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Monday
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PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)

HOUSE OF LORDS

WRITTEN STATEMENTS AND WRITTEN ANSWERS

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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

Monday, 7 October 2024

Annual Capital Investment for Research Call

[HLWS105]

Baroness Merron: Today I am pleased to announce Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) funding of nearly £30 million through the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) for capital equipment, technology and modular buildings to support NHS trusts in England to deliver high-quality research to improve the health of the population.

This large-scale investment will support 36 NHS trusts to develop and deliver research which aims to reduce early death from major conditions and improve access to high-quality health and care. The funding will increase NHS capacity to deliver commercial clinical trials which bring innovative medicines to patients earlier and maximise our potential to lead the world in clinical trials. This includes investment in modular buildings to expand the footprint for research in hospitals, many of which are in rural and coastal areas. It is important that everyone, regardless of where they live, can access the latest innovations in the health and care system through research.

Funding is going to NHS trusts the length and breadth of England, from Harrogate to Plymouth. A mobile research unit in Hull will increase participation in trials in East Yorkshire; and modular buildings will expand capacity for clinical research in Bradford, Essex, Exeter and Derby.

Walsall Healthcare NHS Trust is receiving funding for a mobile x-ray unit to increase their capability to carry out trials that are normally only available in large research units. This is a huge step forward for a district general hospital, bringing research closer to the communities which they serve.

Alder Hey Children's NHS Foundation Trust were successful in their application for funding for equipment which applies red and near infra-red light to injuries or lesions to improve wound and soft tissue healing. This will allow children to participate in studies at their regular clinic, reducing travel and reaching underserved communities.

Southern Health NHS Foundation Trust and East Lancashire Hospitals NHS Trust will expand their capacity for commercial trials in conditions such as dementia with a standalone pharmacy space and a pharmacy dispensary, respectively, to enable studies in new medicines. The Royal Marsden have received funding for equipment to increase capability and capacity in advanced therapy areas in oncology across commercial and non-commercial portfolios.

This significant funding will support cutting edge research to improve population health and support commercial research delivery in NHS settings for both the

benefit of patients but also the economic growth of the country, positioning the UK as an attractive place for innovative companies to invest in research.

While the equipment or technology is primarily for research, when not in use in this way, equipment such as MRI Scanners will be used for clinical care. This will bolster the capacity of the health system to carry out procedures such as diagnostic testing to inform care and reduce the time taken to treatment, maximising the benefit from this investment.

Energy Infrastructure Planning Projects

[HLWS101]

Lord Hunt of Kings Heath: This Statement concerns an application for development consent made under the Planning Act 2008 by Ecotricity (Heck Fen) Limited for the construction and operation of a solar photovoltaic electricity generating station situated in Lincolnshire.

Under section 107(1) of the Planning Act 2008, the Secretary of State must make a decision on an application within three months of the receipt of the Examining Authority's report unless exercising the power under section 107(3) of the Act to set a new deadline. Where a new deadline is set, the Secretary of State must make a Statement to Parliament to announce it.

The statutory deadline for the decision on the Heckington Fen Solar Park application was 27 September 2024.

Ecotricity (Heck Fen) Limited has requested that the Secretary of State extends the statutory deadline to allow time for further negotiations with landowners and to ensure the necessary permissions can be obtained. I have decided to set a new deadline of no later than 24 January 2025 for deciding this application for these reasons.

The decision to set the new deadline for this application is without prejudice to the decision on whether to grant or refuse development consent.

Flood Response: September 2024

[HLWS97]

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

Just over 1,000 properties flooded in late September after double the monthly average of rain fell across central and southern England. Devastating impacts were felt in communities across Northamptonshire, Bedfordshire, Oxfordshire, Shropshire, Buckinghamshire and North West London in particular. Our deepest sympathies are with those whose homes and businesses have been damaged, whose lives have been upended, and who are now facing months of disruption and upset. The government reiterates its thanks to the Environment Agency, local responders and many others who worked tirelessly to help communities across the country deal with the impacts.

The condition of flood defences has declined in recent years through a lack of investment. This was compounded when no more funding was made available by the previous government to repair damage from last winter. Asset condition is now at 92%, its lowest point since 2010, with approximately 60,000 properties at higher risk. The Environment Agency has allocated £36 million this year to do the most urgent repairs from last winter's flood events.

Despite this, over 22,000 properties were protected by existing flood defences. Assets have stood up well. The Environment Agency has not had any reports of asset failures that have resulted in flooding. There may be some unseen damage to defences which the Environment Agency will inspect and assess once the river levels have subsided. My department will be carrying out a post-event assessment with resilience partners to identify where lessons can be learned.

Protecting communities from flooding is a key priority for this government. The government is determined to turbocharge the delivery and repair of flood defences, improve drainage systems and develop natural flood management schemes. That's why we held the first meeting of the government's newly established Flood Resilience Taskforce last month. The government set up the taskforce to improve coordination of the national and local flood response and strengthen preparedness ahead of the winter flood season.

We are investing over £1.25 billion this year to scale up national resilience through building new and improving existing flood defences. The government is reviewing the investment programme to get it back on track after the pace slowed due to the impacts of inflation and delays with the supply chain. Decisions on future spending will be made at the spending review later this month.

The Environment Agency's flood action week is running from 14 to 20 October. The campaign has simple messages and aims to increase awareness of the risk of flooding and what individuals and communities can do to prepare.

Together, the government's work to improve coordination of flood response, strengthen our preparedness and invest in our flood defences will better protect communities from flooding right across the country.

Late Payments and Long Payment Terms

[HLWS104]

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:

Late payments and long payment terms continue to be a significant issue for small businesses and the self-employed across the UK. In 2022, small businesses were owed on average an estimated £22,000 in late payments from the businesses they supply. As well as the direct costs to businesses through lost and late revenue there are

also indirect costs which include a reduction in productivity through lost time chasing late payments and foregoing investment and growth opportunities. We are determined to foster a strong payment culture in the UK by bringing the payment performance and behaviour of large companies more clearly into focus.

Therefore, we are announcing that we will lay secondary legislation in this parliamentary session to make it a requirement for large companies to include information about their payment performance in their Annual Reports.

This measure will help increase transparency around the payment practices of large businesses and bring them into focus for boards and investors.

Introducing secondary legislation however only represents our first step. The Department for Business and Trade will also launch a public consultation within months on additional legislative measures to address late payments and long payment terms. We will take action as needed to ensure improvements in payment times, especially for small businesses and the self-employed.

We will also be launching a new Fair Payment Code to be overseen by the Small Business Commissioner - a voluntary code of best practice for companies committed to fair and fast payments. This will replace the existing Prompt Payment Code, with a clearer and more measurable set of ambitious commitments and will be a further lever to improve the UK's business payment culture by shining a light on the best performers.

Secondary legislation has also been laid today to amend the Reporting on Payment Practices and Performance Regulations 2017 and the Limited Liability Partnerships (Reporting on Payment Practices and Performance) Regulations 2017, to require qualifying companies and LLPs to publish certain information on their practices, policies and performance with respect to retention clauses in any qualifying construction contracts with suppliers. This measure will help increase transparency around retention policies and performance, and encourage improved payment practices.

This package demonstrates this Government's determination to tackle the scourge of late payments, meeting the commitments laid out in our manifesto and Plan for Small Business.

These initiatives will ensure more businesses are paid on time – ultimately increasing productivity, improving cash flow and driving growth.

Legacy of the Troubles

[HLWS106]

Baroness Anderson of Stoke-on-Trent: My Rt Hon Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Hilary Benn) has today made the following statement:

I wish to provide an update to the House following the Northern Ireland Court of Appeal's judgment in *Dillon and Others* regarding the Northern Ireland Troubles (Legacy and Reconciliation) Act ('the Legacy Act'); and

on the appointment of Sir John Evans as the Chair of the Robert Hamill Inquiry.

The Government is absolutely committed to implementing mechanisms to address the legacy of the Troubles that fully comply with human rights. My previous Written Ministerial Statement, laid on 29 July 2024, confirmed that the Government, as part of its ongoing commitment to repeal and replace the Legacy Act, had formally abandoned all grounds of appeal against the section 4 Human Rights Act declarations of incompatibility made by the Northern Ireland High Court in relation to the Act. This included the immunity provisions, providing important clarity for families that the immunity scheme and other offending provisions would not take effect. I also confirmed the Government's intention to propose measures to further strengthen the independence and powers of the Independent Commission for Reconciliation and Information Recovery (ICRIR).

On 20 September, the Court of Appeal handed down its judgment in *Dillon and Others*. The Court recognised *"the wide powers of ICRIR and the benefit of having investigations placed within one body which is well-resourced"* and further noted that the ICRIR has *"unfettered access to all information, documents and materials as it reasonably requires in connection with a review"*

(<https://www.bailii.org/nie/cases/NICA/2024/59.html>, Paragraph 210). The Court concluded that such powers *"cannot be criticised, nor should they be underestimated"* (<https://www.bailii.org/nie/cases/NICA/2024/59.html>, Paragraph 210).

However, the Court of Appeal also made further declarations of incompatibility in relation to the Legacy Act to those made by the High Court. One of these was in relation to the current prohibition on civil proceedings - another policy pursued by the previous Government that this Government has already committed to reversing.

The other declarations of incompatibility relate to effective next of kin participation where an inquest was previously assigned in order to discharge the state's Article 2 procedural obligations, and the role of the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland in relation to public disclosure of information (<https://www.judiciaryni.uk/files/judiciaryni/2024-09/Summary%20of%20judgment%20-%20In%20re%20Dillon%20and%20others%20-%20NI%20Troubles%20%28Legacy%20and%20Reconciliation%29%20Act%202023%20CA.pdf>).

The Government has already made clear its intention to propose measures that allow legacy inquests previously halted to proceed, should that be the preference of families. Notwithstanding this, the Government takes these further declarations of incompatibility very seriously, and it remains my priority to ensure that the ICRIR can provide human rights compliant investigations in *all relevant cases*.

The Court largely upheld the High Court's findings in relation to Article 2 of the Windsor Framework, which as I noted in my statement to the House on 29 July,

introduces legal uncertainty about what protections are afforded by Article 2, and how legislation applies across the United Kingdom.

This is a complex and wide-ranging judgment with significant implications. The Government is therefore carefully considering its findings to inform a decision on the way forward. I wish to make clear to the House that any such decision will be without prejudice to the Government's absolute commitment to addressing legacy issues in a way that is fully human rights compliant, and to the fullest possible transparency within the framework that rightly exists to ensure that those who work to keep the citizens of the United Kingdom safe are themselves protected from harm.

As set out in my statement of 29 July, the Government has begun preparations to lay in Parliament a draft remedial order under section 10 of the Human Rights Act 1998 to remedy the original declarations of incompatibility made by the High Court, including the immunity provisions. In light of the additional declarations of incompatibility made by the Court of Appeal, I am reviewing this process and will update the House in due course.

This Government takes its human rights obligations - and its responsibilities to victims and survivors of the Troubles - extremely seriously. As part of the Government's commitment to repeal and replace the Legacy Act, I continue to undertake consultations with interested parties regarding a practical way forward that can command support across communities in Northern Ireland and beyond. I said previously that this process will involve difficult conversations, and that is proving to be the case in my engagements so far which have been sometimes challenging but always insightful. I am encouraged by the willingness of those I have met to date to engage constructively. I look forward to further discussions in the period ahead.

Separately, I am pleased to announce the appointment of Sir John Evans as Chair of the Robert Hamill Inquiry. A Chair of the Inquiry is required in order for the Inquiry Report to be formally passed to me for publication. Due to the passage of time since the report was completed in 2011, it was necessary for me to appoint a new Chair of the Inquiry, as the former Chair, Justice Sir Edwin Jowitt, is unfortunately unable to continue in the role. I wish to send him my very best wishes, and thank him for all he did in his time as Chair.

Sir John was a panel member when the Inquiry was in operation, and worked closely with Sir Edwin on the report. Sir John brings a wealth of experience to the role as a former Chief Constable, and I know he will do everything in his power to ensure the Inquiry Report is published soon.

I will remain in close contact with Sir John ahead of the Inquiry report being passed formally to me in order to arrange for the necessary legal and security checks to be completed. While I will do everything I can to ensure the report is published as soon as possible, due to the passage

of time since the report was completed, it is imperative that these checks happen before publication.

I want to pay tribute to Robert Hamill's family for their patience, and their dignity, as they awaited the conclusion of relevant criminal proceedings. I will make a further statement to Parliament when the report is published.

Post Office Capture Software: Kroll Associates Report

[HLWS102]

Baroness Jones of Whitchurch: My Honourable Friend the Minister for Services, Small Business and Exports (Gareth Thomas MP) has today made the following statement:

Earlier this year, concerns were raised by Parliamentarians and postmasters about the Post Office's Capture software, which was rolled out by the Post Office to some branches in the 1990s, and pre-dated Horizon. The concerns were that Capture software had bugs which may have caused shortfalls, leaving postmasters to pay the Post Office back, with some postmasters said to have been prosecuted as a consequence.

Responding to those concerns, the Secretary of State for Business and Trade committed on 9 September to publishing the results of forensic accountant, Kroll Associates' investigation into the Capture system as soon as we received their report. Kroll have now completed their investigation, and I published their report on Monday 30 September. The report is available on gov.uk and I have also placed a copy in the House Library.

Kroll Associates investigated the Capture software system, examined the available evidence from postmasters and others who have been working with postmasters to uncover the issues with the software. Further evidence from the Post Office was given to Kroll towards the end of their investigation. Considering this, Kroll have produced an addendum to this report which will be published shortly.

I am very grateful to the postmasters and postmasters' families who spoke to and provided evidence to Kroll during their investigation. I recognise in some cases that this meant revisiting very distressing memories. I am grateful to those who attended the Ministerial chaired roundtable hosted by the Department for Business and Trade. I would also like to thank the Horizon Compensation Advisory Board for their continued work on redress issues, in particular Lord Beamish for helping to shine a light on the issues related to Capture.

In their report Kroll concluded there was a reasonable likelihood that Capture could have created shortfalls for sub-postmasters. Kroll has not identified any available evidence that Post Office Limited's audit, investigations or legal teams took into account known issues with Capture arising from bugs identified in various versions of the software in the course of their work.

I recognise that this report and its conclusions will be of considerable interest to postmasters and their families

across the country. The Government will thoroughly examine Kroll's report into the Capture system and its impact on postmasters. We will update the House on next steps in December.

Royal Navy: Behaviours

[HLWS98]

Lord Coaker: My hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State has made the following Written Ministerial Statement:

This Government is committed to improving Service life for our dedicated Service personnel. This includes addressing any experience in our Armed Forces which falls short of the standards we expect. The Secretary of State for Defence made clear in his first address to the Ministry of Defence that we will have a culture that values all, and will have zero tolerance for any abuse, in the military or the Civil Service.

That is why today, I am updating the house on the findings of an investigation into misconduct in the Submarine Service. This investigation was commissioned by the Royal Navy in October 2022 as a result of allegations of misconduct made by a former female submariner. The investigation has now concluded and has found evidence to prove that misogyny, bullying and unacceptable behaviour did occur amongst a range of ranks and rates during the period 2014-2020.

This is appalling and should have never happened. I sincerely apologise for the treatment that the victim experienced during her time as a submariner, and I commend to the House her bravery in coming forward. Those that have chosen to serve deserve better. The First Sea Lord has also offered his personal and unreserved apologies to the victim for her treatment.

Action is underway to address the findings of the investigation. First and foremost, I can confirm that the Royal Navy has conducted misconduct proceedings, and action has been taken against several individuals up to and including discharge from the Service.

The investigation also made 37 recommendations to address practical and cultural shortcomings which must change. The First Sea Lord has accepted these in full and implementation is underway. These changes include proactive welfare checks for submarine crews pre and post deployment, to understand the experiences of the crew; changes to training and the Submarine Command Course and increased outreach from the Royal Navy Police so that personnel are aware of the routes available to them should they wish to raise a complaint.

Further detail on the investigation, including its findings, recommendations and how they have been implemented has been published on the Ministry of Defence website. The executive summary and redacted report will be placed in the Library of the House. However, changes made so far are not limited to the Submarine Service. In parallel to the investigation itself, the First Sea Lord instigated a wider review of the Royal Navy's working culture. As a result of this, the Royal

Navy has appointed a Commodore as its Head of Culture and a team to support driving cultural, behavioural and leadership improvements across the entirety of the Royal Navy.

Misconduct such as that identified in this investigation is unacceptable and has no place anywhere in Defence. While progress is being made, there is more to be done.

I will hold the First Sea Lord, the Royal Navy and the Submarine Service to account for delivering the change this investigation has identified. I have requested a formal review of progress in six months.

More widely, the MOD has established a programme for Raising our Standards that builds on existing work to instil a positive working culture and uphold the standards of behaviour that we expect. The programme focuses on communications and training, underpinned by work to test the action being taken and make sure that unacceptable behaviours are being eliminated from Defence.

Work is underway by the new Ministerial team to look at what action has been taken to raise standards and tackle unacceptable behaviour so far across the Ministry of Defence and the whole of the military; assess what impact this action has had; identify where we are still falling short; and ensure where we learn lessons and establish good practice this is shared across the whole of Defence.

Furthermore, I will personally oversee the programme of change through our External Challenge Panel; a group of experienced subject matter experts in organisational change that have been brought together to hold this Department to account for action on these issues, and ensure we have strong ambition and independent testing of our programme.

It is only by delivering on this commitment that we will enable Defence to better reflect the nation it serves and protects, and draw from the best of British talent, to deliver operational outcomes in an increasingly uncertain world.

Poor practices and behaviours in the past that may have been normalised in some quarters are unacceptable, and they have no place today. We will learn from this, and I will provide further updates to the House on action taken across Defence in due course.

The leadership of the Submarine Service has my, and the First Sea Lord's, full support to deliver the changes needed.

The Statement includes the following attached material:

Report
[20241003_MisconductinSubmarineService_ExecSummary_Final.pdf]

Summary Report [20231221-ISI SM Summary report-Final-OSP_LIMDISSEC - Redacted Version for Release Final_Redactedv.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:
<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-statement/Lords/2024-10-07/HLWS98/>

Semiconductor Facility: Newton Aycliffe

[HLWS99]

Lord Coaker: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence (The Right Hon John Healey) has made the following Written Ministerial Statement:

On Friday 27 September, the Ministry of Defence bolstered the UK defence supply chain with the acquisition of a key semiconductor factory in Newton Aycliffe, County Durham.

This factory is the only secure facility in the UK with the skills and capability to manufacture gallium arsenide semiconductors. These types of specialist semiconductors are used in a number of military platforms, including fighter jet capabilities. It is therefore crucial for our national security that this facility remains suitable for UK defence needs.

This acquisition will not only safeguard the future of the facility, which is critical to the defence supply chain and major military programmes and exports, but also secures up to 100 skilled jobs in the North East of England.

Semiconductors are vitally important for the functioning of almost every electronic device we use and are equally as important in military platforms. This Government recognises the strategic importance of semiconductors as a critical technology for the future and a significant enabler of the Government's growth and clean energy missions.

The semiconductor factory in Newton Aycliffe, which has been renamed Oetric Semiconductors UK, has been acquired by the Government from its previous parent company Coherent Corporation who were looking to sell or close the site.

I visited the facility on the first day of ownership accompanied by the member for Newton Aycliffe and Spennymoor. The site and the people working there are doing incredible things for Defence for which I thank them.

This Government intends to invest in the company over the coming years, ensuring the nation's security whilst boosting UK defence industrial capacity, expanding export opportunities and supporting our mission to deliver growth. These investments will ensure the facility is capable of producing gallium arsenide semiconductors as well as more powerful semiconductors in the future.

Work has already started to implement best practice governance, providing the appropriate financial oversight to secure the company's future success.

Tackling Global Challenges: R&D Programme

[HLWS100]

Lord Vallance of Balham: I am repeating the following Written Ministerial Statement made today in the other place by my Right Honourable Friend, the

Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology; Rt Hon Peter Kyle MP:

The Department for Science, Innovation and Technology is focused on improving people's lives by maximising the potential of research and development, science and technology to drive economic growth and wider societal benefits. It is our ambition to accelerate innovation, investment and productivity through world-class science, research and development. In line with this goal, the UK's association to Horizon Europe, the world's largest internationally collaborative research programme, empowers UK innovators and scientists to collaborate with colleagues from across the EU, as well as with other associated countries.

From 2028, the 10th Research and Innovation Framework Programme (FP10), will replace Horizon Europe. It will be tasked with harnessing excellence-based research and development to support delivery of European security, sustainable prosperity and competitiveness.

On 26th September, DSIT published a Position Paper setting out the UK Government's views on the potential shape and direction of FP10. We have published this Position Paper to support the work of the EU and Member States in developing an impactful programme which delivers research and development across all disciplines of the highest quality to the benefit of all participants. A copy of the position paper was deposited in the libraries of the House of Commons and the House of Lords.

The Government wants to strengthen ties with our European neighbours and explore areas where we can boost our shared prosperity and security through mutually beneficial agreements. This includes ensuring that UK scientists, innovators, businesses, and institutions can collaborate with partners across Europe and beyond.

Given current geopolitical realities, we believe now is the time to address global challenges through collective action. We believe that through genuine openness, EU Member States, the UK, and other likeminded countries can pool resources to effectively tackle priorities which affect us all. This includes using the power of research to harness emerging technologies and in turn boost productivity and competitiveness.

Our clear position is for FP10 to be based on openness and excellence, and to ensure the continuation of proven instruments within Horizon Europe.

In the paper, we advocate for an FP10 which:

- i) Maintains excellence at the very core of FP10 to harness the full potential of Europe's research and innovation capabilities across the entire research pipeline.
- ii) Enables the equal participation of likeminded associated countries in all areas of the programme from its very inception, with barriers removed to ensure collaboration on critical technologies between like-minded partners. Maintaining the principle of openness

to those who share common goals and values will support the best research and collaboration to tackle these shared challenges.

iii) Preserves the three-pillar architecture in Horizon Europe, maintaining stable and predictable support for proven elements within Horizon Europe to continue supporting discovery research, international collaboration opportunities and applied innovation respectively. Through a careful balance between curiosity-driven research and applied research and innovation, FP10 should remain flexible and responsive to future global challenges.

We very much welcome opportunities for future discussion with researchers, innovators, businesses, institutions, the European Commission and EU Member States as FP10 develops given our many shared priorities.

We will, of course, be interested in potentially associating to FP10, assuming it is open, relevant, and provides good value for researchers and taxpayers.

UK-Thailand Enhanced Trade Partnership

[HLWS103]

Baroness Jones of Whitchurch: My Rt Hon Friend the Minister of State for Trade Policy and Economic Security (Douglas Alexander MP) has today made the following statement:

I am pleased to announce that the UK Thailand Enhanced Trade Partnership (ETP) was signed and launched on 18 September in Bangkok.

Thailand is Southeast Asia's second largest economy. The total trade in goods and services between the UK and Thailand was £5.9 billion to the end of Q1 2024.

The UK-Thailand ETP is a non-legally binding memorandum of understanding which creates a framework to enhance trade, investment and economic cooperation between the UK and Thailand. The new partnership is designed to boost trade and investment across 20 priority areas including automotive, tourism, investment, digital trade, financial services, education.

The partnership is underpinned by a comprehensive workplan guided by the priorities identified through consultations with businesses in the UK and Thailand. Its delivery will be overseen by the UK-Thailand Joint Economic and Trade Committee (JETCO) which will monitor progress and agree updates to the workplan guided by ongoing business consultation.

This partnership further supports this Government's commitment to economic growth through providing a strong commitment and underpinning actions to further enhance our strong bilateral trade relationship with Thailand.

The UK-Thailand Enhanced Trade Partnership text is available online on gov.uk.

Written Answers

Monday, 7 October 2024

10 Downing Street: Art Works

Asked by *Baroness Jenkin of Kennington*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether the Prime Minister, or the Prime Minister's Chief of Staff, undertook an equality impact assessment, and considered the public sector equality duty under the Equality Act 2010, when deciding to remove the portrait of the first female Prime Minister from the Downing Street study. [HL1035]

Baroness Twycross: The portrait continues to hang in 10 Downing Street.

A1: West Yorkshire

Asked by *Lord Jopling*

To ask His Majesty's Government when the current work on the A1's Wentbridge Viaduct started, and when they expect traffic flows to return to normal. [HL937]

Asked by *Lord Jopling*

To ask His Majesty's Government what was the original estimate for the cost of the current repair works to the Wentbridge Viaduct on the A1; and what they expect the final cost to be. [HL938]

Lord Hendy of Richmond Hill: The original estimate for the Wentbridge Viaduct was £5,403,583, however, at present the expected cost for the works is £16,079,669. The change in costs is due to significant change of scope as additional essential repairs were identified, including but not limited to reconstruction of both deck ends, extensive renewal of drainage throughout the structure, replacement of the Vehicle Restraint System foundation plinths, repairs to the underslung hanger walkway, repairs to deck haunches and concrete repairs to the abutments, all of which were not known nor could have been identified until the existing bridge deck was exposed.

National Highways began the enabling works and upgrading Jacksons Lane on 24 February 2023 but the main works on the carriageway commenced on 11 April 2023 with an expected completion date of September 2023. The current expected completion at Wentbridge Viaduct is Spring 2025. This is in part due to the decision to bring forward the Wentedge road bridge works originally planned to be undertaken in 2026 so that they can be completed at the same time due to the proximity of the two structures, and this will minimise long term disruption while ensuring that both works are completed efficiently. Works to both structures is now expected to be completed by August 2025.

Abnormal Loads

Asked by *Earl Attlee*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether the Secretary of State granted one or more Special Orders under section 44 of the Road Traffic Act 1988 which permitted the movement of long trams from the Very Light Rail Innovation Centre in Dudley to the Metro Maintenance Centre in Wednesbury on 15 February; and if so, whether the haulier who moved a tram on that date gave five clear working days' notice to all the relevant authorities in accordance with the relevant Special Order. [HL568]

Lord Hendy of Richmond Hill: National Highways did issue a special order for the movement of ten trams from Dudley to Wednesbury.

Whilst the Department cannot respond on behalf of the other relevant authorities, the haulier did give five clear working days' notice to National Highways for the movement on 15th February.

Adoption

Asked by *Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they have met, or have plans to meet with, the Movement for an Adoption Apology; and whether they have any plans to move for apologising for historic forced adoptions that during the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s, which affected more than 215,000 women and their children. [HL781]

Baroness Smith of Malvern: The government has not met with the Movement for an Adoption Apology and there is no meeting scheduled.

My hon. Friend, the Minister for Children and Families, shares the deepest sympathy with everyone affected by historic forced adoption. The practice was abhorrent and should never have taken place.

The department will look to learn from the approach of the devolved nations and explore what more can be done to support those impacted.

The department is also currently funding the Adoption England project, Improving Adoption Services for Adults (IASA), which is designed to maintain relationships and provide better access to support for adopted adults.

Advisory Bodies

Asked by *Baroness Hayter of Kentish Town*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they are planning to amend the terms of reference of (1) the House of Lords Appointments Commission, (2) the Office of the Commissioner for Public Appointments, (3) the Independent Adviser on Ministers' Interests, or (4) the Committee on Standards in Public Life. [HL619]

Baroness Twycross: The Government is a government of service and it is committed to restoring trust and confidence in public life. We will establish a new independent Ethics and Integrity Commission, with its own independent Chair. We will ensure that this Commission has the powers and remit necessary to fulfil its responsibilities. The terms of reference of other public bodies are kept under review and updated in line with good practice.

Aerials: Planning Permission

Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to ensure that planning regulation does not hinder the effective implementation of the 5G mobile signal. [HL1008]

Baroness Taylor of Stevenage: In 2022, the government made changes to planning regulations to provide mobile operators with the flexibility to upgrade existing sites in England for 5G delivery, enhance coverage and meet the growing demands for network capacity. The reforms were designed to reduce the time, cost and uncertainty involved in upgrading mobile network infrastructure and to encourage greater use and sharing of existing infrastructure. The UK Government is committed to supporting investment in high-quality, reliable digital connectivity so that communities can benefit from faster economic growth and greater social inclusion. Permitted development rights for telecommunications infrastructure have been developed to ensure planning supports this mission. This government has committed to further reforms to the planning system including making it easier to build digital infrastructure.

Afghanistan: Chevening Scholarships Programme

Asked by Baroness Anelay of St Johns

To ask His Majesty's Government on what basis they decided to suspend Chevening scholarships for Afghan students; and what plans they have to review this decision and to reinstate these scholarships. [HL704]

Baroness Chapman of Darlington: No final decisions have been taken for the Afghanistan Chevening programme for academic year 2025/26. We will provide an update on our website in due course.

Africa: Mpox

Asked by The Marquess of Lothian

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the declaration by the WHO Director General on 14 August of Mpox cases in Africa to be a public health emergency of international concern; and what support they are providing to African countries most affected by the current outbreak. [HL1050]

Lord Collins of Highbury: We are deeply concerned by the mpox outbreaks in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and other African countries. In August I visited the DRC and announced £3.1 million to UNICEF (United Nations Children's Fund) for the mpox and cholera response. This will reach 4.4 million people. We have contributed £3 million to the World Health Organisation's (WHO) Regional Office for Africa for health emergency response. The UK's £340 million core voluntary contribution to the WHO supports it to allocate resources where they are needed most, including responding to health emergencies such as mpox. We are one of the largest donors to Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, which has unlocked \$2.9 million to support the rollout of vaccines in the DRC.

