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PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)

HOUSE OF LORDS

WRITTEN STATEMENTS AND WRITTEN ANSWERS

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[I] indicates that the member concerned has a relevant registered interest. The full register of interests can be found at <http://www.parliament.uk/mps-lords-and-offices/standards-and-interests/register-of-lords-interests/>

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<i>Minister</i>	<i>Responsibilities</i>
Baroness Smith of Basildon	Leader of the House of Lords and Lord Privy Seal
Lord Collins of Highbury	Deputy Leader of the House of Lords and Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office
Baroness Anderson of Stoke-on Trent	Whip
Baroness Blake of Leeds	Whip
Baroness Chapman of Darlington	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office
Lord Coaker	Minister of State, Ministry of Defence
Lord Hanson of Flint	Minister of State, Home Office
Baroness Hayman of Ullock	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
Lord Hendy of Richmond Hill	Minister of State, Department for Transport
Lord Hermer	Attorney-General
Lord Hunt of Kings Heath	Minister of State, Department for Energy Security and Net Zero
Baroness Jones of Whitchurch	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Business and Trade and Department for Science, Innovation and Technology and Whip
Lord Kennedy of Southwark	Chief Whip
Lord Khan of Burnley	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government
Lord Leong	Whip
Lord Livermore	Financial Secretary, HM Treasury
Baroness Merron	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department of Health and Social Care
Lord Ponsonby of Shulbrede	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Ministry of Justice
Baroness Sherlock	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Work and Pensions
Baroness Smith of Malvern	Minister of State, Department for Education
Baroness Taylor of Stevenage	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government
Lord Timpson	Minister of State, Ministry of Justice
Baroness Twycross	Whip
Lord Vallance of Balham	Minister of State, Department for Science, Innovation and Technology
Baroness Wheeler	Deputy Chief Whip

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Written Statements

Wednesday, 11 September 2024

Education and Skills Funding Agency

[HLWS83]

Baroness Smith of Malvern: My Right Honourable Friend, The Secretary of State for Education and Minister for Women and Equalities (Rt Hon Bridget Phillipson), has made the following statement:

Today I am announcing the closure of the Education and Skills Funding Agency on 31 March 2025. The functions of the ESFA will be integrated into the core Department for Education. The ESFA is currently an executive agency of the Department.

This will happen in two stages. Schools Financial Support and Oversight functions will transfer from 1 October 2024 and be brought together with Regions Group, part of the Department. This will provide a single seamless voice to schools and ensure that financial improvement is central to school improvement.

We will then centralise our funding and assurance functions into the Department for Education alongside the closure on 31 March 2025, putting certainty, support and assurance in the core of the department.

Moving the agency functions back into the department will bring benefits to the individuals and organisations we support as well as to the taxpayer. It will enable a single, joined-up approach to funding and regulation to improve accountability.

We will be working closely with our staff, unions, stakeholders across the education sector to finalise and deliver our plans for closing the agency.

Independent Review of Forensic Pathology

[HLWS86]

Lord Hanson of Flint: My right hon Friend the Secretary of State for the Home Department (Yvette Cooper) has today made the following Written Ministerial Statement:

Today I am publishing the report of an independent review of the forensic pathology response to the Hillsborough disaster, conducted by forensic science expert Mr Glenn Taylor. Sadly, Mr Taylor passed away on Tuesday 6th August 2024 and his report is being published posthumously. I would therefore firstly like to offer sincere condolences to Mr Taylor's widow, and to express my profound gratitude for all of the work that Mr Taylor put in to conducting this review.

Mr Taylor's review was established in 2022, in response to a recommendation in Bishop James Jones' 2017 report on the experiences of families bereaved by the Hillsborough stadium disaster on 15 April 1989. In 2012, the Hillsborough Independent Panel revealed that pathology evidence presented at the first Hillsborough inquests was flawed; this finding led to fresh inquests, and in turn a verdict in 2016 that the 97 men, women and

children who tragically lost their lives as a result of the disaster were unlawfully killed. Mr Taylor's review examined what went wrong with the original pathology reports from the Hillsborough disaster, to ensure that similar mistakes will not be made in future.

