) Regulations, local authorities are responsible for licensing the use of animals for certain commercial purposes, including the keeping or training of animals for exhibition.

Under the conditions of this schedule, keepers must make provision for the welfare of the animals being exhibited, including providing suitable temporary accommodation for the reindeer, ensuring they are handled by appropriately trained persons, and using suitable handling methods.

■ Rivers: West Dorset**Edward Morello:**[\[7322\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to improve the quality of water in rivers in West Dorset constituency.

Emma Hardy:

Since 2021 Water Companies have invested in 65 schemes in the West Dorset constituency which includes 6 improvement schemes for water quality and 39 monitoring programmes, with 63 of these due for completion by 31 May 2025. All storm overflows in the West Dorset constituency are now fitted with Event Duration Monitors.

The Environment Agency (EA) has also been working with partners in West Dorset on projects such as the Flagship Upper Frome Chalk Stream project and a Natural Flood Management project in the upper River Yeo/River Wriggle, which will deliver a range of environmental improvements to reduce diffuse pollution from land management practices and improve water quality. The EA also has specialist Agriculture Teams that are focused on agricultural regulatory compliance in the Chesil, Fleet and Poole Harbour catchments.

■ Sewage: Infrastructure**Blake Stephenson:**[\[6868\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department plans to take to upgrade sewage infrastructure in Mid Bedfordshire constituency in this Parliament.

Emma Hardy:

The Secretary of State and I have secured agreement that funding for vital infrastructure investment is ringfenced and can only be spent on upgrades benefiting customers and the environment.

There are several schemes at sewage treatment works in the Mid-Bedfordshire constituency that have been or will be completed during Asset Management Period (AMP) 7 (2020 – 2025). This includes a 0.5 mg/l Phosphate limit at Marston Mortaine STW to be delivered by 22/12/2024.

A groundwater investigation into water quality at Upper Sundon has been completed. Five other works have also had investigations into storm overflows, flows within the works and storm and flow monitors installed.

Other improvements to the infrastructure, including the sewer network and at sewage treatment works will be carried out by Anglian Water through a part of their AMP. We do not have sight of this.

■ Water Companies: Directors

Alex Mayer:

[\[6921\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will hold discussions with Ofwat on the potential merits of (a) employees and (b) bill payers being made members of the Boards of water companies.

Emma Hardy:

On 11 July 2024, the Secretary of State announced consumers will gain new powers to hold water company bosses to account through new customer panels. For the first time in history, customers will have the power to summon board members and hold water executives to account.

The Water (Special Measures) Bill will therefore give Ofwat the power to set rules requiring water companies to have arrangements in place for involving consumers in decision-making. The rules may include a requirement for persons representing the views of consumers to be members of a board, committee or panel of a relevant undertaker.

■ Water Restoration Fund

Anna Dixon:

[\[7196\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of ringfencing fines paid by water companies for the Water Restoration Fund.

Emma Hardy:

The Water Restoration Fund, which launched under the previous Government in April this year, is currently being examined carefully by the relevant Ministers.

■ Water Supply: East of England

Ben Obese-Jecty:

[\[6855\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential implications for his policies of water companies in the East of England imposing a moratorium on new mains water connections for non-domestic purposes.

Emma Hardy:

It is a water company's duty to assess water available to meet demand and protect the environment. Water companies do this in their statutory water resources management plans every 5 years.

Approximately £6 billion is planned for spending across England between 2025 and 2030 to provide secure, sustainable water resources. In East Anglia this investment includes 2 new reservoirs and a network of pipelines to improve the supply and distribution of water across the region.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE**■ Commonwealth: Public Appointments**

Adam Jogee: [\[6984\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, which candidate to be the next Secretary-General of the Commonwealth the UK will support.

Stephen Doughty:

The decision on appointing the Commonwealth Secretary-General remains a matter for all members by consensus. The UK looks forward to working with the next Commonwealth Secretary-General.

■ Development Aid: Spaceflight

Sir Ashley Fox: [\[5443\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how much official development assistance was provided to countries that have a space agency with launch capabilities in the last financial year; and how much he plans to provide to those countries this financial year.

Anneliese Dodds:

The UK's Official Development Assistance (ODA) spending is reported on a calendar year basis. In 2023, the UK's country specific bilateral ODA spend on India was £25.5m (focused mainly on tackling the climate crisis), on China was £7.2m (focused mainly on British Council spend), and on Iran was around £134,000 (focused on cultural exchange). We do not provide funding to the Governments of India, China or Iran. These countries have space agencies capable of launching and operating orbital satellites. The FCDO is reviewing its ODA spending plans for the financial year 2024/25 and will publish these in due course.

■ Human Rights: Older People

Fabian Hamilton: [\[5882\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of establishing a new UN convention on the rights of older persons.

Stephen Doughty:

The UK is fully committed to promoting and protecting the rights of all people, including older people. Building stronger legal frameworks at the domestic and international level is key. We were an active participant in the work of the UN's Open-Ended Working Group on Ageing and we welcomed the consensus adoption by the General Assembly in September of its recommendations. The UK seeks to play a constructive role on these issues and we are open to considering further standard-setting, including the possibility of a multilateral instrument to help further address the issues faced by older people.

■ Ukraine: NATO

Jim Shannon:

[\[7456\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will take steps to help Ukraine join NATO.

Stephen Doughty:

At the Washington Summit in July, the UK and other NATO Allies agreed measures to enhance NATO's support to Ukraine as it advances on its irreversible path to NATO membership. NATO will be stronger with Ukraine as a member. The UK will continue to play a leading role in supporting Ukraine, including on interoperability and reforms. In the meantime, the UK and our Allies are stepping up support for Ukraine's immediate and long-term self-defence.

■ USA: Diplomatic Service

Adam Jogee:

[\[6969\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, when he plans to appoint an Ambassador to the United States.

Stephen Doughty:

The appointment of the next HMA Washington has not been decided. An appointment will be made in due course.

■ Vatican: Diplomatic Relations

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[5917\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has met with the Apostolic Nuncio to Great Britain since taking up his position.

Stephen Doughty:

The Foreign Secretary regularly meets Ambassadors and High Commissioners to the United Kingdom. On 10 September the Foreign Secretary hosted a reception for the London Diplomatic Corps, which the Apostolic Nuncio, His Excellency Archbishop Miguel Maury Buendía, attended.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ Alcoholic Drinks: Misuse

Rachael Maskell:

[\[7478\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to help support people who have alcohol dependencies.

Andrew Gwynne:

A vital part of delivering the Health Mission shift to prevention will be action to reduce the harms from excess alcohol consumption. The Department is continuing to invest

in improvements to local alcohol treatment services to ensure those in need can access high quality help and support. Funding for alcohol treatment services is provided through the public health grant. In addition, local authorities have a further £267 million from the Department this year to improve the quality and capacity of drug and alcohol treatment and recovery, alongside £105 million made available by the Department of Health and Social Care, the Department for Work and Pensions, and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to improve treatment pathways and recovery, housing, and employment outcomes for people affected by drug and alcohol use. This additional investment is improving the quality and capacity of alcohol treatment services in England which includes action to expand the alcohol treatment and recovery workforce.

As part of the NHS Long Term Plan, over £30 million of national funding has been invested between 2019 and 2025, on an ambitious programme to establish new, or optimise the existing, Alcohol Care Teams in the 25% hospitals with the highest need, which are 47 out of 188 eligible sites in England. This is estimated to prevent 50,000 avoidable admissions over five years.

The Office for Health Improvement and Disparities published a Commissioning Quality Standard providing guidance for local authorities to support them in commissioning effective alcohol and drug treatment and recovery services in their areas. The UK Clinical guidelines on alcohol treatment are expected to be published later this year which will include recommendations to promote good practice. Further information is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/commissioning-quality-standard-alcohol-and-drug-services>

■ Allied Health Professions

Paula Barker:

[6626]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to improve the integration of (a) dietitians and (b) allied health professionals in the delivery of (i) public health and (ii) primary care.

Andrew Gwynne:

The Department is leading a collaboration between the nations of the United Kingdom, as well as 14 Allied Health Professional (AHP) bodies, including the British Dietetic Association, to refresh the UK Allied Health Professions Public Health Strategic Framework, which is available at the following link:

<https://www.ahpf.org.uk/files/UK%20AHP%20Public%20Health%20Strategic%20Framework%202019-2024.pdf>

Publication of the new strategic framework is planned for early 2025. It will include goals to increase the profile, capability, and leadership of AHPs, including dietitians, in public health, including how they integrate into the wider public health workforce.

The Department has also worked with the Council of Deans of Health to publish Public Health Curricula Guidance for Pre-Registration Education of AHPs, including dietitians, and with the Health and Care Professions Council to promote their revised standards of proficiency for public health.

The Network Contract Directed Enhanced Service (DES) was developed to support the establishment of primary care networks which would provide greater resilience for practices, and is available at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/PRN01583-network-contract-des-spec-24-25-pcn-requirements-entitlements.pdf>

The Network Contract DES details that primary care networks are entitled to funding to support the recruitment of additional staff to deliver health services, which is referred to as the Additional Roles Reimbursement Scheme (ARRS). The ARRS includes first contact physiotherapists and paramedics and also dietitians, podiatrists, and occupational therapists. The inclusion of these AHP roles within primary care creates capacity within the system for the timely assessment and management of patients within the community, reducing the need for general practice (GP) intervention.

Together with existing GP staff, the new roles can help form a multidisciplinary team who can provide new services, better care for patients, and improve integration. GPs can refer to other AHPs not included in the ARRS as clinically indicated within the community.

■ Anaesthesia Associates and Physician Associates

Adrian Ramsay:

[7315]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the debate on the Draft Anaesthesia Associates and Physician Associates Order 2024, on Wednesday 17 January 2024, if he will make an assessment of the potential implications for his Department's policies of the report by the Kings Fund entitled Royal College of Physicians Independent learning review following the Royal College of Physicians' Extraordinary General Meeting 2024.

Karin Smyth:

The Royal College of Physicians is an independent organisation, and they have responded to the review by The Kings Fund that they commissioned, with further information available at the following link:

<https://www.rcp.ac.uk/news-and-media/news-and-opinion/rcp-responds-to-the-kings-fund-learning-review/>

The legislation to introduce statutory regulation for Physician Associates (PAs) and Anaesthesia Associates (AAs) was subject to debate in the Scottish Parliament and in both Houses of Parliament earlier this year. Regulation of PAs and AAs by the General Medical Council (GMC) will begin in December 2024. The GMC will set standards of practice, education, and training, and operate fitness-to-practice

procedures to ensure that PAs and AAs can be held to account if serious concerns are raised.

■ Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder: Diagnosis

Dr Simon Opher: [\[6673\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to reduce the waiting list for ADHD diagnosis.

Anna Dixon: [\[7209\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to help reduce waiting times for ADHD assessments.

Stephen Kinnock:

The Department is currently considering next steps to improve access to attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) assessments. It is the responsibility of integrated care boards to make appropriate provision to meet the health and care needs of their local population, including ADHD assessments, in line with relevant National Institute for Health and Care Excellence guidelines.

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

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

■ Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder: Drugs

Jo Platt: [\[7531\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to help people who are unable to access the ADHD medication they need.

Jo Platt: [\[7532\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to coordinate a local plan with (a) NHS Trusts and (b) healthcare organisations to help tackle shortages of ADHD medication .

Jo Platt: [\[7533\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what progress his Department is making with manufacturers on resolving issues of ADHD medicine supply.

Karin Smyth:

The Department monitors and manages medicine supply at a national level so that stocks remain available to meet regional and local demand. Information is not collected on a local level.

The Department has been working hard with industry and NHS England to help resolve supply issues with some attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) medicines, which are affecting the United Kingdom and other countries around the world. As a result of intensive work, some issues have been resolved and all strengths of lisdexamfetamine, atomoxetine capsules, and guanfacine prolonged-release tablets are now available.

We are continuing to work to resolve supply issues where they remain, for methylphenidate prolonged-release tablets. We are engaging with all suppliers of methylphenidate prolonged-release tablets to assess the challenges faced and their actions to address them. We are also directing suppliers to secure additional stocks, expedite deliveries where possible, and review plans to further build capacity to support continued growth in demand for the short and long-term. We anticipate intermittent regional supply disruptions to continue, and we expect supply to improve in the UK from October 2024.

In parallel, the Department has worked with specialist clinicians, including those within the National Health Service, to develop management advice for NHS clinicians to consider prescribing available alternative brands of methylphenidate prolonged release tablets or available alternative ADHD medicines. We would expect ADHD service providers and specialists to follow our guidance, which includes offering rapid response to primary care teams seeking urgent advice or opinion for the management of patients, including those known to be at a higher risk of adverse impact because of these shortages.

To aid ADHD service providers and prescribers further we have widely disseminated our communications, and continually update a list of currently available and unavailable ADHD products on the Specialist Pharmacy Service website, helping ensure that those involved in the prescribing and dispensing of ADHD medications can make informed decisions with patients.

■ Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder: Methylphenidate**Cat Smith:****[6305]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has made an assessment of the adequacy of the availability at pharmacies of methylphenidate medication for people with ADHD.

Clive Jones:**[7082]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions he has had with Berkshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust on improving access to ADHD medication in Wokingham.

Melanie Ward:

[\[7149\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to tackle the national supply shortage of Methylphenidate.

Karin Smyth:

The Department monitors and manages medicine supply at a national level so that stocks remain available to meet regional and local demand. Information is not collected on a local level.

The Department has been working hard with industry and NHS England to help resolve supply issues with some attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) medicines, which are affecting the United Kingdom and other countries around the world. As a result of intensive work, some issues have been resolved and all strengths of lisdexamfetamine, atomoxetine capsules, and guanfacine prolonged-release tablets are now available.

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■ Blood Cancer

Neil Duncan-Jordan:

[\[7389\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make it his policy to implement the recommendations of Blood Cancer UK's Action Plan.

Andrew Gwynne:

It is a priority for the Government to support the National Health Service to diagnose cancer, including blood cancer, as quickly as possible to treat it faster and to improve outcomes. This is supported by NHS England's key ambition on cancer to meet the Faster Diagnosis Standard, which sets a target of 28 days from urgent referral by a general practitioner or screening programme to patients being told that they have cancer, or that cancer is ruled out.

The Department is committed to implementing the recommendations of the Lord O'Shaughnessy review into commercial clinical trials making sure that the United Kingdom leads the world in clinical trials, and to ensure that innovative, lifesaving treatments are accessible to NHS patients, including those with blood cancer.

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

I would be happy to meet the Hon. member to discuss the Blood Cancer UK Action Plan.

■ Cancer: Children**Sir John Hayes:**[\[5857\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to raise awareness of childhood cancers.

Andrew Gwynne:

We are committed to getting the National Health Service catching cancer on time, diagnosing it earlier, and treating it faster, so that more patients survive this horrible set of diseases. This includes in relation to children and young people.

NHS England and other NHS organisations, nationally and locally, publish information on the signs and symptoms of many different types of cancer, including those that are most common in children. Further information on cancer signs and symptoms is available on the NHS website.

The Department is not currently taking any additional specific action to raise awareness of childhood cancers. However, we are committed to improving outcomes for children and young people with cancer, and are considering next steps to take forward work in this area.

■ Cancer: Health Services**Clive Jones:**[\[7086\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of establishing a long-term cancer strategy.