Agriculture: Carbon Emissions

Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to support the agribusiness sector in reaching net zero carbon emissions targets. [HL1007]

Baroness Hayman of Ullock: This Government is committed to delivering net zero by 2050 and we will work in collaboration with farmers and others with a stake in our food system towards this.

The transition to more climate friendly practices will go hand in hand with food security and farm productivity. We will support farmers to adopt low carbon farming practices, increasing the carbon stored on their land while boosting profitability.

As part of this, we will optimise environmental land management schemes to make them work for farmers and nature, and introduce a land-use framework, helping to protect both the environment, food security and livelihoods.

We will also look carefully at how to enable the benefits of innovation in reaching net zero carbon targets and the integration of new technologies and best practice into farming practices.

Furthermore, to support our farming businesses, we will protect them from being undercut in trade deals, make the supply chain work more fairly and prevent shock rises in bills by switching on GB Energy.

Agriculture: Land

Asked by Lord Bradshaw

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Baroness Taylor of Stevenage on 9 August (HL387), how much high-quality land has been lost for the use of agricultural production in the last ten years for which figures are available. [HL581]

Baroness Hayman of Ullock: Natural England commissioned a review in 2023 to assess the loss of agricultural land to development, with a particular focus on Best and Most Versatile (BMV) land between 2013

and 2022. The report is expected to be published online by early 2025.

Agriculture: Land Use

*Asked by **Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle***

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to ensure, through the land use framework or other mechanisms, that local and larger-scale battery storage facilities are placed in appropriate locations on suitable land classes. [HL1101]

Baroness Hayman of Ullock: The Government has published Planning Practice Guidance, which details what applicants seeking planning permission for battery energy storage systems can do to ensure they consider any potential risks. By law, planning applications are determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Each application is judged on its own individual merit and the weight given to these considerations is a matter for the local planning authority as the decision taker in the first instance. Planning Practice Guidance encourages battery storage developers and local planning authorities to engage with Local Fire and Rescue Services (FRSs) before submitting and determining planning application, so that issues of the siting and location of Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS) are dealt with before the application is made.

Spatial planning will play an important role in the delivery of the Government's growth and clean energy missions. The Land Use Framework will work hand-in-hand with the Strategic Spatial Energy Plan, which will support a more actively planned approach to energy infrastructure across England, Scotland and Wales, identifying appropriate areas for power generation and storage infrastructure including batteries.

Agriculture: Wales

*Asked by **Lord Mott***

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the Welsh Government's Sustainable Farming Scheme; and what consideration they have given to the introduction of a similar scheme in England. [HL1063]

Baroness Hayman of Ullock: Agriculture is a devolved area, and Wales's Sustainable Farming Scheme is therefore a matter for the Welsh Government.

Defra and devolved administration officials meet routinely to share experiences and insight regarding our respective agricultural policies.

Alan Milburn

*Asked by **Baroness Neville-Rolfe***

To ask His Majesty's Government what meetings Alan Milburn has had with the Department of Health and Social Care or NHS England since the general

election (1) with, and (2) without, Ministers being present; and whether his commercial and financial interests were declared ahead of such meetings. [HL1069]

*Asked by **Baroness Neville-Rolfe***

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the remarks by the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care on 9 September (HC Deb col 578), whether Alan Milburn joined any ministerial discussions, or viewed any ministerial papers, relating to private sector involvement in the NHS. [HL1071]

Baroness Merron: As the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care stated in Parliament on 9 September 2024, the Rt. Hon. Alan Milburn is a former Member of the House of Commons, a member of the Privy Council and a former Secretary of State for Health. At every Departmental meeting he has attended, he has been present at the request of ministers.

Ministerial meetings attended by third parties are declared in the quarterly transparency publication on GOV.UK. The Secretary of State also assured the House of Commons that nothing commercially sensitive has been shared with Alan Milburn.

*Asked by **Baroness Neville-Rolfe***

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the remarks by the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care on 9 September (HC Deb col 578), whether Alan Milburn declared his financial interests to the Permanent Secretary; what steps have been taken to mitigate conflicts of interest in the advice from Mr Milburn; whether they will place a copy of any such declaration in the Library of the House; and whether Mr Milburn has signed a confidentiality agreement with the Department. [HL1070]

Baroness Merron: As the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care stated in Parliament on 9 September 2024, it is absolutely right that people appointed to roles in public life declare their conflicts of interest so that they can be assessed when taking decisions or exercising powers to ensure that they are doing so in a way that manages those conflicts of interest and no conflict arises. Alan Milburn does not have a role in the Department of Health and Social Care.

It is also entirely legitimate for Government Departments to invite people with a wide range of experience and insight to advise on policy debates and discussions. We do not ask them all to declare their interests.

Alcoholic Drinks: Excise Duties

*Asked by **Lord Moynihan***

To ask His Majesty's Government whether the outcome to the consultation The new alcohol duty system, which ran from 27 October 2021 to 30 January 2022, has met the stated core principles by making the

system (1) simpler, (2) more economically rational, and (3) less administratively burdensome on businesses. [HL848]

Lord Livermore: A new duty structure for alcohol products was introduced in August 2023 by the previous Government.

HMRC plans to evaluate the impact of the new rates and structures three years after the changes took effect. This will allow time for HMRC to gather a broad range of data with which to evaluate the impacts.

Alzheimer's Disease: Medical Treatments

Asked by Baroness Goudie

To ask His Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with (1) the NHS, (2) NICE, and (3) MHRA, to ensure that NHS patients can access licensed treatments for Alzheimer's disease. [HL882]

Baroness Merron: Department officials have had a number of conversations with colleagues in NHS England, the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE), and the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency to discuss the progress of key regulatory decisions and the National Health Service's preparations for the adoption of any licensed and NICE recommended treatment for Alzheimer's disease.

The NICE is currently developing guidance for the NHS on the use of several potential new medicines for the treatment of Alzheimer's disease, as well as currently consulting on its draft guidance on the use of lecanemab. The NICE has determined that the benefits of this first new treatment are just too small to justify the significant cost to the NHS. These are very difficult decisions to make, and it is right that they are taken independently, and on the basis of the available evidence of costs and benefits. We understand how disappointing the NICE's draft guidance will be to all those affected, but we need to make sure that the finite resources of the NHS are only spent on treatments that are clinically and cost effective, to ensure patient and taxpayer benefit. The NICE's draft recommendations are now open to consultation, and the NICE will take the comments received fully into account in developing its final guidance.

Lecanemab is the first disease modifying treatment for Alzheimer's disease with a marketing approval in Great Britain, and to ensure the health system is prepared for future advances in treatments, a dedicated NHS England team is already looking ahead to 27 other treatments which are currently in advanced clinical trials, that could potentially be approved by 2030.

Ammunition: Lead

Asked by Baroness Jones of Moulsecoomb

To ask His Majesty's Government on what date they expect to receive the Health and Safety Executive's final restriction opinion on the risks of using lead in ammunition to human health and the environment,

which had been due for submission in March 2023. [HL638]

Baroness Sherlock: The UK REACH restriction process relating to lead in ammunition was initiated in 2021 by the then Defra Secretary of State, with the agreement of the Scottish and Welsh Governments. This triggered a process under the UK REACH regulations, with the dossier preparation and opinion process led by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE). The two consultations which form part of this process both garnered large numbers of responses (2859 and 8159) necessitating extensions to the legislative deadlines in order to take account of the information submitted.

We expect to receive HSE's final restriction opinion on the risks of using lead in ammunition to human health and the environment in autumn 2024. The decision to apply any restrictions, or not to do so, will subsequently be made by the Defra Secretary of State, with the consent of the Scottish and Welsh Ministers.

Asked by Lord Browne of Ladyton

To ask His Majesty's Government whether the Health and Safety Executive will have regard to the environmental principles policy statement when formulating its final restriction opinion on the risks to human health and the environment of using lead in ammunition. [HL739]

Baroness Sherlock: The Health and Safety Executive is currently finalising its UK REACH opinion on further action to restrict the use of lead in ammunition and is considering the environmental principles policy statement.

Animal Experiments

Asked by Lord Clement-Jones

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the recent publication of the Annual Statistics of Scientific Procedures on Living Animals, Great Britain 2023, what plans they have to increase funding for the further development and uptake of human-specific methods that can replace the use of animals in medical research, such as computer modelling and organ-on-a-chip technology. [HL1111]

Asked by Lord Clement-Jones

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the recent publication of the Annual Statistics of Scientific Procedures on Living Animals, Great Britain 2023, whether they have considered the merits of legislative action such as 'Herbie's Law', to support a further decrease in the number of scientific procedures performed on living animals and to support the long-term phase-out of animal experiments in medical research by 2035. [HL1112]

Lord Hanson of Flint: The Department for Science, Innovation & Technology (DSIT) is leading on plans to accelerate the development, validation and uptake of alternatives to animal testing.

As yet, no assessment has been made of the potential merits of introducing Herbie's Law.

Apprentices: Finance

Asked by Baroness Wolf of Dulwich

To ask His Majesty's Government what apprenticeship budget was set for the Department for Education in the 2022–23 financial year; and what proportion of that was spent. [HL920]

Asked by Baroness Wolf of Dulwich

To ask His Majesty's Government what proportion of the Department for Education's 2022–23 apprenticeship spend applied to (1) levy-payers, and (2) non levy-payers. [HL921]

Asked by Baroness Wolf of Dulwich

To ask His Majesty's Government what proportion of the Department for Education's 2022–23 apprenticeship spend applied to new starts; and what proportion to ongoing costs for apprentices already in training, both (1) overall, and for (2) levy-payers and non-levy-payers separately. [HL922]

Baroness Smith of Malvern: The English apprenticeships budget for the 2022/23 financial year was £2,554 million. The total spend was £2,458 million meaning that 96% of the English apprenticeships budget was spent in the 2022/23 financial year.

In the 2022/23 financial year, 69% of the overall apprenticeships spend was spent on apprenticeships for levy paying employers and 29% was spent on apprenticeships for non-levy paying employers. This includes the spend on COVID-19 incentive payments made to employers recruiting new apprentices between August 2020 and January 2022. The remaining 2% was spent on the costs of running the apprenticeships programme.

31% of the department's apprenticeships spend for the 2022/23 financial year supported new apprenticeship starts and 62% was spent on the ongoing costs of apprentices that had started in previous years.

22% of the department's apprenticeships spend for the 2022/23 financial year supported new starts in levy paying employers and 43% was spent on the ongoing costs of apprenticeships in levy paying employers that had started in previous years.

9% of the department's apprenticeships spend for the 2022/23 financial year supported new starts in non-levy paying employers and 18% was spent on the ongoing costs of apprenticeships in non-levy paying employers that had started in previous years.

Details of annual apprenticeships spend for the 2023/24 financial year is set out in the department's annual report and accounts, which was published in July 2024 and can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/department->

[for-education-consolidated-annual-report-and-accounts-2023-to-2024.](#)

Asked by Baroness Wolf of Dulwich

To ask His Majesty's Government what the total levy for the apprenticeship budget was in the 2022–23 financial year; and how much of this was allocated to the devolved governments using the Barnett formula. [HL923]

Lord Livermore: The Apprenticeship Levy (AL) is currently paid by large employers, charged at a rate of 0.5% on an employer's annual pay bill of over £3 million. HMT then sets the Apprenticeship Budget at each Spending Review, which funds all apprenticeship training in England – both existing and new apprenticeships – across all employers. In FY22-23, £2,554 million was allocated to the Apprenticeship Budget in England.

While the Apprenticeship Levy is UK wide, apprenticeship policy and spending is devolved. From FY2017-18 to FY2019-20, the devolved administrations received a population share of the Office for Budget Responsibility's apprenticeship Levy forecast. Beyond 2019-20, the devolved administrations received funding through the Barnett formula in relation to English apprenticeship spending. The Block Grant Transparency publication which is available on GOV.UK sets out all Barnett consequential generated at both departmental and programme level. It is for the devolved administrations to allocate their funding in devolved areas as they see fit, including investing in their skills programmes.

Apprentices: Training

Asked by Baroness Wolf of Dulwich

To ask His Majesty's Government what proportion of apprenticeship starts in the financial year 2022–2023 undertook their training in (1) independent training providers, (2) general further education colleges, and (3) other providers. [HL951]

Asked by Baroness Wolf of Dulwich

To ask His Majesty's Government what proportion of apprenticeship starts in financial year 2022–2023 with (1) levy-paying and (2) non-levy paying employers undertook their training in (a) independent training providers, (b) general further education colleges, and (c) other providers. [HL952]

Baroness Smith of Malvern: Apprenticeship starts by provider type and funding type for the 2022/23 academic year are shown in the following tables.

<i>Funding type</i>	<i>Provider type</i>	<i>Starts in Academic Year 2022/23</i>	<i>Starts percentage in Academic Year 2022/23</i>
Supported by	General Further Education (FE) College including Tertiary	28,490	12.40%

<i>Funding type</i>	<i>Provider type</i>	<i>Starts in Academic Year 2022/23</i>	<i>Starts percentage in Academic Year 2022/23</i>
Apprenticeship	Other Public Funded, such as Local Authorities and	50,320	21.90%
Service Account (ASA)	Higher Education(HE) Private Sector Public Funded	149,510	65.10%
levy funds	Schools	180	0.10%
	Sixth Form College	130	0.10%
	Special College	1090	0.50%
	Total	229,720	100.00%
<i>Funding type</i>	<i>Provider type</i>	<i>Starts in Academic Year 2022/23</i>	<i>Starts percentage in Academic Year 2022/23</i>
Other	General FE College including Tertiary	30,210	28.10%
(not supported by ASA levy funds)	Other Public Funded, such as Local Authorities and HE	4510	4.20%
	Private Sector Public Funded	71,310	66.40%
	Schools	20	<0.05%
	Sixth Form College	210	0.20%
	Special College	1160	1.10%
	Total	107,410	100.00%
<i>Funding type</i>	<i>Provider type</i>	<i>Starts in Academic Year 2022/23</i>	<i>Starts percentage in Academic Year 2022/23</i>
Total	General FE College including Tertiary	58,700	17.40%
	Other Public Funded, such as Local Authorities and HE	54,830	16.30%
	Private Sector Public Funded	220,820	65.50%
	Schools	200	0.10%
	Sixth Form College	340	0.10%
	Special College	2250	0.70%
	Total	337,140	100.00%

Note:

(1) Volumes are rounded to the nearest 10.

(2) Total starts are the count of apprenticeships started at any point during the stated academic period. Learners starting more than one apprenticeship will appear more than once.

These figures are published in the 'apprenticeships statistics' publication, which can be accessed at: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/apprenticeships>.

Armed Conflict: Sexual Offences

Asked by *Baroness Anelay of St Johns*

To ask His Majesty's Government when they plan to appoint a Prime Minister's Special Representative for Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict. [HL564]

Lord Collins of Highbury: There are more countries in the world today engaged in conflict than at any time since World War II. Preventing conflict and empowering women and girls is critical to the delivery of the government's missions. We are working to prevent and respond to conflict-related sexual violence, including as vice chair of the International Alliance on PSVI (Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict) and by supporting thousands of survivors around the world.

Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office Ministers will take decisions on envoys in due course and appointments of any new envoys will be announced publicly.

Armed Forces and Diplomatic Service: Education

Asked by *Lord Kempson*

To ask His Majesty's Government how many (1) armed forces, and (2) diplomatic families, currently receive support via the Continuity of Education Allowance; and what were the numbers supported each year since 2019. [HL645]

Lord Coaker: The Ministry of Defence currently has 2,666* Armed Forces personnel receiving MOD's Continuity of Education Allowance (CEA) The number supported since 2019 is as follows:

<i>Academic Year</i>	<i>Number of Armed Forces Personnel</i>
2019-20	2,908
2020-21	2,843
2021-22	2,826
2022-23	2,759

*as at Academic Year 2023-24

(2) The FCDO currently have **328** diplomatic families claiming Continuity of Education Allowance. The number supported since 2019 is as follows:

<i>Academic Year</i>	<i>Number of FCDO Civil Servants</i>
2019-20	281
2020-21	315
2021-22	349
2022-23	341

Armed Forces: Housing

Asked by Baroness Goldie

To ask His Majesty's Government what progress they have made in the renovation and refurbishment of service accommodation and service family accommodation; and what remains outstanding in relation to those works. [HL964]

Lord Coaker: The Department, through its contractors, continuously renovates, refurbishes, improves, and maintains its estate, including accommodation.

With regards to Service Family Accommodation (SFA):

In Financial Year (FY) 2023-24, the Department invested £578 million on maintaining and improving SFA, including £220 million which was spent on remediating damp and mould in c4,000 homes, refurbishing c1,000 long term empty homes, replacing doors and windows in c3,000 homes, providing c1,100 homes with External Wall Insulation, c1,000 homes with replacement kitchens and bathrooms, and upgrading heaters and boilers in c1,500 homes.

In FY2024-25, £619 million is to be spent on maintaining and improving SFA, including £180 million to improve insulation in c600 homes, remediate c1,000 long-term damp and mould homes and refurbishing 200 long-term empty homes. Circa 1,700 minor damp and mould packages are planned, and 30 homes will receive upgraded heating.

With regards to Single Living Accommodation (SLA):

In FY 2023-24, £37.8 million was spent on improvements to SLA, with another £3.2 million spent on SLA Safe & Legal compliance works.

During FY2024-25 expenditure of £41 million is planned to improve the condition of SLA including refurbishment, heating upgrades and room conversions to additional bedspaces. £7.5 million has also been ringfenced for internal improvements to SLA condition and heating. In addition, £14.3 million of Safe & Legal compliance works are planned. Further to this, a further £66.6 million of SLA expenditure is planned for FY2025-26.

Armed Forces: Private Education

Asked by Lord Lamont of Lerwick

To ask His Majesty's Government what is the total cost of school fees paid in the last year by the Government for UK private education for the children of military personnel serving overseas. [HL1043]

Lord Coaker: The cost of Continuity of Education Allowance (CEA) overall for FY 2023/24 for the Ministry of Defence was £88.35 million. Of the total contributed in FY 2023/24, £13.9 million was to Service Personnel serving overseas; this equates to 16% of MOD's total spend of the allowance.

Arm's-Length Bodies: Gender

Asked by Baroness Hayter of Kentish Town

To ask His Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with arm's-length bodies regarding civil action being taken against their staff due to gender-critical views. [HL750]

Baroness Twycross: The government cannot comment on individual cases of civil action within arm's length bodies.

Sponsor departments are responsible for maintaining the relationship between the government and its arm's length bodies. This includes ensuring appropriate discussions about ongoing issues are held.

Arms Trade: Export Controls

Asked by Lord Turnbull

To ask His Majesty's Government, following their decision to restrict arms export licences to Israel, whether they have reviewed the arms licences in respect of (1) Saudi Arabia, given its conflict with the Houthis in Yemen, (2) Qatar, given its support of Hamas, or (3) Turkey, given its conflict with the Kurds. [HL832]

Baroness Jones of Whitchurch: HM Government takes its export control responsibilities very seriously and we operate one of the most robust and transparent export control regimes in the world. We rigorously assess every application on a case-by-case basis against strict assessment criteria, the UK's Strategic Export Licensing Criteria. We will not issue or maintain an export licence to any destination where to do so would be inconsistent with the Criteria. All licences are kept under careful and continual review as standard. We are able to amend, suspend or revoke extant licences as circumstances require.

Arms Trade: Israel

Asked by Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick

To ask His Majesty's Government what is their assessment of the current value of licensed UK arms exports to Israel, both direct and via third party states, and including through open licences. [HL724]

Baroness Jones of Whitchurch: The maximum value of UK SIELs (Standard Individual Export Licences) issued for direct export to Israel was £24.9 million in 2023.

The maximum value of UK SIELs where Israel was listed as an ultimate end-user, alongside multiple other

destinations was £134.9 million in 2023. It is not possible to ascertain what proportion of that amount is attributable to Israel alone.

We do not hold data on value of any other licence type, including open licences. Data on the value of SIELs to Israel in 2024 has not yet been published.

Army: Recruitment

*Asked by **The Marquess of Lothian***

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they (1) are reviewing, or (2) plan to review, current Armed Services recruitment policy to allow those who have previously worked for UK forces in Afghanistan in any capacity, but who are not British or Commonwealth citizens, to apply to join the British Army if they have relocated to the UK. [HL1048]

Lord Coaker: We fully acknowledge and value the contribution of Afghan nationals who supported the UK mission in Afghanistan, and we are determined to honour our nation's commitment to relocate and resettle eligible individuals. The nationality requirements for joining the UK Armed Forces are set out in legislation, namely the Armed Forces Act 2006. We are not currently reviewing the extant nationality requirements. Recruitment policies are reviewed regularly to ensure that Defence continues to be an employer which is representative of wider UK society.

Artificial Intelligence: Investment

*Asked by **Lord Taylor of Warwick***

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to ensure Britain remains competitive in AI innovation following cuts to AI investment. [HL696]

Lord Vallance of Balham: The government is committed to bringing the AI Research Resource supercomputers in Bristol and Cambridge online, which will increase our AI compute capacity by 30 times. In addition, AI entrepreneur Matt Clifford has been appointed to lead the government's AI Opportunities Action Plan. This will set out recommendations to grow our AI sector and ensure AI can be deployed across the economy to improve people's lives.

Artificial Intelligence: Regulation

*Asked by **Lord Taylor of Warwick***

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to ensure that new regulations on the use of artificial intelligence (1) avoid hindering innovation, (2) adapt to a growing industry, and (3) prevent domestic companies from being at a disadvantage internationally. [HL823]

Baroness Jones of Whitchurch: In the King's Speech, the Government set out its intention to legislate to place binding requirements on those developing most powerful AI models. These proposals will be highly targeted and

will support growth and innovation by providing clarity to developers and boosting public trust and business confidence.

The government will be consulting on these proposals to ensure they support UK competitiveness in AI while ensuring its safe development. In addition, the AI Opportunities Action Plan, chaired by Matt Clifford, will set out how the Government can support the growth of the AI sector and compete on the global stage.

Asylum: Employment

*Asked by **Lord Allen of Kensington***

To ask His Majesty's Government, under the policy whereby asylum seekers whose claims have been outstanding for more than 12 months through no fault of their own can request permission to work in jobs on the Shortage Occupation List published by the Home Office, how many such requests have been (1) made, and (2) granted, since the policy was introduced; and how many asylum seekers have taken up employment under that policy. [HL552]

*Asked by **Lord Allen of Kensington***

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have, if any, to alter the current arrangements for asylum seekers whose claim has been outstanding for more than 12 months through no fault of their own to be able to request permission to work in jobs on the Shortage Occupation List published by the Home Office. [HL553]

Lord Hanson of Flint: Asylum seekers granted permission to work are restricted by the Home Office to apply for jobs on the Immigration Salary List which replaced the Shortage Occupation List on 4 April 2024. The list itself is based on expert advice from the independent Migration Advisory Committee, who will continue to review those occupations.

Asylum seekers are provided with accommodation and support to meet their essential living needs if they would otherwise be destitute whilst their claim is considered.

We also encourage asylum seekers to undertake volunteering activities, so long as it does not amount to unpaid work. Volunteering provides a valuable contribution to their local community and may help them to integrate into society if they ultimately qualify for protection.

The Home Office are unable to report how many asylum seekers have applied for and been accepted for permission to work as this information is not held in a reportable format or forms part of published data.

Asylum: Finance

*Asked by **Lord German***

To ask His Majesty's Government what consideration they have given to increasing asylum support payments. [HL1029]

Lord Hanson of Flint: The Home Office has a legal obligation to meet the essential living needs of destitute asylum seekers. Support is usually provided in the form of accommodation and a weekly allowance. The level of the allowance is reviewed each year to ensure it covers an asylum seeker's "essential living needs".

Asylum: Food and Housing

Asked by Lord Empey

To ask His Majesty's Government how many units of accommodation, including hotel rooms, (1) are currently being used to house persons who have submitted claims for asylum in the United Kingdom; and (2) they have reserved or acquired to accommodate those who may yet arrive and seek asylum in the United Kingdom. [HL1024]

Asked by Lord Empey

To ask His Majesty's Government what financial provision has been made in the current financial year to provide (1) accommodation, and (2) food and provisions, to those currently awaiting a response to applications for asylum in the United Kingdom. [HL1025]

Asked by Lord Empey

To ask His Majesty's Government how many asylum seekers are currently being accommodated in (1) England, (2) Scotland, (3) Wales and (4) Northern Ireland. [HL1026]

Lord Hanson of Flint: The Home Office has a statutory obligation to support and accommodate asylum seekers who would otherwise be destitute. It does not publish a breakdown of statistics which disaggregates asylum accommodation costs by type.

The total expenditure on asylum is published in the Home Office Annual Report and Accounts, available at HO annual reports and accounts.

Data on the number of supported asylum seekers in accommodation, including hotels, can be found within the Asy_D11 tab for our most recent stats release at Gov.UK.

The government is determined to restore order to the asylum system so that it operates swiftly, firmly, and fairly including reducing the use of hotels over time. Additionally, the Government will be reviewing current Home Office arrangements to ensure efficiency and deliver value for money.

Asylum: Hotels

Asked by Baroness Eaton

To ask His Majesty's Government what consideration they have given to allowing local authorities to veto the use of hotels for the purpose of housing asylum seekers in their respective areas. [HL593]

Asked by Baroness Eaton

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they plan to take to consult local authorities before Government contractors decide to use hotels in those respective areas for the purpose of housing asylum seekers. [HL594]

Lord Hanson of Flint: In ensuring that views of key external stakeholders are sought and partners engaged with, the Home Office has dedicated Regional Engagement Leads who liaise directly with local authorities or via Regional Strategic Migration Partnerships (SMP). SMPs are Local Government led partnerships funded by, but independent of, the Home Office, whose role is to coordinate and support delivery of national programmes in asylum and refugee schemes as well as agreed regional and devolved migration priorities.

Asylum: Housing

Asked by Baroness Hoey

To ask His Majesty's Government which 10 local authorities in the UK had the most asylum seekers supported by the Home Office by proportion of population in the most recent year for which figures are available. [HL754]

Asked by Baroness Hoey

To ask His Majesty's Government which 10 local authorities in the UK had the most asylum seekers in the most recent year for which figures are available, and how much funding each of those 10 local authorities received to support asylum seekers. [HL755]

Lord Hanson of Flint: The Government is determined to restore order to the asylum system so that it operates swiftly, firmly and fairly. This includes our accommodation sites, as the Home Office continues to identify a range of options to minimise the use of expensive hotels and ensure better use of public money, whilst maintaining sufficient accommodation to meet demand.

The most recent data on the number of supported asylum seekers in accommodation, including hotels, at: Asy_D11 Immigration system statistics data tables - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

The Home Office has had various grants through which we provide funds to support local authorities housing asylum seekers.

- Grant 7 was launched in April 2024 to facilitate local authority support of increased dispersal accommodation (DA) accommodation. The £3500 payment will be made for the net growth of occupancy in each quarter for Home Office Supported Asylum Seeker accommodation within the geographical bounds of the local authority under the following categories; DA, overflow dispersal accommodation (ODA) and initial accommodation (IA).

• Grant 6 was launched in April 2024 to acknowledge the contribution of Local Authorities to supporting asylum seekers. A payment of £750 was made for each occupied bedspaces as of 01 April 2024 and a subsequent payment will be made for the net growth of occupancy in each quarter for Home Office Supported Asylum Seeker accommodation within the geographical bounds of the local authority under the following categories; DA, ODA and IA and contingency accommodation (CA).

The Answer includes the following attached material:

Asy_D11 Immigration system statistics data tables [support-local-authority-datasets-jun-24 - Copy.xlsx]

The material can be viewed online at:
<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2024-09-04/HL754>

Asylum: Immigration

Asked by Lord German

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they have any plans to extend the 28-day move-on period for asylum seekers who have been given the right to remain in the UK. [HL1028]

Lord Hanson of Flint: The government is aware of the need for a smooth exit from asylum accommodation for those asylum seekers who are granted leave to remain, so those individuals can support themselves through employment. We continue to work closely with local government and employment partners, including MHCLG and DWP, on this process.

Bahrain: University of Huddersfield

Asked by Lord Scriven

To ask His Majesty's Government when the University of Huddersfield last sought guidance from anybody affiliated with the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office regarding human rights due diligence on its courses related to Bahrain. [HL1004]

Lord Collins of Highbury: The FCDO has no direct involvement in the partnership between the University of Huddersfield and the Government of Bahrain, which is facilitated solely between the two parties.