In addition to seeking evidence from professionals, Mr Taylor engaged extensively with families who lost loved ones as a result of the Hillsborough disaster, as well as of the devastating Manchester Arena attack on 22 May 2017. I am most grateful to all of those family members who took the time to speak to Mr Taylor about their experiences – their powerful words throughout this report are a stark reminder of the extent to which the State failed them.

Mr Taylor found that "significant progress" has been made in the quality and depth of forensic pathology reports since the Hillsborough disaster. It is clear from this report, however, that there is more to be done and more lessons that still need to be learnt. First, family members are entirely right to expect that the pathology taken in respect of their loved ones will be explained to them and their questions answered. More needs to be done on engagement and support for families. Second, we must build resilience in our pathology services and ensure that we are adequately prepared for any future disaster. And third, we must look again at the structure of pathology in England and Wales, to ensure it best meets our needs as a public service. The Government welcomes Mr Taylor's findings and accepts all his of six recommendations, which it will work at pace to deliver.

To that end, I have today written to the Chair of the Pathology Delivery Board. I have requested that the Board take forward those actions that Mr Taylor identified for it immediately, and that it submits a proposed plan of action to me within 12 months. I have also tasked officials in my department to begin work on actions directed at the Home Office immediately.

I would once again like to extend my sincere thanks to Mr Taylor's wife for his work, and also to his team for their dedicated and sensitive approach to this matter.

The report has been laid before the House and will also be available on GOV.UK.

Law Commission Digital Assets Report: Government Response

[HLWS82]

Lord Ponsonby of Shulbrede: I am pleased to inform the House that we are taking forward the Property (Digital Assets etc) Bill via the Law Commission's special procedure. This recommendation was made in the Digital Assets: Final Report published by the Law Commission in June 2023. The Bill will confirm in statute the common law position that certain digital assets can constitute property.

Providing certainty over legal issues around digital assets will encourage the use of English and Welsh law in internationally mobile transactions. The Ministry of Justice commissioned the digital assets report in 2020 to

identify any barriers to the recognition of digital assets as property under English and Welsh private law and to recommend reforms in this area of law. This work is vital to our ambition to maintain English and Welsh law as a global law of choice.

I also accept the second recommendation by the Law Commission to set up an expert group on control of digital assets. The Ministry of Justice has asked the UK Jurisdiction Taskforce (UKJT), an expert group chaired by the Master of the Rolls that produces non-binding guidance on areas of legal uncertainty, to take forward this work as a body that already has an internationally credible voice in the intersection of the law and technology. I believe the UKJT is uniquely placed to convene the expertise needed to consider the issues around control of digital assets.

Finally, the report made recommendations to make statutory amendments to the Financial Collateral Arrangements Regulations and to set up a multi-disciplinary project to formulate a statutory framework for the entering into, operation and enforcement of certain crypto-token and crypto asset collateral arrangements. I understand that my colleagues in HM Treasury are reviewing these recommendations and will provide an update in due course.

Tata Steel and UK Steel Strategy

[HLWS85]

Baroness Jones of Whitchurch: My Rt Hon Friend the Secretary of State for Business and Trade (Jonathan Reynolds MP) has today made the following statement:

The Government has secured an improved deal for the workers impacted by the transformation plans of Tata Steel and is setting out its ambition for a new, UK-wide steel strategy; one which equips our steel-making industry with the right support to adapt and thrive in the new green economy.

I can announce today that we have agreed a process with Tata to assess investment opportunities for new capabilities that will deliver more, secure, long-term jobs than the deal that we inherited. And I will report back to the House on progress.

Tata Steel have agreed to offer a comprehensive training programme for up to 500 employees as an alternative for those at risk of compulsory redundancy. This would be on full pay for one month, then £27,000 per annum per employee for 11 months. Tata will fund those costs. Employees will be able to choose from recognised qualifications to develop sought-after skills which will be in high demand in the local economy now and long into the future.