Andrew Gwynne:

Lord Darzi's report has set out the scale of the challenges we face in fixing the National Health Service, and the need to improve cancer waiting time performance and cancer survival. In particular, he has highlighted the need to improve the number of patients starting their treatment within 62 days of referral and to increase the number of patients diagnosed at an earlier stage.

Improving 62-day performance and early diagnosis are already key priorities for NHS England. Lord Darzi's report will inform our ten-year plan to reform the NHS, which includes further details on how we will improve cancer diagnosis, treatment, and outcomes. The Government will set out any further priorities on cancer and health in due course.

■ Cancer: Screening

Andy McDonald: [6268]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what guidance his Department issues to NHS facilities on advertising the Healthcare Travel Costs Scheme in cancer screening appointment communications.

Andrew Gwynne:

The NHS Healthcare Travel Costs Scheme does not cover travel costs for any National Health Service screening programme, including cancer screening. Further details of what is covered under this scheme and who is eligible, is available at the following link:

<https://www.nhs.uk/nhs-services/help-with-health-costs/healthcare-travel-costs-scheme-htcs/>

■ Complementary Medicine: Regulation

Lisa Smart: [7604]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of mandating statutory regulation for acupuncture practitioners.

Lisa Smart: [7605]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of taking steps to (a) integrate acupuncture practitioners into the broader healthcare system and (b) ensuring their treatments are in alignment with (i) standard medical practices and (ii) patient safety protocols.

Lisa Smart: [7606]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of mandating that acupuncture providers disclose potential (a) risks, (b) side effects and (c) outcomes before treatments.

Lisa Smart:

[\[7607\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of establishing Government oversight of self-regulating acupuncture bodies.

Karin Smyth:

The Government has no plans to introduce statutory regulation for acupuncture practitioners in the United Kingdom, and we have no plans to make such assessments. The Professional Standards Authority for Health and Social Care (PSA) operates an accredited voluntary registers programme, providing a proportionate means of assurance for unregulated professions by setting standards for organisations holding voluntary registers.

The British Acupuncture Council holds a voluntary register of acupuncturists, which is accredited by the PSA. The organisations accredited by the PSA are independent, representative bodies and as such, they do not fall under Government oversight and therefore any decisions about the practice requirements for the professions they represent are a matter for those organisations and their members.

■ Cystic Fibrosis: Drugs

Steve Darling:

[\[6744\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will establish a Cystic Fibrosis task force within his Department to (a) investigate and (b) address supply chain vulnerabilities and ensure the supply of essential medicines.

Karin Smyth:

While there are no plans to establish a cystic fibrosis task force, the Department has been working with suppliers to address current supply issues with Creon, which is an essential medicine for patients with cystic fibrosis. Supply issues with Creon are impacting countries throughout Europe and have been caused by limited availability of raw ingredients and manufacturing capacity constraints to produce volumes needed to meet demand. These issues have resulted in knock-on supply disruptions of alternative pancreatic enzyme replacement therapy (PERT) medications. 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.

The supplier of Creon has advised that they expect to have regular supplies released each month going forward, and is working to increase the quantities released. Serious Shortage Protocols are in place for Creon 10,000 and 25,000 capsules which pharmacists can use to restrict supply to one month at a time to ensure more patients have access to it whilst stock is limited.

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.

■ Dental Services: Romford**Andrew Rosindell:** [\[5907\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of dental provision in Romford constituency.

Stephen Kinnock:

The data for the NHS North East London Integrated Care Board, which includes the Romford constituency, shows that 46% of adults were seen by a National Health Service dentist in the previous 24 months, compared to 40% in England. Additionally, 57% of children were seen by an NHS dentist in the previous 12 months, compared to 56% in England. These statistics were published by the NHS Business Services Authority on 22 August 2024, and are available at the following link:

<https://www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/statistical-collections/dental-england/dental-statistics-england-202324>

■ Dentistry: Recruitment**Andrew Rosindell:** [\[5904\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to help increase the recruitment of NHS dentists.

Stephen Kinnock:

We will tackle the immediate dentistry crisis with a rescue plan to provide 700,000 more urgent dental appointments and to recruit new dentists to the areas that need them most. To rebuild dentistry in the long term, we will reform the dental contract, with a shift to focus on prevention and the retention of National Health Service dentists.

We acknowledge that there are areas of the country that are experiencing recruitment and retention issues, and we are taking steps to address the workforce challenges across the country. Integrated care boards have started to advertise posts through the Golden Hello scheme. This recruitment incentive will see up to 240 dentists receiving payments of £20,000 to work in those areas that need them most, for three years.

■ Epilepsy: Medical Treatments**Cat Smith:** [\[6304\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has made an assessment of the adequacy of the availability of anti-convulsant medicines to control epilepsy.

Ben Coleman: [\[7373\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure the adequacy of the supply of (a) Tegretol and (b) other epilepsy medications.

Karin Smyth:

The Department is working hard with industry to help resolve intermittent supply issues with some epilepsy medications. As a result of ongoing activity and intensive work, including directing suppliers to expedite deliveries, some issues, including with some Tegretol presentations, have been resolved. The Department continues to work closely with industry, the National Health Service, and others to help ensure patients continue to have access to an alternative treatment until their usual product is back in stock. This includes working with manufacturers of alternatives formulations to ensure they remain available and can support increased demand.

Food: Nutrition**Angus MacDonald:**[\[7396\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to restrict the promotion of unhealthy food and drink products; and if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of introducing fiscal measures to support the production of high-quality food and drink products.

Andrew Gwynne:

The Government has committed to tackling the childhood obesity crisis, which includes taking action on the promotion and advertising of less healthy products to children.

The Food (Promotion and Placement) (England) Regulations 2021 restrict the promotion of less healthy food and drink products. The location promotions restrictions came into force in England in October 2022 and the volume price promotions are due to come into force in October 2025.

We have committed to implementing the advertising restrictions regulations set out in the Communications Act 2003 on less healthy food and drink products without further delay. The regulations introduce a 9pm watershed for the advertisement of less healthy food or drink products on television and a total restriction of paid-for advertising of these products online will come into force across the United Kingdom on 1 October 2025.

The Soft Drinks Industry Levy (SDIL) places a tax on manufacturers and importers of soft drinks with added sugar and with a total sugar content of 5 grams sugar per 100 millilitres or more. It has so far reduced the sugar content of drinks in scope of the Levy by 46% between 2015 and 2020, removing approximately 46,000 tonnes of sugar. The reductions have had equal benefit across all socio-economic groups. As well as translating to reductions in intakes in most age groups, these reductions have also been linked to the prevention of around 5000 cases of obesity in girls in the last year of primary school and reductions in children's admissions to hospital for caries related tooth extractions.

As with all taxes, the Government keeps the SDIL under review. Decisions about the future development of taxes are made by my Rt. Hon. Friend, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, in line with the Government's tax policy-making framework.

■ Health Professions: Migrant Workers

Mark Pritchard:

[\[5968\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will improve checks on declared medical qualifications for international employees in the NHS.

Karin Smyth:

There are currently no plans for my Rt Hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, to improve checks on declared medical qualifications for international employees in the National Health Service. NHS trusts have robust recruitment policies and processes aligned to employment law and good human resource practice, as set out in the NHS Employment Check Standards. For doctors, this includes a requirement to check with the General Medical Council that individuals meet the necessary standards of competency, skill, and training required of the medical profession, and that there are no known issues which would affect their fitness or licence to practice.

■ Health Services and Social Services: Standards

Neil Duncan-Jordan:

[\[7390\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to help improve NHS health and social care services.

Karin Smyth:

We have made it our mission to build a National Health Service that is fit for the future. We aim to shorten the time people spend in ill health, reduce health inequalities, and support economic growth.

Reform is at the heart of this mission and will be delivered by the upcoming 10 Year Plan for Health. We will shift our NHS away from a model focussed on delivering healthcare in hospital, to one which delivers more care in local communities, effectively utilises digital approaches and prioritises prevention over treatment.

We are also committed to building consensus on the long-term reform needed to create a National Care Service based on consistent national standards. We will set out next steps for a process that engages with adult social care stakeholders, including cross-party and people with lived experience of care.

■ Health Services: Children

John McDonnell:

[\[5829\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what proportion of new NHS care appointments he plans to provide in child health services.

Karin Smyth:

The National Health Service is broken, and reducing elective waiting lists is a key part of getting it back on its feet. Delivering 40,000 more NHS appointments per week, or two million per year, is part of our commitment to get back to NHS standards so that both adults and children can expect to wait no longer than 18 weeks for treatment.

This will mean that children waiting for elective treatment will also experience significant improvements in waiting times, care, and outcomes. Further detail regarding 40,000 more NHS appointments per week will be confirmed after the budget in October 2024.

John McDonnell:

[5830]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health's report entitled, *From left behind to leading the way: a blueprint for transforming child health services in England*, published in September 2024, if he will make an assessment of the potential implications of the report's findings on his policies.

John McDonnell:

[5834]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to Lord Darzi's Independent investigation of the NHS in England, published on 11 September 2004, what steps he is taking to address funding levels for children's health services.

Andrew Gwynne:

The Government is committed to raising the healthiest generation of children ever. We will develop the role of neighbourhood health services to support children and young people in accessing high-quality holistic physical and mental health care in the community.

As part of the Government's five long-term missions, we will launch a 10-Year Health Plan to reform the National Health Service, and make it fit for the future. The plan will set out a bold agenda to deliver on the three big shifts needed: moving healthcare from hospital to the community; from analogue to digital; and from sickness to prevention.

A core part of the development of the 10-Year Health Plan will be an extensive engagement exercise with the public, staff, stakeholders, including the Royal Colleges and others across the child health sector. Further details on how to get involved will be set out in the coming weeks.

John McDonnell:

[5832]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of including provision for children's health services in the NHS long term workforce plan.

Andrew Gwynne:

The Government will ensure that every child has the best start in life and that we create the healthiest generation of children ever. The child health workforce, including paediatricians, health visitors, and school nurses, is central to how we will achieve this.

We are committed to training the staff we need to ensure patients, their carers, and their families are cared for by the right professional, when and where they need it. We

have also committed to the Long Term Workforce Plan, which will deliver the reform needed.

■ Health: Homelessness

Paula Barker: [\[6614\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many Integrated Care Systems across England have policies targeted to better health outcomes for those that experience homelessness.

Andrew Gwynne:

Integrated care systems and integrated care boards (ICBs) are expected to have a dedicated focus on tackling health inequalities. The Health and Care Act 2022 mandates that ICBs reduce inequalities in access to and outcomes from healthcare for the population they serve. This includes groups experiencing the poorest health outcomes, often referred to as inclusion health populations, such as people experiencing homelessness, vulnerable migrants, sex workers, and people with substance use issues. In addition, the Department has supported the development of National Institute for Health and Care Excellence guidance which provides recommendations on ways to improve access to, and engagement with, health and social care services for people experiencing homelessness, and the Department is working across the health system to promote this guidance.

■ Liver Cancer: Medical Treatments

Dame Caroline Dinenge: [\[6054\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will set out a timetable for providing selective internal radiation therapy to NHS liver cancer patients.

Karin Smyth:

Each National Health Service liver cancer patient will be offered the treatment their clinicians consider to be the most effective, and this may include the use of selective internal radiation therapy.

■ Neuroblastoma: Drugs

Mary Kelly Foy: [\[6500\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to make difluoromethylornithine available on the NHS for children with high-risk neuroblastoma.

Karin Smyth:

We understand how important it is that cancer patients are able to benefit from rapid access to effective new treatments. We are aware that the manufacturer difluoromethylornithine (DFMO) has applied for a United Kingdom marketing authorisation through Project Orbis, which is an international partnership that allows the more rapid review and approval of promising new cancer treatments.

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence has already begun evaluating this treatment with the aim of publishing guidance for the National Health Service on its use as soon as possible, if it receives a UK licence.

We understand that the manufacturer of DFMO, Norgine, is setting up a 'compassionate use' programme, meaning it will be made available free of charge in the UK for individual patients upon a request from a UK prescribing clinician, before a decision is made on the UK marketing authorisation.

■ **NHS: Workplace Pensions**

Anna Dixon: [\[7221\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will review the tapered annual allowance threshold for NHS pensions.

Karin Smyth:

Tax policy is a matter for my Rt Hon. Friend, the Chancellor of the Exchequer. The tapered annual allowance threshold applies universally and restricts the amount of tax-free pension saving available to the wealthiest in society.

■ **Pancreatic Enzyme Replacement Therapy: Shortages**

Mr Andrew Mitchell: [\[5884\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to tackle the shortage of the drug CREON.

Tom Hayes: [\[7107\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to tackle shortages of Pancreatic Enzyme Replacement Therapy.

Alison Hume: [\[7179\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to help ensure the adequacy of patient access to (a) Creon and (b) other pancreatic enzyme replacement medications; and whether he has had recent discussions with (i) NHS England and (ii) pharmaceutical companies on supplies of such medication.

Paul Davies: [\[7304\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to help ensure that local solutions to manage shortages of Pancreatic Enzyme Replacement Therapy are shared nationally.

Karin Smyth:

The Department has been working with suppliers to address current supply issues with Creon, which is used by patients with conditions such as cystic fibrosis and certain cancers including pancreatic cancer. The supply issues with Creon are impacting countries throughout Europe and have been caused by limited availability of raw ingredients and manufacturing capacity constraints to produce volumes needed to meet demand. These issues have resulted in knock-on supply disruptions

of alternative pancreatic enzyme replacement therapy medications. The Department is continuing to work with all suppliers of pancreatic enzyme replacement therapy 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.

The supplier of Creon has advised that they expect to have regular supplies released each month going forward and are working to increase the quantities released. Serious Shortage Protocols are in place for Creon 10,000 and 25,000 capsules which pharmacists can use to restrict supply to one month at a time to ensure more patients have access to it whilst stock is limited.

We have worked closely with colleagues in NHS England to issue comprehensive guidance to healthcare professionals about these supply issues and encourage sharing of local solutions. The guidance provides advice on how to manage patients whilst there is disruption to supply and is being kept under review, with updates made as necessary.

■ Pharmacy: Community Health Services

Luke Akehurst: [\[6888\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the impact of the Community Pharmacy Contractual Framework 2019-2024 on the number of community pharmacies in England.

Luke Akehurst: [\[6889\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when his Department plans to publish the contract for the Community Pharmacy Contractual Framework 2024.

Luke Akehurst: [\[6890\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the (a) impact and (b) effectiveness of the Pharmacy First programme.

Luke Akehurst: [\[6891\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the implications for his policies of allegations of fraudulent claims submitted through the Pharmacy First programme.

Stephen Kinnock:

The number of community pharmacies has reduced from 11,517 to 10,458 from 2019 to 2024. Pharmacies are private business and decisions to close are made for a range of reasons, as with any other provider market.

The detail of the pharmacy contract is set out in regulations and in the Drug Tariff. These stand until they are changed. We are looking to finalise the consultation on funding for the sector for 2024/25 with Community Pharmacy England, as a matter of urgency.

Over 95% of pharmacies are signed up to deliver the Pharmacy First Service, and together they have delivered three quarters of a million consultations as of June 2024, taking pressure off general practices. The Department and NHS England are closely monitoring the service and working with Community Pharmacy England to support contractors in delivering this increased access to National Health Service care.