Baroness Thatcher: Art Works

Asked by Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay

To ask His Majesty's Government where the portrait of Baroness Thatcher by Richard Stone will hang or be stored following its removal from the study of 10 Downing Street. [HL670]

Asked by Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay

To ask His Majesty's Government whether the portrait of Baroness Thatcher by Richard Stone, commissioned by Gordon Brown in 2007, is part of the

Government Art Collection; and if not, who owns it. [HL671]

Asked by Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay

To ask His Majesty's Government on what date the portrait of Baroness Thatcher by Richard Stone was removed from the study of 10 Downing Street. [HL672]

Baroness Twycross: The portrait, which was moved in August, continues to hang in 10 Downing Street. It is owned by the Cabinet Office of which the Prime Minister's Office is a part.

BBC World Service

Asked by The Marquess of Lothian

To ask His Majesty's Government what recent assessment they have made of the soft power value to the UK of the news programming provided by the BBC World Service; and whether they intend to fund fully the BBC World Service language services. [HL1052]

Baroness Chapman of Darlington: The Government strongly values the BBC World Service as a UK soft power asset. It is the world's most trusted international broadcaster. Consisting of 42 language services, it provides impartial accurate news to a global audience of 320 million across more than 120 countries.

The Government is committed to a successful BBC World Service and ensuring its financial sustainability. Ahead of Charter Review, the Government will keep an open mind about the future of the licence fee and how the World Service is funded, and engage with the BBC, the public and other stakeholders before making decisions.

Bibby Stockholm: Finance

Asked by Lord Roberts of Llandudno

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made regarding the finances of renting the Bibby Stockholm for the detention of asylum seekers. [HL990]

Lord Hanson of Flint: As part of the government's commitment to fix the asylum system and clear the backlog, the decision has been taken to not renew the contract for the Bibby Stockholm, which ends in January 2025. Extending the use of the Bibby Stockholm would have cost over £20 million next year.

Bicycles and Electric Scooters: Insurance

Asked by Baroness McIntosh of Pickering

To ask His Majesty's Government what consideration they have given to making insurance cover for pedal bikes, e- bikes and e-scooters compulsory; and what assessment they have made of the benefits that could be gained. [HL1127]

Lord Henty of Richmond Hill: Those who cycle on public roads are encouraged, but not required, to take out

some form of insurance, and many cyclists have insurance cover through their membership of cycling organisations. Any change requiring cyclists to have insurance before cycling on the public highway would be likely to have unintended consequences such as putting many people off cycling. This would have adverse impacts on health and congestion.

It is illegal to use privately owned e-scooters on public roads, cycle lanes and pavements, and rental e-scooters can only be hired in e-scooter trials areas. The e-scooters used in the rental trials are covered by full motor vehicle insurance policies.

Biodiversity

Asked by Baroness Jones of Moulsecoomb

To ask His Majesty's Government how they are monitoring the success and roll-out of biodiversity net gain policy; and what plans they have, if any, to review the current system of exemptions. [HL1038]

Baroness Hayman of Ullock: We will build the housing and infrastructure that Britain desperately needs while protecting the environment.

That is why we are working closely with the sector to make biodiversity net gain work effectively and proportionally, with exemptions in place for any development that would have no or minimal impact on nature.

The list of specified exemptions is narrow and focused and keeps the policy ambitious, whilst being proportionate and deliverable for developers and local planning authorities.

Officials are monitoring the implementation of biodiversity net gain closely, and regularly meet with those engaging with it across local planning authorities, developers, and the land management sector.

Biodiversity net gain fundamentally changes how developers choose land to build on and how they design sites, and we are pleased to see so many stakeholders embracing this opportunity to deliver both much needed development and deliver for the environment.

Asked by Baroness Jones of Moulsecoomb

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to (1) monitor, and (2) address, non-compliance with biodiversity net gain regulations. [HL1039]

Baroness Hayman of Ullock: We are working closely with local planning authorities, who are responsible for monitoring and addressing incidents of non-compliance with biodiversity net gain regulations.

Failure to deliver, or attempt to deliver, biodiversity net gain outcomes which are secured with conditions or limitations (subject to which planning permission is granted) can result in enforcement action by the planning authority. Planning authorities have a range of existing planning enforcement tools at their disposal.

Defra has funded the Planning Advisory Service to deliver training and guidance on biodiversity net gain to local planning authorities, ensuring they can competently enforce regulations.

As biodiversity net gain delivery develops, Defra will continue to review the role of guidance in supporting when enforcement action can be taken. Defra will also continue to work with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government on any future measures that could support enforcement of BNG and develop the essential housing and infrastructure Britain needs, while safeguarding the environment.

Asked by Lord Teverson

To ask His Majesty's Government how they are monitoring the success and roll-out of biodiversity net gain policy; and whether they have plans to review the current system of exemptions. [HL826]

Asked by Lord Teverson

To ask His Majesty's Government what initial assessment they have made of the implementation of biodiversity net gain to date. [HL827]

Asked by Lord Teverson

To ask His Majesty's Government what additional guidance to local planning authorities would be appropriate in order to ensure that exemptions to biodiversity net gain can be properly and confidently assessed. [HL828]

Baroness Hayman of Ullock: We will build the housing and infrastructure that Britain desperately needs while protecting the environment.

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Biodiversity net gain fundamentally changes how developers choose land to build on and how they design sites, and we are pleased to see so many stakeholders embracing this opportunity to deliver much needed development and deliver for the environment.

Birds: Conservation

Asked by Lord Roborough

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact of badger predation on

the nests of UK Red List bird species such as lapwings and curlews. [HL994]

Baroness Hayman of Ullock: The Government has not specifically assessed the impact of badger predation on the nests of UK Red List bird species. However, as opportunistic omnivores badgers have a varied diet and birds comprise only a small proportion of this and then mostly as carrion. While some predation does occur, there is no conclusive evidence that badgers have an impact on the conservation of ground-nesting birds such as lapwing and curlew.

Bluetongue Disease: Disease Control

Asked by Baroness McIntosh of Pickering

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the current threat of blue tongue in livestock; and what steps they are taking to prevent the spread of the disease. [HL658]

Baroness Hayman of Ullock: Following the initial findings of cases of bluetongue serotype 3 (BTV-3) virus in Norfolk in August 2024, Defra implemented a Temporary Control Zone (TCZ) around the affected premises and humanely culled infected animals to prevent potential spread. Our risk assessments had indicated the risk of incursion was high given the circulating disease in Europe and warmer weather.

After confirmation of BTV-3 on further premises and evidence of local transmission of bluetongue virus, in accordance with the bluetongue disease control framework we replaced the TCZ with a Restricted Zone and are no longer culling animals in this zone. This Restricted Zone prevents all ruminants, camelids and their germinal products moving outside the zone and potentially spreading disease. The Restricted Zone initially covered Norfolk and Suffolk and was subsequently extended to Essex.

Following suspicion of disease in cattle at a premises near Withersea, East Riding of Yorkshire, a case of BTV-3 was confirmed on 4 September. This is in an area previously free of bluetongue. A Temporary Control Zone (TCZ) has been implemented and the affected animal will be culled to minimise the risk of onward transmission.

Defra and APHA continue surveillance of susceptible animals and epidemiological assessments. Defra has also permitted the use of vaccines for BTV-3, under certain circumstances, in the high-risk counties of south east England.

The Government continues to monitor the outbreak closely.

Boots: Pensions

Asked by Lord Rooker

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of (1) the sale of the Boots Pension scheme to an insurance company and (2) the effect of

this sale on the protection provided to the pensions held in the Boots Pension scheme by the Pension Protection Fund. [HL905]

Baroness Sherlock: When a Defined Benefit pension scheme transfers responsibility for paying some or all of its members' benefits to an insurer, the scheme pays a premium to the insurance company, which then takes on responsibility for paying the promised benefits. This is a well-established approach used by pension scheme trustees to secure the promised pensions for members with an insurance company.

Arrangements to provide pension benefits to some or all scheme members with an insurer are secure and offer long term protection for member benefits. Insurance companies are regulated by the Prudential Regulation Authority and their policy holders are protected by the Financial Services Compensation Scheme.

Pension Protection Fund protection is retained until the whole scheme is transferred to an insurer, and both the sponsor and the trustees are discharged. At that point the members are no longer protected by the Pension Protection Fund. This is because all benefits are now secured with an insurance company.

No assessments of individual schemes are made by Government.

Bovine Tuberculosis: Disease Control

Asked by Baroness Jones of Moulsecoomb

To ask His Majesty's Government, in light of the complaint in relation to the Government's badger culling policy being considered by the Bureau of the Standing Committee of the Bern Convention at its third meeting of 2024, what methods have been used to measure the badger population since 2012 to ensure local extinction events do not take place. [HL935]

Baroness Hayman of Ullock: As part of the existing badger control licensing policy, for intensive and supplementary badger control, Natural England set minimum and maximum numbers of badgers to be removed, in order to comply with commitments under the Bern Convention. This is to ensure the badger control operations deliver disease reduction benefits without endangering the local badger population.

The number of badgers removed and extent of culling activity is also closely monitored by Natural England during the operational period to ensure local extinction of badgers is avoided and to monitor the humaneness, safety and effectiveness of these culls. In addition, prior to licence authorisation, Natural England can also conduct sett surveys and sett checks in order to determine whether there is badger activity present in an area and that local extinction has not occurred.

On 30 August, the new Government announced the start of work to refresh the Bovine TB strategy for England, to end the badger cull by the end of this parliament and drive down disease to save cattle and farmers' livelihoods. This work starts immediately and includes the launch a new

survey to start this winter to update estimates of badger abundance and population recovery.

Further details can be found on GOV.UK at <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-to-end-badger-cull-with-new-tb-eradication-strategy> (attached).

The Answer includes the following attached material:

Attachment for HL935 [New TB eradication strategy.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at: <http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2024-09-10/HL935>

Asked by **Baroness Jones of Moulsecoomb**

To ask His Majesty's Government, in light of the complaint in relation to the Government's badger culling policy being considered by the Bureau of the Standing Committee of the Bern Convention at its third meeting of 2024, on what occasions their actions have been brought to the attention of the Bureau of the Standing Committee, and how many times that they are aware of has an open file been kept on their actions. [HL936]

Baroness Hayman of Ullock: A complaint was submitted to the Bureau of the Standing Committee of the Bern Convention in 2019 in relation to the licensed culling of badgers to prevent the spread of bovine tuberculosis (bTB) in England. In response to the evidence submitted by the UK Government, the Bureau decided there was insufficient evidence to open a complaint. Instead, it decided to keep it on standby so the situation could be monitored. As requested by the Bureau the UK has provided further progress reports in 2021 and 2023. The UK's next progress report is due in July 2026.

Bovine Tuberculosis: Vaccination

Asked by **Lord Roborough**

To ask His Majesty's Government what trials they intend to conduct and publish on the efficacy of vaccinating badgers in the wild against bovine tuberculosis, and its impact on transmission to cattle, before transitioning from culling to vaccination. [HL993]

Baroness Hayman of Ullock: There is already a significant evidence base which underpins the use of badger vaccination as a tool for the control of bovine tuberculosis (TB). Trials on captive badgers, modelling studies and field studies on wild badgers all indicate that badger vaccination will significantly reduce the risk of infection and spread of disease within badger populations. Logically, as badgers cause a proportion of cattle breakdowns each year, and since badger vaccination has been proven to reduce the disease burden in the badger population, vaccination should result in a reduction in TB incidence in cattle where badgers are the source of infection. This has also been demonstrated by large scale field trials in Ireland which found that badger vaccination

is not inferior to badger culling at controlling TB in cattle. Vaccination would also play a role in protecting healthy badgers, preventing the spread of TB from cattle to badgers.

On 30 August, the Government announced the start of work to refresh the Bovine TB strategy for England, to end the badger cull by the end of this parliament and drive down disease to save cattle and farmers' livelihoods. This includes establishing a new Badger Vaccinator Field Force to increase badger vaccination delivery to drive down TB rates and protect badgers.

Wider deployment of badger vaccination will increase opportunities for further research on its effect in badgers and cattle, by creating the large and contiguous areas of vaccination needed to be able to detect an effect. Accordingly, as part of this recent announcement, the Government has committed to rapidly analyse the effect of badger vaccination on the incidence of TB in cattle, to encourage farmers to take part and provide greater confidence that doing so will have a positive effect on their cattle. This will build on the analytical work that is already underway in the Animal and Plant Health Agency using a "herd-level" analysis of historic badger vaccination data.

Brazil: Climate Change and Sustainable Development

Asked by **Baroness Anelay of St Johns**

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to support the UK–Brazil Partnership on Green and Inclusive Growth announced on 24 May; and whether they endorse the initial five main pillars of the agreement relating to climate, forests, agriculture, energy and finance. [HL566]

Baroness Chapman of Darlington: The UK government wants to strengthen our long-standing cooperation with Brazil on climate, energy, and nature. We are proud to be the third biggest contributor of climate finance to Brazil and are boosting our relationships with Brazilian ministers and officials. Last month, the Secretary of State for Energy and Net Zero visited Brazil and underlined the UK's ongoing commitment to work with the Brazilian government to realise our shared ambition on climate mitigation, finance, deforestation, and energy transition. The subsequent joint statement reaffirmed our collective desire to strengthen collaboration, including under the existing UK-Brazil Partnership for Green and Inclusive Growth and committed us to develop a Bilateral Strategic Dialogue on Climate.

Breast Cancer: Statistics

Asked by **Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick**

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the quality and consistency of triple

negative breast cancer data collected in England; and what steps they are taking to improve it. [HL727]

Baroness Merron: Data on triple negative breast cancer for England is collected through the National Disease Registration Service (NDRS). An NDRS Quality Assurance Team is in place to identify, investigate, and monitor data quality issues, with over 130 Quality Assurance reports being run each month as well as quarterly reports to assess the completeness of key data.

To drive up the completeness of the data for triple negative breast cancer, progesterone receptor status, human epidermal growth factor receptor in situ hybridization status, and oestrogen receptor status are part of the Cancer Outcomes and Services Data set, which supports national registration.

British Indian Ocean Territory: Sovereignty

Asked by Lord Kempson

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the military and security impact of negotiations between the UK and Mauritius on the exercise of sovereignty over the British Indian Ocean Territory; and what is the timeline for these negotiations. [HL888]

Baroness Chapman of Darlington: The UK and Mauritius have held 12 rounds of negotiations on the exercise of sovereignty over British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT). Whilst it is too early to speculate on timelines or conclusions, our priority remains to resolve this important issue and ensure that any agreement protects the long-term effective and secure operation of the joint UK/US military base on Diego Garcia.

British Indian Ocean Territory: Tamils

Asked by Lord Moylan

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they have plans to transport Sri Lankan nationals from Diego Garcia to the UK and if so, how many persons, and when; what assessment they have made as to how many such persons were trafficked to Diego Garcia by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), an organisation proscribed under the Terrorism Act 2000, or its associates; what security risks may arise as a result of any links to the LTTE; and what consideration they have given to the possibility of returning them to Sri Lanka as a safe country. [HL662]

Baroness Chapman of Darlington: The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office is engaging in ongoing discussions with relevant departments regarding this issue. The BIOT is not a suitable long-term location for the migrants, which is why we are working to find a lasting solution. The BIOT Administration have put in place a process for considering claims for protection, which is thorough and comprehensive, but do not comment publicly on individual claims for protection. We

are not aware of any involvement of LTTE in trafficking the migrants, and continue to cooperate with international partners to try and prevent criminal groups exploiting individuals and sending them on dangerous journeys across the sea.

British Nationality: Children

Asked by Baroness Lister of Burtersett

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to encourage and support local authorities to ensure that children in their care with rights to British citizenship have their citizenship rights confirmed or registered, including where necessary by confirming relevant information from records held by the Home Office. [HL655]

Asked by Baroness Lister of Burtersett

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to ensure that children with rights to British citizenship can secure their citizenship rights where hostile British or settled fathers are unwilling to support their child's registration or passport applications. [HL656]

Asked by Baroness Lister of Burtersett

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to fulfil the commitments made to Parliament at the time of the creation of British citizenship under the British Nationality Act 1981 that information would be made available to affected individuals. [HL657]

Lord Hanson of Flint: The Home Office regularly engages with local authorities to support them in ensuring that children in local authority care, who are not already British citizens, can make an appropriate application for registration for citizenship. Children in local authority care are not required to pay an application fee when applying for registration as a British citizen.

In most cases, local authorities have access to the information needed to establish the citizenship rights and apply for registration for children in their care. Where there are evidence gaps, the Home Office will assist any applicant by checking information held in its records to confirm a claim.

Following the implementation of the British Nationality Act 1981, a range of explanatory material was prepared to support those affected by changes made by the Act. This material has been maintained and now forms part of the content of the relevant GOV.UK pages. The Home Office maintains published customer guidance for every British citizenship and nationality route, and also provides a British nationality status confirmation service.

Asked by Baroness Lister of Burtersett

To ask His Majesty's Government what, if any, race equality impact assessment has been made of policy and practice relating to registering statutory rights to British citizenship. [HL717]

*Asked by **Baroness Lister of Burtersett***

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they will take to ensure that the right to British citizenship under the British Nationality Act 1981 is not confused or conflated with the powers and discretion delegated to the Home Secretary to manage the immigration system including naturalisation of adult migrants. [HL718]

*Asked by **Baroness Lister of Burtersett***

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to ensure that statutory rights to be registered as a British citizen under the British Nationality Act 1981 are exercised so that all children who are born, and have grown up, in the UK are recognised as citizens. [HL720]

Lord Hanson of Flint: In line with the duties introduced by the Equality Act 2010, the Home Office undertakes an equality impact assessment whenever decisions are taken on policy relating to registering statutory rights to British citizenship. Most recently, equality impact assessments were undertaken when changes were made to Section 3(1) British Nationality Act 1981 and on the introduction of the Nationality and Borders Act 2022.

There are various provisions within the British Nationality Act 1981 that allow for children born in the UK to register as British citizens. The Home Office has published clear and easy to follow guidance for applications under each of these sections. Home Office caseworkers are trained to carry out their duties to ensure that those who apply and meet the statutory requirements are granted citizenship.

British Nationals Abroad: Antisemitism

*Asked by **Lord Alton of Liverpool***

To ask His Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with the government of Switzerland following recent allegations of an antisemitic attack on a British Orthodox Jew in Davos; and what diplomatic steps they are taking to help protect British nationals from antisemitic violence abroad and ensure their safety in such incidents. [HL862]

Lord Collins of Highbury: We have not, to date, been approached for consular assistance by the victim of the attack in Davos on the night of Friday 23 August. However, the British Embassy in Berne has been engaging with stakeholders on antisemitism, in line with the work of the UK's chair of International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance. Our Embassy continues to have significant engagement planned throughout the coming months, including with the Swiss Government and Civil Society. Antisemitism has absolutely no place in any society, which is why we are taking a lead in tackling it in all its forms. Consular staff stand ready to support British nationals overseas at all times.

British Nationals Abroad: EU Countries

*Asked by **Viscount Waverley***

To ask His Majesty's Government whether British citizens with residency in a Schengen Area country will be required to register biometrics and fingerprints on their first visit to the Schengen Area after the EU's entry / exit system is introduced. [HL919]

Lord Hanson of Flint: The EU's Entry/Exit System (EES) is an automated IT system for registering non-EU nationals travelling for a short stay, each time they cross the external borders of any of the participating European countries.

However, non-EU nationals that hold a residency card or permit in a Schengen Area country and those holding documents showing they qualify as Withdrawal Agreement beneficiaries will not be required to register for EES, this includes British citizens.

British Standards Institution

*Asked by **Lord Roborough***

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they intend to continue their partnership with the British Standards Institute on creating high-integrity natural capital and carbon offsetting standards. [HL760]

Baroness Hayman of Ullock: Subject to the outcome of the Spending Review, Defra intends to continue to partner with the British Standards Institution on the Nature Investment Standards Programme.

Building Regulations

*Asked by **Lord Ravensdale***

To ask His Majesty's Government when they intend to legislate to bring in the Future Homes Standard and Future Buildings Standard; and when these will apply to all new (1) domestic, and (2) non-domestic, buildings respectively. [HL987]

Baroness Taylor of Stevenage: The Future Homes and Buildings Standards consultation was published in December 2023 and closed in March 2024, and a government response has not yet been issued. The consultation proposed that the new standards would apply to all new domestic and non-domestic buildings.

We fully support the need for low carbon homes and buildings, fit for a net zero future. We are reviewing proposals and feedback from the Future Homes and Buildings Standards consultation and will publish the government response in due course.

Bus Services: Concessions

*Asked by **Lord Kempson***

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they plan to extend the £2 bus fare cap beyond 31 December 2024. [HL713]

Lord Hendy of Richmond Hill: Delivering reliable and affordable public transport services for passengers is one of the government's top priorities and we know how important this is for passengers and for local growth. The Department for Transport is looking at the future of the £2 fare cap as a matter of urgency, and is considering the most appropriate and affordable approach for the future of the scheme.

Business Premises: Solar Power

Asked by Lord Bach

To ask His Majesty's Government what consideration they have given to reforming the planning system to examine the installation of solar panels on newly constructed industrial premises. [HL956]

Baroness Taylor of Stevenage: As part of our plans to triple solar capacity we are consulting on extra measures in the National Planning Policy Framework that highlight the importance of solar power to our clean energy ambitions.

Separately, 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.

Business Rates: Valuation

Asked by Lord Browne of Ladyton

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact of the last Valuation Office Agency business rates revaluation on critical national infrastructure, including airports and power stations. [HL740]

Lord Livermore: The last business rates revaluation, which came into effect in England and Wales on 1 April 2023, resulted in a fall in the total rateable values for each of the sectors shown below. Using the examples provided, the figures below demonstrate the overall change in total rateable value (RV) for civil airports and fossil fuel power stations, between the 2017 and 2023 rating lists.

Civil airports.

2017 RV: £392,425,000

2023 RV: £390,997,000

Fossil fuel power stations.

2017 RV: £164,653,000

2023 RV: £138,420,000

For transparency the VOA publishes official statistics for each property class, which show the change in RV. These can be found on the Non-domestic Rating Stock of Properties statistics pages for 2023 and 2024.

The VOA carried out a revaluation of around 2.1 million non-domestic properties in England and Wales to produce the 2023 rating list. The new RVs came into force on 1 April 2023, with the 2023 RV reflecting

changes in rental values between 1 April 2015 and 31 March 2021.

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

Cabinet Office: Civil Servants

Asked by Baroness Neville-Rolfe

To ask His Majesty's Government, with reference to section 7 of the Ministerial Code, whether the Paymaster General and Minister for the Cabinet Office made a declaration of interest to (1) the Permanent Secretary of the Cabinet Office or (2) the Independent Adviser on Ministerial Interests, in relation to the ministerial appointment of a Labour staffer from his parliamentary office, funded by Labour Together donors, to the Cabinet Office's Propriety and Constitution Group as a civil servant without open and fair competition. [HL663]

Baroness Twycross: There is a well-established process in place for the declaration and management of ministers' private interests, which has been followed in all instances.

Cabinet Office: Departmental Responsibilities

Asked by Baroness Neville-Rolfe

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to transfer Cabinet Office-sponsored (1) functions, and (2) agencies, to other Government departments. [HL979]

Baroness Twycross: Following the 4th July 2024 election, there have been two Written Ministerial Statements outlining several Machinery of Government changes, all of which impact the Cabinet Office. The Written Ministerial Statement laid on 24th July 2024 (HCWS19) announced:

- The Office for Veterans' Affairs will move from the Cabinet Office to the Ministry of Defence
- Digital functions (i.AI, Government Digital Service, Central Digital and Data Office) will move from the Cabinet Office to the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology
- Ministerial oversight of the EU relationship (existing agreements and the future relationship) will move from the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) to the Cabinet Office
- Government Car Service will move from the Department for Transport (DfT) to the Cabinet Office

A later Written Ministerial Statement laid on 5th September set out:

- Responsibility for Union and devolution policy across Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland is moving from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to the Cabinet Office

Cabinet Office staff are now working on the implementation of the above Machinery of Government Changes, including scoping and impact assessment.

Cabotage: Arts

*Asked by **The Earl of Clancarty***

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they plan to negotiate a cabotage exemption for the creative industries within the EU. [[HL1109](#)]

Lord Henty of Richmond Hill: The Department for Transport is committed to working closely with the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, Department for Culture, Media and Sport, Cabinet Office and other relevant Whitehall departments to address key challenges facing the UK's creative professionals and their support staff when touring in the EU.

We are working hard to reset the relationship with our European friends and know that strengthening this relationship will take time. This Government is ambitious and wants to make swift progress, with clear manifesto priorities for the creative and cultural sectors.

Cancer: Health Services and Mortality Rates

*Asked by **Lord Taylor of Warwick***

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the findings in the review by Lord Darzi of Denham Independent Investigation of the National Health Service in England, published on 12 September, that (1) "cancer care lags behind other countries", and (2) "the UK has appreciably higher cancer mortality rates than other countries" [[HL1090](#)]

Baroness Merron: Professor Lord Darzi's report sets out that the United Kingdom has higher mortality from cancer than neighbouring countries, the Nordic countries, and other English-speaking countries, using data published by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. His report also uses the latest data from the International Cancer Benchmarking Partnership to show that five-year survival for common cancers is below that of comparable countries.

The Department remains committed to improving cancer survival rates by hitting all National Health Service cancer waiting time targets within five years, so no patient waits longer than they should.

We will get the NHS diagnosing cancer on time, diagnosing it earlier, and treating it faster, and we will improve patients' experience across the system.

The findings of Professor Lord Darzi's independent review will feed into the Government's 10-year plan to build a health service that is fit for the future. We are

considering how a long-term strategic approach to cancer would best fit in with the 10-year plan.

Carbon Emissions

*Asked by **Lord Roberts of Llandudno***

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the recommendations of the report by Zero Hour, *Net Zero: The Ambition Gap*, published on 10 August 2022. [[HL1133](#)]

Lord Hunt of Kings Heath: The Government sees fighting climate change as a priority and has already taken actions to address it while delivering for communities through its Clean Energy Superpower mission, for example by delivering 131 clean energy projects powering the equivalent of 11 million homes at the Sixth renewables auction. The level of our Sixth Carbon Budget, which the Climate Change Committee recommended, aligns with the temperature goal of the Paris Agreement.

This Government will set out how it intends to deliver these commitments in its response to the Climate Change Committee Progress report in the autumn and its updated Carbon Budget Delivery Plan in spring next year.

*Asked by **Lord Roberts of Llandudno***

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to align their carbon emission reduction plan with the UK's proportionate share of the remaining global carbon budget for limiting global heating to 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels. [[HL1135](#)]

Lord Hunt of Kings Heath: As a Party to the Paris Agreement, the UK is committed to contributing to global emissions reductions to limit global temperature rise to well below 2 degrees and to pursue efforts towards 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels. The level of our Sixth Carbon Budget, which the Climate Change Committee recommended, aligns with the temperature goal of the Paris Agreement.

The Government has already taken action to combat climate change through its Clean Energy Superpower mission, for example by delivering 131 clean energy projects powering the equivalent of 11 million homes at the Sixth renewables auction. The Government encourages all countries to bring forward ambitious, economy-wide 1.5°C aligned NDCs that take into account the outcomes of the Global Stocktake by the 2025 deadline.

Casement Park: Regeneration

*Asked by **Lord McCrea of Magherafelt and Cookstown***

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the amount of public money that will be spent on the redevelopment of Casement Park in Belfast. [[HL805](#)]

Baroness Twycross: The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport wrote to Gordon Lyons MLA, the Northern Ireland Minister for Communities, on Friday 13 September to update him on the funding of Casement Park for EURO 2028. The letter (which is published on gov.uk and a copy of which I will place in the Library of both Houses) states that they have, regrettably, decided that it is not appropriate for the UK Government to provide funding to seek to build Casement Park in time to host matches at EURO 2028 based on unreasonable cost and high delivery risk.

The Government will seek engagement with Northern Ireland partners, including the Gaelic Athletic Association, in the coming weeks, to discuss this decision in more detail as well as seeking views on the appropriate way forward for Casement Park.

Central and North West London NHS Foundation Trust: Training

Asked by Lord McCrea of Magherafelt and Cookstown

To ask His Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with the chief executive of the NHS concerning reports that Central and North West London NHS Foundation Trust emailed staff advising them not to attend anti-Semitism awareness training. [HL847]

Baroness Merron: Ministers meet regularly with NHS England's Chief Executive and other senior representatives to discuss a wide range of issues. The communication circulated by the Central and North West London NHS Foundation Trust requesting that staff did not attend the antisemitism awareness training does not represent the corporate view of the trust. The communication has been rescinded and an apology issued by the trust's Chief Executive.

NHS England provides funding for antisemitism training, alongside training on islamophobia, across the National Health Service. Employers are expected to encourage their staff to attend these training events.

Child Cancer Awareness Month

Asked by Lord Lancaster of Kimbolton

To ask His Majesty's Government what activities they have carried out to support Child Cancer Awareness Month. [HL1046]

Baroness Merron: We are committed to helping the NHS diagnose cancer on time, diagnose it earlier and treat it faster so that more patients survive this horrible set of diseases. We are also committed to improving patients' experience across the system. This includes children and young people cancer and their families.