Tata also expects that during the construction of the Electric Arc Furnace at least 500 new jobs could be created, which will tap into the local labour market wherever possible.

The Government has helped to secure improved terms for those at risk of redundancy by working closely with Unions.

Tata Steel's employees are now able to set out their expression of interest in the most generous voluntary redundancy package the company has ever offered for a restructuring of this size. Employees will now be paid 2.8 weeks of earnings for each year of service up to a maximum of 25 years.

There is also a minimum redundancy payment of £15,000 pro-rata and a 'retention' payment of £5,000 for employees leaving the business because of these closures. Over 2,000 employees have expressed interest in voluntary redundancy on these terms.

As part of the deal, the company will also be releasing 385 acres of their site for sale or transfer. This is valuable real estate which will help bring in more companies and more employers not just from the steel sector but from a whole host of other industries too.

Taxpayers should know the improved terms for workforce are not dependent on additional money.

Strong conditions are included within the Grant Funding Agreement to clawback investment if Tata Steel reneges on its promises or fails to keep its end of the bargain. For example, there is now an improved grant repayment of £40k for every job Tata Steel does not retain post transformation. It was £30k per job under the previous deal. In the event of this condition being enacted, this money will be repaid directly to the Government – a powerful incentive to ensure Tata Steel meet their 5,000 UK jobs target.

The Government knows this is the start of a journey towards a greener future for the steelworks in Port Talbot – reducing the site's carbon emissions by as much as 85% a year. However, decarbonisation should not mean deindustrialisation. As part of the agreement the Government will be working with Tata Steel over the coming weeks and months to consider business cases for further investment and job creation opportunities.

However, the Government's ambition for steel is so much bigger and broader than one single company. It is about the whole sector. The UK has always been a proud steelmaking nation, with a rich heritage stretching back to the Industrial Revolution. From cars to cranes, ships and scaffolding, British steel has been and is still used the world over, embodying our industrial might and innovation. For years, steel has been a neglected industry in this country. Crude steel production has declined by more than 50% in the last 10 years; some proclaimed the industry's decline to be inevitable in the 21st century. This Government does not believe that decline is inevitable. While the industry faces challenges today, we want to do everything we can to ensure that it can adapt and grow tomorrow.

That is why I am pleased to announce that the Government will introduce a new Steel Strategy, which will be published in Spring 2025.

Our manifesto announced £2.5 billion for steel, on top of the £500m for this transformation at Port Talbot. Our intention is to use the money we're investing to increase our UK capabilities so that we can create a more vibrant, competitive steel sector in the UK.

As part of our Steel Strategy, this Government will look seriously at the options to improve steel capabilities across the whole supply chain, including for primary steelmaking in the UK. We are also clear that we won't be able to prioritise short-term subsidies over long-term jobs. That's why with the help of independent experts, we will also be reviewing the viability of Direct Reduced Iron in the UK.

Steel is essential to delivering on our net zero goals and building the next generation of green infrastructure – which as Hon members know this Government is passionate about. It's why, as part of our Steel Strategy, we intend to use the new Procurement Act to drive economic growth and account for social value in the things Government buys and the projects we commission. This work is already underway to increase the role of steel as we build our manufacturing base.

This Government also recognises that for far too long British energy intensive industries, including the steel sector, have been held back by high electricity costs. More often than not, this has made the UK less attractive to international investors. The Government's clean energy mission will ensure we are no longer exposed to the kinds of gas price shocks we have seen in recent years helping British businesses to compete and win in the global market. To support that ambition, we're also working with other like-minded nations to tackle global trade distortions, including through our chairing of the Global Forum on Steel Excess Capacity this year.

The Steel Strategy will be developed and delivered in partnership with the steel sector and trade unions. And it will work in lockstep with the Government's Industrial Strategy. The Government's ambition is to ramp up investment, strengthen our supply chains and create more well-paid jobs in the places where they're most needed.

To drive our partnership on the Steel Strategy forward, the Secretary of State for Business and Trade will shortly meet with industry experts and interested parties to discuss the future of the industry.

This Government cares about steel, the communities it supports and recognises its fundamental importance to the economy.