The Department and NHS England are aware of significant outliers in claims submitted through the Pharmacy First programme. These are being investigated through the appropriate routes, as set out in the service outline, and will be handled accordingly. If the investigation leads to concerns about fraud these will be escalated appropriately. Such processes help protect the public and contractors and give us confidence as we look to develop our services in the future.

■ Prescriptions: Chronic Illnesses

Claire Hazelgrove:

[\[7252\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he had made of the impact of prescription costs on people with chronic health conditions.

Karin Smyth:

No assessment has been made of the impact of prescription costs on people with chronic health conditions. Approximately 89% of prescription items are dispensed free of charge in the community in England and there is a wide range of exemptions from prescription charges already in place. Eligibility depends on the patient's age, whether they are in qualifying full-time education, whether they are pregnant or have recently given birth, or whether they are in receipt of certain benefits or a war pension.

People on low incomes can apply for help with their health costs through the NHS Low Income Scheme. The scheme provides income related help to people who are not automatically exempt from charges but who may be entitled to full or partial help if they have a low income and savings below a defined limit.

To support those with greatest need who do not qualify for an exemption or the NHS Low Income Scheme, prescription prepayment certificates (PPCs) are available. PPCs allow people to claim as many prescriptions as they need for a set cost, with three month and 12-month certificates available.

■ Prescriptions: Cystic Fibrosis

Rebecca Paul:

[\[7244\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to review the list of conditions for exemption from prescription charges; and if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of including cystic fibrosis on that list.

Karin Smyth:

There are no current plans to review the list of medical conditions that entitle someone to apply for a medical exemption certificate. Approximately 89% of

prescription items are dispensed free of charge in the community in England, and there is a wide range of exemptions from prescription charges already in place, for which those with cystic fibrosis may be eligible. Eligibility depends on the patient's age, whether they are in qualifying full-time education, whether they are pregnant or have recently given birth, or whether they are in receipt of certain benefits or a war pension.

People on low incomes can apply for help with their health costs through the NHS Low Income Scheme. Prescription prepayment certificates (PPCs) are also available. PPCs allow people to claim as many prescriptions as they need for a set cost, with three-month and 12-month certificates available. The 12-month PPC can be paid for in instalments.

■ Princess Royal Hospital Telford: Accident and Emergency Departments

Shaun Davies:

[\[6703\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people (a) presented at the Princess Royal Hospital A&E, Telford, and (b) were admitted to that hospital in each of the last five years.

Shaun Davies:

[\[6704\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the (a) longest, (b) shortest and (c) average waiting time for (i) children and (ii) adults was at Princess Royal Hospital A&E, Telford, in each of the last five years.

Karin Smyth:

Information on accident and emergency attendances and admissions is not available in the format requested, as it is only available at a National Health Service trust-level. The following table shows the accident and emergency attendances and emergency admissions for the Shrewsbury and Telford Hospital NHS Trust, from 2019/20 to 2024/25:

YEAR	ACCIDENT AND EMERGENCY ATTENDANCES	EMERGENCY ADMISSIONS	EMERGENCY ADMISSIONS VIA ACCIDENT AND EMERGENCY
2019/20	143,008	59,793	31,804
2020/21	103,203	45,701	30,240
2021/22	149,323	54,807	34,574
2022/23	149,413	54,969	33,723
2023/24	154,766	59,307	33,118
2024/25	64,904	25,971	15,813

Source: the data is from NHS England, and is available at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/statistics/statistical-work-areas/ae-waiting-times-and-activity/> Note: the data for 2024/25 is only up until August 2024.

NHS England publishes monthly provisional quality indicators that include the median average and the 95th percentile times that patients spent in accident and emergency by NHS trust. The following table shows the monthly range, from lowest and highest, of the median average time in minutes that patients spent in accident and emergency, each year since 2019/20 to 2024/25, for the Shrewsbury and Telford NHS Trust:

YEAR	RANGE OF MEDIAN AVERAGE TIME PATIENTS SPENT IN ACCIDENT AND EMERGENCY	RANGE OF THE 95TH PERCENTILE TIME PATIENTS SPENT IN ACCIDENT AND EMERGENCY
2019/20	169 to 211	577 to 921
2020/21	138 to 199	361 to 796
2021/22	158 to 218	471 to 1,089
2022/23	201 to 268	899 to 2,086
2023/24	212 to 240	1,698 to 2,339
2024/25	208 to 250	1,663 to 2,123

Source: the data is from NHS England, and is available at the following link:

<https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/provisional-accident-and-emergency-quality-indicators-for-england> Notes:

1. the data for 2024/25 is only up until July 2024.
2. data is published at NHS provider-level not a site level, and is not disaggregated by age to provide separate information for adults and children.
3. the 95th percentile is the time that is longer than the time 95% of patients spent in accident and emergency.

■ Prostate Cancer: Screening

Adam Jogee:

[6954]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the impact on patient outcomes in (a) Newcastle-under-Lyme, (b) Staffordshire and (c) England of introducing a screening programme for prostate cancer.

Adam Jogee:[\[6960\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the potential impact of a screening programme for prostate cancer on patient outcomes.

Andrew Gwynne:

Screening for prostate cancer is currently not recommended by the UK National Screening Committees (UK NSC). This is because of the inaccuracy of the current best test, the Prostate Specific Antigen (PSA). A PSA-based screening programme could harm men, as some of them would be diagnosed with a cancer that would not have caused them problems during their life. This would lead to additional tests and treatments which can also have harmful side effects, for example incontinence of faeces and urine, and impotence.

The UK NSC is undertaking an evidence review for prostate cancer screening and plans to report within the UK NSC's three-year work plan. The evidence review includes modelling the clinical cost effectiveness of several approaches to prostate cancer screening, including different potential ways of screening the whole population from 40 years of age onwards and targeted screening aimed at groups of people identified as being at higher-than-average risk, such as black men or men with a family history of cancer.

■ Quetiapine: Shortages**Clive Lewis:**[\[6318\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to tackle shortages of Quetiapine.

Karin Smyth:

The Department was aware of shortages affecting quetiapine 150 milligrams, 200 milligrams and 300 milligrams. The Department worked closely with industry and others and issued communications to the National Health Service to help ensure patients continued to have access to an alternative treatment until their usual product was back in stock. These shortages have now been resolved and the Serious Shortage Protocols that were in place have now been stood down.

■ Radiotherapy: Standards**James Cartlidge:**[\[6334\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the radiotherapy late effects service.

Karin Smyth:

No specific assessment has been made by the Department. The National Health Service keeps under review the range of services it offers patients and the Government understands that many trusts are using the radiotherapy late effects service as part of the care pathway for their cancer patients.

■ Respiratory Diseases

James Naish: [\[6726\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an estimate of the potential cost to the public purse of respiratory conditions in (a) 2023-24 and (b) 2034.

James Naish: [\[6728\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he plans to take to improve the (a) availability and (b) quality of data on respiratory health.

Andrew Gwynne:

Chronic respiratory diseases are the third biggest contributor to Years of Life Lost in England. The annual economic burden of asthma and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease on the National Health Service in the United Kingdom is estimated as £3 billion and £1.9 billion, respectively. In total, all lung conditions, including lung cancer, directly cost the NHS in the UK £11 billion annually. Further information is available at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/ourwork/prevention/secondary-prevention/respiratory-high-impact-interventions/>

NHS England is working alongside a range of organisations with an interest in respiratory data, including Asthma and Lung UK, Health Data Research UK, and the British Thoracic Society, and have developed a collective vision for the future of high-quality respiratory data. The vision is due to be finalised in October 2024 and is supported by a working group of key stakeholders to take forward.

James Naish: [\[6727\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he plans to take to include a focus on respiratory conditions in the NHS Long Term Plan.

Andrew Gwynne:

The Ten Year Health Plan will consider the change needed to meet the three health mission goals: a fairer system where everyone lives well for longer; a National Health service that is there when people need it and fewer lives lost to the biggest killers. We will carefully be considering policies with input from patients, public, health staff and our stakeholders as we develop the plan, including on respiratory conditions.

■ Skin Cancer

Sarah Champion: [\[7459\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to help reduce melanoma incidence rates.

Andrew Gwynne:

The Department continues to advise patients to follow National Health Service guidance on reducing the risk of melanoma. The advice is available at the following link:

<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/seasonal-health/sunscreen-and-sun-safety/>

■ Skin Cancer: Sunscreens

Neil Duncan-Jordan:

[7388]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to encourage the use of sunscreen to help prevent (a) melanoma and (b) other skin cancers.

Andrew Gwynne:

The Department would advise people to follow the National Health Service guidance on using sunscreen. This advice is available at the following link:

<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/seasonal-health/sunscreen-and-sun-safety/>

■ Surgery: Waiting Lists

Mr James Frith:

[6423]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to assess waiting lists for elective surgery on the basis of average wait times rather than longest possible wait time.

Karin Smyth:

Tackling waiting lists is a key part of our Health Mission and a top priority for the Government. We have committed to achieving the National Health Service's constitutional standard that 92% of patients should wait no longer than 18 weeks from Referral to Treatment by the end of this Parliament. Whilst our focus is on achieving this constitutional standard, it is unacceptable that patients are waiting over a year for care. Therefore, the Government will continue to review and treat the patients who have waited the longest for treatment as well as monitoring progress on the 18-week standard. Tackling the longest waits will be a key part of achieving our commitment.

The Department and NHS England use a range of data metrics to assess elective waiting lists. This is supported by the publication of monthly statistics that include the number of incomplete patient pathways and time spent on the waiting list, as well as average wait times, measured as the median wait time for incomplete patient pathways. This monthly publication is available at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/statistics/statistical-work-areas/rtt-waiting-times/rtt-data-2024-25/>

■ Trastuzumab Deruxtecan: Northern Ireland

Sorcha Eastwood:

[6900]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will have discussions with the Northern Ireland Health Minister on access to Enhertu in Northern Ireland.

Karin Smyth:

My Rt Hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, has no plans to speak to the Minister of Health for Northern Ireland about the specific issue of access

to the medicine Enhertu in Northern Ireland. Decisions on the availability of individual treatments to National Health Service patients in Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland are for the devolved administrations.

Decisions on whether new medicines should be routinely funded by the NHS in England are taken by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) on the basis of an evaluation of a treatment's costs and benefits. The NICE's methods are internationally respected, and have been developed through extensive work with industry, academics, and the public to ensure they appropriately capture the costs and benefits, and best reflect social values. These are very difficult decisions to make, and it is important that they are made independently and on the basis of the available evidence.

■ Von Hippel-Lindau Disease: Belzutifan

Paula Barker:

[\[6635\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to provide Belzutifan to patients with von Hippel-Lindau disease.

Karin Smyth:

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) makes recommendations for the National Health Service on whether new medicines should be routinely funded by the NHS, based on an assessment of their costs and benefits. The NICE has published final draft guidance that recommends belzutifan for treating tumours associated with von Hippel-Lindau disease subject to a managed access agreement. Belzutifan is now available to eligible patients through the Cancer Drugs Fund in line with the NICE's final draft recommendations, ahead of the publication of the NICE's final guidance.

HOME OFFICE

■ Asylum: Detention Centres

Dr Simon Opher:

[\[6675\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, by what criteria asylum seekers are housed in detention centres.

Dame Angela Eagle:

Asylum seekers may be detained for immigration purposes only in accordance with Home Office detention policy, as set out in the Detention General Instructions, the Adults at Risk in Immigration Detention guidance and the Detained Asylum Casework guidance.

There are various factors which influence a decision to detain, as set out in published policy. In asylum cases concerning Foreign National Offenders, there may be a higher risk of absconding and harm to the public on release and therefore it will

normally be appropriate to detain as long as there is a realistic prospect of removal with a reasonable timescale.

■ Deportation

Mr Richard Holden: [6584]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many people were deported from the UK between November 1990 and May 1997.

Dame Angela Eagle:

Home Office statistics relating to deportation action are available through the [National Archives](#), in the 'Control of Immigration: Statistics' biannual publications.

Rupert Lowe: [6945]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many people have been deported by country of destination on each day this year.

Dame Angela Eagle:

The Home Office publishes data on individuals who are returned from the UK as a part of the "[Immigrations Systems Statistics Quarterly Release](#)". The total number of enforced returns of individuals by destination can be found in table Ret_D02 of the "[returns detailed datasets](#)". The Home Office publishes this data quarterly, with the latest data up to the end of June 2024. Data for July to September 2024 will be published in November 2024. The Home Office does not publish daily returns of individuals.

Deportations are a specific subset of enforced returns which are enforced either following a criminal conviction or when it is judged that a person's removal from the UK is conducive to the public good. The deportation order prohibits the person returning to the UK until such time as it may be revoked. The Home office publishes data on enforced returns but not deportations.

■ Deportation: Offenders

Rupert Lowe: [6950]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many and what proportion of foreign nationals sentenced to a period of imprisonment of at least 12 months have been deported in each of the last five years; and what mitigating factors the Foreign National Offenders Returns Command considers when determining whether deportation based on criminality is appropriate.

Dame Angela Eagle:

The Home Office publishes statistics on the returns of foreign national offenders by nationality and year. These returns are published in the Returns Detailed Datasets, Year Ending June 2024; which are available at: [Immigration system statistics data tables - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#) The published statistics refer to enforced returns which include deportations, as well as cases where a person has breached UK

immigration laws, and those removed under other administrative and illegal entry powers that have declined to leave voluntarily

Under the UK Borders Act 2007, a deportation order must be made where a foreign national has been convicted of an offence and received a custodial sentence of 12 months or more. This is subject to several exceptions, including where to do so would breach a person's ECHR rights or the UK's obligations under the Refugee Convention.

Section 7 of the Immigration Act 1971 provides an exemption from deportation for Commonwealth citizens who were ordinarily resident in the UK on 1 January 1973 and ordinarily resident in the five-year period before the decision to make a deportation order. Those who can establish that they meet this exemption will not be liable to deportation and so will not be deported.

A foreign national offender is given the opportunity to make submissions as to why they should not be deported and all claims raised are fully considered and decided upon before deportation, including, where applicable, via the Courts.

■ **Illegal Migration Act 2023**

Dr Simon Opher: [\[6674\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of repealing the Illegal Migration Act 2023.

Dame Angela Eagle:

The Government has made clear that the Migration and Economic Development (MEDP) Policy with Rwanda will end. We will bring forward a new Border Security, Asylum and Immigration Bill as promised in the King's Speech.

■ **Undocumented Migrants: Ashfield**

Lee Anderson: [\[6484\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many irregular migrants are housed in Ashfield constituency; what accommodation is used to house those migrants; and what the cost is of housing those migrants.

Dame Angela Eagle:

The Government is determined to restore order to the asylum system so that it operates swiftly, firmly and fairly. This includes identifying a range of options to reduce the use of hotels over time and ensuring efficiency and value for money across all accommodation arrangements.

The Home Office does not publish a breakdown of statistics which disaggregates asylum accommodation costs by type.

Data on the number of supported asylum seekers in accommodation, by local authority, can be found within the Asy_D11 tab for our most recent stats release: [Immigration system statistics data tables - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/immigration-system-statistics-data-tables) (opens in a new tab).

The total expenditure on asylum is published in the Home Office Annual Report and Accounts, available at HO annual reports and accounts- [HO annual reports and accounts - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)\(opens in a new tab\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/123456/ho-annual-reports-and-accounts-2023-24.pdf).