The Department is currently reviewing the work of the Children and Young People's Cancer Taskforce and are in the process of considering next steps for taking forward the Taskforce's work.

Child Tax Credit

Asked by Baroness Lister of Burtersett

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Baroness Sherlock on 24 July (HL300), what is their most recent estimate of the cost of abolishing the two-child limit; and how this compares with the external estimates referred to. [HL652]

Baroness Sherlock: No estimates have been published.

While we cannot commit to changing the two child policy at this time, tackling child poverty is at the heart of the Government's mission to break down barriers to opportunity and improve the life chances of every child. This is why the child poverty taskforce will look at all available levers to reduce child poverty, including social security reforms, before publishing a strategy in Spring 2025.

The taskforce will engage external experts throughout the strategy development process including through a rolling programme of meetings, with sessions built thematically to bring together a broad range of experts on specific topics.

The Government also recognises the importance of capturing the experiences of those living in poverty which is why the taskforce will also draw on findings from wider external engagement events in all regions and nations of the UK. These events will convene a broader range of voices, including bringing in the perspectives of families and children themselves.

Children and Families: Protection

Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to ensure the protection of families and young children, particularly in light of (1) the decrease in local authority spending on early intervention services, and (2) the rising number of children in residential care. [HL732]

Baroness Smith of Malvern: The department recognises that there is a strong evidence base for early intervention to support families stay together and thrive. This will be at the heart of this government's system reform of children's social care.

Through the £45 million Families First for Children Pathfinder and Family Network Pilot, the department 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, to prevent escalation, to keep children safe and help families to overcome challenges, stay together and thrive. The pathfinder is being independently evaluated. Early evaluation findings are expected in spring 2025.

The department recognises that there are increasing numbers of children in high cost, residential placements.

Whilst many children benefit from high quality children's homes, for too many children, residential placements do not meet their needs and are putting significant pressures on local authority budgets. This is why the department is committed to supporting alternatives to care for children who cannot stay with their birth parents, such as kinship arrangements. Through the Family's First for Children pathfinder and Family Network Pilot, the department aims to make 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.

Furthermore, foster carers play a vital role in the care system, offering stable, nurturing, and loving family environments. However, in recent years the number of people applying to be foster carers has dropped significantly. The department is addressing this through a suite of measures. Key among these is the creation of a regional approach where 99 local authorities are working in 10 regional clusters, collaborating to recruit and retain foster carers.

This government is introducing a Children's Wellbeing Bill to support these reforms, including through a strengthened multi-agency response. The department will also take targeted action on specific harms such as child criminal and sexual exploitation.

Children and Young People Cancer Taskforce

Asked by Lord Lancaster of Kimbolton

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Department of Health and Social Care on 6 September (HC2283), why they have paused the work of the Child and Young Person Cancer Taskforce. [HL1045]

Baroness Merron: The Children and Young People's Cancer Taskforce was paused so that ministers could assess the work of the taskforce so far and determine how it fitted into the Government's priorities for the Department. Although the taskforce has been paused, the work carried out to date has been valuable, and remains important to the Department's work. We are committed to progressing work in this area, and are in the process of considering next steps for taking forward the taskforce's work and leadership.

Children in Care

Asked by Lord Laming

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to reduce the number of children who are taken into the care of local authorities. [HL646]

Asked by Lord Laming

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to improve services that aim to prevent children being taken into the care of local authorities. [HL647]

Baroness Smith of Malvern: 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.

The department recognises that there is a strong evidence base for early intervention to support families to stay together and thrive, and this will be at the heart of its whole system reform of children's social care.

This department also recognises the valuable and important role that kinship carers play in caring for some of the most vulnerable children. The government's manifesto set out a commitment to working with local government to support children in care, including through kinship arrangements.

Through the £45 million Families First for Children pathfinder and Family Network Pilot, the government is testing the implementation of intensive whole family support in ten pathfinder local authorities. In these local authorities, multi-disciplinary teams are providing targeted support to help families overcome challenges at the earliest opportunity to prevent escalation.

These local authorities are also making greater use of family networks by 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.

Children: Mental Health

Asked by Baroness Nicholson of Winterbourne

To ask His Majesty's Government how they are promoting collaboration between the Department for Education and the Department of Health and Social Care on the rising number of mental health cases among children in primary school; and what meetings Health and Education ministers have had on this topic. [HL1074]

Baroness Merron: Ministers and officials in the Department of Health and Social Care will continue to work closely with colleagues at the Department for Education, as part of our mission to build a National Health Service that is fit for the future, and that supports the mental health needs of children of primary school age.

We are working with our colleagues at NHS England and the Department for Education to consider options to deliver our commitments to recruit 8,500 additional mental health workers across children and adult mental health services, and to introduce a specialist mental health professional in every school, so that mental health conditions, such as anxiety and depression, can be identified early on and prevented from developing into more serious conditions in later life. Ministers have not

yet met to discuss this particular topic, but there are plans to do so in the future.

Children: Musical Instruments

Asked by Lord Kempson

To ask His Majesty's Government what progress they have made towards helping every child to learn to play a musical instrument. [HL846]

Baroness Smith of Malvern: The government believes that creative subjects like arts, music and drama are significant elements of the rounded and enriching education every child deserves to receive. Under this government, the arts and music will no longer be the preserve of a privileged few.

One of the aims of the existing National Curriculum programmes of study for music from age 5 to 14 is to ensure that all pupils in England have the opportunity to learn a musical instrument. However, academies and free schools are not required to follow the National Curriculum. The government has established an independent review of the curriculum and assessment from ages 5 to 18, which will be led by Professor Becky Francis CBE, and one of the aims is to deliver a broader curriculum so that pupils do not miss out on subjects such as music. When the review has concluded, subject to parliament passing the Children's Wellbeing Bill, the department will require all state-funded schools, including academies and free schools, to follow the National Curriculum.

The department additionally supports children to learn to play instruments through the Music Hubs programme which support instrumental teaching in schools, including whole class ensemble teaching, instrument tuition, an instrument hire service, continuing professional development for teachers and access to local, regional and national ensemble. In 2022/23, Music Hubs provided support to around 90% of schools across England.

Children: Speech and Language Disorders

Asked by Lord Touhig

To ask His Majesty's Government which providers of language intervention programmes for schools they support with funding. [HL1093]

Asked by Lord Touhig

To ask His Majesty's Government how many children have completed language intervention programmes each year since such programmes were first funded by the Government in 2021. [HL1094]

Asked by Lord Touhig

To ask His Majesty's Government how many schools registered to deliver language intervention programmes in (1) 2021, (2) 2022, and (3) 2023, and how many

completed the full work programme in each of those years. [HL1095]

Baroness Smith of Malvern: The department works with the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) to support building the evidence base for early language interventions. In July 2024, the department announced that funded support for the 11,100 schools registered for the Nuffield Early Language Intervention (NELI) programme (two thirds of English state primary schools) would continue for the 2024/25 academic year. NELI is the most robustly evidenced early language programme in the UK, helping children who need extra support with their speech and language development to make four months of additional progress and seven months for those on free school meals.

To support early language skills, the department has invested over £20 million in NELI. The department does not hold the exact number of children who have completed NELI since 2020, but an estimate is based on the data included in EEF's 'NELI Scale-up: Evaluation Report - Year 2', as attached. The programme has screened more than 650,000 children in the last four years and supported more than 210,000 four and five-year-olds since the pandemic. Broken down by academic year, this is:

2020/21: 35,000.
2021/22: 59,000.
2022/23: 58,000.
2023/24: 59,000.

The Stronger Practice Hubs, which provide advice, share good practice and offer evidence-based professional development for early years practitioners, have also collaborated with the EEF to fund and make places available on several early language programmes. This is helping to strengthen and add to the evidence base of early years professional development programmes. The department does not hold data on the number of children who have benefitted from these programmes.

The number of new schools who registered to deliver NELI in each academic year since 2020 are as follows:

2020/21: 6,668.
2021/22: 4,418.
2022/23: 26.
2023/24: no new school registration undertaken.

For registered schools, the government has continued to fund the intervention so that schools can deliver the programme to new cohorts of reception children, where they are identified with below or well-below average language levels. We do not hold figures on how many of these schools completed the full work programme in each of those years.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

HL1093_HL1094_HL1095_attachment
[HL1093_HL1094_HL1095_NELI_Scale_Up_Evaluation_Report_Year_2.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:
<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2024-09-12/HL1093>

China: Cybercrime

Asked by *Lord Alton of Liverpool*

To ask His Majesty's Government what account was taken of the recent hack of the Electoral Commission and the alleged hack of the Ministry of Defence by China, and its aggressive military action in the South China Sea, before authorising the attendance of the UK's Air Vice-Marshal at a recent reception at the Chinese Embassy to celebrate the 97th anniversary of the founding of the People's Liberation Army. [HL479]

Lord Coaker: The Government is taking a consistent, long term and strategic approach to managing the UK's relations with China, rooted in UK and global interests, by co-operating where we can as fellow permanent members of the UN Security Council. But we will also compete where we have different interests and challenge where we must, to protect our national security and values.

The bilateral defence relationship with the People's Liberation Army (PLA) plays an important role in this, including recent senior military attendance at the PLA Anniversary Reception in London, where UK attendance was agreed in June 2024.

China: Development Aid

Asked by *Lord Alton of Liverpool*

To ask His Majesty's Government what is their policy in relation to the provision of development aid to entities within China; and what is the total of UK aid provided to the China in the past 10 years. [HL558]

Lord Collins of Highbury: Total UK Official Development Assistance (ODA) spend to China between 2014-2022 was £356.6 million, including FCDO ODA spend such as Chevening scholarships and British Council activity. In a Written Ministerial Statement in April 2021, the FCDO committed to cut ODA funded programmes in China by 95 per cent from the 2021-22 financial year, which it delivered. Final data for 2023 UK ODA spend will be available when the next Statistics for International Development is published on 26 September 2024.

China: Human Rights

Asked by *Lord Alton of Liverpool*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the potential implications for the UK's relationship with China of (1) the detention of Uyghur children in boarding schools in Xinjiang, and (2) the alleged cultural genocide perpetrated by the government of China through the forced assimilation of Uyghur and Kazakh children; and what diplomatic actions are being taken to address these concerns. [HL863]

Baroness Chapman of Darlington: This Government will take a consistent, long term and strategic approach to managing the UK's relations with China, rooted in UK and global interests.

We stand firm on human rights, including in Xinjiang, where China continues to persecute and arbitrarily detain Uyghurs and other predominantly Muslim minorities. We raise our concerns at the highest levels of the Chinese government. The Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary both raised human rights in their recent introductory discussions with President Xi and Foreign Minister Wang.

Chinese Embassy

Asked by *Viscount Waverley*

To ask His Majesty's Government when the application by China to situate its embassy in a new site in London is expected to be determined; and whether they anticipate any delay to that process, and if so, why. [HL773]

Baroness Taylor of Stevenage: The planning application for a proposed new Chinese Embassy is currently with the London Borough of Tower Hamlets. The timing of determining the application is a matter for them as the local planning authority. No further comment can be made in respect of this, or any prospective scheme, as to do so may prejudice any future decision the Deputy Prime Minister in her role as Secretary of State for the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government may need to make should this application come before her in the future.

Christopher Allen

Asked by *Lord Black of Brentwood*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they have made any representations to the government of South Sudan about the death of Christopher Allen in 2017 following the publication in March 2024 of the report by the South Sudan Investigation Committee into his death. [HL707]

Lord Collins of Highbury: The UK consistently pressed the Government of South Sudan to conduct a thorough and credible investigation into the death of Christopher Allen which resulted in the formation of the South Sudan Investigative Committee in 2023. We continue to press the Government of South Sudan to ensure protection of journalists and humanitarian workers. We champion the importance of media freedom and civil space, including urging the government to hold to account those who abuse or restrict media freedom.

Civil Partnerships

Asked by *Lord Teverson*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they plan to ensure that UK citizens have the right to marry or

form a civil partnership, other than a marriage of convenience, with whom they wish, and have the freedom to reside with their spouse or partner in the UK whatever their wealth or income. [HL699]

Lord Hanson of Flint: British citizens and those settled in the UK are free to enter into a genuine relationship with whomever they choose. Foreign partners are able to come to the UK to be married or enter into a civil partnership through a visit visa, where they intend to return home, or a fiancé visa where they intend to go on to apply for permission to stay as a spouse or partner.

Unmarried partners, where the couple have been in a relationship similar to marriage or civil partnership for at least 2 years are able to apply for a permission to enter or stay in the UK as partner.

For those intending to establish their family life in the UK through the spouse, partner or fiancé routes, it is appropriate they should do so on a basis which is fair to the UK taxpayer and promotes integration with the wider community.

The government has announced the intention to commission the Migration Advisory Committee (MAC) to conduct a review of the financial requirements of the family immigration rules and will take into account their recommendations.

Civil Proceedings: Legal Aid Scheme

Asked by The Lord Bishop of Bristol

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they intend to continue the Review of Civil Legal Aid; and if so, when they intend to publish a final report. [HL583]

Lord Ponsonby of Shulbrede: We are committed to ensuring the long-term sustainability of the civil legal aid sector and are keen to work closely with practitioners and their representative bodies to look at how best we can address this.

We want to understand the different ways in which the justice system can be improved and will be carefully considering our options on the way forward. This includes considering the evidence on civil legal aid gathered over the past year.

Civil Servants: Clothing

Asked by Baroness Jenkin of Kennington

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Baroness Twycross on 7 August (HL346), whether this clothing policy applies to all staff in the Department for Work and Pensions. [HL1037]

Baroness Sherlock: The DWP's standards of behaviour statement requires employees to dress in a professional and business-like way. Professional and business-like has a normal, everyday meaning.

Civil Servants: Email

Asked by Baroness Hayter of Kentish Town

To ask His Majesty's Government what is their policy on Civil Service and other Government staff adding membership or support logos to their official email or correspondence signatures. [HL752]

Baroness Twycross: There is no central policy on email signatures in the Civil Service. Individual departments may choose to provide their civil servants with guidance on this matter. Civil servants should of course be mindful of the core values in the Civil Service Code, including ensuring anything included in their signatures maintains their commitment to impartiality.

Civil Servants: LGBT+ People

Asked by Lord Lucas

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Baroness Twycross on 7 August (HL345), how many staffing hours are allocated to the Civil Service LGBT+ Network, and across how many staff members. [HL1057]

Baroness Twycross: Allocation of working time spent on cross-government staff networks is an agreement between the staff network volunteers and their departments as employers.

The majority of staff time spent on the Civil Service LGBT+ Network is voluntary and unpaid. There are no central records on how many staff members participate in the network.

Civil Servants: Recruitment

Asked by Baroness Neville-Rolfe

To ask His Majesty's Government how many staff previously working for (1) the Labour Party, (2) Labour Together, and (3) Labour Parliamentarians, have been recruited without open and fair competition to the Civil Service since the general election, other than as special advisers. [HL664]

Baroness Twycross: Data on the work history of those appointed into the Civil Service is not routinely collated.

Previous political activity does not preclude appointment into the Civil Service. All Civil Servants are expected to support the government of the day in accordance with the values of the Civil Service Code, including impartiality. Routine recruitment processes are in place to allow candidates to declare any potential conflicts of interest, and to discuss how these should be handled.

Where appointments are made by exception to the principle of fair and open competition, the employing department must be satisfied that the use of the relevant exceptions route is justified and that the individuals in question can uphold the Civil Service Code values.

Civil Servants: Remote Working

Asked by Lord Kempson

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they plan to maintain the Civil Service work-from-home rules, introduced in November 2023, which require Civil Servants to work in the office or face-to-face 60 per cent of the time, and whether they will publish a copy of those rules. [HL640]

Baroness Twycross: Current Civil Service guidance requires Civil Servants to attend the office or work face-to-face with colleagues at least 60% of the time. There are no plans to change those requirements.

Asked by Lord Kempson

To ask His Majesty's Government when they will resume publication of Civil Service office attendance data; and how that data is broken down by department for the period between May and July this year. [HL641]

Baroness Twycross: The publication of this data was suspended in line with pre-election guidance for the duration of the Pre-Election Period. We will provide an update on future publication plans in due course.

Civil Servants: Sexuality

Asked by Lord Lucas

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Baroness Twycross on 12 August (HL426), whether the Ministry of Justice has received such representations from the Public and Commercial Services Union; and what was their response. [HL1056]

Lord Ponsonby of Shulbrede: The Public and Commercial Services Union has not made any representations to the Ministry of Justice regarding this motion and therefore no response was given.

Civil Service: Equality

Asked by Baroness Jenkin of Kennington

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by the Parliamentary Secretary at the Cabinet Office on 30 July (HC936), whether they now intend to publish the data gathered from the Civil Service Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Expenditure Review. [HL1036]

Baroness Smith of Basildon: We are currently considering the Civil Service Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Expenditure Review commissioned by the previous Government.

Asked by Lord Lucas

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Baroness Twycross on 12 August (HL517), what applications for an equality, diversity and inclusion spending control exemption have been (1)

applied for, (2) accepted, and (3) rejected, since the general election. [HL1058]

Baroness Twycross: Applications and decisions about applications for external Equality Diversity and Inclusion expenditure lie with individual departments. No exemptions have been centrally reported since the General Election.

Commonwealth: Election Observers

Asked by Baroness Hoey

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the (1) timeliness, and (2) value for money of election monitoring missions undertaken by Commonwealth Observer Groups since 2016. [HL627]

Lord Collins of Highbury: The UK values the Commonwealth Secretariat's work on elections, including their election observation missions. This work plays a vital role in supporting resilient democratic institutions across the Commonwealth, in line with the values of the Commonwealth Charter. The Commonwealth Secretariat regularly provides updates on its work to all Commonwealth members and together they work to ensure effectiveness and value for money across Commonwealth programmes.

Community Relations

Asked by Lord Reid of Cardowan

To ask His Majesty's Government in what ways they are supporting the integration of immigrants into UK society, and what measures are in place to promote community cohesion and reduce discrimination. [HL678]

Lord Khan of Burnley: All immigrants with valid status in the UK should be able to fully integrate into British life. Immigrants who come to the UK usually integrate on their own initiative; there is not a one size fits all approach to integration, but we provide specific help to certain cohorts. For example Ukrainians through the STEP programme which provides an intensive 12 week English language and employment support course to support better employment outcomes and economic independence. Other cohorts supported include Hong Kong British Nationals (Overseas) and Afghans arriving in the UK through relocation schemes.

Most refugees and those granted protection in the UK integrate successfully and become self-sufficient, providing for themselves and their families, and contributing to the economy, to support this we are working across Government and with local authorities to ensure they have access to the labour market, to mainstream benefits (where eligible) and services, and to mainstream English language provision to enable their integration.

Government policy places a key role in supporting thriving, cohesive and resilient communities. Work is now underway in my Department to develop a stronger

approach to support our communities and to build resilience against the challenges they face.

Construction: Materials

Asked by Baroness Hodgson of Abinger

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they plan to remove VAT from work and building materials that are utilised to repurpose old buildings into housing. [HL621]

Lord Livermore: There are a number of VAT reliefs on construction work to properties already for residential use. For instance, a reduced rate of VAT at five per cent applies to residential renovations, subject to certain conditions. These include conversions of buildings from one residential use to another, conversions from commercial to residential use, and the renovation of properties that have been empty for two years or more prior to the renovation work.

The Government also maintains a zero rate of VAT on new-build residential or qualifying buildings to encourage the construction of new homes.

VAT is the UK's second largest tax forecast to raise £176 billion in 2024/25. A vital source of revenue that helps to fund public services.

The Government keeps all taxes under review as part of the policy making process.

Construction: Skilled Workers

Asked by Lord Mann

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact of construction skills shortages on the current rates of house building and infrastructure development. [HL893]

Baroness Taylor of Stevenage: To meet the Government's commitment to deliver 1.5 million homes over this Parliament, alongside net zero and housing quality objectives, we will need to expand and upskill the construction workforce. We are working with the construction industry to ensure we have the workforce necessary to meet our housebuilding ambitions through the delivery of sufficient high-quality training opportunities which will build a diverse workforce that is fit for the future.

Construction: Training

Asked by Lord Mann

To ask His Majesty's Government how many 14–18 year-olds received training in construction skills in England in the academic year 2023–24. [HL891]

Baroness Smith of Malvern: Provisional in-year data on further education and skills in England reported for the academic year 2023/24 shows 134,600 aim (course) enrolments in Construction, Planning and the Built Environment for learners aged under 19. This data can be

found here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/further-education-and-skills>. This includes provision returned via the Individualised Learner Record administrative data only. Any provision within schools reported solely in the School Census data is not included in this figure.

Construction: Vacancies

Asked by Baroness Scott of Bybrook

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they will be taking to overcome labour supply challenges faced by the construction sector. [HL820]

Baroness Jones of Whitchurch: The government aims to ensure that people are able to get the skills that will enable them to have good, well paid jobs and enable the economy to grow.

Access to a skilled workforce is crucial for the dual missions of growing the economy and making Britain a green energy superpower.

It is essential that all construction trades working within the built environment have the right level of skills, knowledge, experience and behaviours.

The Government will be working with the industry over the short and long term to ensure the sector has access to skilled labour. We have already announced the introduction of Skills England and launched the Office for Green Jobs, so the next generation of construction workers can deliver the built environment.

Convention on Biological Diversity

Asked by The Lord Bishop of Norwich

To ask His Majesty's Government what their priorities are for the Conference of the Parties to the UN Convention on Biological Diversity to be held in Colombia in October. [HL940]

Baroness Hayman of Ullock: The UK Government remains committed to halting and reversing biodiversity loss by 2030. COP16, in Cali, Colombia, will be the first opportunity to review our collective global progress against the goals and targets of the Kunming Montreal Global Biodiversity framework agreed at COP15. Our priorities include operationalising the mechanism for sharing benefits derived from Digital genetic Sequence Information (DSI), championing an integrated approach to nature and climate as we head from COP16 to COP30 in Brazil, generating more finance for nature, and ensuring increased action is taken globally to achieve the targets agreed under the Kunming Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF).

Asked by The Lord Bishop of Norwich

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the theme of the forthcoming Conference of the Parties to the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (COP16) being designated "Peace with Nature" by the government of Colombia, and in

particular of the link between environmental breakdown and conflict internationally; and what are their objectives for COP16 regarding the relationship between humanity and nature to ensure greater global peace. [HL984]

Baroness Hayman of Ullock: There is a clear link between climate change, nature loss, peace and security. Environmental degradation in all its forms presents an unprecedented challenge for the security of people, states and the international community. It exacerbates resource competition, food and water insecurity, displacement of people, the risk of conflict, and humanitarian and economic crises, while eroding resilience and reducing capacity to respond.

The Government is working closely with Colombia and international partners to build global ambition on nature and to ensure a successful Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) COP16 under the official theme of 'Peace with Nature'. We are committed to promoting coordinated global action to tackle the climate and nature crises and support peace and security, including through raising international awareness of the linkages and the critical importance of halting and reversing nature loss.

Convictions: Appeals

Asked by Lord Northbrook

To ask His Majesty's Government how many cases submitted to the Criminal Cases Review Commission were outstanding on 1 September 2024. [HL981]

Asked by Lord Northbrook

To ask His Majesty's Government how many cases submitted to the Criminal Cases Review Commission have been concluded and reported on in (1) 2024 and (2) each of the previous five calendar years. [HL982]

Asked by Lord Northbrook

To ask His Majesty's Government how many cases submitted to the Criminal Cases Review Commission have remained pending and incomplete in each of the previous five calendar years, respectively. [HL983]

Lord Ponsonby of Shulbrede: On 1 September 2024, the Criminal Cases Review Commission (CCRC) had 1,088 cases open, of those, 921 were under review (including triage), 167 were waiting to be allocated to a case review manager.

The table below provides the data for 2024 and the previous five calendar years:

Year	Applications Closed	Referrals
2019	1,539	22
2020	1,063	76
2021	1,216	21
2022	1,174	33
2023	1,487	20

1 January 2024 to 1 September 2024	969	19
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The number of open cases as of 31 December of each year is below:

Year	Open cases as of 31 December
2019	700 (530 under review, 170 waiting)
2020	725 (600 under review, 125 waiting)
2021	755 (646 under review, 109 waiting)
2022	890 (763 under review, 127 waiting)
2023	1,010 (855 under review, 155 waiting)

The number of cases completed by the CCRC in each financial year is reported in their Annual Reports, which can be found on their website.

Council Housing: Sales

Asked by Lord McCrea of Magherafelt and Cookstown

To ask His Majesty's Government what changes, if any, they are considering to the 'right to buy' discount scheme for tenants wishing to purchase their council house. [HL807]

Baroness Taylor of Stevenage: The Government believe it is right that those social tenants who have lived in their homes for many years retain the right to purchase their property at a reasonable discount. As such, we will not be ending the Right to Buy scheme.

We are, however, committed to better protecting our existing stock of social rented homes and are currently reviewing the increased right to buy discounts introduced in 2012. We will bring forward secondary legislation to implement changes in the Autumn.

We also intend to review Right to Buy more widely, including looking at eligibility criteria and protections for newly-built social housing. A consultation of these wider changes will be brought forward in the Autumn.

Council Tax: Valuation

Asked by Lord Kempson

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they plan to reform council tax banding; and if so, whether they plan to carry out and publish an assessment of the impact of any such changes. [HL643]

Baroness Taylor of Stevenage: There are currently no plans to reform council tax.

Countryside: Access

*Asked by **Baroness Scott of Needham Market***

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they intend to retain the public access offer within Environmental Land Management schemes so that more people can benefit from improved access to the countryside. [HL1002]

Baroness Hayman of Ullock: Presently Countryside Stewardship scheme supports land managers to offer educational access visits to school age children and care farming groups and also offers a supplement to support access to woodlands. In protected landscapes, the Farming in a Protected Landscape programme offers permissive access.

We are fully committed to the Environmental Land Management schemes. The government will optimise Environmental Land Management schemes over time, so they produce the right outcomes for all farmers - such as small, grassland, upland and tenanted farms - while delivering food security and nature recovery in a just and equitable way. This will also consider improved access to the countryside.

Crime Prevention: Rural Areas:

*Asked by **Baroness McIntosh of Pickering***

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the work of rural police task forces in reducing rural crimes; and what plans they have to encourage rural task forces in areas they do not exist. [HL1126]

Lord Hanson of Flint: Rural crime can have devastating consequences for rural communities. That is why this Government is committed to reducing crime and disorder in rural areas. Under our reforms, rural communities will be safeguarded, with tougher measures to clamp down on anti-social behaviour, strengthened neighbourhood policing and stronger measures to prevent farm theft and fly-tipping.

The Neighbourhood Policing Guarantee will deliver 13,000 neighbourhood police and community support officers, across England and Wales, including in rural areas, to speed up response times and build public confidence.

It is for Chief Constables and PCCs, as operationally independent leaders and elected local representatives, to decide how best to deploy resources to manage and respond to individual crimes and local crime priorities, including rural crime. The National Rural Crime Unit provides police forces across the UK with specialist operational support in their responses to rural crime.

Cultural Heritage: Customs

*Asked by **The Earl of Clancarty***

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they plan to reduce the cost of the ATA Carnet for cultural goods. [HL1108]

Lord Livermore: The London Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI) and its operational unit, the UK National ATA Carnet Organisation, is responsible for the issue of ATA Carnets in the UK. Issuing Chambers charge their own fees to cover their administration costs. The cost of an ATA Carnet also reflects the cost of providing a guarantee through an International Guarantee Chain, which covers any customs charges potentially due on goods in the countries to be visited.

The UK is currently participating in a pilot exercise to digitalise ATA Carnets and their processes as part of a World Customs Organisation (WCO) and International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) initiative. The Digital Pilot was launched in February 2019, initially involving the UK and five other countries. To date, the UK has successfully processed a number of e-ATA Carnets from Heathrow and is looking to collaborate with more ports to make digital Carnets more readily available.

There are other options for temporarily moving goods between the UK and EU which may be more cost-effective than an ATA Carnet, depending on the specific circumstances. The EU's Temporary Admission procedure can be used in conjunction with the UK's Returned Goods Relief to claim relief on goods which are temporarily imported into the EU, and subsequently re-exported back into the UK. More information can be found on GOV.UK.

Culture: Finance

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

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the finding in the report *The State of the Arts*, published by Campaign for the Arts and the University of Warwick on 22 July, that the UK has one of the lowest levels of government spending on arts and culture among European countries; and whether they intend to increase funding to local councils for local arts programmes. [HL688]

Baroness Twycross: The Arts in the UK are funded by a mixture of direct national and local public funding, arm's length funding, charitable giving, commercial income and tax reliefs but we recognise that all of these income streams have been under extreme pressure in recent years.

For instance, net expenditure on cultural services by local authorities - the largest funder of culture across England - has fallen by 42% in real terms between 2009-10 and 2022-23. Likewise, Arts Council England spent over £700 million in 2023/24 on supporting arts and culture, through a mix of grant-in-aid funding from government and proceeds from the National Lottery. But this was significantly less than in 2010.