And supporting steel in this country is about being involved in the detail, shepherding individual plants into the future while protecting the people in them. But it's also about providing a direction of travel. An inspiration for investment and a cause for confidence, so that the sector can play its part in the next ten years and beyond.

Water Framework Directive Regulations and River Basin Management Planning

[HLWS84]

Baroness Hayman of Ullock: My honourable friend, the Minister for Water and Flooding, Emma Hardy MP, has made the following Written Statement:

Today the Government is laying before the House its full response to the Office for Environmental Protection's (OEP's) review of the implementation of the Water Framework Directive (WFD) Regulations and River Basin Management Planning.

The Government welcomes the OEP's recommendations and accepts its key conclusions that not enough progress has been made by previous governments to improve the water environment and meet the WFD objective to restore 75% of water bodies to good ecological status or good ecological potential. We face a major challenge in achieving these objectives due to years of under investment and insufficient action.

This Government is committed to taking action to accelerate progress on improving the water environment. There are systemic issues that require urgent reform of our water system. The government will set out over the coming months its plans to fundamentally transform how our water system works and clean up our rivers, lakes and seas for good. This will include a review of the framework that underpins our water sector, to ensure it delivers long-term stability, and reflects the needs of customers and the environment. We expect that the OEP's review of the WFD will be an important contribution to inform the review.

The Government Response will be available on GOV.UK.

Written Answers

Wednesday, 11 September 2024

Arms Trade: Export Controls

Asked by **Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick**

To ask His Majesty's Government what is the purpose of the UK's arms export licensing criteria, and whether these criteria apply the precautionary principle over arms sales to prevent UK arms from being used in atrocities. [HL726]

Baroness Jones of Whitchurch: The purpose of the UK's arms export licensing criteria is to ensure that the Government's decisions on export licences are informed by a set of criteria which promote global security and facilitate responsible exports. The Criteria enable the Government to operate one of the most robust and transparent export control regimes in the world. We consider all new licence applications against the Criteria and will refuse any which are inconsistent with them. Specifically, Criteria 2c states that the Government will not issue or maintain export licences if there is a clear risk that the items might be used to commit or facilitate serious violations of International Humanitarian Law.

Carers

Asked by **Lord Laming**

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to improve the support given to unpaid carers. [HL649]

Baroness Merron: The Government is committed to ensuring that families have the support that they need. We want to ensure that people who care for family and friends are better able to look after their own health and wellbeing.

Long-term reform is needed in social care, and we will engage with a wide range of stakeholders, including unpaid carers, to ensure their voices are heard as we develop plans to create a National Care Service. The National Care Service will be underpinned by national standards and delivered locally to ensure that everyone, including unpaid carers, is supported to live independent, dignified lives.

The Government recognises that many unpaid carers can face challenges balancing employment with caring. That is why we are committed to reviewing the implementation of carer's leave, and examining the benefits of introducing paid carer's leave.

We must also ensure that carers are supported by the benefits system. The Department for Work and Pensions will keep Carer's Allowance under review to see if it meets its objectives. The previous Work and Pensions Committee made a number of recommendations for changing the rules and processes. The Government will respond to those recommendations in due course.

Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership

Asked by **Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park**

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to carry out a monitoring report of the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership, including its environmental impact and impact on deforestation; whether they will include opportunities for expert stakeholders to provide their views and evidence; and how often they plan to carry out such a report. [HL749]

Baroness Jones of Whitchurch: The Department for Business and Trade intends to cover the UK's accession to the CPTPP Agreement in a Free Trade Agreement monitoring report. The Department will consider a range of areas for inclusion in this report, including the environment, and it will take account of stakeholder views. The timing of the report will be provided in due course.