■ Undocumented Migrants: English Channel

Rupert Lowe: **[6951]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many irregular migrants that have arrived by small boat have been granted asylum in each of the last five years.

Dame Angela Eagle:

The Home Office publishes statistics on detected small boat arrivals to the UK in the '[Irregular migration to the UK statistics](#)' release. Data on initial decisions on asylum applications from small boat arrivals, including the number granted, is published in table Irr_D03 of the '[Irregular migration to the UK detailed datasets](#)' with the latest data up to the end of June 2024. Data for July to September 2024 will be published in November 2024.

■ Undocumented Migrants: Housing

Rupert Lowe: **[6952]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will publish a constituency level breakdown of where all irregular migrants are being housed including accommodation type.

Dame Angela Eagle:

Data on the number of supported asylum seekers in accommodation, by local authority and accommodation type, can be found within the Asy_D11 tab for our most recent stats release: [Immigration system statistics data tables - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)\(opens in a new tab\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/123456/immigration-system-statistics-data-tables-2023-24.pdf).

The Government is determined to restore order to the asylum system so that it operates swiftly, firmly and fairly. This includes identifying a range of options to reduce the use of hotels over time and ensuring efficiency and value for money across all accommodation arrangements.

HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

■ Batteries: Storage

Alison Bennett: **[5520]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will bring forward legislative proposals to make (a) the Environment Agency, (b) the Health and Safety Executive and (c) local fire and rescue services statutory consultees on applications for battery energy storage systems.

Matthew Pennycook:

The Government has no plans to make these bodies statutory consultees on applications for battery energy storage systems. I would encourage applicants to refer to the relevant Planning Practice Guidance, which details what applicants seeking planning permission for battery energy storage systems can do to ensure they consider any potential risks.

■ Civic Dignitaries and Members: Age**David Simmonds:**[\[5416\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 5 September 2024 to Question 2313 on Members: Age, whether she plans to lower the candidacy age to 16 for (a) Members of Parliament, (b) elected Mayors, (c) councillors and (d) Police and Crime Commissioners, in the context of lowering the voting age to 16.

Alex Norris:

As per the manifesto, the Government is committed to act during this Parliament to give 16- and 17-year-olds the right to vote in all elections, strengthening our democracy, empowering young people to participate and building an informed and empowered electorate.

Regarding the candidacy age for members of the House of Commons, elected Mayors, councillors and Police and Crime Commissioners the Government currently has no plans to change the eligibility criteria.

Lowering the voting age will be a major change to the electoral franchise, with implications for the wider electoral sector. Successful design and implementation of the change will require careful planning and engagement with stakeholders in the electoral sector, devolved and local government, education and civil society and, importantly, young people themselves.

■ Community Relations**John Glen:**[\[5020\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 31 July 2024 to Question 1226 on Community Relations, what policies the Prime Minister plans to implement to (a) reduce divisions and (b) promote unity.

Alex Norris:

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government has established an interministerial Communities & Recovery Steering Group, chaired by the Deputy Prime Minister, that will oversee the ongoing response to recent violent unrest in the medium term.

It shall focus on supporting and empowering communities affected by disorder and in other places, including work to manage cohesion pressures and wider community tensions.

A Communities Recovery Fund has been announced to support the ongoing recovery of the local authorities who have been significantly affected by the public disorder incidents that took place between July and August 2024.

John Glen:

[5285]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment she has made of the contribution of multiculturalism to communities; and what steps her Department is taking to promote social cohesion.

Alex Norris:

This Government is committed to working with communities around the UK to build a culture of cohesion, trust and mutual respect. Building strong relationships and creating spaces and opportunities to bring people from different walks of life together is vital to fostering strong communities.

The appalling violence we saw exposed the deep-seated levels of division and decline felt in so many communities. We witnessed rife levels of Islamophobia and other forms of racism, leaving many people fearful, despite the immediate violence having abated.

To support the recovery of those towns and cities affected, I am leading cross-Government efforts to help places recover and build cohesion. As a first step in this work, we recently announced up to £15 million of funding for those communities which suffered such appalling violence and hatred on their streets. This includes a comprehensive support offer for Southport. We will rebuild our country by working in partnership with communities, to renew the ties that bind us.

Andrew Bowie:

[5349]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs' oral statement of 2 September 2024, Official Report, column 37, if she will make an assessment of the potential impact of suspending some arms exports to Israel on levels of community cohesion.

Alex Norris:

Government is alert to the damage to community relations caused by the attack on Israel by Hamas on 7 October last year and the subsequent conflict in Gaza, and that there remains potential for events to cause this to become heightened. For this reason, my Department constantly monitors trends relating to community tensions based on information from local government, the police and civil society partners including, since 2 September, representatives of a range of Jewish community organisations. Communities have expressed a wide range of responses to the announcement on 2 September, and we understand the concerns that have been raised by some Jewish communities. We continue to engage closely with our partners across communities to provide reassurance, reduce tensions and encourage cohesion.

■ Elections: Proof of Identity

David Simmonds:

[\[5422\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the oral answer of 2 September 2024 from the Minister for Democracy and Local Growth, Official Report, Column 24, when he plans to bring forward legislative proposals to add Veterans ID cards as a form of recognised identification at polling stations; and whether such proposals will include Northern Ireland.

Alex Norris:

We will bring forward legislative proposals when parliamentary time allows.

Electoral policy for Northern Ireland is a matter for the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and a separate regime for voter identification exists there.

■ Empty Dwelling Management Orders

David Simmonds:

[\[5691\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what guidance her Department issues on the use of Empty Dwelling Management Orders by local authorities.

Matthew Pennycook:

Local authorities can apply for an Empty Dwelling Management Order when a property has been empty for more than two years. This is subject to the production of evidence that the property has been causing a nuisance to the community and evidence of community support for the proposal.

Local authorities publish local guidance on how they use them. Similarly, local authorities can use Compulsory Purchase Orders to acquire empty properties, provided they can demonstrate the acquisition is in the public interest.

■ Health

David Simmonds:

[\[5677\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 9 September 2024 to Question 3109 on Health, whether she plans to use the planning system to regulate the (a) sale of hot food and (b) type of food offered by food outlets.

Matthew Pennycook:

As part of the consultation on proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework and other changes to the planning system, the Government sought views on how the planning system could better support local authorities in promoting healthy communities, and specifically, in tackling childhood obesity. This included considering whether a more consistent approach to controlling hot food takeaways near schools though planning policies would be effective.

The consultation closed on the 24 September and officials in my department are currently analysing responses.

■ **Housing: Construction**

David Simmonds: [\[5419\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 5 September 2024 to Question 2451 on Housing: Construction, what recent estimate she has made of the number of new homes that will be needed each year to meet housing demand from levels of net migration.

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 1.5 million homes over five years.

David Simmonds: [\[5682\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what representations her Department has received on the potential impact of (a) 50% new town and (b) 40% Green Belt affordable quotas on the viability of building 1.5 million homes in this Parliament.

Matthew Pennycook:

The Government has launched an independent New Towns Taskforce to identify and recommend locations for large-scale new communities containing at least 10,000 homes each. The Taskforce's terms of reference include advising on a 'New Towns Prospectus' – standards that developers must meet in these new settlements, including targeting rates of 40% affordable housing with a focus on genuinely affordable social rented homes. The Taskforce will seek a wide range of evidence to inform its recommendations.

As part of the consultation on proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework and other changes to the planning system, the Government is seeking views on implementing golden rules to ensure development in the Green Belt is in the public interest. These rules include a target of 50% affordable housing on land released from the Green Belt for residential development. The consultation closed on the 24 September and officials in my department are currently analysing responses.

David Simmonds: [\[5686\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether her target to build 1.5 million homes in this Parliament applies only to England.

David Simmonds: [\[5687\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the answer of 9 September 2024 to Question 3252 on Housing: Construction, whether her target to build 1.5 million homes in this Parliament will be measured by housing completions.

David Simmonds:

[\[5688\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 9 September 2024 to Question 3252 on Housing: Construction, whether the 1.5 million new homes target is a net or gross figure, in the context of (a) demolitions, (b) change of use, (c) conversions and (d) other changes to net housing supply other than new build.

Matthew Pennycook:

The Government's target of delivering 1.5 million new homes in this parliament applies to England only as housing is a devolved matter. We will update Parliament on our progress in the usual manner.

■ Housing: Disability

Dr Luke Evans:

[\[5378\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether her Department has plans to help increase the building of accessible housing for people with accessibility needs.

Rushanara Ali:

Housing is one of this Government's top priorities. Everyone deserves to live in a decent home in which they feel safe. We will set out our policies on accessible new build housing shortly.

■ Housing: Greater London

David Simmonds:

[\[5415\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what discussions she has had with the Mayor of London on building new homes on land designated for strategic industrial locations.

Matthew Pennycook:

Strategic Industrial Land is land designated in the London Plan as vital for industrial and related capacity.

On 18 March 2024, the last Government directed the Mayor of London to complete a partial review of the London Plan including in relation to the use of industrial land.

This Government believes that a review of industrial land policies is better undertaken as part of the wider London Plan review given that it cannot be meaningfully reviewed in isolation. As a result, we withdrew the direction, given under section 340(2) of the Greater London Authority Act 1999, on 30 September 2024.

Withdrawing the direction will allow the government and the Greater London Authority to take a new partnership approach on our shared aim to deliver the homes London needs.

■ Housing: Pensioners**Gregory Stafford:** [\[5505\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether she plans to take legislative steps to ensure that pensioners are not impacted by annual retirement property price increases.

Matthew Pennycook:

Leaseholders living in retirement housing who pay variable service charges will benefit from measures contained in the Leasehold and Freehold Reform Act 2024 that will ensure all leaseholders receive minimum key financial and non-financial information on a regular basis, including introducing a standardised service charge demand form and an annual report, so that leaseholders can scrutinise and better challenge costs if they are considered unreasonable. The Government are committed to acting quickly to implement the provisions of the Act.

■ Local Plans**Mrs Kemi Badenoch:** [\[5631\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to her oral statement of 30 July 2024 on Building homes, what guidance her Department issues to local authorities on the last date at which a local plan should have been revised in order to be considered up-to-date.

Mrs Kemi Badenoch: [\[5632\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will make an assessment of the merits of providing additional resources to ensure local authorities have an up to date local plan.

Mrs Kemi Badenoch: [\[5633\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of bringing forward proposals to sanction local planning authorities that do not have up-to-date local plan by 31 December 2024.

Matthew Pennycook:

To progress toward our ambition of universal local plan coverage, the Government has made clear that it will drive local plans to adoption as quickly as possible.

Local planning authorities should continue to progress their plans to adoption under the existing system without delay and we reaffirm our commitment to supporting them in getting plans in place.

To enable local planning authorities to respond to any changes that might be made following the consultation on proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework, the Government have proposed transitional arrangements for emerging plans in preparation. This will ensure that plans at more advanced stages of preparation can maintain progress, while maximising proactive planning for the homes our communities need.

If taken forward, we recognise that these transitional arrangements would require some local planning authorities to undertake unforeseen additional work and reopen engagement with communities. In such a scenario, the Government has made clear that it would provide direct funding support to help these authorities progress their plans to examination quickly.

While we hope the need will not arise, we have made clear that we are willing to make full use of available intervention powers – including taking over an authority's plan making directly – if local plans are not progressed as required.

■ **Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government: Aviation**

Mrs Kemi Badenoch:

[\[5630\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of the use of private planes by her Department.

Alex Norris:

The department has policies in place to facilitate departmental business being conducted in a cost effective, sustainable, and efficient way. There are no current plans to review this.

■ **Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government: Pentland Communications and Sovereign Strategy**

David Simmonds:

[\[5420\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the answer of 4 September 2024 to Question 2973 on Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government: Pentland Communications and Sovereign Strategy, for what reason she has not provided the information requested on special advisers.

Alex Norris:

Details of meetings between special advisers and external organisations are published on gov.uk.

■ **Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government: Public Consultation**

David Simmonds:

[\[5412\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 9 September 2024 to Question 3001 on MHCLG: Public Consultation, if she will list the consultations issued by her Department before 24 May 2024 that are (a) closed and (b) have not yet received a formal response.

Alex Norris:

This information relating to the previous administration cannot be provided as it is not held centrally and collating it would result in a disproportionate cost to the department.

■ Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government: Public Expenditure**Charlie Dewhirst:** [5736]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, Pursuant to the answer of 5 September 2024 to Question 2635 on Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government: Public Expenditure, what the policy reasons were for cancelling the Investment Opportunity Fund and the associated support for private investment in Investment Zones and Freeports cancelled.

Alex Norris:

Economic growth is the number one mission of this government. The government has committed to delivering productivity growth in every part of the country, making everyone, not just a few, better off. As part of this, government will work in partnership with local leaders to develop ambitious, long-term Local Growth Plans reflecting their local strengths and opportunities to support the national growth mission and new Industrial Strategy.

Immediate action to fix the foundations of the economy is the only way to rebuild Britain and make every person and every part of the country better off. We are being honest about those schemes that we cannot afford to deliver so that we can fix the foundations of our economy, drive domestic growth and pool investment into the country by addressing spending pressures and repairing the public finances.

The Investment Opportunity Fund, which was launched at Autumn Statement 2023, had yet to provide support to any projects.

■ New Towns: Disclosure of Information**David Simmonds:** [5673]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the answer of 9 September 2024, to Question 3008, on New Towns: Disclosure of Information, for what reason she has not provided the information requested.

Matthew Pennycook:

The House was not sitting on 31 July when the New Towns Taskforce was announced. The Government published a written ministerial statement on new towns on 8 October (HCWS112). It can be found [here](#).

■ Oil: Production**Mrs Kemi Badenoch:** [5628]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether her department intends to introduce legislation as a result of the Supreme Court decision of [2024] UKSC 20, R (on the application of Finch on behalf of the Weald Action Group) (Appellant) v Surrey County Council and others.

Matthew Pennycook:

The Supreme Court has clarified that downstream emissions are to be considered as part of the environmental assessment of certain kinds of development. The

Department for Energy Security and Net Zero recently announced their plans to consult on new environmental guidance for offshore oil and gas developments in light of this ruling, and more detail will be provided in due course.

■ Pedestrian Areas: Smoking

David Simmonds:

[5678]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what guidance her Department issues on (a) smoking and non-smoking provisions in the model conditions and (b) other aspects of pavement licences.

Matthew Pennycook:

Publicly available pavement licensing guidance provides details on the duration, application, determination, and enforcement of pavement licences granted under the Business and Planning Act 2020. It can be found on gov.uk [here](#).

Section 4.2 of the said guidance sets out what is reasonable provision for seating where smoking is not permitted and suggests ways business can meet these conditions.

■ Radicalism

Charlie Dewhirst:

[5739]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, Pursuant to the answer of 5 September 2024 to Question 2635 on Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government: Public Expenditure, whether she has discontinued the New definition of extremism programme announced in March 2024; and what assessment she has made of the potential impact of the £5 million saving on government (a) policy on counter-extremism and integration and (b) due diligence.

Alex Norris:

I refer the hon Member to the answer given to Question UIN [HL965](#) on 20 September 2024. This Government takes the threat of extremism very seriously and we will continue to work with partners to tackle extremism in all its forms. Following the conclusion of the rapid review ordered by the Home Secretary, we will be setting out our strategic approach, which will ensure that we have the strongest possible response.