We are grateful to the Campaign for the Arts for their work and are carefully examining the report. It is encouraging to read that 91% of adults in England engaged with the arts in person between October 2022 and December 2023, and 77% attended events, but

concerning to read the report's analysis that between 2018 and 2023 there was a 23% fall in the number of music, theatre, dance and comedy events in the UK.

The government will work with arm's-length bodies and the cultural sector at large to understand their needs and the pressures on culture and creativity in the UK - and work to put them on a more sustainable footing.

Cycling and Electric Scooters: Accidents

Asked by *Baroness McIntosh of Pickering*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made on the impact on the Motor Insurers' Bureau of accidents caused by pedal bikes, e-bikes and e-scooters in the absence of any insurance cover. [HL1125]

Lord Henty of Richmond Hill: We have made no assessment of the impact on the Motor Insurers' Bureau (MIB) of incidents involving e-bikes and e-scooters. However, pedal cycles and Electrically Assisted Pedal Cycles (EAPCs) do not require insurance, so they have no impact on the MIB.

The Government regularly meets with the Motor Insurers' Bureau to discuss issues around micromobility insurance.

Cycling and Electric Scooters: Death and Injuries

Asked by *Baroness McIntosh of Pickering*

To ask His Majesty's Government how many (1) serious injuries, and (2) deaths, of pedestrians occurred as a result of dangerous or careless cycling on pedal bikes, e-bikes and e-scooters in each of the past three years. [HL1124]

Lord Henty of Richmond Hill: The information requested is not held by the Department.

Statistics on road casualties reported to police, including where pedestrians are injured in collisions with pedal cycles or e-scooters, are published annually.

However, this data does not attribute causation to collisions which means that it is not possible to determine in how many cases deaths or injuries to pedestrians were the result of dangerous or careless cycling.

Cycling and Walking: Infrastructure

Asked by *Baroness Jones of Moulsecoomb*

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to encourage local authorities to consult directors of public health when (1) creating local plans, and (2) taking planning decisions. [HL635]

Asked by *Baroness Jones of Moulsecoomb*

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to ensure that routes identified in Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans are considered by

local planning authorities when (1) creating local plans, and (2) taking planning decisions. [HL636]

Baroness Taylor of Stevenage: As part of the ongoing government consultation 'Proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and other changes to the planning system' which was launched on Tuesday 30 July, we are seeking views on proposed changes to the NPPF intended to support the provision of public infrastructure and to create sustainable, healthy communities.

Contributions from developers play an important role in delivering the infrastructure that local communities expect to see alongside new development. The Government will focus on improving the system of developer contributions.

The NPPF makes clear that plans should set out the contributions expected from development. This should include setting out the levels and types of affordable housing provision required, along with other infrastructure (such as that needed for health, open space, and transport). Plan-makers should work in collaboration with the local community, developers, and other stakeholders to create realistic, deliverable policies.

It is important that local planning authorities prepare, and keep up to date, a local plan as the primary basis for identifying what development is needed in an area. This helps ensure that local strategies to improve health and wellbeing and the provision of the required health infrastructure are supported and considered in plans (including in the preparation of strategic policies for community facilities) and in planning decisions.

Working with the advice and support of the Director of Public Health, plan-makers may also need to involve key groups in the local health and wellbeing system, including Health and Wellbeing Boards.

The Government is committed to promoting active travel and ensuring that routes identified in Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs) are considered in planning decisions. Active Travel England (ATE), established as an executive agency within the Department for Transport, acts as a statutory consultee in the planning system, reviewing active travel provisions in major planning applications to ensure they align with the standards and principles set out in national design standards. This ensures that new developments support and enhance active travel routes identified in LCWIPs.

Cystic Fibrosis

Asked by *Baroness Fraser of Craigmaddie*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the case for extending eligibility for medical exemption certificates to patients with cystic fibrosis, given that many cystic fibrosis patients now live well into adulthood. [HL934]

Baroness Merron: 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 are 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.

Defence and Security: Innovation

Asked by Lord Browne of Ladyton

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the scale of innovation in the UK's defence and security sector, in the light of the success of non-legacy defence contractors in recent US procurement rounds. [HL741]

Lord Coaker: The Ministry of Defence (MOD) recognises the importance of engaging with non-traditional defence suppliers and is working closely with UK Industry and Academia to identify and invest in innovative technologies that address our most pressing capability challenges.

This includes initiatives such as the Defence and Security Accelerator (DASA), which is designed to find and fund innovative solutions to defence and security challenges, for example through Regional Defence and Security Clusters (RDSCs)

This Government is committed to bringing forward a Defence Industrial Strategy, working closely with industry to support UK resilience and innovation.

Defence: Technology

Asked by Baroness Goldie

To ask His Majesty's Government whether the Test and Evaluation Transformation Programme being undertaken within the Ministry of Defence has completed its first phase; if not, when is the projected date of completion; and what is proposed for the next phase of the programme after that date. [HL961]

Lord Coaker: The Test and Evaluation (T&E) Transformation Programme will conclude its first phase in March 2025. The focus of the second phase will be establishing the foundations of a modern T&E enterprise that is fit for the future, as set out in the Ministry of Defence's (MOD) recently published paper on the future of T&E:

[Test and Evaluation \(T&E\): Future Advantage Through Evaluation \(FATE\) - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/test-and-evaluation-t-e-future-advantage-through-evaluation-fate)

The T&E Transformation programme is currently collecting feedback from the Front Line Commands, defence industry and other organisations to inform the detailed design of its second phase, which is planned to commence in April 2025 subject to internal MOD approval.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

Test and Evaluation in Defence [Test and Evaluation in Defence.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2024-09-11/HL961>

Democratic Republic of Congo: Human Rights

Asked by The Lord Bishop of Winchester

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they intend to work within international forums to establish a commission of inquiry to investigate and hold accountable those responsible for human rights violations against the Banyamulenge in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. [HL860]

Lord Collins of Highbury: The UK continues to raise concerns about human rights violations in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and condemns all forms of hate speech and violence committed against all individuals and communities in DRC. We continue to lobby DRC to tackle the drivers of conflict, introduce human rights reforms and combat impunity. The UK also continues to push for the imposition of sanctions through the UN against individuals who have committed human rights abuses. Given the withdrawal of UN peacekeeping force, United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) from South Kivu, we continue to encourage DRC to ensure suitable plans are in place regarding protection of civilians, including those in particularly vulnerable communities.

Dental Health

Asked by Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the appropriateness of dental surgeries profiting from the sale of dental hygiene products, including mouthwashes containing chlorhexidine; and what assessment they have made on the financial impact for dentists and patients. [HL1102]

Baroness Merron: No assessments have been made on the appropriateness of dental surgeries profiting from the sale of dental hygiene products, including mouthwashes containing chlorhexidine, or the financial impact for dentists and patients. The National Health Service contracts with independent dental providers to deliver NHS dental treatment in primary care settings. Dental practices are businesses and are therefore able to decide

how they operate, providing they remain compliant with the appropriate regulations.

Department for Energy Security and Net Zero: Equality

Asked by Lord Farmer

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Baroness Sherlock on 7 August (HL344), how many staff in the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero are permitted to undertake diversity-related network time during core working hours; what is the percentage of overall working time they are permitted to spend on such network activity; how many hours are allocated in total; what are the names of each of the networks being funded; and what plans they have to (a) increase, or (b) reduce, such funding. [HL1116]

Lord Hunt of Kings Heath: All staff in the Department can take part in diversity-related network activities during core working hours with agreement from their line manager. Network Chairs and Champions are given a weekly pro-rata time allocation of 10% to support respective network activity.

There are currently 37 Chairs and Champions across 11 diversity networks which are: Carers Network, CAN (disability) Network, Mental Health & Wellbeing Network, EU & International Network, LGBT+ Network, Parental Support Network, Faith and Minority Ethnic Network, SEDI (social mobility) Network, Volunteering Network, Women Empowered Network, Schools Outreach Network. There are currently no plans to review time allocation for networks.

The Department values its diversity networks and is committed to promoting Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in partnership with them.

Department for Science, Innovation and Technology and UK Research and Innovation: Equality

Asked by Baroness Altmann

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Baroness Sherlock on 7 August (HL344), how many staff in (1) the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology and (2) UK Research and Innovation are permitted to undertake diversity-related network time during core working hours; what is the percentage of overall working time they are permitted to spend on such network activity; how many hours are allocated in total; which networks are being funded; and whether they have any plans alter such funding. [HL1014]

Lord Vallance of Balham: The Department for Science, Innovation and Technology has 19 colleague-run networks, 11 of which are diversity-related. Time taken on network activities is agreed between individuals and

line managers- no formal facility time is allocated. No network holds a delegated budget, and there are currently no plans to revise this approach.

UKRI has 12 network co-chairs across 8 formally supported staff networks. Co-chairs are allocated 1 day per month to carry out network related activities which includes work on organisation-led EDI priorities and reporting on network activities to governance. All 8 networks receive funding for their activities (in financial year 2023/24 this was less than £5,000). There are no plans to alter these funding arrangements.

Department for Transport: Equality

Asked by Baroness Altmann

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Baroness Sherlock on 7 August (HL344), how many staff in (1) the Department for Transport and (2) the Driver and Vehicle Licencing Agency are permitted to undertake diversity-related network time during core working hours; what is the percentage of overall working time they are permitted to spend on such network activity; how many hours are allocated in total; which networks are being funded; and whether they have any plans alter such funding. [HL1013]

Lord Henty of Richmond Hill: *Time allocation:* The Department for Transport Core (DfTc) and the Driver and Vehicle Licencing Agency (DVLA) do not allocate a specified amount of time for staff to spend on diversity-related network activities. Civil Service guidance for diversity-related networks requires that time being spent on EDI activities by volunteers, where it is not part of an individual's core role, is appropriate, reasonable and proportionate.

Funding: At present none of the networks within Department for Transport Core (DfTc) and the Driver and Vehicle Licencing Agency (DVLA) are funded. We are currently reviewing our staff networks and any future funding will align with the guidance on EDI Expenditure published on 14th May 2024.

Department for Work and Pensions: Equality

Asked by Lord Lucas

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Baroness Sherlock on 7 August (HL344), whether any of the civil servants claiming diversity network time are also claiming trade union facility time, and at what hourly amounts; and what is their policy on the double dipping of network time and facility time. [HL1059]

Baroness Sherlock: There are fewer than 5 individuals in DWP in September 2024 who are claiming Trade Union (TU) Facility time and Diversity Network time.

In line with standard departmental practice in statistics, we do not publish details of numbers below 5, or where individuals might otherwise be identified in the data, as this would breach our data protection obligations.

DWP does not have a policy on colleagues claiming both Diversity Network Time and Facility Time at the same time.

Department for Work and Pensions: Transgender People

Asked by Lord Lucas

To ask His Majesty's Government whether the Department for Work and Pensions (1) currently has, or (2) has previously had, a National Diversity Ambassador on Trans Issues; and if so, (a) who they were, and (b) during what time period(s) they served. [HL1054]

Baroness Sherlock: DWP does not have a National Diversity Ambassador on Trans Issues.

Since 2018, under the current Permanent Secretary, there has been no formally recognised role of this description. Before this, the term Ambassador may have been used colloquially within the Department to raise awareness of Trans and wider Equity, Diversity and Inclusion matters. However, this role was not confirmed in any official capacity.

Derelict Land

Asked by Baroness Hodgson of Abinger

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they have identified older buildings in each local authority area that could be adapted to provide housing. [HL622]

Asked by Baroness Hodgson of Abinger

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to encourage developers to use brownfield sites; and whether they plan to give tax breaks to developers of this land to reflect the added costs of making the land fit to be built on. [HL623]

Asked by Baroness Hodgson of Abinger

To ask His Majesty's Government what their policy is towards repurposing old buildings for housing, to help address the housing crisis. [HL625]

Baroness Taylor of Stevenage: We have been clear that development must look to brownfield first, prioritising previously used land wherever possible. To support this, we propose a set of targeted changes in our consultation on reforms to the NPPF, published 30 July. These changes include an expanded definition of previously developed land, and changes to make clear that the default answer to brownfield development should be 'yes'.

National planning policy also expects local councils to support efforts to identify and bring back into residential use empty homes and other suitable buildings.

Developing Countries: Education

Asked by Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to convene with civil society organisations and education ministers from other governments on developing an international strategy for global learning. [HL723]

Lord Collins of Highbury: Foundational learning for all (numeracy, literacy and socio-emotional learning) is crucial to make progress in school, attain higher order skills, and reap education's full rewards. The UK works with civil society and education ministers from other governments to address the global learning crisis through The Global Coalition for Foundational Learning. The Global Coalition is working together to ensure that we meet undertakings set out in the 2022 Commitment to Action on Foundational Learning. This includes national governments committing to reducing by half, by 2030, the global share of children unable to read and understand a simple text by age ten, and to take urgent and decisive action to do so. 32 countries and 34 organisations, including civil society, have signed the commitment to action to date.

Development Aid

Asked by Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the Official Development Assistance budget for overseas aid. [HL683]

Lord Collins of Highbury: Ensuring that we are using the Official Development Assistance (ODA) budget effectively is key to delivering value for money for the British taxpayer. The effectiveness of all FCDO ODA programmes is measured and assessed regularly throughout their lifecycle. We are committed to working with the Independent Commission for Aid Impact to apply the highest standards to our ODA spend, including robust measures on development effectiveness.

This will allow us to achieve better outcomes on our priorities. This includes delivering humanitarian aid to those who need it most, tackling the climate and nature crisis, working for peace, and accelerating economic development and growth, with equality and women and girls at the heart of everything we do.

Asked by Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick

To ask His Majesty's Government what consideration they will give to the Official Development Assistance budget for overseas aid in the forthcoming Autumn Budget statement. [HL684]

Lord Livermore: The Government is committed to restoring ODA spending at the level of 0.7 percent of GNI as soon as fiscal circumstances allow. The Government is currently undertaking a Spending Review and will set out its approach in due course.

Development Aid: Food Supply

Asked by *Baroness Anelay of St Johns*

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to support initiatives to close the financing gap for food security and nutrition, further to the report *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2024*, published in July by the World Food Programme, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN, the International Fund for Agricultural Development, UNICEF and the World Health Organisation; and what assessment they have made of the projection that 582 million people will be chronically food insecure by 2030. [HL561]

Lord Collins of Highbury: We are committed to addressing global food insecurity and malnutrition. This includes the financing gap identified in the *State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World* report. We work to unlock climate finance, push multilateral development banks to stretch their balance sheets, provide technical assistance and finance to bring in more private sector investment, and support the reform of subsidies for more sustainable agriculture. This must be done in partnership. We will join the Global Alliance against Hunger and Poverty, to accelerate action and unlock finance, and support the G7 Apulia Food Systems Initiative which seeks innovative financing solutions.

Development Aid: Malnutrition

Asked by *Lord Roberts of Llandudno*

To ask His Majesty's Government which countries receive grants from the UK to reduce the number of children suffering from malnutrition. [HL989]

Lord Collins of Highbury: Information on how the FCDO disburses UK Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) is available on Devtracker. Additionally, the FCDO prepares an annual report on our ODA expenditure on nutrition. The most recent report shows that in 2022 we funded work to reduce malnutrition in 30 countries: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Jordan, Kenya, Lebanon, Madagascar, Malawi, Mozambique, Myanmar, Nepal, Nigeria, Occupied Palestinian Territories, Pakistan, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Syria, Tanzania, Uganda, Ukraine, Yemen, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

Diplomatic Relations: China

Asked by *Viscount Waverley*

To ask the Senior Deputy Speaker what consideration has been given to allowing the Ambassador of China to visit the House of Lords parts of the parliamentary estate. [HL859]

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: In September 2021, in response to Chinese government sanctions being placed upon Members of both Houses of Parliament, Mr Speaker

and the Lord Speaker determined that the Ambassador of China would no longer be permitted access to the Parliamentary Estate. The decision of the Speakers remains unchanged.

Diplomatic Service: Private Education

Asked by *Lord Lamont of Lerwick*

To ask His Majesty's Government what is the total cost of school fees paid in the last year by the Government for UK private education for the children of foreign office officials serving overseas. [HL1044]

Baroness Chapman of Darlington: The amount spent by the FCDO on provision of the Continuity in Education Allowance for 494 children in UK schools in the financial year 2023/24 was £14,502,476.00.

Disability

Asked by *The Lord Bishop of St Albans*

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Baroness Sherlock on 5 August (HL273), when they will review their commitments in the Disability Action Plan, published on 5 February; and where they will publish their response. [HL766]

Baroness Sherlock: The Disability Action Plan was an initiative of the previous administration. This Government is committed to championing the rights of deaf and disabled people. We will build on the insights shared by deaf and disabled people and their representative organisations, working closely with them so that their views and voices are at the heart of everything we do. We will provide further updates on the Government's priorities for disability policy in due course.

Drax Power Station

Asked by *Lord Birt*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether burning biomass at Drax Power Station will be an element of their strategy for achieving their net zero carbon emissions target. [HL867]

Lord Hunt of Kings Heath: As outlined by groups including the Climate Change Committee (CCC) and the International Energy Agency (IEA), Greenhouse Gas Removal technologies such as Bioenergy with carbon capture and storage (BECCS) technologies can play a role in supporting net zero targets. No decisions on potential future support for this site have been made at this time.

Drax Power Station: Demonstrations

Asked by *Baroness Jones of Moulsecoomb*

To ask His Majesty's Government what is their assessment of the rules which prevent peaceful protest at the Drax power station. [HL711]

Lord Hanson of Flint: The management of protests are matters for the police, who are operationally independent from Government. The Home Office cannot direct the operational activities of the police.

Driving

Asked by The Lord Bishop of St Albans

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to ensure that (1) driving lessons, and (2) driving tests, are (a) available, and (b) affordable. [HL906]

Lord Hendy of Richmond Hill: The Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency's (DVSA) main priority is to reduce car practical driving test waiting times, whilst upholding road safety standards.

As of 9 September 2024, there were 556,774 car practical driving tests booked, and 91,059 driving tests available within the 24-week booking window.

Measures already in place to reduce waiting times for customers at driving test centres. These 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. The Secretary of State for Transport has met with the Chief Executive of the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency to discuss solutions to barriers to obtaining a driving test.

The DVSA also continues to deploy examiners from areas with lower waiting times into those centres with longer waiting times. This is in addition to the DVSA recruiting additional examiners across the country into areas where waiting times are highest.

The DVSA does not employ driving instructors so has no control over what they charge for their services, including lessons.

Driving test fees are set in legislation.

Drugs: Packaging

Asked by Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to secure the recycling of medical blister packs, particularly to ensure that provision for collection is free, universal, and processing can be done in the UK. [HL1103]

Baroness Hayman of Ullock: Waste is a devolved policy, and the devolved administrations have their own arrangements for household and business recycling and waste collections. There are currently no plans for blister packs to be included in the list of materials to be collected at kerbside through Simpler Recycling reforms.

Modulation of pEPR fees, which will be introduced in from year 2 of the scheme, will be used to disincentivise packaging formats that are not readily recyclable.

Economic Growth

Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to improve GDP growth. [HL1006]

Asked by Lord Rose of Monewden

To ask His Majesty's Government when they expect real GDP per capita to return to its pre-pandemic peak; and what steps they are taking to support this growth. [HL1085]

Lord Livermore: Achieving sustained economic growth is the priority mission of this government. The government is focused on fixing the foundations of the UK's economy.

Having launched the Growth Mission in July 2024, the government has already taken several steps including planning reforms to get Britain building, establishing the National Wealth Fund, announcing a Pensions Review, and launching Skills England. The government is under no illusion of the scale of the challenge, however, given the difficult economic inheritance.

HM Treasury does not prepare formal forecasts for the UK economy, which are the responsibility of the independent Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR). In its March forecast, the OBR expects that GDP per capita will surpass its pre-pandemic peak in 2025. Further details can be found in Table 1.5 of the OBR's latest Economic and Fiscal Outlook published in March 2024: <https://obr.uk/efo/economic-and-fiscal-outlook-march-2024/>.

Egypt: World War I

Asked by Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Baroness Goldie on 25 January 2023 (HL4903), what progress they have made towards (1) identifying and marking the graves of Egyptians who died serving the UK during the First World War, including in the Egyptian Labour Corps, and (2) recovering the records of all Egyptians who served with UK forces. [HL783]

Lord Coaker: In its work to identify and mark the graves of the Egyptian Labour Corps and Camel Transport Corps, the Commonwealth War Graves Committee (CWGC) has established that more than 327,000 Egyptians served alongside Commonwealth forces across the Middle East, Turkey, and Western Europe. Of those, the CWGC now know that more than 16,500 died in service. Fewer than 400, however, have been commemorated by name, with the remainder commemorated collectively on the CWGC's Giza Memorial.

The CWGC has determined that during the Second World War, the Ministry of Interior sent thousands of notifications of death to the fallen personnel's next of kin.

The CWGC believes these records are likely to be held either by the Egyptian State archives or possibly by one or more departments of the Government of Egypt. Although this is yet to be confirmed, the CWGC have approached the Egyptian authorities and are working to gain access the relevant archives.

The CWGC's wider historical research in archives across Africa and Europe continues to make positive progress in revealing the names of those previously not commemorated, and in mapping potential burial sites. To date, almost 7,000 names have been recovered and the CWGC are actively working to commemorate these individuals in a manner befitting their service and loss.

Electric Bicycles and Electric Scooters

Asked by Baroness Hodgson of Abinger

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they will take to address (1) unregulated e-bike hire, and (2) illegal e-scooters. [HL1030]

Lord Hendy of Richmond Hill: The Government recognises the need to address the problems caused by unregulated e-bike hire schemes and illegal e-scooters. Ministers are carefully considering next steps and potential solutions. It is a matter for the police to decide what action is appropriate to deal with those who ride e-scooters illegally on the public highway.

Electric Vehicles: Charging Points

Asked by Baroness Randerson

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they have undertaken an impact assessment of Ofgem's Targeted Charging Review, published in 2019, on the viability of new high capacity, low-utilisation infrastructure such as public electric vehicle charge point operators. [HL896]

Lord Hunt of Kings Heath: As part of their Targeted Charging Review, Ofgem undertook analysis on the impact their reforms would have on different network users. It has estimated a resulting total consumer saving of £4 billion up to 2040. We are aware that the reforms are causing particular concern for a small number of sites, including public electric vehicle charge point operators. Ofgem will be undertaking a broad review of system costs and will consider whether other cost recovery options provide potential for improvements. Proposals are currently being progressed through industry, and Ofgem are engaging with this process and the detailed proposals under discussion.

Asked by Baroness Randerson

To ask His Majesty's Government what consideration they have given to providing a standing charge relief for electric vehicle (EV) charge point operators connecting in rural areas; and what other incentives they are considering to improve the network of EV charge points, particularly in rural areas. [HL897]

Lord Hendy of Richmond Hill: The setting of standing charges associated with tariffs is a commercial matter for suppliers, and suppliers have the flexibility in how they structure their tariffs. Ofgem regulates standing charges, as they do with other elements of billing. The Government is pleased that Ofgem is considering the issue of standing charges through their recent Call for Input and industry led working groups. Solutions would be implemented across electric vehicle (EV) charging sites, including those situated in rural areas. Our £381 million Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Fund aims to address regional charging inequality and transform the availability of EV charging for drivers. The data-led allocation model to award funding considers the level of rurality with local authorities in rural areas allocated additional funding compared to urban ones.

Electronic Travel Authorisations: EU Countries

Asked by Lord Foster of Bath

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Hanson of Flint on 12 August (HL502), whether they have set a date for the Electronic Travel Authorisation scheme roll out to EU nationals; and whether they have informed port operators about this timetable. [HL603]

Lord Hanson of Flint: No date has yet been set for the further rollout of the Electronic Travel Authorisation scheme, including to European nationals. We expect to make an announcement very shortly and will work with ports and carriers on coordinated communications to those affected.

Electronic Warfare

Asked by Lord Kempson

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of UK capabilities in electronic warfare; and what steps they are taking to improve such capability. [HL644]

Lord Coaker: The UK has a number of excellent electromagnetic warfare capabilities; given the highly competitive nature of electromagnetic warfare, the Ministry of Defence will consider how best to keep pace with this challenge as part of the Strategic Defence Review.

Emily Middleton

Asked by Baroness Neville-Rolfe

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the remarks by Baroness Smith of Basildon on 4 September (HL Deb col 1157), and to the Written Answer by the Parliamentary Secretary to the Cabinet Office on 4 September (HC2317), whether Peter Kyle declared as a political donation in kind the reported use of a seconded member of staff from Public Digital to the

departmental Permanent Secretary before that member of staff, Emily Middleton, was appointed as a Director-General for Digital Centre Design in the department by exception; whether they considered recusal; and whether the Civil Service Commission was informed of any previous donations before they considered the Recruitment Principles exception request from the department for Ms Middleton's appointment to the Senior Civil Service. [HL812]

Baroness Jones of Whitchurch: The secondment from Public Digital was listed by the Secretary of State in his Register of Members' Financial Interests in January and in April. Conflicts of interest have been managed by the Department in line with usual practice. The Civil Service Commission was provided with the relevant background information requested, including the proposed candidate's full employment history, when approving this temporary appointment.

Employment

Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of Britain's labour market, particularly in relation to (1) the decrease in job placements, and (2) the decline in pay growth. [HL916]

Baroness Sherlock: Job placements, as measured by employment, are currently at 33.2m. These have increased by 265,000 on the quarter and 150,000 on the year. The employment rate remains lower than it was immediately pre-COVID by 1.4 percentage points. This has been driven almost entirely by increased economic inactivity, including long term sickness which is at a near-record high.

Regular pay growth (excluding bonuses) is currently at 5.1% on the year without accounting for inflation. This rate of pay growth has slowed since June 2023 when it reached 7.9%. Regular pay growth after inflation is currently at 2.2% on the year, following falls in real pay in 2022 and 2023 due to high inflation. Regular earnings after inflation are currently only 3% or £15 a week higher in the latest three months than the start of 2008, 16 years ago.

Environment Protection

Asked by Baroness Scott of Needham Market

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they intend to retain goals to improve access to and engagement with nature as part of the rapid review of the current Environmental Improvement Plan, announced on 30 July; and whether they intend to engage with stakeholders representing public access and recreation. [HL1000]

Baroness Hayman of Ullock: The Government is committed to enhancing public access to nature, as evidenced by our manifesto commitment to create nine new national river walks and three new national forests.

We are currently considering how best to continue to drive forward our goals in this area and we will be engaging with stakeholders as we do so.

Environmental Land Management Schemes

Asked by Lord Cromwell

To ask His Majesty's Government what specific steps they are taking to enable farmers and land managers to plan long-term on the basis of clarity on the future of financial support for environmental schemes, including transitioning from existing ones. [HL709]

Baroness Hayman of Ullock: We know farmers require stability in order to make long-term plans. We said we would provide stability for farmers and we are delivering on this commitment. We have confirmed that the first Sustainable Farming Incentive agreements of the 2024 offer are now live. We will confirm plans for rollout of schemes and our wider approach as soon as possible.

The Government is fully committed to Environmental Land Management (ELM) schemes, which it will optimise in an orderly way, over time. We will work with the sector to make sure schemes produce the right outcomes for all farmers, including small, grassland, upland and tenanted farms, supporting food security and nature's recovery in a just and equitable way. Spending on farming in future financial years will be confirmed as part of the Government's spending review.

Equal Pay: Ethnic Groups

Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to reduce the ethnicity pay gap in businesses. [HL914]

Baroness Twycross: The King's Speech announced our intention to publish draft legislation this session that will introduce mandatory ethnicity pay gap reporting for large employers (those with 250 or more employees). This will help businesses to identify and close ethnicity pay gaps within their workforces.

Equipment: Theft

Asked by The Lord Bishop of St Albans

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they intend to extend the Equipment Theft (Prevention) Act 2023 to include GPS kits. [HL814]

Lord Hanson of Flint: We are committed to implementing the Equipment Theft (Prevention) Act 2023, which aims to prevent the theft and re-sale of high-value equipment, particularly for use in an agricultural setting.

The Act requires secondary legislation before it can come into effect. We will be carefully considering the

views of those who may be affected by the legislation and its regulations, to determine the scope of the legislation and understand its potential implications.

Ethiopia: Somalia

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of tensions between Ethiopia and Somalia; and what steps they are taking to avert further armed conflict in the region. [HL861]

Lord Collins of Highbury: Tensions between Ethiopia and Somalia remain heightened, with a risk of further escalation. This is having a destabilising effect on the wider region. We are following developments closely and continue, alongside our international partners, to urge all parties in the region to avoid escalation and any action that threatens stability in the Horn of Africa. In August, the Foreign Secretary and Minister Dodds both separately raised this issue with Ethiopian Foreign Minister Taye, and I discussed it with Somali President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud.

EU Countries: Visas

Asked by Lord Naseby

To ask His Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the European Union to increase the allowance under its visa-waiver policy to allow UK citizens working for UK-based hauliers to remain in the Schengen Area for more than 90 days in any 180-day period. [HL975]

Baroness Twycross: Both the UK and the EU allow for visa-free short-term travel in line with their arrangements for Third Country Nationals. The Schengen Borders Code allows for third country nationals to travel within the Schengen Area for up to 90 days in any 180-day period; this is standard for third countries travelling to the EU. While we recognise that extending the 90-180 day period is a matter for Member States and the EU, the Government will continue to listen to and advocate for UK nationals. In November 2023, officials raised the challenges the 90 days in 180-day limit presents for UK national hauliers and coach drivers through the UK-EU Specialised Committee on Road Transport; the EU Co-Chair noted that there are no plans to change the rules on the conditions of entry of third country nationals to the EU, including for visa-free travel for short-term visits.