Ethiopia: Human Rights

Asked by **Baroness Anelay of St Johns**

To ask His Majesty's Government what is their assessment of the current situation regarding human rights in Ethiopia. [HL703]

Lord Collins of Highbury: Violent conflict, particularly in the Amhara and Oromia regions of Ethiopia, has led to widespread human rights violations and abuses, including arbitrary arrests, killings, torture, sexual violence and enforced disappearances. Whilst the situation in the Tigray region has significantly improved, two years after the end of conflict, we have yet to see whether a new transitional justice policy will correct the lack of accountability for human rights violations and abuses committed in Tigray and elsewhere. More broadly, whilst there is progress in social and economic areas, including access to health and education, civil society operates in a restrictive, shrinking environment.

Forced Labour

Asked by **The Lord Bishop of St Albans**

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they intend to take steps to prevent UK consumers from purchasing goods produced by forced labour; and what assessment they have made of (1) the decision by the government of the United States to add aluminium to its list of priority sectors for the enforcement of the Uyghur Forced Labour Prevention Act, and (2) European Commission plans to publish an online database of regions and sectors where forced labour is a risk. [HL690]

Baroness Jones of Whitchurch: The Government is committed to working with international partners and businesses to ensure global supply chains are free from

human and labour rights abuses. No UK company should have forced labour in its supply chains.

This Government is reviewing the details of the EU Forced Labour Regulation and US Uyghur Forced Labour Prevention Act and will continue to engage with our European and US partners to understand the impact on UK businesses as we consider how we best tackle forced labour in supply chains.

HIV Infection: Death

Asked by Lord Black of Brentwood

To ask His Majesty's Government how many deaths in the UK there have been from AIDS-related illnesses in each of the last 10 years for which figures are available. [HL708]

Baroness Merron: While the information is not collected in the format requested, the following table shows the most recent HIV Action Plan monitoring and evaluation framework report, where UKHSA presented an estimated number of HIV-related deaths (30% of all-cause mortality in people with HIV) in England. Below is a summary table:

	2019	2020	2021	2022
Total number of deaths (all-cause mortality)	571	741	732	603
Estimated number of HIV-related deaths (30% of all-cause mortality)	171	222	220	181

An in-depth analysis of 2022 deaths showed that 25% (103) of the 402 deaths from known causes were HIV related or possibly HIV related and 14% (55 deaths) included an AIDS-related condition as primary cause of death.

HIV is a priority for the government and, as set out in the Labour manifesto, the government have committed to commissioning a new plan to end new HIV transmissions within England by 2030. Ministers have commissioned officials for advice including engaging stakeholders from across the system to build upon the work of the previous Plan.

Mental Health Services

Asked by Lord Patel of Bradford

To ask His Majesty's Government what constitutes an 'out of area' placement for an adult acute mental health

inpatient, specifically whether it is defined by geography or by the institution the patient is referred to. [HL813]

Baroness Merron: For the purposes of data collection, NHS England defines an out of area placement for adult acute mental health inpatient care as happening when 'a person with assessed acute mental health needs who requires adult mental health acute inpatient care, is admitted to a unit that does not form part of their usual local network of services. By this we mean an inpatient unit that does not usually admit people living in the catchment of the person's local community mental health service, and where the person cannot be visited regularly by their care co-ordinator to ensure continuity of care and effective discharge planning'.

River Wye: Conservation

Asked by Lord Lipsey

To ask His Majesty's Government what progress they are making with regard to their River Wye Action Plan, published on 12 April. [HL651]

Baroness Hayman of Ullock: The River Wye is one of our most important, iconic rivers. The level of pollution in the River Wye is unacceptable. That's why this Government is introducing its first steps to clean up our rivers, lakes and seas.

Defra and its arm's length bodies, the Environment Agency and Natural England, continue to work with the Welsh Government, farmers and local partners on how we collectively can improve the river.

Somalia: Floods

Asked by Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact of the El Niño floods, upon children and families in Somalia. [HL682]

Lord Collins of Highbury: El Niño-related weather events in the past year significantly exceeded the UN's projections, with an estimated 2.4 million people displaced and over 120 people killed in Somalia due to flooding. Women and children suffer disproportionately from these displacements. HMG has continued to monitor the impacts of this on the Somali population and support recovery. We have disbursed £17.7 million to support rapid responses and build community resilience to El Niño-related events, including repairing access to healthcare and education facilities.

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