■ Social Rented Housing: Asylum and Undocumented Migrants

David Simmonds:

[5689]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what her policy is on (a) irregular migrants and (b) asylum seekers applying for social housing.

Matthew Pennycook:

If a person's immigration status does not allow them recourse to public funds then they are not eligible for an allocation of social housing. This includes irregular migrants and asylum seekers.

■ Social Rented Housing: Rents**David Simmonds:**[\[5690\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what her policy is on allowing (a) social housing providers to increase social rents above inflation and (b) backdated rent increases to offset below-inflation rents set under the previous administration.

Matthew Pennycook:

We will set out plans at the next fiscal event to give councils and housing associations the rent stability they need to be able to borrow and invest in both new and existing homes, while also ensuring that there are appropriate protections for both existing and future social housing tenants.

■ South Cambridgeshire District Council: Working Hours**David Simmonds:**[\[5680\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what the status of the best value intervention is in relation to South Cambridgeshire District Council on its plans for a four day week.

Jim McMahon:

The Best Value Notice remains in place until such a time that ministers decide otherwise. Announcements will be made in the usual way.

JUSTICE**■ Convictions: Foreign Nationals****Rupert Lowe:**[\[6942\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many foreign nationals were convicted of offences in each of the last five years; and if she will provide a breakdown of those offences by class of crime.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

The Ministry of Justice publishes information on the number of defendants convicted for offences in each of the last five years in the [Outcomes by Offence data tool: December 2023](#).

However, it is not possible to identify an offender's nationality from the centrally collated convictions data. This information may be held on court records but to examine individual court records would be of disproportionate costs.

■ Prisoners' Release**Priti Patel:**[\[6182\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, when she plans to review the impact of the Criminal Justice Act 2003 (Requisite and Minimum Custodial Periods) Order 2024.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

As set out in the Statutory Instrument to Amend the Standard Determinate Sentence Automatic Release Point Impact Assessment published on 17 July 2024 (available at the link below), the Government has been clear that this is a temporary change which will be reviewed after 18 months.

https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukia/2024/117/pdfs/ukia_20240117_en.pdf.

Further statistics will also be published in due course on a quarterly basis.

Kim Leadbeater:**[6659]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps she is taking to ensure public protection as part of her Department's early release scheme.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

Amending the automatic release point for eligible Standard Determinate Sentences to 40% (SDS40) has allowed us to end more challenging measures like End of Custody Supervised Licence which gave us less predictability and stability in release planning.

Delivery of SDS40 prioritises public safety with strict probation supervision for those released from custody and, where necessary, conditions like tagging and curfews. Should offenders breach these conditions, they face being immediately recalled to prison. A pre-release plan will be ensured for everyone leaving custody.

The Probation Service plays a crucial role in protecting the public and reducing reoffending. We are strengthening probation by building a supported, skilled and resilient workforce that can deliver high quality supervision, focused on the areas of highest risk, and delivered within manageable caseloads. In recognition of this, we are recruiting at least 1,000 new trainee Probation Officers by the end of March 2025.

■ Prisoners' Release: Lincolnshire**Sir John Hayes:****[5265]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many people will be released from prisons in Lincolnshire under the early release scheme.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

Data on SDS40 releases in specific areas such as Lincolnshire forms a subset of data intended for future publication. The number of prison places projected to be saved nationally is in the Impact Assessment published on 17 July 2024.

■ Prisoners' Release: Reigate**Rebecca Paul:****[5797]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many (a) women and (b) men have been released from prisons in Reigate constituency under the early release scheme in September 2024.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

Data on SDS40 releases in specific areas such as Reigate forms a subset of data intended for future publication. The number of prison places projected to be saved nationally is in the Impact Assessment published on 17 July 2024.

■ **Prisoners: Children****Rebecca Long Bailey:**[\[6289\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment she has made of the adequacy of child safeguarding monitoring after a child's parent is imprisoned.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) has recently reviewed its Child Safeguarding and Prison Public Protection policies, so as to enhance their effectiveness, notably in relation to monitoring and mitigating risks to children. HMPPS staff are required to check if prisoners received into custody have caring responsibilities for any children, to exchange information with Children's Services and record known safeguarding concerns. There are robust arrangements for monitoring those cases where an adult in prison is identified as posing a risk to children.

HMPPS has worked with the Department for Education to review and update the Working Together to Safeguard Children statutory guidance, which was published in December 2023. The updated guidance helps to strengthen the arrangements between HMPPS and local Children's Services, particularly in relation to responding to child safeguarding concerns and collaborating to improve outcomes for children at risk of abuse or neglect.

In July this year we produced the first official statistics on children of prisoners, estimating that over the course of a year around 193,000 children in England and Wales may be affected by a parent being in, or going to, prison. We recognise there is more that can be done to make sure that children with a parent in prison do not fall through the cracks, which is why this Government has committed to ensuring that those young people are identified and offered the support they need.

Rebecca Long Bailey:[\[6290\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many children have (a) parents and (b) guardians who are imprisoned; and how many of those children are living without an adult guardian.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

The Government recently published the first official statistics to estimate the number of children affected by parental imprisonment using administrative government data. It's estimated that between 1 October 2021 and 1 October 2022 there were around 193,000 children with a parent in prison. These statistics take a broad view of parental responsibility and include those with caring responsibility, legal guardianship, or primary care for a child, and therefore we are unable to split the data out into separate figures for those with a parent and those with a guardian. The Department

for Education who hold responsibility for children, and the Ministry of Justice both fully recognise the importance of being able to identify children with a parent in prison.

Rebecca Long Bailey: [\[6291\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps she is taking to support the children of people who are imprisoned.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

The Government recently published the first official statistics to estimate the number of children affected by parental imprisonment using administrative government data. It's estimated that between 1 October 2021 and 1 October 2022 there were around 193,000 children with a parent in prison. We fully recognise the importance of being able to identify children with a parent in prison to make sure they receive the support they need, which is why a commitment on this was included in our manifesto.

The Ministry of Justice is working closely with the Department for Education who hold responsibility for children to determine how effectively identify these children and provide support for both them and for the parent in prison. The support will be informed by learnings from previous interventions and pilots, and engagement both with those with lived experience and organisations from the Voluntary, Charity and Social Enterprise sector.

■ Prisoners: Literacy

Paul Davies: [\[7293\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many and what proportion of prisons have a literacy programme.

Paul Davies: [\[7294\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many and what proportion of prisons have a one-to-one literacy mentoring programme.

Paul Davies: [\[7295\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps she is taking to provide reading support in prisons; and what programmes her Department funds to provide such support.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

All prisons assess prisoner literacy on entry, and deliver English Functional Skills qualifications via the main Prison Education Framework.

HMPPS also fund 62 additional literacy and reading contracts across 80 prisons via the more locally commissioned Dynamic Purchasing System.

All prisons have a library, and to further support reading the Shannon Trust operates their Turning Pages programme in nearly all prisons in England. This programme teaches prisoners to read and is delivered by prisoner mentors who work with individual learners.

Every prison also has a reading strategy which has been supported by the donation of over 150,000 books to prisons by publishing houses through the 'Bang-Up-Books' campaign.

In addition, the Literacy Innovation Fund provided funding to a further 15 prisons for projects delivered by the Shannon Trust, to further boost the reach of their peer mentoring and the National Literacy Trust who deliver workshops to encourage creative writing, reading and book groups.

■ Probation Service

Clive Lewis:

[6326]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether her Department made an assessment of the potential impact of the early prisoner release scheme on the probation service.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

Amending the automatic release point for eligible Standard Determinate Sentences to 40% (SDS40) has allowed us to end more challenging measures like End of Custody Supervised Licence and move to a more transparent system.

SDS40 will result in some offenders being released earlier from custody. This change will lead to longer periods on licence in the community, which will incur additional costs to the Probation Service and Electronic Monitoring Service. Additionally, there will be increased demand for services provided to offenders in the community, such as substance misuse services. The impact of this will be managed carefully to ensure the Probation Service has time to prepare and plan for release.

Further information on impact on the Probation Service is set out in the published Impact Assessment available at:

https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukia/2024/117/pdfs/ukia_20240117_en.pdf

■ Probation Service: East of England

Blake Stephenson:

[6870]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what recent assessment she has made of the effectiveness of the Probation Service in the East of England.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

The performance of the Probation Service in England and Wales is closely monitored by both internal and external scrutiny bodies, including His Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation (HMIP), who provide independent scrutiny of Probation Services. The Ministry of Justice also publishes the Probation Scorecard, which gives an overall rating of the performance of the probation service both nationally and within regions. The Probation Scorecard ratings for all regions, for the performance year ending March 2024, can be found on GOV.UK at: [Community Performance Annual, update to March 2024 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/123456/Community_Performance_Annual_update_to_March_2024_-_GOV.UK.pdf).

Following eight inspection reports on Probation Delivery Units in the East of England from May to August 2024, the HM Chief Inspector of Probation published an

assessment of the region on 29 August 2024, which can be found at: [An inspection of Probation Service – East of England region \(justiceinspectorates.gov.uk\)](https://justiceinspectorates.gov.uk).

The most recent HMPPS assurance of sentence management in East of England region was completed in January 2024 and identified similar performance issues in the East of England, such as insufficient assessment, planning and risk management, which the region is taking steps to address via their published Action Plan: [East of England Probation Service Action Plan - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk).

■ Probation Service: Staff

Clive Lewis:

[6328]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what recent discussions her Department has had with Napo on the impact of the prisoner early release scheme on workers in the probation service.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

Probation Service officials meet regularly with Napo officials. In addition to weekly briefings, matters of note concerning the Probation Service, such as prison capacity measures, are discussed at quarterly consultative meetings, and at bi-monthly 'stock takes' with the Chief Probation Officer.

NORTHERN IRELAND

■ Electricity Interconnectors: Northern Ireland

Jim Shannon:

[7450]

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of providing additional funding for the construction of the North South Interconnector.

Hilary Benn:

Energy policy and funding for infrastructure in Northern Ireland are devolved to the Northern Ireland Executive. Additional funding for this joint infrastructure project is ultimately a matter for the Northern Ireland Executive and the Irish Government.

■ Patrick Finucane

Alex Easton:

[7184]

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, what estimate he has made of the cost to the public purse of the public inquiry into the murder of Patrick Finucane.

Hilary Benn:

As outlined in my Oral Statement of 11 September 2024, I have considered the likely costs and impact on the public finances. It is the Government's expectation that the inquiry will - while doing everything that is required to discharge the State's human rights obligations - avoid unnecessary costs given all the previous reviews and

investigations, and the large amount of information and material that is already in the public domain.

■ **Shipbuilding: Harland and Wolff**

Alex Easton:

[\[7182\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, whether he plans to take steps with Cabinet colleagues to provide (a) financial and (b) other support for Harland and Wolff's Belfast shipyard.

Hilary Benn:

Following a comprehensive assessment of the company's financial profile and the criteria set out in UK Government risk policies, the Secretary of State for Business and Trade confirmed in a Written Ministerial Statement on 22 July that the UK Government had decided not to proceed with the provision of an Export Development Guarantee to Harland and Wolff.

This was not an easy decision, but we concluded that the market is best placed to resolve these commercial matters. Government funding would not necessarily secure our objectives, and there is a risk that taxpayer money would be lost.

We want to see an outcome for Harland and Wolff that delivers shipbuilding and fabrication in Northern Ireland and protects jobs, and we encourage all parties to engage with trade unions before further decisions are made.

■ **UK Internal Trade: Trade Barriers**

Adam Jogee:

[\[6964\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, what discussions he has had with the haulage industry in Northern Ireland about barriers to trade between Northern Ireland and Great Britain

Hilary Benn:

I and the Minister for the Cabinet Office engage regularly with representatives from a wide range of industries involved in the movement of goods from Great Britain to Northern Ireland. On Monday 29 July, the Minister for the Cabinet Office met with representatives from the haulage industry at a roundtable with the Northern Ireland Brexit Business Working Group.

SCIENCE, INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY

■ **Databases: Infrastructure**

Andrew Griffith:

[\[5700\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, whether he has had discussions with the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government on easing planning rules for data centres.

Chris Bryant:

The Secretary of State has regular formal and informal conversations with the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government on a range of issues. I welcome the proposed changes to planning policy that would facilitate growth in UK data centre capacity and subsequent growth in the digital economy.

Department for Science, Innovation and Technology: Equality**Andrew Griffith:**[\[5696\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, how many diversity, equality and inclusion officers his Department employed in August 2024.

Feryal Clark:

In August 2024, DSIT employed two members of staff whose entire role was dedicated to equality, diversity, and inclusion, and two members of staff for whom it constituted 50% of their role. This is a reduction from the previous month, where the team was temporarily larger to allow a handover due to personnel changes. There has been no change in staffing numbers since August.

Department for Science, Innovation and Technology: Finance**Andrew Griffith:**[\[5704\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, with reference to his Department's publication entitled DSIT annual report and accounts 2023 to 2024, published on 12 September 2024, whether his Department plans to use the £599 million underspend.

Feryal Clark:

As set out in guidance underspends cannot be automatically carried forward into the following financial year.

SCOTLAND**Scotland Office: Official Cars****Charlie Dewhirst:**[\[7014\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, pursuant to the Answers of 6 September 2024 to Questions 2306 and 2308 on Ministers: Official Cars, which (a) Ministers and (b) officials in his Department have (i) been allocated a dedicated vehicle and (ii) access to use of a shared vehicle from the Government Car Service; what the (A) make, (B) model and (C) fuel type is for each car; and what the budget was for those cars in the 2024-25 financial year.

Ian Murray:

The Scotland Office uses a vehicle provided by the Government Car Service (GCS) under a contract agreed by the previous government. The car is a Jaguar i-Pace and

is an electric vehicle. The total annual cost of the contract (excluding VAT) is £86,347.44.

Charlie Dewhirst:

[\[7015\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, what his Department's policy is on the allocation of Government Car Service cars to senior officials; what the policy was on 24 May 2024; and which senior officials have been granted access to the service since 4 July 2024.

Ian Murray:

The Scotland Office follows the policy of the Government Car Service on the allocation of Government Car Service cars to senior officials under a contract agreed by the previous government. This states that the Department can make the Service available for other senior officials at the department at their discretion. No Scotland Office senior officials have used the vehicle since 4 July 2024.

TRANSPORT

■ A12: Essex

Priti Patel:

[\[6161\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether she has had recent discussions with National Highways on the planned timetable for work on the A12 Chelmsford to A120 widening scheme.

Lilian Greenwood:

On 30 July 2024, the Secretary of State announced that she was commissioning a review of the Department's capital spend portfolio.

This review will support the development of our long-term strategy for transport, developing a modern and integrated network with people at its heart, ensuring that transport infrastructure can be delivered efficiently and on time.

I regularly meet with National Highways to discuss a range of matters and will continue to do so during the capital review and after.

Priti Patel:

[\[6163\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if she will provide additional funding to National Highways for the A12 Chelmsford to A120 widening scheme.

Lilian Greenwood:

On 30 July 2024, the Secretary of State announced that she was commissioning a review of the Department's capital spend portfolio.

This review will support the development of our long-term strategy for transport, developing a modern and integrated network with people at its heart, ensuring that transport infrastructure can be delivered efficiently and on time.