European Social Charter

Asked by Lord Balfie

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the answer by Baroness Sherlock on 3 September (HL Deb col 1046), what aspects of domestic law have been in breach of the provisions of the Additional Protocol to the European Social Charter and the Revised European Social Charter 1996, preventing their ratification; and

what is the legislative timetable for correcting these breaches. [HL735]

Baroness Sherlock: The Additional Protocol 1995 provides for a collective complaints mechanism. Member States who choose to accept this mechanism are not assessed on their conformity with the process. The UK has not accepted the mechanism because, like the majority of member States, the UK believes the existing supervisory mechanisms of the European Social Charter are adequate.

The new Government is embarking on an extensive programme of reforms, including our Employment Rights Bill which will change our position on provisions within both the 1961 and Revised Charter. The Government will, therefore, consider our position on the Revised Charter in due course.

A summary of the latest assessments of the UK's conformity with the European Social Charter 1961 was published by the Council of Europe. The Council of Europe also published the UK's report on non-accepted provisions of the European Social Charter and the Revised European Social Charter earlier this year. I will place a copy of both of these documents in the House of Lords Library.

Extradition: USA

Asked by Lord Birt

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they have any plans to review the working of the UK-US extradition treaty. [HL575]

Lord Hanson of Flint: There is no current intention to review the UK-US Extradition Treaty. The UK-US Extradition Treaty continues to produce tangible results, bringing justice to victims in both the UK and US.

Asked by Lord Jackson of Peterborough

To ask His Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with the government of the United States on the future of United States-United Kingdom extradition treaty arrangements and any risks of miscarriages of justice arising from their operation. [HL799]

Lord Hanson of Flint: The UK-US Extradition Treaty continues to enable extradition of individuals, bringing justice to victims in both the UK and US. Individual requests for extradition from the UK are subject to the Extradition Act 2003, which requires a judge to decide whether the requested person's extradition would be appropriate based on the safeguards and protections included in the Act. Extradition continues to be a vital tool in our fight against transnational crime.

The Home Office has not had any recent discussions with the US on the future of the UK-US Extradition Treaty or risks of miscarriages of justice arising from their operation.

Farming Recovery Fund

Asked by **Lord Mott**

To ask His Majesty's Government how much of the £50 million extension of the Farming Recovery Fund, announced on 24 May, has been distributed to date. [HL1060]

Baroness Hayman of Ullock: We are acutely aware of the challenges farmers have been facing following the winter storms and the wet weather in late 2023 and early 2024. All eligible farmers that were identified in the original fund from April 2024 have been offered payment. This represents 679 farmers who were paid a total of £2.19 million. We are committed to maintaining food production and supporting thriving farm businesses as well as protecting communities from flooding. More information on the expanded Farming Recovery Fund will be made available soon (following the previous Government's announcement on this scheme in May).

Farms: Domestic Visits

Asked by **Lord Mott**

To ask His Majesty's Government how many farm visits the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs has undertaken in an official capacity since his appointment on 5 July. [HL1064]

Baroness Hayman of Ullock: The Secretary of State attended the Great Yorkshire Agriculture Show on 10 July 2024 and visited a farm and met with local farmers in Essex on 25 September 2024.

Ferries: Solent

Asked by **Lord Sharkey**

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the effectiveness of competition on cross-Solent ferry routes to and from the Isle of Wight in delivering fair consumer pricing. [HL857]

Lord Henty of Richmond Hill: Assessments regarding the effectiveness of competition on cross-Solent ferry services are a matter for the Competition and Markets Authority, which is independent of the Government. Decisions on which markets to investigate sit with its board.

The Department continues to engage directly with key stakeholders, including Islanders and ferry companies.

Financial Institutions: Prosecutions

Asked by **Lord Sikka**

To ask His Majesty's Government how many people have been prosecuted under section 36 of the Financial Services (Banking Reform) Act 2013 in each of the years since its inception; and what outcomes were achieved. [HL1089]

Lord Ponsonby of Shulbrede: The Ministry of Justice Court Proceedings Database has not recorded any prosecutions under section 36 of the Financial Services (Banking Reform) Act 2013 since its introduction.

Please see the offence group classification which lists the offences available to view in the Outcomes by Offence tool available via the following link: [Criminal Justice System statistics quarterly: December 2023 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/criminal-justice-system-statistics-quarterly-december-2023). This provides information on the number of prosecutions, convictions, sentences and sentence outcomes in England and Wales.

Financial Services: Education

Asked by **Lord Cruddas**

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to ensure that financial literacy education reaches the most disadvantaged students. [HL879]

Baroness Smith of Malvern: Financial education is currently taught through the National Curriculum for mathematics (at key stages 1 to 4) and citizenship (at key stages 3 and 4) which together cover personal budgeting, saving for the future, managing credit and debt, and calculating interest. The National Curriculum is compulsory for maintained schools. However, all schools are measured by Ofsted on having a broad and balanced curriculum which is comparable to the National Curriculum.

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. That is why the government announced a Curriculum and Assessment Review on 19 July 2024, chaired by Professor Becky Francis CBE.

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.

The review will look closely at the key challenges to attainment for young people, and the barriers which hold children back from the opportunities and life chances they deserve – in particular those who are socioeconomically disadvantaged, or with special educational needs and disabilities.

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.

Financial Services: Equality

Asked by Lord Moylan

To ask His Majesty's Government what is the policy of (1) the Treasury, and (2) the Government Equalities Office, on the consultations being conducted by the Financial Conduct Authority and the Prudential Regulation Authority on new diversity and inclusion reporting requirements for financial services firms; and what assessment they have made of whether those proposals are in line with their policy on increasing economic growth. [HL1065]

Lord Livermore: The Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) and Prudential Regulation Authority (PRA) are non-governmental bodies which are independent from the Treasury and have broad powers to make rules in order to advance their statutory objectives. The regulators are required by legislation to carry out their general functions, which include rule-making, in a way that advances their competitiveness and growth objectives.

In line with statutory requirements, the FCA and PRA have included in their consultations an explanation of the compatibility of the proposed rules with their duties, including consideration of the competitiveness and growth objectives.

Fireworks: Crime

Asked by Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they have had any discussions with the Metropolitan Police regarding reports that they are not investigating the illegal ignition of fireworks on bridges over the River Thames in central London on Wednesday 7 August, one of which landed in the Globe Theatre. [HL669]

Lord Hanson of Flint: The choice of whether to open an investigation is a decision for the police, who are operationally independent from Government. Home Office Ministers and officials have no power to direct or control the operational activities of the police.

Fluorinated Gases: Regulation

Asked by Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Benyon on 16 March 2023 (HL6230), what progress has been made in the review of the F-gas regulations, both (1) generally, and (2) with regard to the greenhouse gas sulphur hexafluoride (SF₆); what steps they are taking in reducing its carbon footprint in electricity transmission, distribution, and hydronic heat pump equipment; and how they intend to ensure that expansion of the electricity grid does not increase carbon emissions through increased use of fluorinated greenhouse gases. [HL785]

Baroness Hayman of Ullock: Defra is in the process of reviewing the F-gas Regulation, including consideration for reducing the use of SF₆ in the power sector.

Alternative technologies to the use of SF₆ in the power sector are being developed, with some already available and being deployed. As the review of the F-gas Regulation progresses, we will review the need for any future action within the F-gas regulatory regime to support the transition.

Folic Acid

Asked by Lord Kamall

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the remarks by Baroness Merron on 11 September (HL Deb col 1562) that they propose that 250 micrograms of folic acid per 100 grams should be added to non-wholemeal wheat flour, what scientific advice they have received on the maximum volume of folic acid per 100 grams that could be added to non-wholemeal wheat flour without damaging the health of patients who are advised not to take folic acid. [HL1122]

Baroness Merron: Pregnant women with folate deficiency are at greater risk of neural tube defects (NTDs). Currently government advice recommends that women who could become pregnant take a daily supplement of folic acid before conception and up until the 12th week of pregnancy. However, we know that around 50% of pregnancies in the UK are unplanned. Government is therefore looking at this UK-wide measure to mandate the fortification of flour with folic acid to reduce the number of NTDs in pregnancies as a priority.

The Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition (SACN) and the Committee on Toxicity of Chemicals in Food, Consumer Products and the Environment (COT) have considered the proposed level of fortification in depth.

The proposed policy is to fortify non-wholemeal wheat flour at 250 micrograms per 100 grams. Fortification above this level would allow for greater reductions in NTD risk but would increase the risk of people exceeding the recommended upper level of folic acid intake.

An upper limit of 1 milligram per day was set in the UK by the UK Expert Group on Vitamins and Minerals in 2003, which was later reviewed and agreed by COT in 2018. In 2006 and 2009, SACN concluded that it was also necessary to minimise exposure to high intakes of folic acid because there was still uncertainties regarding folic acid and cancer risk at high intakes.

The UK Government and devolved governments addressed concerns on the interaction of folic acid with treatments and medications for different conditions, such as cancer and epilepsy, in the consultation on the policy proposal in 2021. In addition, information on the presence of folic acid will be included on the ingredients list on product labels to inform consumers. In 2023, COT published a risk assessment of the potential risks of

allergic reaction (hypersensitivity) to folic acid if flour is fortified with folic acid at 250 micrograms per 100 grams.

There is agreement from both SACN and COT that the proposed levels of fortification are appropriate and provide a balanced approach to fortification.

The level of folic acid fortification will be kept under review as part of the monitoring and evaluation of the policy, which would assess both positive and postulated negative impacts.

Food Supply

Asked by Lord Mott

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they intend to continue to publish an annual food security index. [HL1062]

Baroness Hayman of Ullock: The Government is looking at options to strengthen food security reporting, including the possibility of enhanced annual reporting.

The Government's UK Food Security Report (UKFSR) sets out an analysis of statistics relating to food security. The next edition of the UKFSR will be published later this year, as required by the 2020 Agriculture Act.

Food: Labelling

Asked by Baroness Gale

To ask His Majesty's Government when they intend (1) to respond to the consultation by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs on fairer food labelling that closed on 7 May, and (2) to bring forward the proposals to improve transparency in method-of-production welfare labelling for pork, chicken and eggs. [HL606]

Baroness Hayman of Ullock: Ministers are carefully considering all responses provided to a public consultation on fairer food labelling before deciding on next steps.

Football: Governing Bodies

Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick

To ask His Majesty's Government when they intend to re-introduce the Football Governance Bill. [HL1092]

Baroness Twycross: The Football Governance Bill was announced as part of the King's Speech on 17 July 2024. We will introduce this legislation as soon as parliamentary time allows.

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Equality

Asked by Lord Farmer

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Baroness Sherlock on 7 August (HL344), how many staff in the Foreign,

Commonwealth and Development Office are permitted to undertake diversity-related network time during core working hours; what is the percentage of overall working time they are permitted to spend on such network activity; how many hours are allocated in total; what are the names of each of the networks being funded; and what plans they have to (a) increase, or (b) reduce, such funding. [HL1117]

Baroness Chapman of Darlington: The FCDO has 17 Staff Networks which relate to protected characteristics defined in the 2010 Equality Act, related characteristics referenced in the Civil Service Diversity & Inclusion Strategy, and FCDO specific groups for topics experienced as a global organisation. Staff Networks provide valuable insight and help us to meet the Public Sector Equality Duties. Co-Chairs of FCDO Staff Networks are volunteers who are allowed to spend up to 10 per cent of their contracted time to serve in this capacity - we do not record the hours this translates to. A small discretionary budget is available for Staff Networks to support their work in line with the Civil Service guidance and value for money. There are no plans to change the number of FCDO Staff Networks or related funding.

The Staff Networks are as follows: Armed Forces, Uniformed Volunteers & Family Staff Network, Country Based Staff, Disability Inclusion and Awareness Network, FCDO Women, FCDO/Diplomatic Service Families Association Carers' Network, FLAG: FCDO LGBT+ Staff Association, Flexible Working Network, Home Civil Service International Staff Network, Mental Health, Wellbeing and Listening Network, Over Fifties Network, Parents' Support Network, Parents of children with disabilities Network, Race and Ethnicity Network, Religion and Belief Group, Social Mobility Network, Unaccompanied Staff Network and Young People and Early Professionals Network.

Forests and Peatlands: Carbon Emissions

Asked by Lord Roborough

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to ensure that the Woodland Carbon Code and Peatland Carbon Code are certified under the Integrity Council on Voluntary Carbon Market's Core Carbon Principles. [HL762]

Baroness Hayman of Ullock: The Woodland Carbon Code is currently endorsed by ICROA, a leading industry accreditation programme for voluntary carbon market programmes. The Code is supported by a transparent carbon registry and a robust monitoring, reporting and verification system underpinned by third party validation and verification. The Woodland Carbon Code is preparing an application to be assessed for adherence to the Core Carbon Principles Assessment Framework of Integrity Council for the Voluntary Carbon Market and will submit as soon as it can.

The Peatland Code is currently in the process of applying to the Integrity Council on Voluntary Carbon Market's Core Carbon Principles. The Peatland Code also applied to ICROA in March this year. The Peatland Code is awaiting conditional endorsement once the first two verifications have been completed this winter. The Peatland Code (PC) validation and verification bodies (VVBs) are undergoing ISO accreditation under the PC by United Kingdom Accreditation Services (UKAS) which is one of the requirements for ICVCM and ICROA.

Forests and Peatlands: UK Emissions Trading Scheme

Asked by Lord Roborough

To ask His Majesty's Government what progress they are making to allow for the entry of Woodland Carbon Units and Peatland Carbon Units into the UK Emissions Trading Scheme. [HL764]

Baroness Hayman of Ullock: We are exploring the inclusion of greenhouse gas removals in the UK Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS), including the potential inclusion of high integrity woodland carbon, such as Woodland Carbon Units. A consultation was launched in May 2024 and a Government Response will be provided in 2025.

Forests: Commodities

Asked by Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park

To ask His Majesty's Government when they plan to introduce secondary legislation under Schedule 17 to the Environment Act 2021; and what plans they have to review the regulations once implemented. [HL748]

Baroness Hayman of Ullock: The Environment Act includes provisions to make it illegal for larger businesses operating in the UK to use key commodities that have been grown on land that is illegally occupied or used, but the required secondary legislation to operationalise the scheme was not introduced in the last Parliament. The new Government will set out its approach to addressing the use of forest risk commodities in due course.

Fractures: Health Services

Asked by Lord Lexden

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they have plans to establish a fund for new and improved fracture liaison services. [HL802]

Baroness Merron: The Government is committed to expanding fracture liaison services (FLS), supporting ending the postcode lottery. FLS are a globally recognised care model and can reduce the risk of refracture for people at risk of osteoporosis by up to 40%. Officials are working closely with NHS England to consider how best to support systems to ensure better quality and access to these important preventative services.

Asked by Lord Lexden

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they have any plans to appoint a national specialty adviser to lead cross-departmental work to improve fracture liaison services. [HL803]

Baroness Merron: The Government is committed to expanding Fracture Liaison Services (FLS), supporting ending the postcode lottery. FLS are a globally recognised care model and can reduce the risk of refracture for people at risk of osteoporosis by up to 40%. Officials are working closely with NHS England to consider how best to support systems to ensure better quality and access to these important preventative services.

Fuel Oil: VAT

Asked by Lord Allen of Kensington

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the potential benefit of zero-rating VAT on fuel oil to assist households that are reliant on fuel oil to heat their homes; and what plans they have to reduce VAT on fuel oil. [HL555]

Lord Livermore: Domestic fuels such as a gas, electricity and fuel oil are subject to the reduced rate of VAT at 5 per cent of VAT.

VAT is the UK's largest tax, forecast to raise £176 billion in 2024/25. A vital source of revenue which helps to fund public services.

The Government keeps all taxes under review as part of the policy making process."

Further Education: Civil Engineering

Asked by Lord Jopling

To ask His Majesty's Government which further education establishments in England provide courses which include instruction in the construction of tunnels for the use of railway or road traffic. [HL939]

Baroness Smith of Malvern: It is for providers to determine what courses to deliver based on employer and learner demand. Statistics are published on sector subject area, which can be accessed here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/further-education-and-skills>. The department does not hold information on which institutions are providing provision covering the construction of tunnels for the use of railway or road traffic.

Further Education: VAT

Asked by Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of removing VAT liability from general further education colleges, given that sixth form colleges are not liable. [HL1099]

Lord Livermore: On 29 July, the Government announced that, as of 1 January 2025, all education services and vocational training provided by a private school in the UK for a charge will be subject to VAT at the standard rate of 20 per cent. This will include sixth form colleges which provide these services for a charge.

Education and vocational training provided by further education colleges will not be subject to VAT as they do not charge fees for full time education for 16–19-year-olds.

Gambling

Asked by The Lord Bishop of St Albans

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they will take to support children growing up in households where an adult is experiencing problem gambling. [HL1086]

Baroness Twycross: We recognise the impact harmful gambling can have on individuals and their families. The National Gambling Clinic (NGC) supports people aged 13–18 years old in England who are experiencing harm from gambling, and offers a Family and Friends service which provides support to those impacted by someone else's difficulty with gambling.

As stated in the Government's manifesto, we are committed to strengthening protections for those at risk. We will consider the best available evidence in future decisions regarding the fulfilment of that important commitment.

Asked by The Lord Bishop of St Albans

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the findings of GambleAware's Annual GB Treatment and Support Survey 2023, published on 21 August. [HL999]

Baroness Twycross: The Government is committed to using all the evidence available from a range of sources, including the GambleAware survey, to better understand the true picture of gambling behaviours and treatment in Great Britain.

We recognise the impact harmful gambling can have on individuals and their families and, as stated in the Government's manifesto, we are committed to strengthening protections for those at risk. We will consider the best available evidence in future decisions regarding the fulfilment of that important commitment.

Gambling: Payment Methods

Asked by The Lord Bishop of St Albans

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of whether allowing the use of debit cards and digital payment wallets in land-based gambling venues will prevent (1) their closure, (2) a decline in revenue, or (3) job losses. [HL691]

Baroness Twycross: The use of debit cards and digital payment wallets is currently permitted for a range of gambling and non-gambling activities in land-based gambling venues in Great Britain. The Gaming Machines (Circumstances of Use) Regulations 2007 prohibit the direct use of debit cards on gaming machines. The full regulations can be seen here: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2007/2319/contents/made>

In our manifesto, we set out our intention to reduce gambling-related harm, strengthen protections for those at risk, and work with the industry to ensure responsible gambling. We are in the early stages of the new Government and are still considering the full range of gambling policy. We will consider the best available evidence from a wide range of sources to inform decisions on how best to fulfil our manifesto commitments.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

The Gaming Machine Regulations 2007 [The Gaming Machine (Circumstances of Use) Regulations 2007.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at: <http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2024-09-02/HL691>

Gatwick Airport: Air Traffic Control

Asked by Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of human resources and staff issues affecting the air traffic control provider at Gatwick Airport. [HL902]

Lord Henty of Richmond Hill: The provision of tower services at UK airports operates in a commercial market, with contractual agreements in place between the provider of air traffic control services and the airport concerned.

Neither the Government nor the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) has regulatory oversight of these commercial arrangements which are agreed between private businesses.

My officials and the CAA will, however, continue to engage with Gatwick airport and airlines wherever issues arise, which could impact services.

Gaza: Israel

Asked by The Marquess of Lothian

To ask His Majesty's Government what progress has been made on diplomatic efforts to secure a ceasefire in the Israel-Gaza conflict and the release of hostages since the Prime Minister spoke to Benjamin Netanyahu on 20 August. [HL1049]

Lord Collins of Highbury: Following the Prime Minister's conversation with Prime Minister Netanyahu on 20 August, the UK has been working tirelessly towards its priority of ending this conflict and securing

the safe release of hostages still cruelly detained by Hamas since day one. The situation on the ground remains intolerable, and the war must end now.

The Prime Minister met President Biden in Washington on 13 September where they reiterated UK and US calls for a ceasefire that will enable the release of the hostages. We welcome the efforts of our partners in Qatar, Egypt and the United States, and fully endorse their joint statement calling for the immediate resumption of ceasefire negotiations and a hostage release deal between Israel and Hamas. We are urging all sides to show flexibility. Both the Foreign Secretary and Minister Falconer have held meetings with the families of hostages with links to the UK and reiterated our commitment to using all diplomatic avenues to secure their release.

GCSE: Taiwan

Asked by *Lord Alton of Liverpool*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they have investigated reports that China lobbied for the removal of references to Taiwan from material used in schools in connection with GCSE examinations. [HL559]

Baroness Smith of Malvern: The content of textbooks is a matter for individual publishers. The department does not play a role in prescribing or authorising the books that schools can use. It is for schools to determine what curriculum resources they use, and to use their judgement in assessing their content.

Gender-Based Violence

Asked by *Baroness Jones of Moulsecoomb*

To ask His Majesty's Government, what steps they are taking ahead of White Ribbon Day to invest in the prevention of gender-based violence, particularly in work engaging men and boys. [HL1040]

Asked by *Baroness Jones of Moulsecoomb*

To ask His Majesty's Government, what steps they are taking ahead of White Ribbon Day to prioritise the prevention of gender-based violence. [HL1041]

Lord Hanson of Flint: This Government has set out our ambition to halve violence against women and girls within a decade, using every tool available to target perpetrators and address the root causes of violence.

Prevention and education are fundamental to our approach, and we will tackle the root causes of these crimes, including supporting our education system to teach children about respectful and healthy relationships and consent.

Gender Dysphoria: Health Services

Asked by *Lord Cashman*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment has been made of the impact of extended waiting times

to access NHS-commissioned mental health and paediatric services on the ability for young people to access support at the specialist gender services. [HL791]

Baroness Merron: In August, NHS England published a service specification for the National Referral Support Service for Specialist Services for Children and Young People with Gender Incongruence. Now referrals can only be made by a National Health Service-commissioned, secondary care-level paediatric service, or a Children and Young Person mental health service. This will ensure that healthcare professionals with the relevant expertise conduct the assessment and help determine any co-existing mental health or other health needs of these children and their onward care, ultimately ensuring a holistic approach to care for these children and young people.

The impacts of the new arrangements for referral into the NHS Children and Young People's Gender Services were considered in detail by NHS England through a process of public consultation, which included publication of an impact assessment. The impact assessment concluded that the new access arrangements are unlikely to increase the waiting time into the NHS Children and Young People's Gender Services for the majority of individuals, as the referral date from primary care to the secondary care service will be honoured for determining an individual's place on the waiting list for the NHS Children and Young People's Gender Service, and waiting times for local mental health services and paediatric services are likely to be lower for the majority of individuals than the current waiting time for the first appointment with the NHS Children and Young People's Gender Service. NHS England expects waiting times into the NHS Children and Young People's Service to fall as clinical capacity is increased through the establishment of new regional providers, in line with the recommendations of the Cass Review. The consultation materials and the impact assessment are available at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/publication/referral-pathway-for-specialist-service-for-children-and-young-people-with-gender-incongruence/>

Gender Recognition

Asked by *Baroness Stedman-Scott*

To ask His Majesty's Government how many responses have been received to the call for input on incorrect guidance on single-sex spaces and gender self-identification, published on 1 May; and what is the estimated date for publishing the Government response to the consultation and the summary of responses. [HL693]

Baroness Twycross: The call for input, published under the previous Government, closed on 26 June. We are currently reviewing the responses and considering the next steps. We will share further details, including the number of valid responses, in due course.

General Practitioners: Digital Technology

Asked by **Lord Kamall**

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Baroness Merron on 1 August (HL348), what percentage of GP surgeries and primary care centres currently offer an online booking option for GP appointments. [HL969]

Baroness Merron: The Department does not hold the information on what percentage of general practice (GP) surgeries and primary care centres currently offer an online booking option for GP appointments.

Gibraltar: Sovereignty

Asked by **Lord Kemsell**

To ask His Majesty's Government what is their position on the sovereignty of Gibraltar, and what communications they have had recently with the government of Spain in this regard. [HL714]

Lord Collins of Highbury: The UK Government is confident of British sovereignty over the whole of Gibraltar, including British Gibraltar Territorial Waters. The UK Government will never enter into arrangements under which the people of Gibraltar would pass under the sovereignty of another State against their freely and democratically expressed wishes. We have not, and will never enter into a process of sovereignty negotiations with which Gibraltar is not content. We regularly make this position clear to Spain.

Government Departments: Equality

Asked by **Lord Jackson of Peterborough**

To ask His Majesty's Government whether the (1) Cabinet Office Government People Group, and (2) Government Equalities Office, has a list of banned words and phrases. [HL1033]

Baroness Twycross: The Government has no such list. The Government uses terms which are designed to be inclusive, easy to understand and accessible to everyone.

Asked by **Baroness Hayter of Kentish Town**

To ask His Majesty's Government whether government departments give equal consideration and status to staff sex equality and equity networks as they do to LGBT+ and other diversity groupings. [HL751]

Baroness Twycross: All formally recognised cross-government equality, diversity and inclusion networks are given equal consideration. The Cabinet Office oversees cross-government equality, diversity and inclusion networks. Management of departmental equality, diversity and inclusion networks is delegated to departments.

Government Departments: Procurement

Asked by **Baroness Neville-Rolfe**

To ask His Majesty's Government why the implementation of the Procurement Act 2023 has been delayed to 2025; and what changes have been made to the timetable for the National Procurement Policy Statement in the light of changes to government policy on procurement since the general election. [HL1066]

Asked by **Baroness Neville-Rolfe**

To ask His Majesty's Government what changes they intend to make to current Government policy on procurement, including in relation to (1) social value requirements, (2) conditions relating to trade unions, and (3) conditions relating to equality, diversity and inclusion requirements. [HL1067]

Baroness Twycross: The Government wants to ensure that public procurement supports delivery of its missions. The National Procurement Policy Statement (NPPS) which sets out the Government's strategic policy priorities for public procurement is an essential element of the Procurement Act, and it is crucial that the new regime commences with a statutory NPPS aligned to the new Government's priorities.

Work will now begin on a new NPPS, helping to create a mission-led procurement regime which builds on the transformative powers within the Act, and which meets the challenge of applying the full potential of public procurement to deliver value for money, economic growth and social value. This work will be completed by February and therefore, Ministers have taken the decision to delay the commencement of the new regime until the new NPPS is in place. I am confident that this extra time will allow for a more seamless transition, ensuring a smoother and more effective implementation process for both contracting authorities and suppliers. The NPPS laid by the previous administration, and which would have come into force with the Act, will be withdrawn.

Government Departments: Remote Working

Asked by **Baroness Neville-Rolfe**

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer of Baroness Twycross on 13 August (HL548), whether further headquarters occupancy data have been collated since the end of general election purdah; what guidance they have given to the Civil Service on whether such data should continue to be collected and published; and whether they will place in the Library of the House any collated but unpublished data for the period since the election. [HL667]

Asked by **Lord Udny-Lister**

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Baroness Twycross on 13 August 2024 (HL548), what equivalent occupancy data has

been compiled since the general election; and whether they will place all post-election data that is held for each department in the Library of the House. [HL834]

Baroness Twycross: The publication of this data was suspended in line with pre-election guidance for the duration of the Pre-Election Period. We will provide an update on future publication plans in due course.

Asked by Lord Udney-Lister

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Baroness Twycross on 13 August 2024 (HL548), what is their policy on how often civil servants should work in the office rather than remotely. [HL835]

Baroness Twycross: Current Civil Service guidance requires Civil Servants to attend the office or work face-to-face with colleagues at least 60% of the time. There are no plans to change those requirements.

Asked by Lord Udney-Lister

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Baroness Twycross on 13 August 2024 (HL548), what is their policy on full-time civil servants working a four-day week on full-pay; and whether the 'right to switch off' will apply to civil servants on their fallow workday when working a four-day week. [HL836]

Baroness Twycross: Departments are responsible for setting the terms and conditions of employment for their civil servants, in accordance with the rules of the Civil Service Management Code. Full time employees across the Civil Service generally work 42 hours gross (37 hours net) per week over 5 days. Some departments may have flexible working policies that allow employees to request compressed hours, where the same hours are worked, only compressed over a shorter period, with no change to pay. There are no flexible working arrangements that permit reduced hours or part time working in exchange for full time pay.

Government Departments: Small Businesses

Asked by Baroness Bowles of Berkhamsted

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the statement by the Chancellor of the Exchequer on 29 July (HC Deb cols 1033–40), what assessment they have made of the impact on (1) small, and (2) innovative, businesses of the call for departmental savings; and in particular what assessment they have made of long-term economic harm, including the loss of economic activity, innovation, export potential, incomes and ability to make pension provisions. [HL1021]

Lord Livermore: The Chancellor has been clear that stability and sound money are key prerequisites for growth and strong public services. The government has taken hard but necessary decisions to fix the foundations of our economy and bring back economic stability -

including through the savings identified at the July statement.

Asked by Baroness Bowles of Berkhamsted

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the statement by the Chancellor of the Exchequer on 29 July (HC Deb cols 1033–40), how many small businesses working directly as Government contractors or suppliers have had work or expected work cancelled for departmental savings; how many Government contracts with small business have been cancelled or postponed; and what arrangements they have put in place to ensure small businesses do not have to carry the burden of new tendering for the same or similar work. [HL1022]

Asked by Baroness Bowles of Berkhamsted

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the statement by the Chancellor of the Exchequer on 29 July (HC Deb cols 1033–40), how many small businesses working directly for the Government have been told that their payment rates are being cut, and by what percentage range and average. [HL1023]

Lord Livermore: The government does not collate this information centrally.

Government Departments: Written Questions

Asked by Baroness Neville-Rolfe

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by the Parliamentary Secretary to the Cabinet Office of 30 July (HC923), whether paragraphs 207–208 of the Cabinet Office's Guide to Parliamentary Work (November 2022) on the relationship between the treatment of requests for information under Parliamentary Questions and the Freedom of Information Act 2000 remain their policy when answering Parliamentary Questions. [HL668]

Baroness Twycross: The Guide to Parliamentary Work is published by the Office of the Leader of the House of Commons and is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guide-to-parliamentary-work>.

The Government's position regarding the relationship between the treatment of requests for information under Parliamentary Questions and the Freedom of Information Act 2000 is unchanged. It is a routine courtesy and a recognised fundamental right of Parliament that Members receive full and timely responses to parliamentary questions.

Green Belt

Asked by Lord Teverson

To ask His Majesty's Government for what reason the second of the green belt purposes in paragraph 140 of the draft National Planning Policy Framework, "to

prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another", is not replicated in paragraph 155 regarding major development permitted through development management or on land which has been released from the green belt. [HL700]

Baroness Taylor of Stevenage: This Government recognises the important role the Green Belt plays in preventing urban sprawl and remains committed to its continued protection. The manifesto was clear that without changing its purpose or general extent, the government will take a more strategic approach to Green Belt release to build more homes in the right places.

The Government's proposed reforms relating to the Green Belt, and approach to implementation, are set out in the consultation on our approach to revising the National Planning Policy Framework and other changes to the planning system. This consultation began on Tuesday 30 July and closes on Tuesday 24 September.

Hamas: UNRWA

Asked by Baroness Altmann

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they will take, in light of their decision to renew funding of UNRWA, to ensure that its schools and facilities are not used to conceal Hamas infrastructure or launch attacks on Israel. [HL557]

Lord Collins of Highbury: Following the independent review by Catherine Colonna the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) set out an action plan with detailed management reforms including stronger independent oversight, better detection systems, improved screening procedures, mandatory training for staff on humanitarian principles and more proactive donor engagement. As a result, we are assured that UNRWA is taking action to ensure it meets the highest standards of neutrality.

£1 million of the UK's £21 million support to UNRWA this financial year will support implementation of these reforms. The FCDO will also continue to conduct its own annual assessment of UK funding to UNRWA.

Hammersmith Bridge: Repairs and Maintenance

Asked by Baroness Hodgson of Abinger

To ask His Majesty's Government when Hammersmith Bridge will re-open to traffic. [HL1120]

Lord Hendy of Richmond Hill: Hammersmith Bridge is expected to be reopened following the completion of the second, 'Strengthening' stage of works.

Hare Coursing

Asked by The Lord Bishop of St Albans

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to tackle hare coursing; and what assessment they

have made of whether hare coursing is increasing. [HL687]

Baroness Hayman of Ullock: The Government recognises the impact which the crime of hare coursing has on rural communities.

Measures to strengthen law enforcement and increase the powers of the courts were introduced through the Police, Crime Sentencing and Courts Act 2022. They have been widely welcomed. The new offences and higher penalties introduced by the Act are all being used and imposed by the courts.

Wildlife crimes such as hare coursing are not 'notifiable' so there are no official Home Office statistics or identifiable trends to judge robustly whether such crimes are increasing or decreasing across the country. Decisions on whether to make wildlife crimes notifiable sit with the Home Office. It is reasonable to assume the 2022 legislation, along with improved police tactics, intelligence and information sharing as well as the use of community protection notices (CPN) and criminal behaviour orders (CBO), has had an effect in terms of reducing levels of hare coursing.

Health Education

Asked by Lord Roberts of Llandudno

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to invest in health prevention in the coming years to help lesson demands on services through earlier intervention and education. [HL992]

Baroness Merron: One of the Government's five missions is to 'build an NHS fit for the future', with a greater emphasis on prevention, to support people in living longer and healthier lives.

This will involve working across the Government to tackle the underlying determinants of preventable ill health and giving people the information and support they need to make healthy choices. It also means shifting the National Health Service away from a model geared towards late diagnosis and treatment, to a model focused on prevention, with more services delivered in local communities. We will intervene earlier in life to raise the healthiest generation of children in our history, giving every child a healthy start in life. Our future funding plans will be confirmed as part of the forthcoming Spending Review.

Health Services

Asked by Baroness Redfern

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to review the present NHS commissioning system and to develop more robust arrangements to alleviate any potential of creating a two-tier system which could lead to differing priorities between Councils, the NHS, and the care sector. [HL722]

Baroness Merron: The Department supports the role and structure of statutory integrated care systems (ICSs) in both commissioning health services to meet the needs of their populations, and bringing together commissioners and other partners to plan and deliver joined up health and care services that improve the lives of people who live and work in their area.

The organisations within an ICS include the National Health Service, local government, social care providers, charities, and other organisations working together to provide more joined up care for people, and to improve the outcomes for their populations. NHS England has set out the four core purposes for the ICSs, which are as follows:

- improve outcomes in population health and healthcare;
- tackle inequalities in outcomes, experience, and access;
- enhance productivity and value for money; and
- help the NHS support broader social and economic development.

Health: International Cooperation

Asked by The Lord Bishop of St Albans

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Collins of Highbury on 1 August (HL313), what recent conversations they have had with other states regarding the timelines of replenishment for major global health multilaterals. [HL767]

Lord Collins of Highbury: We are working closely with other donors, implementing partners, civil society and the private sector on forthcoming replenishments of multilateral global health institutions to advance developing partner countries' priorities and sustainably improve global health security. The replenishments of Gavi (the Vaccine Alliance), the Global Fund, the Pandemic Fund, and the World Health Organisation's inaugural Investment Round will all take place over the coming 18 months. The Minister for Development will meet with the CEO of Gavi this week to discuss Gavi's recent Investment Case launch and timings for its replenishment.

Hen Harriers: Conservation

Asked by Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle

To ask His Majesty's Government whether any cases of hen harrier brood meddling have taken place this year; and whether the Hen Harrier Action Plan is intended to be continued, either on a trial or other basis. [HL780]

Baroness Hayman of Ullock: The Government remains committed to securing the long-term future of the hen harrier as a breeding bird in England. This currently includes the implementation of the six actions set out in

the Hen Harrier Action Plan. Changes to this approach in the future would require ministerial review.

No brood management of hen harriers was carried out this year. Natural England is currently reviewing and analysing the data gathered under the hen harrier brood management trial, a process which will be concluded later this year. These findings will play a critical role in assessing the effectiveness of brood management as a conservation technique.

High Rise Flats: Electrical Safety

Asked by Lord Rooker

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Baroness Taylor of Stevenage on 31 July (HL90), whether the Minister's secretary received a response to their letter from the Health and Safety Executive. [HL853]

Baroness Taylor of Stevenage: I would like to thank my Noble Lord for following up on the response I gave on the 31st July. My office has written to the Health and Safety Executive and I am awaiting a response.

Higher Education: Admissions

Asked by Baroness Crawley

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact of removing the cap on student recruitment in higher education on the sustainability of the sector, and whether they plan to review or restore the cap. [HL877]

Baroness Smith of Malvern: The Office for Students (OfS), the independent regulator of higher education (HE) in England, publishes an annual report on the financial health of the HE sector.

The OfS' most recent report, published in May 2024, does not cite the removal of the cap on student recruitment as a key risk to the financial sustainability of the sector. There are no plans to reintroduce student number controls. The report is attached and can also be read here:

<https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/media/ly1buqlj/financial-sustainability-report2024.pdf>.

The UK's universities are autonomous, vibrant and independent. The government values this, as does the HE sector. This means that, ultimately, it is for providers, as part of an autonomous and independent sector, to decide on effective business models.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

HL877 attachment - Financial sustainability report [HL877 attachment - Financial sustainability report 2024.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:
<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2024-09-09/HL877>

Higher Education: Finance

Asked by *Lord Alton of Liverpool*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the extent to which the independence of the UK higher education sector has been compromised by a reliance on funding from China. [HL560]

Baroness Smith of Malvern: The government has made significant strides to protect our values against those who do not respect the UK's fundamental rights and freedoms, or whose strategic intent is hostile to UK interests. The department has committed, in the Integrated Review Refresh, to review the full set of legislative and other provisions designed to protect our academic sector, in order to identify what more the department could or should be doing.

The department recognises the potential for overseas interference in our higher education (HE) sector and we are committed to ensuring ways to increase transparency, improve HE providers' overall resilience and economic security, whilst respecting the autonomy of universities.

A key part of the department's International Education Strategy is diversification. Our universities must ensure they have appropriate processes in place to manage risks associated with dependence on a single source of funding, whether that is from a single organisation or a single country. The Office for Students, the regulator of HE in England, monitors the risk of over-reliance on overseas income at a sector level.

Higher Technical Qualifications

Asked by *Viscount Camrose*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they intend to continue the Modular Acceleration Programme. [HL873]

Baroness Smith of Malvern: The modular acceleration programme is a two-year programme designed to accelerate the supply and support the delivery of individual modules of Higher Technical Qualifications ahead of the launch of the Lifelong Learning Entitlement. During academic years 2023/24 and 2024/25, 25 providers will deliver up to 108 modules to learners.

Delivery of the first modules began in April 2024, with the bulk of modules being delivered from September 2024. Activities to raise demand and support recruitment to modules will continue as the programme enters its second academic year.

Home Education

Asked by *Lord Storey*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the increasing number of pupils being educated at home. [HL947]

Baroness Smith of Malvern: The department has collected local authority data on electively home-educated children from local authorities in England since autumn 2022. The most recent published figures show an estimated 92,000 children in home education on the October 2023 census, which is an increase from 80,900 on the same day in the previous year.

The department knows that local authorities are concerned about rising numbers and the resulting implications on resources for their ongoing education and safeguarding duties. Data collection shows that mental health, special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and dissatisfaction with schools are increasingly common reasons behind decisions to home-educate. The forthcoming SEND reforms will help more schools to meet the needs of children with SEND and may help to stem the flow of families who feel that schools are not able to appropriately support their child.

The government will legislate for statutory local authority registers of children who are not in school as part of the Children's Wellbeing Bill, which will be introduced in due course. Parents will have a duty to provide information about their child for these registers. This will help to improve local authority and the department's understanding of this cohort of children and enable local authorities to target resources and capacity to those children who need it most.

Home Office: Equality

Asked by *Lord Farmer*

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Baroness Sherlock on 7 August (HL344), how many staff in the Home Office are permitted to undertake diversity-related network time during core working hours; what is the percentage of overall working time they are permitted to spend on such network activity; how many hours are allocated in total; what are the names of each of the networks being funded; and what plans they have to (a) increase, or (b) reduce, such funding. [HL1115]

Lord Hanson of Flint: As the noble Lord will be aware, successive governments have supported civil service staff to engage in network activity designed to foster a more inclusive workforce. The funding for that activity within the Home Office over the period 2019-24 was set out by the previous government in HC26338.

For network chairs and other representatives elected by their colleagues, the time they may spend on network activity is capped at 50 per cent of their working hours, and their role within the Department will always be given first priority over staff network activity. Time allocation is pro rata based on working pattern and contract, but the total amount of time allocated to network activity by relevant officials is currently equivalent to 19 FTE staff per year.

In August 23, the Home Office reported an allocated support time amounting to 19 FTE for the Civil Service

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Expenditure and Impact Review.

Horticulture: Import Controls

Asked by Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact of changes introduced by the Border Target Operating Model which came into force on 30 April, on the United Kingdom's environmental horticulture sector. [HL1020]

Baroness Hayman of Ullock: The impact of the Border Target Operating Model to cut flower trade is expected to be minimal.

A limited group of European Union (EU) cut flowers (such as chrysanthemum and carnations and orchids), are medium risk goods; all other EU cut flowers are low risk and will not be subject to border checks.

EU Medium risk cut flowers have been subject to prenotification since 1 January 2022 and EU Medium risk cut flowers have required a Phytosanitary Certificate (PC) since 31 January 2024, and inspections at the border since 30 April 2024.

EU Plants for planting are already classified as high-risk goods, and subject to inspection at place of destination. There is no change regarding the need for inspections, just a change of location of these inspections to Border Control Posts or Control Points.

House of Lords Composition: Bishops

Asked by Lord Lancaster of Kimbolton

To ask His Majesty's Government why in their proposals to reform the eligible membership of the House of Lords they have not included consideration of the bishops. [HL973]

Baroness Twycross: In its manifesto, the Government promised to bring about an immediate reform by removing the right of hereditary peers to sit and vote in the House of Lords.

The Government has now introduced legislation to implement this reform. This is a first step in taking forward the Government's commitments to wider reform of the House of Lords, including the introduction of a retirement age, a new participation requirement, changes to the appointments process, as well as establishing an alternative second chamber that is more representative of the regions and nations of the UK.

House of Lords Management Board

Asked by Lord Lamont of Lerwick

To ask the Senior Deputy Speaker why, in addition to the non-executive members of the House of Lords Commission, two non-executive directors are to be recruited to the House of Lords Management Board; and how much their employment will cost. [HL970]

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: Within the House of Lords, Non-Executive Directors (NEDs) are expected to provide an independent view and expertise on service delivery and provision, governance, and boardroom best practice. The Lords Management Board is seeking two NEDs to bring complementary skills and experience to the Board to provide advice, support and challenge about the management and delivery of services to the House of Lords. The remuneration of the NEDs is in line with wider public sector practice and within the House's governance arrangements. The remuneration for 2024/25 is £9,495 per annum based on 15 days of engagement.

Asked by Lord Lamont of Lerwick

To ask the Senior Deputy Speaker what are the responsibilities of the House of Lords Management Board; to whom it reports; and what relationship it has to the House of Lords Commission. [HL971]

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: The House of Lords Management Board supports the Clerk of the Parliaments in the discharge of his functions as Accounting Officer, Corporate Officer and employer of House staff. The Board takes strategic and corporate decisions for the House of Lords Administration within the framework set by the House of Lords Commission. The Commission provides high-level strategic and political direction for the House of Lords Administration on behalf of the House. The Commission works with the Management Board to develop, set and approve the strategic business plan, the annual business and financial plans for the Administration and monitor the performance of the Administration against agreed targets.

The responsibilities of the Management Board are set out in more detail in its terms of reference, and include:

- Preparing the strategic plan, business plans, financial plans, annual estimates and annual reports for approval by the House of Lords Commission;
- Managing the resources agreed by the House of Lords Commission;
- Assessing and managing each of the House of Lords Administration's corporate risks, and maintain a system of prudent and effective controls;
- Monitoring the House of Lords Administration's performance in achieving its objectives, as set out in the strategy approved by the House of Lords Commission; and
- Managing change in the House of Lords to increase, protect and drive value for money, improve performance and reduce costs so that the House operates and delivers services more efficiently and effectively.

By statute, the Clerk of the Parliaments is accountable to the House of Lords as a whole, but in practice this is primarily channelled through the Commission. The Clerk of the Parliaments regularly reports to the House of Lords Commission on the work of the Administration, and the Commission, Services, Finance, and Audit and Risk Assurance Committees scrutinise the work of the House of Lords Administration.

The full Terms of Reference are set out in the Management Board Handbook and Operating Framework, which is available on ParliNet.

Asked by Lord Lamont of Lerwick

To ask the Senior Deputy Speaker why applicants for the position of non-executive director of the House of Lords Management Board are asked to apply anonymously. [HL972]

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: This is a fair and open competition approach in line with sector-wide best practice, including in the Civil Service. All candidates are asked to submit a full application and provide an anonymised CV. While the supporting HR team have full access to candidates' information, the recruitment panel receives anonymised information which enables candidates' written applications to be assessed solely against the job criteria. The element of anonymity ends once candidates are shortlisted and invited to interview.

House of Lords: Membership

Asked by Lord Bradshaw

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of fee-charging agencies offering coaching to prospective applicants for membership of the House. [HL737]

Baroness Twycross: Neither the Government nor the House of Lords Appointments Commission endorse any service or company charging for advice on how to make and complete an application to the House of Lords.

Household Support Fund

Asked by Baroness Lister of Burtersett

To ask His Majesty's Government when they will announce their decision on the extension of the Household Support Fund beyond 20 September; what assessment they have made of how the current uncertainty over its continuation will affect local authorities' delivery of the fund, should it be continued; and what assessment they have made of the calls from charities and local authorities for a longer-term statutory local crisis support scheme in place of the fund in addition to local welfare assistance schemes. [HL653]

Baroness Sherlock: The Government has announced funding to extend the Household Support Fund (HSF) for a further 6 months, from 1 October 2024 until 31 March 2025.

An additional £421 million will be provided to enable the extension of the HSF in England, plus funding for the Devolved Governments through the Barnett formula to be spent at their discretion, as usual.

As with previous HSF schemes, the Fund will be made available to County Councils and Unitary Authorities in

England to provide discretionary support to those most in need.

The HSF scheme guidance and individual Local Authority funding allocations for the forthcoming extension will be announced as soon as possible ahead of the scheme beginning on 1 October 2024.

DWP is conducting an evaluation of the fourth iteration of the Household Support Fund. This includes research with a selection of representative Local Authority case study areas, consisting of interviews with Local Authority officials and their delivery partners, and surveys and interviews with recipients of the HSF. This evaluation will provide key evidence on how Local Authorities are delivering the scheme, and their experiences of doing so, as well as the effectiveness of the funding for recipients.

Housing

Asked by Lord Jamieson

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework, what is the average price per square metre for housing by local authority. [HL630]

Baroness Taylor of Stevenage: The requested statistics are not held.

Housing: Construction

Asked by Baroness Hodgson of Abinger

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they intend to consider the potential benefits of beautiful housing in their proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework. [HL624]

Baroness Taylor of Stevenage: The Government wants to create good quality, well-designed, and sustainable homes and places that we are all proud of. That is why the National Planning Policy Framework and our national design guidance highlight the benefits of good design and the role that it can play in improving health and well-being, accessibility and inclusion, and establishing a strong sense of place.

I would like to assure the Noble Baroness that creating beautiful homes and beautiful places is still encouraged by the Framework, including as part of the social objective of the planning system; one of the three overarching objectives for achieving sustainable development.

Asked by Lord Jamieson

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework, what steps they will take to ensure there is sufficient highways infrastructure to support housing growth given that the proposed reforms would introduce a high bar for refusing development on highways grounds. [HL631]

Baroness Taylor of Stevenage: We are clear that transport infrastructure is crucial in enabling sustainable development and that necessary transport infrastructure should be delivered through developer contributions.

However, the current approach to transport planning is dated and for that reason, we set out proposals for a 'vision-led' approach in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) consultation published on 30th July.

It remains the case that development should only be prevented or refused on highways grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe.

Asked by Lord Jamieson

To ask His Majesty's Government what additional support and powers they will provide to local authorities to ensure that suitable land is made available by landowners and developers actually build when planning permissions has been granted. [HL633]

Baroness Taylor of Stevenage: The Government is committed to building 1.5m homes over the next parliament. To meet our target will require record levels of housebuilding. That is why we are making changes to planning rules that will unblock the system and ensure the homes we need get built. The consultation on proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework and other changes to the planning system that began on Tuesday 30 July includes proposals designed to support increased build out rates and promote mixed-tenure schemes that meet the housing needs of local people. In conjunction with the start of that consultation, the housebuilding industry made a public commitment to increase the pace at which homes are delivered and to get on and build where sites are viable and have implementable consent. The Government has also taken swift action to unblock stalled sites through the creation of New Homes Accelerator Task Force.

Asked by Baroness Jones of Moulsecoomb

To ask His Majesty's Government what distance they consider to be a "short walk", as referred to in paragraph 155(c) of the National Planning Policy Framework draft text, published on 30 July. [HL637]

Baroness Taylor of Stevenage: In our consultation on proposed changes to the National Planning Policy Framework, we have set out that land released in the Green Belt should deliver clear benefits for nature and public access to green space where Green Belt release occurs. Q36 seeks views on our proposed approach. We will confirm our approach in our formal response to the consultation.

Asked by Baroness Scott of Bybrook

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the role modern methods of construction might play in speeding up the delivery of housing. [HL817]

Asked by Baroness Scott of Bybrook

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact modern methods of construction could have on achieving their housebuilding targets early. [HL818]

Asked by Baroness Scott of Bybrook

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to financially support the modern methods of construction sector as part of their housebuilding programme. [HL819]

Baroness Taylor of Stevenage: Modern methods of construction (MMC) provides an important opportunity to improve productivity in the construction sector, and quickly deliver high quality, energy efficient, homes whilst creating new and diverse jobs in the sector.

We will reflect on views from across the sector to establish how best to increase the use of MMC and will set out more details on this in due course.

Asked by Baroness Scott of Bybrook

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact of their housing policy on existing labour supply challenges in the construction sector. [HL821]

Baroness Taylor of Stevenage: To meet the Government's commitment to deliver 1.5 million homes over this Parliament, alongside net zero and housing quality objectives, we will need to expand and upskill the construction workforce. We are working with the construction industry to ensure we have the workforce necessary to meet our housebuilding ambitions through the delivery of sufficient high-quality training opportunities which will build a diverse workforce that is fit for the future.

Housing: Costs

Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of increasing housing costs. [HL770]

Baroness Taylor of Stevenage: While the pricing of mortgages is a commercial decision for lenders, we recognise that many home owners have been faced with higher mortgage rates in recent years. That is why we are committed to delivering economic stability to grow the economy and keep taxes, inflation and mortgage rates as low as possible.

Higher mortgage rates, along with the general increase in the cost of living have in particular created significant challenges for first-time buyers. In 2023 there were 235,000 first-time buyers, compared to 334,000 in 2021, a fall of nearly 30%. Too many people are now locked out of homeownership. Our aim to build 1.5m homes will help tackle this. We have also committed to introducing a permanent, comprehensive mortgage guarantee scheme

and to giving first-time buyers the first chance to buy homes.

Housing: East of England

Asked by Lord Jackson of Peterborough

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they plan to discuss with Peterborough City Council and other stakeholders, including Homes England, the development of legacy allocated land for residential development at Great Kyne (Castor and Ailsworth) in Peterborough to meet the housing delivery targets in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough and the East of England. [HL797]

Baroness Taylor of Stevenage: Homes England is promoting land north east of Castor and Ailsworth in the emerging Peterborough Local Plan Review, with the ambition to create a modern, sustainable community with high-quality homes, jobs, and facilities. The Local Plan Review is at an early stage and Homes England will be responding to consultations in line with the Council's Local Development Scheme and engaging with all stakeholders throughout the process.

Housing: Heat Pumps

Asked by Lord Birt

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Hunt of Kings Heath on 1 August (HL250), what plans they have for reducing the cost of operating heat pumps in the home below the cost of equivalent heating systems powered by gas or oil. [HL865]

Lord Hunt of Kings Heath: The Government is committed to ensuring low carbon heating is affordable. We are doing this by encouraging heat pump efficiency through innovation, installer training and product standards. We are also keen to support the most efficient ways of bringing down running costs of low-carbon alternatives.

The Warm Homes Plan will offer grants and low interest loans to support investment in insulation, low carbon heating and other home improvements. We will be focused on making it economically worthwhile for people to transition to clean sources of heating. We will announce further policy detail in due course.

Ian Corfield

Asked by Baroness Neville-Rolfe

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the remarks by Baroness Smith of Basildon on 4 September (HL Deb col 1157), and to the Written Answer by the Parliamentary Secretary to the Cabinet Office on 4 September (HC2317), whether the Chancellor of the Exchequer declared her political donation from Ian Corfield to the Treasury Permanent Secretary before he

was appointed as a civil servant by exception; whether they considered recusal; and whether the Civil Service Commission was informed of the donation before they considered the request for an exception to the Recruitment Principles in this matter. [HL810]

Lord Livermore: Ian Corfield was appointed on a short-term basis to carry out urgent work in support of the government's International Investment Summit in October. A full recruitment process could not have been completed in the time available. The donation was included in the Chancellor's Register of Member's Interests. He has since been appointed, unpaid, as a direct ministerial appointment. The Civil Service Commission has published their letter to HM Treasury approving the appointment of Ian Corfield.

Asked by Baroness Neville-Rolfe

To ask His Majesty's Government which Ministers (1) requested, and (2) approved, the appointment of Ian Corfield as a civil servant in July 2024; and which Minister and/or senior official authorised the Recruitment Principles exception application to the Civil Service Commission. [HL976]

Asked by Baroness Neville-Rolfe

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they will confirm if Ian Corfield received any payments in relation to his initial appointment as a civil servant in July 2024, prior to his subsequent conversion to a direct Ministerial appointment. [HL977]

Lord Livermore: Ian Corfield was appointed on a short-term basis to carry out urgent work in support of the government's International Investment Summit in October. A full recruitment process could not have been completed in the time available. He has since been appointed, unpaid, as a direct ministerial appointment.

The Treasury does not comment on the individual contractual arrangements.

Internet

Asked by Lord Clement-Jones

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to ensure supplier diversity and resilience in the UK's cloud infrastructure. [HL927]

Asked by Lord Clement-Jones

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to ensure that the UK's cloud networks regain sovereign capability. [HL928]

Asked by Lord Clement-Jones

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to support the UK's cloud hosting industry, in line with their aspiration to attain sovereign capability within the UK's cloud networks. [HL930]

Baroness Jones of Whitchurch: This government is committed to ensuring the security and resilience and

fostering diverse growth and innovation of UK data infrastructure, including cloud services.

The government recently designated data centres and cloud infrastructure as Critical National Infrastructure (CNI), recognising their fundamental importance to the UK and the digital economy. This will ensure that the UK is a safe place to develop and invest in data infrastructure.

The government continues to engage with the whole sector to enable and promote a level playing field, where UK cloud hosting providers have equity of access to the public sector cloud market.

Immigration

Asked by Lord Reid of Cardowan

To ask His Majesty's Government what data they hold on the economic contributions of immigrants to the UK, including their roles in key sectors such as healthcare, technology, and agriculture. [HL676]

Lord Hanson of Flint: This Government collects a breadth of data on the economic contributions of immigrants to the UK, and their roles in key sectors. The collection of statistics, research and analysis published by the Home Office on migration can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/migration-analysis-at-the-home-office>.

As part of that collection, the Home Office publishes data on the volume of migrants coming to the UK, the journey those migrants take through the immigration system and for those in sponsored work, the occupation in which they are employed. Internal data, which is used to support the Impact Assessments and Evaluation contained in that collection, includes wider information on the salaries, and characteristics of those migrants. This is further supported by primary research, also published as part of that collection, into the decision making and contribution of those using the immigration system.

The Home Office also makes use of data held by other organisations, including the ONS, HMRC and DWP on the activities of those who are not required to report their employment to the Home Office. This includes data on, for example, payrolled employment by nationality and sector in the UK, including in healthcare, technology and agriculture.

Further analysis on the contributions of immigrants to the UK are produced by the independent Migration Advisory Committee, including as part of their Annual Report (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/migration-advisory-committee-annual-report-2023/migration-advisory-committee-mac-annual-report-2023-accessible>) and the by the OBR as part of the Economic and Fiscal outlook (Net migration forecast and its impact on the economy - Office for Budget Responsibility (obr.uk))

Immigration Controls

Asked by Lord Reid of Cardowan

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they intend to take to ensure effective border control and management of illegal immigration. [HL674]

Lord Hanson of Flint: This government is implementing a serious, practical plan for reform; the Home Secretary has taken immediate steps to strengthen our approach by launching a new Border Security Command (BSC). Capabilities from across the Home Office have come together to build the foundational operating model of BSC with over 90 staff currently in post. Wider recruitment is ongoing as part of the broader organisational design.

The BSC will provide strategic direction across several agencies and partners, drawing together the work of the National Crime Agency (NCA), intelligence agencies, police, Immigration Enforcement and Border Force.

It will also work with international partners to disrupt the activity of criminal smuggling gangs and ensure those profiting from people-smuggling are brought to justice.

As set out in the King's speech, this government will introduce new legislative measures to restore order to our border.

The proposed new legislation will include provisions to give the border security system stronger powers to disrupt, investigate and prosecute facilitators of organised immigration crime.

Furthermore, in August the Home Secretary announced new measures to provide long term security to our border which included: the deployment of 100 specialist staff to the National Crime Agency (NCA) to disrupt and smash criminal smuggling gangs, a surge in enforcement and return flights, and increased detention capacity including 290 added beds at Campsfield and Haslar Immigration Removal Centres.