The A12 Chelmsford to A120 widening scheme will be considered as part of the capital review alongside other future road projects and, as the Rt Hon Member will know, major investment decisions are a matter for the forthcoming Spending Review.

■ Airports: Construction

Alex Mayer:

[\[6918\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if her Department will make an environmental impact assessment for each airport expansion plan.

Mike Kane:

All airport expansion proposals that are likely to have a significant effect on the environment must already be accompanied by an environmental impact assessment, as set out in planning legislation. These assessments will be taken into account by the local planning authority and/or Secretary of State in deciding whether or not to grant consent for the development.

■ Airports: Disability

Robin Swann:

[\[7311\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether she has made an assessment of the potential impact of the Civil Aviation Authority's Airport Accessibility Performance Framework on the quality of assistance at airports; what steps she is taking to monitor that quality; what assessment she has made of the adequacy of such monitoring; and what (a) enforcement and (b) accountability measures are in place.

Mike Kane:

The Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) assesses airports on a yearly basis to ensure airports are meeting their legal obligations, and provides a rating on the airports performance against its Airport Accessibility Performance Framework. It is for the the CAA as the independent regulator to develop the tools it needs to assess performance and take enforcement action as needed. The Department for Transport is committed to ensuring aviation is accessible, and it will continue to work with the CAA, industry and stakeholders to ensure that everyone can fly with dignity and ease.

■ Aviation: Crew

Nadia Whittome:

[\[6646\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment her Department has made of the potential merits of (a) trainee pilots accessing one standardised training course and (b) allowing new pilots to use their UK licence in EU countries without undertaking another course.

Mike Kane:

No assessment has been made as to the standardisation of training, as the training that an individual receives is dependent upon which licence they are seeking - such as a Private Pilots Licence (PPL) or Commercial Pilots Licence (CPL). The

competencies required to be demonstrated may differ depending on the licence type being issued but are standardised within each licence type.

The decision on whether to unilaterally allow UK licenced pilots to operate EU registered aircraft is entirely a decision for the European Union (EU) and the European Union Aviation Safety Agency (EASA). Article 445(1) in the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement outlines the areas in which both the UK and EU may cooperate in aviation safety. Under these terms, any future mutual recognition of personnel licencing would require an expansion to the TCA.

■ Aviation: Noise

Andrew Rosindell: [\[5893\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether she has made an assessment of the implications for her policies of the potential impact of aviation noise pollution on residents of Romford constituency.

Mike Kane:

The Romford constituency is primarily overflowed by aircraft departing from London City airport and arriving into Heathrow airport.

At London City airport, restrictions are set through the planning system. It is the responsibility of the local planning authority to conduct any necessary noise assessment and to enforce any restrictions. The Government sets noise-related restrictions at Heathrow and ensures its noise impacts are assessed annually.

Under the Environmental Noise (England) Regulations 2006, both airports are also obliged to produce Noise Action Plans to manage aviation noise and its effects.

■ Bicycles: Subsidies

Anna Sabine: [\[5735\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps she is taking to support people not eligible for the Cycle to Work Scheme to buy a bicycle.

Simon Lightwood:

The Department is aware that many people are unable to access the Cycle to Work scheme, including the self-employed and those who are retired, on low incomes, or not in employment. The Department will continue to consider ways of addressing this as part of its future plans for active travel.

■ Blue Badge Scheme

Clive Jones: [\[7079\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of a temporary blue badge scheme for those experiencing temporary disability as a result of illness or injury.

Lilian Greenwood:

The Blue Badge scheme is primarily about helping people with a long-term disability, that affects their capacity to access the goods and services they need to use. Anyone may be entitled to a badge if they meet the eligibility criteria.

The Department has issued local authorities with advice on how they could use existing powers to provide locally determined parking concessions within their areas. For example, some local authorities grant parking concessions to assist their elderly residents. The same powers could be used to help those with temporary disabilities. The guidance is available at: www.gov.uk/government/publications/people-with-severe-temporary-impairments-advice-to-local-authorities.

■ Cars: Motor Insurance**Helen Whately:****[6348]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether she has received recent representations on the potential merits of regulating the pricing of car insurance with reference to a customer's postcode.

Lilian Greenwood:

Motor insurers are responsible for setting premiums based on their assessment of the risk a driver poses, and postcode is one of the criteria. We recommend that consumers shop around to get the best deal.

I am aware of the challenges facing motorists on the high cost of motor insurance. We are engaging with the motor insurance industry to understand the causes of increased premiums and identify potential solutions.

■ Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency: Internet**Tonia Antoniazzi:****[6420]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps her Department is taking to raise awareness of fraudulent DVLA websites.

Lilian Greenwood:

The Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) advises customers to use GOV.UK as the official and only website when seeking information or completing applications.

All DVLA literature directs customers to the official GOV.UK website. The DVLA also uses its external communication channels, including social media, to publish advice and to remind motorists that GOV.UK is the only website for government motoring services. Since April 2024, the DVLA has issued guidance to the public via X and Facebook, directing them to GOV.UK services, on sixteen occasions.

The DVLA investigates reports of organisations which act illegally or are actively misleading users about their services. Where appropriate such sites can be and are taken down promptly.

■ Driving Licences: Kosovo**Ruth Cadbury:** [\[6277\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps officials in her Department have taken to introduce a reciprocal driving licence exchange agreement with Kosovo.

Lilian Greenwood:

Following a request from the Kosovan Embassy to consider a possible reciprocal driving licence exchange agreement, officials have carried out a full assessment of the information provided by the Kosovan authorities. This assessment concluded that driver testing and licensing arrangements in place in Kosovo are comparable with those in this country.

The department is now progressing the work required to achieve an exchange agreement. All driving licence exchange agreements are subject to a legally required public consultation and the introduction of the relevant legislation.

■ Driving Licences: Medical Examinations**Ms Julie Minns:** [\[6859\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps the DVLA is taking to reduce the time it takes to respond to drivers medical referrals.

Ms Julie Minns: [\[6860\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many and what proportion of drivers medical referrals to the DVLA took longer than 30 days to resolve in each year since 2019.

Ms Julie Minns: [\[6861\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many Drivers Medical referrals to the DVLA took more than 60 days to (a) resolve and (b) close in (i) 2023, (ii) 2022, (iii) 2021, (iv) 2020 and (v) 2019.

Ms Julie Minns: [\[6862\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many Drivers Medical referrals to the DVLA took more than 90 days to (a) resolve and (b) close in (i) 2023, (ii) 2022, (iii) 2021, (iv) 2020 and (v) 2019.

Ms Julie Minns: [\[6863\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many Drivers Medical referrals to the DVLA took more than six months to (a) resolve and (b) close in (i) 2023, (ii) 2022, (iii) 2021, (iv) 2020 and (v) 2019.

Ms Julie Minns: [\[6864\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many Drivers Medical referrals to the DVLA took more than one year to (a) resolve and (b) close in (i) 2023, (ii) 2022, (iii) 2021, (iv) 2020 and (v) 2019.

Lilian Greenwood:

The following table shows the number of drivers medical cases the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) has resolved in each of the last five calendar years.

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
All drivers medical decisions made	766,283	556,382	550,773	863,431	723,126
30 working days or more to make a licensing decision	275,615	278,672	368,029	584,226	380,132
Proportion of licensing decisions made over 30 working days	35.97%	50.09%	66.82%	67.66%	52.57%
60 working days or more to make a licensing decision	129,321	167,311	263,084	453,639	213,639
90 working days or more to make a licensing decision	72,897	101,363	191,618	340,712	136,735
Six months or more to make a licensing decision (182 working days)	17,651	19,328	82,895	154,507	55,854
One year or more to make a licensing decision (365 working days)	346	613	4,547	14,105	11,759

To note, cases are classed as “resolved” when a licensing decision is made and the appropriate action is taken. Some cases may have been resolved but remain open for administrative reasons, for example, payments to third parties still needing to be fulfilled before the case can be closed.

The Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) aims to make a licensing decision within 90 working days, in 90% of cases where a medical condition(s) must be investigated before a licence can be issued.

Medical applications can take longer because the DVLA is very often reliant on receiving information from third parties, for example doctors or other healthcare professionals, before a decision can be made on whether to issue a licence.

Drivers with diabetes, epilepsy, Parkinson’s disease, visual impairments, sleep conditions, or heart conditions can renew their driving licence online. The DVLA has also introduced a simplified licence renewal process for drivers with epilepsy, multiple sclerosis, some mental health conditions, and glaucoma. This has significantly reduced the need for the DVLA to seek further information from medical professionals and enabled more licensing decisions to be made based on the information provided by the driver.

In July 2022, the law changed to widen the pool of registered healthcare professionals who can provide information as part of the DVLA’s medical investigations into a person’s fitness to drive. Previously, this information could only be provided by a doctor. GP surgeries and hospital teams now have greater flexibility to decide how they manage the DVLA’s requests for information.

Most applicants renewing an existing licence will be able to continue driving while their application is being processed, providing the driver can meet specific criteria. More information can be found online at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/inf1886-can-i-drive-while-my-application-is-with-dvla>.

■ Driving Tests

Clive Jones:

[7078]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of increasing the amount of time before a driving theory test expires.

Lilian Greenwood:

It is important road safety knowledge and hazard perception skills are up-to-date at the critical point a person drives unsupervised for the first time.

The maximum duration of two years between passing the theory test and a subsequent practical test is in place to ensure a candidate’s road safety knowledge and ability to identify developing hazards is current. This validity period is set in legislation and the Government has no current plans to lay further legislation to extend it.

Ensuring learner drivers have current relevant knowledge and skills is a vital part of the learning to drive process as new drivers are disproportionately casualties on our roads. Learners therefore need to pass another theory test if their two-year theory test certificate expires.

■ Driving Tests: Oxfordshire

Freddie van Mierlo:

[7243]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps her Department is taking to (a) help tackle the use of bots and apps to bulk-buy practical driving tests, (b) increase the number of driving test examiners and (c) otherwise increase the availability of practical driving tests in Oxfordshire.

Lilian Greenwood:

The Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency's (DVSA) main priority is to reduce car practical driving test waiting times, whilst upholding road safety standards.

Measures in place to reduce waiting times for customers at driving test centres include the recruitment of driving examiners, conducting tests outside of regular hours, including at weekends and on public holidays, and buying back annual leave from driving examiners.

As of 7 October 2024, there were 571,047 car practical driving tests booked, and 89,349 driving tests available within the 24-week booking window.

It is not possible to block book car practical driving tests. A driving licence number can only be assigned to one car practical driving test at a time. A survey by DVSA suggests that only 10% of learner drivers use third parties to book their tests. Most either book appointments themselves or through their approved driving instructor (ADI).

To ensure fairness for everyone wanting to book a practical driving test, DVSA continues to work hard to combat the unscrupulous practice of reselling tests. Such apps or bots are not approved by DVSA. They make it harder for candidates to get a test and can also result in people paying more for a test. DVSA will continue to take steps to block cancellation services from accessing the booking system, which are having a positive impact.

DVSA operates an online booking service (OBS) for instructors and trainers so that they can book and manage driving and riding tests for their pupils. DVSA has made changes to the OBS by stopping automatic online registrations to use the service, ensuring each company that registers employs an ADI and removing access for any companies not linked to driving instructors.

In January 2023, DVSA changed the terms and conditions for using the booking service to help prevent anyone from selling tests at profit. Since then, DVSA has issued 313 warnings, 766 suspensions, and closed 705 businesses for misuse of its booking service.

Following these changes, there has been a significant drop in traffic to these services because DVSA is successfully identifying and blocking apps or bots.

■ Driving Tests: Waiting Lists

Ms Julie Minns: [\[7940\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if she will make an assessment of the potential impact of average waiting times for driving tests on the economy.

Lilian Greenwood:

The Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) knows that car practical driving test waiting times remain high and understands the impact this is having on learner drivers.

DVSA does not record, or hold, information about candidates whose driving licence is a requirement of their current, or potential, employment.

DVSA's main priority is to uphold road safety standards as it reduces car practical driving test waiting times.

■ East Coast Main Line

Andrew Rosindell: [\[5551\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of allowing open access services to operate train services run by London and North Eastern Railway with (a) under 60% seat utilisation and (b) limited stops.

Simon Lightwood:

The Department continues to work with the rail industry to ensure the design of timetable meets stakeholders needs and makes effective use of infrastructure. If an Open Access operator wishes to compete with a contracted operator, such as LNER, it is free to apply to the ORR to do so, and ORR will assess the benefits and wider impacts to passengers and to taxpayers and decide upon the application in its role as independent regulator for the rail industry.

Martin Vickers: [\[5558\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if she will make (a) an estimate of the proportion of London and North Eastern Railway services with limited stops that operate with under 65% seat occupancy and (b) a comparative assessment of the potential merits of providing non-subsidised open access services with more calling points.

Simon Lightwood:

The Department continues to work with the rail industry to ensure the design of timetable meets stakeholders needs and makes effective use of infrastructure. If an Open Access operator wishes to compete with a contracted operator, such as LNER, it is free to apply to the ORR to do so, and ORR will assess the benefits and wider impacts to passengers and to taxpayers and decide upon the application in its role as independent regulator for the rail industry.

■ London North Eastern Railway: Passengers**Andrew Rosindell:**[\[5549\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what the percentage seat utilisation per mile is on London and North Eastern Railway services to (a) York, (b) Leeds and (c) Newcastle.

Simon Lightwood:

LNER services have a high rate of seat utilisation which is comparable to or better than other inter-city long distance franchised operators. However, seat utilisation varies throughout the day as LNER make effective use of track capacity by running longer trains which delivers more capacity during the peaks, which can lead to excess capacity on return legs where demand may be lower. Timetable obligations and fixed train sets means that there is sufficient capacity to meet demand, though it is not possible to alter capacity in these quieter times to improve seat utilisation rates on these services.

Andrew Rosindell:[\[5552\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if she will make an assessment of the adequacy of seat utilisation of London and North Eastern Railway services before permitting Network Rail to issue a restricted capacity notice for the East Coast Main Line.

Simon Lightwood:

The Department regularly monitors levels of passenger demand on LNER services which help inform timetable planning decisions on the East Coast Mainline. Network capacity is a matter for Network Rail to assess according to their criteria.

Andrew Rosindell:[\[5553\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions she has had with Network Rail on (a) the under-utilisation of some London North Eastern Railway services on the East Coast Main Line and (b) awarding those rail services to open access services.

Simon Lightwood:

The Department regularly monitors levels of passenger demand on LNER services which help inform timetable planning decisions on the East Coast Mainline. Network capacity is a matter for Network Rail to assess according to their criteria.

The Secretary of State has not discussed awarding LNER services to Open Access operators with Network Rail, and has no plans to do so, but does continue to engage with Network Rail and the ORR on submitted Open Access applications in line with standard industry processes.

Martin Vickers:[\[5556\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what is the percentage seat utilisation per mile on London and North Eastern Railway services to (a) York, (b) Leeds and (c) Newcastle.

Simon Lightwood:

LNER services have a high rate of seat utilisation which is comparable to or better than other inter-city long distance franchised operators. However, seat utilisation varies throughout the day as LNER make effective use of track capacity by running longer trains which delivers more capacity during the peaks, which can lead to excess capacity on return legs where demand may be lower. Timetable obligations and fixed train sets means that there is sufficient capacity to meet demand, though is not possible to alter capacity in these quieter times to improve seat utilisation rates on these services.

Martin Vickers: [\[5559\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if she will ensure that seat utilisation of London and North Eastern Railway services on key routes are taken into account before permitting Network Rail to issue a restricted capacity notice for the East Coast Main Line.

Simon Lightwood:

The Department regularly monitors levels of passenger demand on LNER services which help inform timetable planning decisions on the East Coast Mainline. Network capacity is a matter for Network Rail to assess according to their criteria.

Martin Vickers: [\[5560\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions she has had with Network Rail on the (a) under-utilisation of some London North Eastern Railway services on the East Coast Main Line and (b) comparative potential merits of awarding those rails slots to open access services.

Simon Lightwood:

The Department regularly monitors levels of passenger demand on LNER services which help inform timetable planning decisions on the East Coast Mainline. Network capacity is a matter for Network Rail to assess according to their criteria.

The Secretary of State has not discussed awarding LNER services to Open Access operators with Network Rail, and has no plans to do so, but does continue to engage with Network Rail and the ORR on submitted Open Access applications in line with standard industry processes.

■ Luton Airport**Victoria Collins:** [\[7069\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the report by the Climate Change Committee entitled 2023 Progress Report to Parliament, published on 28 June 2023, what assessment she has made of the compatibility of expanding Luton Airport with that report.

Mike Kane:

The Climate Change Committee published its most recent Progress Report to Parliament on 18 July 2024. The government will carefully consider all of the CCC's recommendations and respond later this year.

The statutory deadline for a decision on the application for a Development Consent Order for London Luton airport expansion is 3 January 2025. Given the Secretary of State's role in determining the application, it would not be appropriate to comment on the application.

■ **Members: Correspondence**

Sir Gavin Williamson:

[\[6199\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when she plans to respond to the letter of 12 August 2024 from the Rt hon. Member for Stone, Great Wyrley and Penkridge on the M54/M6 Link Road.

Lilian Greenwood:

I responded to the honourable member's letter on 27 September 2024.

■ **Northumberland Line**

Olly Glover:

[\[5801\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent progress has been made on the Northumberland Line; and what estimate she has made of the date by which that work will be completed.

Lilian Greenwood:

Recent progress on the Northumberland Line includes completion of track and signalling upgrades which have allowed driver training to commence, and the stations at Ashington, Newsham and Seaton Delaval nearing construction completion ahead of undergoing authorisation to operate a passenger service.

Based on information from the Northumberland County Council project team we currently estimate that passenger services will commence in December 2024 between those three stations and Newcastle. The remaining stations will open as soon as possible after this.

■ **Official Cars**

Dr Luke Evans:

[\[5658\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what proportion of Government cars are (a) petrol, (b) diesel, (c) hybrid and (d) electric.

Mike Kane:

Within the operational fleet of the Government Car Service the cars are:

(a) 16.8% petrol

(b) 1.9% diesel

(c) 47.6% hybrid

(d) 33.6% electric

■ Parking Offences: Fines**James MacCleary:** [\[7187\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of raising the level of Penalty Charge Notices on the number of parking offenders outside London.

Lilian Greenwood:

We have no current plans to raise the PCN levels. It is important to strike the right balance between deterrence and fairness on this issue.

■ Parking: Disability**David Simmonds:** [\[6653\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether she has had discussions with local authorities on powers to enforce parking restrictions for disabled bays.

Lilian Greenwood:

It is for each local authority to decide on the parking restrictions they wish to set in their areas and to decide if any parking restriction, over and above the concessions conferred by the Blue Badge scheme, should also be exempted for Blue Badge holders. If someone misuses a Blue Badge, it is a criminal offence with a fine of up to £1000 and can be enforced by a local authority. If people park in a bay without a badge a local authority can issue a parking ticket.

■ Railways: Energy Supply**Martin Vickers:** [\[5562\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what progress Network Rail has made on the cost reviews taking place to deliver power supply improvements on the (a) West and (b) East Coast Main Line.

Lilian Greenwood:

The Government is currently reviewing the position it has inherited on rail infrastructure and will consider how we address power supply issues. We will set out our plans in due course.

■ Railways: Spalding**Sir John Hayes:** [\[5262\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if she will take steps to introduce a rail freight terminal near Spalding.

Lilian Greenwood:

The Government recognises that the economic and environmental potential of rail freight is significant and is fully committed to supporting its growth. Under our plans to deliver the biggest overhaul of the railways in a generation, Great British Railways will have a duty and targets to grow the use of our railways to transport freight.

Rail freight terminals are either developed and operated by the private sector where there is a demand for rail freight that is commercially viable or, where Network Rail owns or can obtain the freehold to the land, it will work with the private sector to develop a rail freight terminal.

While Network Rail does not own the relevant land near Spalding, work is currently continuing to explore developing an intermodal rail freight interchange on Network Rail land in Peterborough, which would help to address the current road-only option to transport goods from the nearby Lincolnshire area.

■ Restoring Your Railway Fund

Olly Glover:

[\[5798\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the oral statement of the Chancellor of the Exchequer of 29 July 2024, Official Report, column 1037, which projects under the Restoring Your Railway programme will not go ahead.

Lilian Greenwood:

Aside from Restore Your Railway projects currently at the RNEP 'Deliver' stage or in delivery/construction, all remaining Restore Your Railway originated projects are now being considered as part of preparations for the Spending Review. Ministers have been clear that not all projects will be able to proceed to delivery due to the challenging financial situation facing the Department.

Olly Glover:

[\[5799\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how much and what proportion of the £500 million funding announced for the Restoring Your Railway Fund in January 2020 (a) has been fully allocated, (b) is still to be allocated and cannot be cancelled for contractual reasons and (c) remains unallocated.

Olly Glover:

[\[5800\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how much of the £500 million of funding announced for the Restoring Your Railway Fund in January 2020 has been allocated to (a) the Ideas Fund, (b) support advanced proposals for re-opening of railway lines, (c) support advanced proposals for re-opening of train stations and (d) support advanced proposals for new train stations.

Simon Lightwood:

The Ideas Fund element of RYR supported the development of early-stage business cases. As of 4 July 2024, £21.24m has been spent. The allocated funds were £50.84m.

Advanced Proposals refer to proposed lines and stations that were already being considered by the Department for Transport prior to the launch of Restoring Your Railway. As of 4 July 2024, £307.36m has been spent. The allocated funds were £322.59m.

The New Stations Fund is intended to fund new stations, with eight new stations across England and Wales being delivered. As of 4 July 2024, £20.58m has been spent. The allocated funds were £32m.

Following the Chancellor's 29 July announcement, the Restoring Your Railway programme will be brought to a close.

■ Roads: Essex

Priti Patel: [\[6162\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what funding she plans to provide to Essex County Council for highways in each of the next five years.

Lilian Greenwood:

This Government takes the condition of local roads very seriously and is committed to maintaining and renewing the local road network. To this end, we will provide authorities with funding to help them fix up to one million more potholes across England in each year of this parliament.

Essex County Council will receive £34.5 million from the Department for Transport during 2024/25 to enable it to carry out its local highway maintenance responsibilities. Funding for future years is a matter for the Spending Review.

■ Roads: Repairs and Maintenance

Lewis Cocking: [\[7918\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many potholes her Department expects to be fixed in (a) 2024, (b) 2025, (c) 2026 and (d) 2027.

Lilian Greenwood:

The Government takes the condition of local roads very seriously and is committed to maintaining and renewing the local road network. To this end, the Government will provide authorities with funding to help them fix up to one million more potholes across England in each year of this parliament. Confirmation of highways maintenance funding for future years is a matter for the forthcoming Budget and Spending Review.

Highways maintenance funding typically covers a range of maintenance activities and local authorities are best placed to decide how to spend it according to local needs and priorities. Government expects authorities to invest in all parts of the highway including cycleways, bridges, and lighting columns, and not just the fixing of potholes.

■ Roads: Safety

Robin Swann: [\[8083\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what her planned timetable is for laying the secondary legislation required to commence section 19 of the Road Safety Act 2006.

Lilian Greenwood:

Ministers are giving consideration to this matter. An update will be provided in due course.

■ Roads: Safety Measures**Edward Morello:**[\[7318\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps her Department is taking to ensure the adequacy of funding for local authorities to improve road safety.

Lilian Greenwood:

Local authorities are responsible for the management of local roads, within the rules set by Government. It is for the local authority to decide what measures may be appropriate in their local areas.

Since the general election, the Department has begun work on a new Road Safety Strategy, the first in over a decade. We will set out next steps on this in due course.

■ Roads: West Dorset**Edward Morello:**[\[7326\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether she plans to provide additional funding to fill potholes in West Dorset constituency.

Lilian Greenwood:

This Government takes the condition of local roads very seriously and is committed to maintaining and renewing the local road network. To this end, the Government will provide authorities with funding to help them fix up to one million more potholes across England in each year of this parliament.

Dorset Council (DC) is the local highway authority for the West Dorset constituency, and it is therefore responsible for the maintenance of the local road network. The council will receive £18.4 million from this Department during 2024/25 to enable it to carry out its local highway maintenance responsibilities. Funding for future years is a matter for the forthcoming Spending Review.

Edward Morello:[\[7327\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what plans she has to improve road safety in West Dorset constituency.

Lilian Greenwood:

The safety of our roads is an absolute priority for this Government and will support our health mission. Since the general election, the Department has begun work on a new Road Safety Strategy, the first in over a decade. We will set out next steps on this in due course.

■ Tolls: Research**Helen Whately:**[\[6355\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether the Transport Research and Innovation Board has had discussions on the subject of pay per mile road charging or equivalent schemes.

Lilian Greenwood:

The Transport Research and Innovation Board has not discussed the subject of pay per mile road charging or equivalent schemes.

TREASURY**■ Choirs: Tax Allowances****Ben Obese-Jecty:**[\[6813\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of providing tax relief for (a) singing groups and (b) choirs.

James Murray:

The creative industries play a key role in driving economic growth. The Government is committed to supporting the creative industries as a key part of its plan to fix the foundations of the economy, creating good jobs and accelerating growth in film, music, gaming, and other creative sectors.

The Government keeps all tax policy under review and regularly receives proposals for sector-specific tax reliefs. When considering a new tax relief, the Government must ensure it supports businesses in a fair way and that taxpayer money is effectively targeted.

■ Civil Servants: Pay**Charlie Dewhirst:**[\[5751\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 6 September 2024 to Question 2631 on Civil Service: Pay, what estimate she has made of the potential cost of the civil service pay award for 2024-25 (a) in total and (b) for senior civil service staff; and whether she has had discussions with the Office for Budget responsibility on the estimated cost of that pay award.

Darren Jones:

Pay for civil servants outside of the Senior Civil Service is not set centrally; rather, departments and bodies have freedom to make decisions on pay within the parameters of the Pay Remit Guidance published annually by the Cabinet Office. The Pay Remit Guidance for 2024/5 can be found using the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/civil-service-pay-remit-guidance-2024-to-2025/civil-service-pay-remit-guidance-2024-to-2025>

The Pay Remit Guidance sets a percentage maximum by which bodies can increase their average payroll. Each department will need to consider how they intend to apply the award to their workforce, before implementing it. The final cost of the civil service pay award for 2024/25 will not be confirmed until this is concluded.

Senior Civil Service pay is set on the basis of recommendations from the Senior Salaries Review Body, one of the Pay Review Bodies (PRB) which make recommendations on pay for many public sector workforces. The 2024-25 pay awards for PRB workforces, alongside a 5% maximum average award to the delegated Civil Service grades create an estimated further pressure of around £9 billion in 2024-25, on top of what the last government set aside for pay.

These 2024/25 pay announcements do not represent a change to the funding allocated to departments or to borrowing plans. Nonetheless, the Government's full fiscal plans will be set out at the upcoming Budget and Spending Review on 30th October, accompanied by the OBR's Economic and Fiscal Outlook.

■ Employee Ownership

Dame Siobhain McDonagh:

[\[5843\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether she plans to respond to the call for evidence entitled Non-Discretionary Tax-Advantaged Share Schemes: Call for Evidence, which closed on 25 August 2023.

James Murray:

The Non-Discretionary Tax-Advantaged Share Schemes Call for Evidence ran under the previous government.

The government is considering the responses to the call for evidence. The government is grateful to those who took the time to respond.

■ Financial Services

Lloyd Hatton:

[\[7139\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 10 September 2024 to Question 4157 on Financial Services, if she will set a target date for making a decision on the creation of a Financial Inclusion Strategy.

Tulip Siddiq:

Ensuring all individuals have access to the appropriate financial services and products they need is a key priority for Government and is vital to supporting people's financial resilience and wellbeing. It is also an essential part of achieving inclusive growth and ensuring individuals are able to fully participate in the economy.

I will be providing an update on Government's financial inclusion agenda in due course.

■ Financial Services: UK Relations with EU**Callum Anderson:****[5497]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will negotiate a new financial services memorandum of understanding with the EU that includes measures on green finance.

Tulip Siddiq:

Green finance measures are covered by the existing Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) establishing a framework for financial services regulatory cooperation between the EU and the UK.

The MoU is published online:

[UK-EU Memorandum of Understanding on Financial Services Cooperation - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/121222/UK-EU_Memorandum_of_Understanding_on_Financial_Services_Cooperation_-_GOV.UK_(www.gov.uk).pdf)

Joint Statements following meetings of the Joint EU-UK Financial Regulatory Forum, established by the MoU, are published online:

[Joint EU-UK Financial Regulatory Forum - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/121222/Joint_EU-UK_Financial_Regulatory_Forum_-_GOV.UK_(www.gov.uk).pdf)

■ Government Departments: Cost Effectiveness**Charlie Dewhirst:****[5752]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the Government Finance Function guidance on the Government Efficiency Framework, published in July 2023, whether she is taking steps to ensure consistency in departmental interpretation of (a) technical and (b) allocative efficiencies.

Charlie Dewhirst:**[5754]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether provisions are in place for the independent audit of efficiency savings reported by departments in line with the Government Efficiency Framework to ensure that non-cash-releasing savings are not used as a method to (a) defer costs to future years and (b) reduce essential services.

Darren Jones:

The Government Efficiency Framework, published in July 2023, sets out what an efficiency is and how it should be categorised, including the difference between technical and allocative efficiencies.

It states that an efficiency should not mean deferring costs to future years or be a reduction in costs with the intention to achieve less. HM Treasury has been clear that these definitions apply to all government departments.

Accounting Officers are expected to oversee the application of the definitions and monitoring of efficiencies. This includes having an appropriate internal assurance process.

As per the government response to the recommendations from the PAC report entitled “*Cabinet Office functional savings*”, HM Treasury will set out further detail on its approach to providing assurances on the use of GEF definitions in due course.

■ Insurance: Competition and Monopolies

Mark Pritchard:

[\[5969\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will take legislative steps to (a) increase competition and (b) reduce monopolies in the consumer insurance market.

Tulip Siddiq:

The Government is committed to ensuring that the insurance industry operates on a fair and competitive basis.

The Financial Conduct Authority (FCA), as the independent regulator, has a primary objective to ensure relevant markets are functioning well and a secondary objective to promote effective competition in the interests of consumers.

The FCA has robust powers to tackle anti-competitive practices, working with the Competition and Markets Authority where required. The Government is confident that both regulators are effective in their oversight of the insurance market.

■ Loans: Protection

Claire Hazelgrove:

[\[7254\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will take steps to ensure that people entering into financial commitments are provided with adequate information on the (a) contract and (b) impact of borrowing.

Tulip Siddiq:

The Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) is responsible for regulating the consumer credit market. It is part of a robust regulatory system which is driving the Government's vision for a well-functioning and sustainable consumer credit market that meets consumers' needs.

Prior to entering into an agreement, a firm must provide a consumer with a range of information, allowing them to compare the features of different credit products, and to ensure they understand the key terms of the agreement they are entering into. This includes Adequate Explanations required by FCA rules, as well as Pre-Contractual Credit Information set out in the Consumer Credit Act 1974.

Lenders are also required to adhere to rules and guidelines set out in the FCA's Consumer Credit Sourcebook (CONC) on responsible lending. These rules are based on the principle that money should only be lent in circumstances where it is affordable and appropriate for the consumers' needs. Such rules mandate firms to undertake affordability and creditworthiness assessments against consumers to assess their ability to repay the credit without causing financial difficulty.

You may also be interested to know that the Government is committed to reforming the Consumer Credit Act 1974 to make it fit for purpose and bolster consumer protection. As part of this, the Government will consider how to ensure consumers are better informed about the costs and conditions of credit products and can make informed decisions. The government will be publishing proposals in due course.

■ Office for Value for Money**Charlie Dewhirst:** [\[5750\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the answer of 6 September 2024 to Question 2637 on Office for Value for Money, what plans she has for targeted interventions; and what estimate she has made of operating cost of the office in its first full year of operation.

Darren Jones:

As a new venture, the Office is developing its workplan and will make more information public as it develops.

The Office for Value for Money is currently a part of HM Treasury. Existing departmental resources will be reprioritised to fulfil the needs of the office where possible.

■ Off-payroll Working**Daisy Cooper:** [\[6535\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will review IR35 rules.

James Murray:

The Government keeps all tax policy under review to identify potential improvements.

■ Private Education: VAT**Damian Hinds:** [\[5990\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to paragraph 4.7 of her Department's Technical Note entitled Applying VAT to Private School Fees and Removing the Business Rates Charitable Rates Relief for Private Schools, published in July 2024, on what evidential basis the Government expects increased rates liabilities to have a limited impact on average school fees per pupil.

James Murray:

Following scrutiny of the Government's costing by the independent Office for Budget Responsibility, details of the Government's assessment of the expected impacts of the removal of charitable rates relief from private schools in England will be published at the Budget on October 30 in the usual way.

■ Public Expenditure: Northern Ireland**Sorcha Eastwood:** [\[5791\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will make an assessment of the adequacy of the fiscal floor for Northern Ireland.

Sorcha Eastwood: [\[5792\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will conduct a comprehensive review of (a) relative need and (b) associated implications for the level of the fiscal floor for Northern Ireland required to ensure equivalent levels of service provision across the UK.

Sorcha Eastwood: [\[5793\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will fund an updated version of the report entitled Cost of Division: A benchmark of performance and expenditure, published by the Ulster University Economic Policy Centre in January 2016.

Darren Jones:

As part of the restoration of the Northern Ireland Executive (NIE) the UK Government and NIE agreed to add a 24% needs-based factor into the Barnett formula as it applies to the NIE from 2024-25. This is part of the financial package worth over £3.3 billion.

This factor reflects the higher level of relative need in Northern Ireland, that the independent Northern Ireland Fiscal Council (NIFC) has calculated is 24% more per head than the rest of the UK for equivalent spending. The NIFC was established with cross-party agreement by the NIE in 2021 as part of the New Decade, New Approach agreement signed with the UK Government.

Public Houses: Business Rates**Lee Anderson:** [\[6489\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether her Department plans to review the business rates system for pubs.

Ben Obese-Jecty: [\[6814\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, when she plans to announce changes to business rates.

James Murray:

The government is committed to delivering a fairer business rates system by levelling the playing field between the high street and online giants, better incentivising investment, tackling empty properties and supporting entrepreneurship.

Any decisions on future tax policy will be announced by the Chancellor at a fiscal event.

Public Sector: Pay**Charlie Dewhirst:** [\[5745\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 6 September 2024, to Question 2627, on Public Sector: Pay, what estimate (a) her Department and (b) the Office for Budget Responsibility have made of the limited increase in (i) inflation and (b) wage expectations from the public sector pay rises.

Darren Jones:

HM Treasury have assessed the impact of the public sector pay rises announced at the Chancellor's July Statement on inflation and wage expectations to be negligible given they were broadly in line with private sector wage growth, at the time of the announcement.

The OBR will take into account any impact from all government policy announcements on the UK's economic and fiscal outlook in their next forecast. This will be available in their Economic and Fiscal Outlook report which will be published on the 30th October, alongside the Autumn Budget.

■ Tax Allowances

Alison Bennett:

[\[7224\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, when she plans to publish guidance for the Transitional Tax Free Allowance Certificate.

Tulip Siddiq:

Legislation concerning the abolition of the Lifetime Allowance (LTA) was included in Finance Act 2024. The legislation introduced transitional arrangements including Transitional Tax-Free Amount Certificates (TTFACs). Guidance was published alongside the legislation.

Further regulations to address some discrete technical areas were laid on 7th and 9th of October 2024, with effect from 18th November (subject to parliamentary process). Once effective, they will apply retrospectively from 6th April 2024 onwards.

Further information will be provided in HMRC's November newsletter and HMRC's existing guidance will be updated in due course.

■ Tax Avoidance

Melanie Ward:

[\[7148\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 30 July 2024 to Question 1887 on Tax Avoidance, when she plans to provide an update on her policy on the loan charge.

James Murray:

I know that the loan charge is an extremely important issue for many members and their constituents.

I have met with campaigners to discuss the loan charge, and the Chancellor and I are considering this matter further. We will provide an update in due course.

■ Taxation: International Cooperation

Andy McDonald:

[\[6260\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment her Department has made of the adequacy of the role of the United Nations in the coordination of an international tax framework.

Andy McDonald:

[\[6261\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment her Department has made of the potential merits of a UN Tax Convention.

Mary Kelly Foy: [\[6504\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of agreeing a UN global tax convention.

James Murray:

The UK is committed to working with all stakeholders to ensure inclusive and effective international tax cooperation, and has been actively engaging in negotiations at the UN over a future Framework Convention.

The UK believes that a UN Tax Framework Convention has the potential to further advance international tax cooperation, but to be successful, it needs to be clear in its aims, avoid duplicating initiatives, and seek to secure the broad support and participation of members.

The UK was disappointed that these principles were not fully reflected in the Terms of Reference agreed by the UN Ad Hoc Committee in August, but will continue to engage constructively in support of key principles for strengthening international tax cooperation.

■ Treasury: Communication and Marketing

Charlie Dewhirst: [\[5746\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how much her Department has spent on (a) branding, (b) communications and (c) marketing in relation to her Fixing the Foundation (i) announcement, (ii) speech and (iii) documentation.

Darren Jones:

The Department's in-house communications team is responsible for producing branding and communicating key messages as part of its core function. Any costs related to the Chancellor's Fixing the Foundations announcement and speech were met within the Department's existing communications budget.

The cost of typesetting the Fixing the Foundations: public spending audit 2024-25 document and printing copies of this and supplementary publications to be made available to MPs and Members of the House of Lords on the day of the statement was met within the Department's existing printing budget.

WALES

■ Wales Office: Official Cars

Charlie Dewhirst: [\[7033\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to the Answers of 6 September 2024 to Questions 2306 and 2308 on Ministers: Official Cars, which (a) Ministers and (b) officials in his Department have (i) been allocated a dedicated vehicle and (ii) access to use of a shared vehicle from the Government Car Service; what the (A) make, (B) model and (C) fuel type is for each car; and what the budget was for those cars in the 2024-25 financial year.

Dame Nia Griffith:

No Minister or Official in the Department have been allocated a dedicated or shared vehicle from the Government Car Service.

Charlie Dewhirst:[\[7034\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, what her Department's policy is on the allocation of Government Car Service cars to senior officials; what the policy was on 24 May 2024; and which senior officials have been granted access to the service since 4 July 2024.

Dame Nia Griffith:

No senior officials within the Department use the Government Car Service.

WOMEN AND EQUALITIES**Women and Equalities: Arden Strategies****Kit Malthouse:**[\[5603\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, whether (a) she has and (b) her special advisers have had (i) meetings and (ii) other communications via electronic messaging with representatives of Arden Strategies.

Bridget Phillipson:

Details of ministers' meetings with external organisations and individuals are published quarterly in arrears on GOV.UK.

Special advisers are required to comply with the Special Adviser Code of Conduct at all times and are required to make declarations on meetings with senior media figures in line with published transparency guidance.

Where a special adviser accompanies their minister to an official meeting with a senior media figure, the special adviser's attendance does not need to be separately recorded as the minister will be the main attendee.

Where an informal lobbying approach is granted time or resource by Government, it should result in a diarised engagement and therefore be recorded.

Women: Safety**James Wild:**[\[5387\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, what steps she is taking to promote safe spaces for women.

Anneliese Dodds:

This Government is steadfast in its dedication to protecting women and fostering a society in which they feel respected and empowered. We will uphold the Equality Act and its framework to protect single-sex spaces for women, and ensure that service providers understand how to lawfully protect such spaces.

We will also treat violence against women and girls as a national emergency and have committed to halving the instances of this in a decade. This Government

believes that women and girls should feel safe and protected wherever they go whether that be at home, on the street or at work.

■ **Women's Rights and Transgender People**

James Wild:

[\[5388\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, what steps she is taking to ensure public bodies protect the rights of (a) women and (b) transgender people.

Anneliese Dodds:

The Equality Act 2010 protects people from discrimination based on the protected characteristics of 'sex' and 'gender reassignment'. The Government is committed to upholding this important legislation. The Public Sector Equality Duty requires public bodies, in carrying out their functions, to have due regard to the need to achieve the objectives set out under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010. These are to: eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act; advance equal opportunities between people who have a protected characteristic and those who do not; and foster good relations between people who have a protected characteristic and those who do not.

WORK AND PENSIONS

■ **Employment: Lone Parents**

Tom Hayes:

[\[7120\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department is taking to reduce barriers facing single parents looking for (a) work and (b) increased hours.

Alison McGovern:

The Department is committed to helping everyone find a job, progress in work and thrive in the labour market. We know that single parents face unique barriers to work including access to affordable childcare and flexible working arrangements.

Our Plan to Get Britain Working will create more good jobs, make work pay, transform skills, and overhaul jobcentres, alongside action to tackle the root causes of worklessness including poor physical and mental health. In addition, our work coaches are committed to delivering a quality service to ensure all claimants, including single parents, receive the best possible support that takes account of their individual circumstances, helping to identify and address the barriers they may have in looking for or increasing their hours of work. This would include childcare.

Eligible Universal Credit customers can be reimbursed up to 85% of their registered childcare costs each month up to the maximum amounts, regardless of the number of hours they work.

■ Pension Credit**Stuart Anderson:****[5357]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department is taking to help ensure as many people as are eligible sign up for Pension Credit in (a) South Shropshire, (b) the West Midlands and (c) across England.

Emma Reynolds:

The Deputy Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions wrote to all local authorities on 20 August. The letter acknowledged the vital role local authorities play in supporting their communities. The Government recognises that many local authorities already do a huge amount of work to promote benefit take-up. We are asking that local authorities support our national Pension Credit Awareness campaign and help us reach those eligible pensioners who have not claimed Pension Credit, so they continue to receive an annual Winter Fuel Payment.

Building on last year's 'Invitation to Claim' trial, the Department will be directly contacting approximately 120,000 pensioner households who are in receipt of Housing Benefit and who may also be eligible for, but not currently claiming, Pension Credit.

The Government is determined to ensure that the poorest pensioners get the support they need. As part of the recent Pension Credit Awareness Week of Action, we joined forces with national charities, broadcasters, and local authorities to encourage pensioners to check their eligibility and make a claim.

From 16 September, we are running a national marketing campaign on a range of channels. The campaign will target potential pension-age customers, as well as friends and family who can encourage and support them to apply.

Our future campaign messaging will also focus on encouraging pensioners to apply for Pension Credit before the 21 December 2024, which is the last date for making a successful backdated claim for Pension Credit in order to receive a Winter Fuel Payment.

We will work with external partners, local authorities, and the Devolved Governments to boost the take-up of Pension Credit.

Dr Luke Evans:**[5385]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what the average processing time for a Pension Credit application was in the latest period for which data is available; and whether she has taken steps to improve that processing time.

Emma Reynolds:

The most recent information on processing times for Pension Credit was published in the DWP Annual Report and Accounts published on 22nd July 2024 ([link to ARA 23/24](#)). This shows that in 2023/24 DWP cleared 192,000 Pension Credit claims within the planned 50 working day timescale, equating to 77.7%. The department has secured funding for additional staffing to improve processing times.

Rachel Hopkins: [\[5694\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will simplify the application form for Pension Credit.

Emma Reynolds:

The Department continues to assess the Pension Credit service. This led to the introduction of the online claim process, providing customers with a convenient alternative claim route, alongside the existing telephony and paper application methods. As the Department continues to modernise the Pension Credit service, we continue to review the user experience, balancing simplification of application with capturing the right information to ensure accuracy of award.

■ **Pensioners: Income****Neil Duncan-Jordan:** [\[5504\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many pensioners have an annual income of between £11,383 and £20,000.

Emma Reynolds:

We estimate that the number of pensioner units with an annual income of between £11,383 and £20,000 is approximately 2.3 million. This number has been rounded to the nearest 100,000.

This estimate is based on Pensioners' Incomes data derived from the Family Resources Survey and covers private households in the United Kingdom.

A pensioner unit can be a single pensioner over State Pension age, a pensioner couple where one member is over State Pension age, or a pensioner couple where both members are over State Pension age.

■ **State Retirement Pensions****Cat Smith:** [\[5331\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many people have deferred their State Pension.

Emma Reynolds:

It is not possible to estimate the overall number of people who have deferred their State Pension, because we do not know who has deferred until they make their claim for it.

In May 2023, there were 138,872 people who had made a deferred claim for their New State Pension and are now in receipt of extra State Pension.

Data is not available on deferred claims from those reaching State Pension age prior to 2016, as the statistics were suspended following the introduction of a new DWP computer system. The most recently published statistics showing the total number of pensioners receiving extra State Pension are from May 2021 and are available here

(*Extra State Pension is referred to as “increments” in this document.*) : [DWP benefits statistics: May 2021 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

■ **State Retirement Pensions: Women**

Andy McDonald:

[5325]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether she accepts the findings of maladministration in her Department in the report by the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman entitled *Women’s State Pension age: our findings on injustice and associated issues*, published on 21 March 2024.

Emma Reynolds:

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

Now the election has concluded we need to consider the views that have been expressed on all sides.

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

As part of this work, I met with representatives from the WASPI Campaign on the 5 September.

Andy McDonald:

[5326]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the report by the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman entitled *Women’s State Pension age: our findings on injustice and associated issues*, published on 21 March 2024, whether she will enable Members to vote on proposals for financial redress.

Emma Reynolds:

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

Now the election has concluded we need to consider the views that have been expressed on all sides.

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

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