Immigration Controls: EU Countries

Asked by Lord Foster of Bath

To ask His Majesty's Government, in addition to the £10.5 million of funding made available to Eurostar, Eurotunnel and Port of Dover for the introduction of the EU Entry-Exit System, what other projects and funding they have planned that can be expedited immediately to ease the potential disruption, not least to the Kent road network. [HL1118]

Lord Henty of Richmond Hill: DfT and Home Office have allocated £9m and £1.5m respectively to help enable the implementation of EES at Eurostar, Eurotunnel, and Port of Dover in a manner which minimises the risk of disruption. In addition, the Government is working closely with the relevant operators, the French and the European Commission to ensure implementation is optimised.

DfT continues to review contingency planning and traffic management in Kent in response to the additional risks to border throughput which EES poses, with additional contingency measures being planned in conjunction with Kent and Medway Resilience Forum to manage impacts to drivers and local communities in the event of any disruption.

Immigration: Applications

Asked by *Lord Reid of Cardowan*

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to improve the efficiency and fairness of the immigration system, particularly in terms of processing times and decision transparency. [HL677]

Lord Hanson of Flint: The Home Secretary has removed the retrospective application of the Illegal Migration Act. This allows decision-makers to decide asylum claims from individuals who have arrived in the UK since 7 March 2023, with claims to be considered against the existing legislative regime under the Nationality and Borders Act 2022.

Asylum interviews have commenced, and asylum claims are now being decided for individuals who arrived in the UK from 7 March 2023.

We are determined to restore order to the asylum system so that it operates swiftly, firmly, and fairly; and ensures the rules are properly enforced.

Data relating to the performance against visa service standards are produced as part of the Migration Transparency publication.

These can be found at: [https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/migration-transparency-data#uk-visas-and-immigration\(opens_in_a_new_tab\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/migration-transparency-data#uk-visas-and-immigration(opens_in_a_new_tab)).

The Answer includes the following attached material:

Immigration and protection data: Q2 2024
[L_P+Q2+2024+Transparency+PUBLISHED+v3.xlsx]

The material can be viewed online at:
<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2024-09-02/HL677>

Immigration: Public Sector

Asked by *Lord Reid of Cardowan*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact of recent immigration levels on public services, including healthcare, education, and housing. [HL675]

Lord Hanson of Flint: This Government has an ongoing programme of work to monitor and evaluate the impact of migration. Statistics, research and analysis published by the Home Office on migration can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/migration-analysis-at-the-home-office>.

Further analysis on recent levels of net migration and its impacts are produced by the independent Migration Advisory Committee as part of their Annual Report, the most recent of which can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/migration-advisory-committee-annual-report-2023/migration-advisory-committee-mac-annual-report-2023-accessible>.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

MAC Framework Document
[The_MAC_Framework_Document_signed.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:
<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2024-09-02/HL675>

Individual Savings Accounts

Asked by *Lord McCrea of Magherafelt and Cookstown*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they still intend to introduce the British ISA. [HL806]

Lord Livermore: The government will provide further information on its plans for the British ISA in due course.

Influenza: Vaccination

Asked by *Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick*

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to paragraph 4.5.6 of the NHS Vaccination Strategy, published on 13 December 2023, what is their timeline for the development of a cost-benefit analysis on the centralised procurement and supply of adult flu vaccines. [HL903]

Asked by *Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick*

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to paragraph 4.5.6 of the NHS Vaccination Strategy, published on 13 December 2023, what plans they have to engage with external stakeholders in the development of a cost-benefit analysis of the centralised procurement and supply of adult flu vaccines. [HL904]

Baroness Merron: The NHS Vaccination Strategy outlined the intention to explore whether centralising the procurement and supply of adult flu vaccines could deliver better outcomes and address the existing clinical, operational, and financial challenges associated with local procurement. NHS England, the Department, and the UK Health Security Agency are working in partnership to plan a programme of work to consider this. This will include undertaking a cost-benefit analysis and market engagement with stakeholders. These plans, which include timelines, are still under development and subject to ministerial decision-making, but any potential changes as a result of this exploratory exercise will not be implemented before the 2026/27 financial year.

Inland Border Facilities: Ashford

Asked by *Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether it plans to publish any data on the Common User Charge including values invoiced and collected; and any data on operating costs for the Sevington Border Control Post. [HL1019]

Baroness Hayman of Ullock: While we recognise the importance of sanitary and phytosanitary checks on certain imports, this Government is also committed to reducing unnecessary barriers to trade and cutting red tape by striking a fair balance between business and biosecurity.

As such we are reviewing the current border controls brought into place on 30 April under the previous Government.

Information about the common user charge can be found on [here](#). We will publish further information in due course on the charge.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

Common User Charge Info [HL1019 attachment.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2024-09-12/HL1019>

Integrated Care Boards

Asked by *Lord Roberts of Llandudno*

To ask His Majesty's Government what is their assessment of the success of integrated care boards. [HL991]

Baroness Merron: NHS England holds integrated care boards (ICBs) and National Health Service providers to account for the delivery of national priorities and statutory functions, and oversees them via the NHS oversight framework. NHS England has a legal duty to annually assess the performance of each integrated care board, in respect of each financial year, and publish a summary of its findings. Annual assessments for the financial year 2023/24 have been completed and NHS England will summarise the outcomes of all annual assessments and publish a report.

In addition, the Government published Professor Lord Darzi's independent investigation of the NHS in England on 12 September 2024, which includes an assessment of the progress of and challenges facing ICBs. The Government has committed to the development of a new 10 Year Health Plan which will build on the findings of the report published by Professor Lord Darzi.

Internal Drainage Boards: Finance

Asked by *Lord Mott*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they intend to distribute in full the £75 million of funding to

support internal drainage boards announced in February, and if so, by what date. [HL1061]

Baroness Hayman of Ullock: Protecting communities from flooding is a key priority for this Government, and that is why we have launched a Flood Resilience Taskforce. It will provide oversight of national and local flood resilience and preparedness ahead of and after the winter flood season. It met for the first time on 12 September to discuss preparation for the winter ahead.

The Internal Drainage Board (IDB) Fund, announced in February 2024, will support our farmers and rural communities from the impacts of flooding by providing grants to IDBs. The Environment Agency has confirmed Tranche 1 allocations, which provides financial support for storm recovery following the wet weather and flooding during winter 2023/24. They are in the process of making payments to the successful IDBs. We will update the IDBs on Tranche 2 in due course.

Investment: Departmental Responsibilities

Asked by *Lord Taylor of Warwick*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they intend to appoint a new investment minister. [HL825]

Baroness Twycross: My Rt Hon Friends the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Secretary of State for Business and Trade are responsible for this Government's priority of growth and advancing opportunities for investment across the country.

Iran: Trade Promotion

Asked by *Lord Godson*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they intend to appoint a replacement for the previous trade envoy to Iran; and if so, what appointment procedure they will follow. [HL960]

Baroness Jones of Whitchurch: We are carefully reviewing the Prime Minister's Trade Envoy programme in the context of the new Government's trade and industrial strategies. The House will be notified of any appointments in due course.

Iraq: Children

Asked by *Lord Alton of Liverpool*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the implications of the proposed amendment to Iraq's Personal Status Law 188, which could lower the legal age for marriage to nine, and the extent to which it aligns with international treaties on the rights of children to which Iraq is a signatory. [HL1017]

Lord Collins of Highbury: The UK is analysing the proposed amendments to Iraq's Personal Status Law and its implications for women and children's rights. As we privately engage with a range of Iraqi interlocutors to

discuss this, we are emphasising the importance of any amendments' compatibility with Iraq's international obligations.

We would condemn any legislative change that would violate international norms, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966), the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1976) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989).

Iraq: Christianity

Asked by The Lord Bishop of Winchester

To ask His Majesty's Government what representations they plan to make to the government of Iraq regarding the subversion of regional government by Iranian-backed militia in the Ninevah Plains and the impact of this on the stability of the region and on the safety of the Christian community there. [HL702]

Lord Collins of Highbury: It is vital that the Government of Iraq keep Iraqi militia groups in line and ensure democracy is adhered to. We are closely monitoring the impact of these developments on the safety of Nineveh's Christian community.

The UK is firmly committed to protecting the Christian community, and other ethnic and religious minorities, and are strong advocates of greater Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB) in Iraq. We regularly engage with the Government of Iraq and the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) on this issue, in particular the importance that minorities are included in national and local government as well as reconciliation efforts.

Iraq: Yazidis

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask His Majesty's Government what representations they have made to government of Iraq in relation to the spike in hate speech against the Yazidi, following the 10th anniversary of the Yazidi genocide; and how they are assisting Iraq in addressing the issue. [HL837]

Lord Collins of Highbury: The UK remains committed to supporting the Yazidi community. The UK regularly engages with the Government of Iraq and the Kurdistan Regional Government on the promotion of the right to freedom of religion and belief, including for the Yazidi community.

We are closely monitoring the situation currently facing Yazidis. We currently provide support to Yazidi survivors through a Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative delivered by the International Organization for Migration (IOM), which funds capacity building support to the Government of Iraq to support to the implementation of the Yazidi Survivors Law passed in 2021. We continue to advocate for implementation of the

Law, which is crucial in securing justice for survivors and rebuilding their lives.

We have also supported Iraq to develop capacity for Daesh accountability through the United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Daesh/ISIL (UNITAD), and international efforts to deliver justice will continue.

Islamic State: Crimes against Humanity

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask His Majesty's Government what is their position on establishing an ad hoc tribunal for Da'esh to ensure that its members are prosecuted for their involvement in international crimes, including genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes. [HL840]

Lord Collins of Highbury: The UK is committed to ensuring that those responsible for the commission of serious international crimes do not go unpunished. Universal jurisdiction has been adopted in the case of certain heinous crimes to accord with customary international law and the UK's international obligations set out in various treaties. The UK is committed to helping countries to prosecute offences that take place on their territory or within their jurisdiction, including the investigation and prosecution of crimes of universal jurisdiction. The UK has arrangements to provide mutual legal assistance to other countries and permits the surrender of its own nationals subject to statutory safeguards.

Israel: Arms Trade

Asked by Lord Turnbull

To ask His Majesty's Government what additional factors led to the Foreign Secretary's decision to limit arms supplies to Israel when his predecessor in that office did not take such action. [HL833]

Lord Collins of Highbury: Previous assessments against the export criteria are a matter for the government in office at the time. As soon as the Foreign Secretary took office, he tasked officials with a comprehensive review of Israel's compliance with international humanitarian law. On 2 September the Foreign Secretary delivered an Oral Statement in the House of Commons updating Members on his assessment regarding international humanitarian law (IHL) and the Government's related decision on arms exports.

He has published a summary of the IHL process, decision, and the factors taken into account [<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/summary-of-the-international-humanitarian-law-ihl-process-decision-and-the-factors-taken-into-account#:~:text=The%20government%20has%20conducted%20a%20thorough%20review%20of%20Israel%E2%80%99s%20compliance>].

Asked by Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the statement by the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs on 2 September (HC Deb cols 37–40), whether they plan to publish a comprehensive list of licences for the sale of arms to Israel that are not covered by the partial suspension announced in that statement. [HL941]

Lord Collins of Highbury: The UK has some of the most robust export licencing criteria in the world. The Government will not issue export licences if there is a clear risk that the items might be used in violations of International Humanitarian Law. This government has concluded that a clear risk does exist, with regards to certain items. This means that under the Criteria we are required to suspend around 30 licences which we assess could be used in the current conflict in Gaza. This is around a third of the total number of our export licences for equipment to the Israeli military. The remaining licences for the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) include trainer aircraft parts, naval equipment, and air defence. Affected exporters have been notified of those suspensions. Further information on the decision to suspend certain export licences to Israel is provided in the Secretary of State for Business and Trade's Written Ministerial Statement [https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-statements/detail/2024-09-02/hcws64].

Asked by Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the statement by the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs on 2 September (HC Deb cols 37–40), whether components for F-16s transferred to Israel via the United States of America under incorporation licences have been excluded from the partial suspension of arms to Israel; and if so, why. [HL942]

Lord Collins of Highbury: The Strategic Export Licensing Criteria (SELC) state 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 a serious violation of International Humanitarian Law (IHL). We have deemed that such a risk exists for items that are for use in military operations in the current conflict in Gaza and have made the decision to suspend these exports immediately. This consists of approximately 30 export licences to the Israeli military, including parts for F-16 fighter jets, as detailed in the Secretary of State for Business and Trade's Written Ministerial Statement [https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-statements/detail/2024-09-02/hcws64].

Israeli Settlements

Asked by The Lord Bishop of Gloucester

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the intensification of land

confiscation, settlement construction and settlement expansion in the Occupied Palestinian Territories since 7 October 2023. [HL747]

Lord Collins of Highbury: West Bank settlement expansion and settler violence have reached record levels. The Israeli government has seized more land this year than in the past twenty years combined. This is unacceptable: it runs counter to multiple resolutions of the United Nations Security Council and undermines the viability of a two-state solution. The Foreign Secretary met Palestinians displaced by settlers during his visit in July. The UK condemns settler expansion and the increase in settler violence. We keep all these issues under review and discuss them with our closest allies.

Israeli Settlements: Palestinians

Asked by The Lord Bishop of Gloucester

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the treatment of Palestinian Christians by Israeli settlers establishing illegal outposts. [HL881]

Lord Collins of Highbury: The UK's position is clear. Settlements are illegal under international law, present an obstacle to peace, and threaten the physical viability of a two-state solution. We condemn settler violence, and champion the right to freedom of religion and belief (FoRB). The Foreign Secretary was clear with PM Netanyahu on his visit to Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories (July 2024) that the Israeli government must clamp down on settler violence and end settlement expansion. The Foreign Secretary also met Palestinian community members during his visit to the West Bank on 15 July, where he heard how communities are affected.

The UK will champion FoRB for all abroad. We are clear that incitement of violence or hatred against individuals based on their religion or belief is unacceptable. Respect for FoRB, and the promotion of interreligious dialogue, plays an important role in securing sustainable peace. Our Consulate General in Jerusalem regularly engages with the Christian community in the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

Jess Sargeant

Asked by Baroness Neville-Rolfe

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment the Cabinet Secretary has made of the compatibility of appointing Ms Jessica Sargeant from Labour Together as the new Deputy Director in the Cabinet Office's Propriety and Constitution Group, with (1) propriety, (2) the Nolan principles on standards in public life, and (3) the Civil Service Code's provisions on political impartiality. [HL666]

Baroness Twycross: It is a long-standing policy not to comment on individuals.

All civil servants are expected to carry out their duties in accordance with the values of the Civil Service Code, including impartiality. Where appointments are made by exception to the principle of fair and open competition, the employing department must be satisfied that the use of the relevant exceptions route is justified and that the individuals in question can uphold the Civil Service Code values.

*Asked by **Baroness Neville-Rolfe***

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the remarks by Baroness Smith of Basildon on 4 September (HL Deb col 1157), and to the Written Answer by the Parliamentary Secretary to the Cabinet Office on 4 September (HC2317), whether Nick Thomas-Symonds declared, as a political donation in kind, the reported use of a seconded member of staff from Labour Together to (1) the Permanent Secretary to the Cabinet Office, or (2) to the Cabinet Secretary, before that member of staff, Jessica Sargeant, was appointed as a Deputy Director at the Cabinet Office by exception; whether they considered recusal; and whether Cabinet Office officials were informed of any political donations when they considered the delegated Recruitment Principles exception request for Miss Sargeant's appointment to the Cabinet Office's Propriety and Constitution Group. [HL811]

Baroness Twycross: There is an established process in place for the declaration and management of private interests held by ministers, which ensures that steps are taken to avoid or mitigate any potential or perceived conflicts of interest.

Jimmy Lai

*Asked by **Lord Alton of Liverpool***

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the urgent appeal submitted to the United Nations Special Rapporteur on torture on 12 September by the international legal team for British citizen Jimmy Lai; and what action they are taking to secure his release. [HL1015]

Baroness Chapman of Darlington: We are aware of the urgent appeal to the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture with respect to British national Jimmy Lai and are deeply concerned by the allegations of torture and mistreatment it makes. The Foreign Secretary raised Jimmy Lai's case in his first meeting with China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi at the ASEAN Summit on 26 July and his case remains a priority for this Government. We will continue to call on the Hong Kong authorities to end their politically motivated prosecution and immediately release Jimmy Lai and we will continue to press for consular access.

*Asked by **Lord Alton of Liverpool***

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the report, Cooperation with the United Nations, its representatives and mechanisms in

the field of human rights, by the United Nations Secretary-General, published on 20 August, including the concerns it raises about reprisals against British citizen Jimmy Lai, his son, Sebastien Lai, and members of their international legal team. [HL1016]

Baroness Chapman of Darlington: We are carefully reviewing the UN's report on 'Cooperation with the United Nations, its representatives and mechanisms in the field of human rights' and will respond to the report during the current session of the Human Rights Council in Geneva.

Any attempts to coerce, intimidate or harm those who cooperate with the United Nations are unacceptable. The UK unequivocally condemns each and every act of intimidation or reprisal.

Jobcentre Plus

*Asked by **Baroness Wilcox of Newport***

To ask His Majesty's Government what recent assessment they have made of the effectiveness of Jobcentre Plus in helping people get back into work. [HL1096]

Baroness Sherlock: The last Parliament saw the biggest increase in economic inactivity in nearly 40 years. The employment rate remains 1.4%pts lower than before the pandemic. Only one in six people escape low pay over the course of a decade.

The UK is the only G7 country not to have a higher employment rate than pre-COVID. We are reforming employment support, bringing together Jobcentre Plus and the National Careers Service. The new jobs and careers service will transform our ability to support more people into work and help those on low pay to increase their earnings, which will in turn be vital to supporting our wider economic growth mission.

We will set out our plans in more detail through the forthcoming White Paper to Get Britain Working.

Land Use

*Asked by **Lord Roborough***

To ask His Majesty's Government whether their planned land use framework will consider renewable energy and other development, as well as food security and nature recovery. [HL763]

Baroness Hayman of Ullock: The forthcoming land use framework for England will consider cross-governmental issues such as energy and food security and how we can expand nature-rich habitats such as wetlands, peat bogs and forests.

Spatial planning will play an important role in the delivery of the Government's growth and clean energy missions, and the land use framework will work hand in hand with the Strategic Spatial Energy Plan. The Government will also explore the opportunities for spatial

planning to support the delivery of other types of infrastructure.

Leasehold and Freehold Reform Act 2024

Asked by Lord Black of Brentwood

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they will provide details of their proposals, including timetables, for the implementation of each of the provisions of the Leasehold Reform Act 2024. [HL705]

Baroness Taylor of Stevenage: As outlined in the King's Speech, the Government will implement the Leasehold and Freehold Reform Act 2024 so that leaseholders can benefit from more rights, power and protections over their homes. A small number of provisions came into force on 24 July, two months after Royal Assent, relating to rent charge arrears, building safety legal costs and the work of professional insolvency practitioners. The implementation of many of the reforms in the Leasehold and Freehold Reform Act 2024 will require a programme of secondary legislation. Any reforms to leasehold law are highly complex, and the Government will take the time required to get those changes right.

Legal Aid Scheme

Asked by The Lord Bishop of Bristol

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have, if any, to increase fees payable for (1) barristers, and (2) solicitors, undertaking legal aid cases. [HL584]

Lord Ponsonby of Shulbrede: We want to understand the different ways in which the justice system can be improved and will be carefully considering our options on the way forward, including with regards to legal aid. We acknowledge that the sustainability of the profession is central to a successful legal aid system.

We will carefully consider the evidence including, for example, information gathered as part of the Review of Civil Legal Aid.

Life Peers

Asked by Lord Bradshaw

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to revise the factors they take into account when considering the suitability of individuals to be nominated for a life peerage. [HL736]

Baroness Twycross: The Government committed in its manifesto to reform the process of appointments to the House of Lords to ensure the quality of new appointments and to seek to improve the national and regional balance of the second chamber and is actively considering how this can be achieved.

Lifelong Education

Asked by Lord Watson of Invergowrie

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have regarding the rollout of the Lifelong Learning Entitlement. [HL918]

Baroness Smith of Malvern: At present, the department is working to ensure that its approach to lifelong learning will be as effective as possible, enabling people to gain the skills they need to support their careers.

The government recognises that lifelong learning is a core part of a sustainable higher education system which provides opportunities for all and offers learners greater flexibility in an ever-evolving economy.

We will make further announcements about this work shortly.

Livestock Worrying

Asked by The Lord Bishop of St Albans

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they plan to take to tackle dog attacks on livestock, following the 30 per cent increase in dog attacks on livestock in 2023 compared to the previous year. [HL815]

Baroness Hayman of Ullock: The Government recognises the distress livestock worrying can cause animals and their keepers. We are considering the most effective ways to deliver our commitments in this area and will be setting out next steps in due course.

Local Government: Land

Asked by Lord Jamieson

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to ensure that the removal of the presumption of a five-year land supply for local authorities with an up-to-date local plan as part of the proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework does not lead to a significant increase in speculative applications and planners' workload. [HL632]

Baroness Taylor of Stevenage: Our consultation on national planning policy delivers on our manifesto commitment to reversing the changes made to the NPPF in December 2023 that were detrimental to housing supply. These changes are an essential part of meeting our commitment to building 1.5m new homes. Alongside this, we have set out clear plans for improving the operation of the presumption and for boosting the capacity of LA planners.

London North Eastern Railway: Fares

Asked by Baroness Randerson

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they will take to assess plans for the simplification of fares

on LNER routes; and how they intend to assess the views of the public on these proposals. [HL895]

Lord Henty of Richmond Hill: We will evaluate the pilot to consider impacts on passengers and will carefully consider before taking any further decisions.

Marine Environment

Asked by Lord Teverson

To ask His Majesty's Government when they will commence the operation of marine net gain. [HL829]

Baroness Hayman of Ullock: This Government is committed to nature recovery. Work is underway to develop options for the role marine net gain may play including consideration of timescales for operation of the policy.

Medical Records: Data Protection

Asked by Lord Kamall

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they will place in the Library of the House (1) the data protection impact assessment for the Privacy Enhancing Technology contract for NHS England's Federated Data Platform, and (2) NHS England's template data protection impact assessment for each nationally commissioned product in the Federated Data Platform. [HL968]

Baroness Merron: NHS England has published on its website an overarching National Health Service Federated Data Platform (FDP) data protection impact assessment (DPIA), an overarching NHS FDP information governance framework, and overarching NHS FDP privacy notice and privacy notices, for each national FDP product.

NHS England plans to publish an overarching NHS Privacy Enhancing Technology DPIA, and a DPIA for each national FDP product on the NHS England website in autumn 2024. These will be placed in the library of the House.

Meters: Smart Devices

Asked by Lord Truscott

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made, if any, of the number of smart meters which malfunction in the UK. [HL1009]

Lord Hunt of Kings Heath: The Department is working closely with industry and Ofgem to reduce the proportion of smart meters not operating in smart mode. Data on this is included in the statistics the Government publishes every quarter on the progress of the smart metering rollout. These are available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/smart-meters-statistics> and at Gov.UK. This shows that over 90% of smart meters are functioning in smart mode and that the proportion of meters operating in 'traditional'

mode is steadily reducing. Smart meters operating in traditional mode continue to record energy usage accurately but do not send automatic readings to energy suppliers.

Metropolitan Police

Asked by Lord Swire

To ask His Majesty's Government whether there are any plans to revisit or otherwise further investigate the operational conduct of Operation Midland. [HL731]

Lord Hanson of Flint: Police forces and the Independent Office for Police Conduct are independent of government and decisions concerning investigations are operational ones for them to make.

Metropolitan Police: Misconduct

Asked by Lord Swire

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the progress of the Independent Office of Police Conduct in pursuing gross misconduct charges arising from Operation Midland. [HL730]

Lord Hanson of Flint: Disciplinary proceedings concerning Operation Midland remain ongoing and it would therefore be inappropriate for the Government to comment while that remains the case.

Migrant Workers: Skilled Workers

Asked by Lord Reid of Cardowan

To ask His Majesty's Government, in light of current labour shortages in various industries, how they are adjusting immigration policies to attract and retain skilled workers from abroad. [HL679]

Lord Hanson of Flint: Net migration is too high and must be reduced. This means employers should look to the domestic labour market to nurture and develop the skills where they can.

This is why we are setting out a different approach – one that links migration policy and visa controls to skills and labour market policies – so immigration is not used as an alternative to training or tackling workforce problems here at home.

As a first step, we have commissioned the Migration Advisory Committee (MAC) to identify the reasons for the reliance on international recruitment in key sectors, including IT and engineering.

The MAC commission has been published on their website: www.gov.uk/government/publications/mac-commissioned-to-review-it-and-engineering-sectors

The Answer includes the following attached material:

Letter [MAC+commissioning+letter_final+060824.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at: <http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2024-09-02/HL679>

Military Attachés

Asked by *Baroness Goldie*

To ask His Majesty's Government how many defence attachés are currently operating in host countries; and whether the numbers of UK defence attachés (1) increased, or (2) decreased, in (a) 2022, (b) 2023, and (c) 2024 to date. [HL963]

Lord Coaker: The current number of Defence Attachés (as of September 2024) who reside in host countries and lead Defence Sections in UK Embassies and High Commissions are 91. The numbers for the years 2022 and 2023 are:

Year Number of Defence Attachés

2022 - 87

2023 - 89

Note: The UK Defence Attachés for the Russian Federation and Yemen have been temporarily relocated due to local circumstances and conduct their duties from other locations.

Ministers: Conduct

Asked by *Baroness Hayter of Kentish Town*

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to revise the Ministerial Code. [HL618]

Baroness Twycross: As the Prime Minister has made clear, public service is a privilege. When meeting with his new Cabinet for the first time, the Prime Minister was clear about the standards he expects of all ministers.

The Prime Minister will issue a Ministerial Code in due course.

Ministers: Members' Interests

Asked by *Baroness Neville-Rolfe*

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by the Parliamentary Secretary to the Cabinet Office on 4 September (HC2317), whether a Minister is required to declare a political donation as an interest to their Department if they make a Government decision that directly and personally financially benefits the donor; and what guidance (1) the Cabinet Office, and (2) the Independent Adviser on Ministers' Interests, have issued on such requirements, and on recusal processes in the event of conflicts of interest. [HL809]

Baroness Twycross: There is an established process in place for the declaration and management of ministers' private interests, which ensures that steps are taken to avoid or mitigate any potential or perceived conflicts of interest.

Asked by *Baroness Neville-Rolfe*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether the Independent Adviser on Ministerial Interests has

finished reviewing Ministers' declared interests, whether all Ministers have now declared their interests, and when they intend to publish the List of Ministers' Interests. [HL978]

Baroness Twycross: The next List of Ministers' Interests will be published in due course in line with the established process in place for the declaration and management of private interests held by ministers, which ensures that steps are taken to avoid or mitigate any potential or perceived conflicts of interest.

Ministers: Pay

Asked by *Lord Forsyth of Drumlean*

To ask His Majesty's Government what are the salaries and allowances of each of the Ministers and Whips in the House of Lords. [HL746]

Baroness Twycross: The Ministerial and Other Salaries Act 1975 sets out the terms on which salaries can be paid to government ministers. The salaries claimed by ministers and whips in the House of Lords are available on gov.uk at the following address:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ministerial-salaries-data/salaries-of-members-of-his-majestys-government-april-2022-html#ministers-who-are-members-of-the-house-of-lords>

A list of all government ministers, which indicates whether each minister receives a salary or is unpaid, is available on gov.uk at the following address:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/ministers>.

In addition, ministers who are members of the House of Lords are entitled under the Ministerial and Other Pensions and Salaries Act 1991 to receive the Lords Office-Holders Allowance (LOHA). It has been long-standing government policy over successive administrations for ministers whose main residence is in Greater London to waive their entitlement to claim this allowance and instead claim it at a reduced rate equivalent to the London Area Living Payment set annually by the Independent Parliamentary Standards Authority; details are available at the following address:

https://assets.ctfassets.net/nc7h1cs4q6ic/5j9dlpZsDtyFgqi43bBB91/7eaea5bcc329496878b420bf2e511586/Seventeenth_edition_of_the_Scheme_2024-25.pdf.

Ministers who are members of the House of Lords who do not receive a salary may choose between claiming LOHA or the Lords Daily Attendance Allowance.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

Government Ministers [Ministers - GOV.UK - GOV.UK.pdf]

Lords Office-Holders Allowance (LOHA)
[Seventeenth_edition_of_the_Scheme_2024-25.pdf]

Salaries of HMG Officials [Salaries of members of His Majesty's Government_ April 2022 (HTML) - GOV.UK.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:
<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2024-09-04/HL746>

Ministry of Defence: Equality

Asked by **Baroness Altmann**

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Baroness Sherlock on 7 August (HL344), how many staff in the Ministry of Defence are permitted to undertake diversity-related network time during core working hours; what is the percentage of overall working time they are permitted to spend on such network activity; how many hours are allocated in total; which networks are being funded; and whether they have any plans alter such funding. [HL1012]

Lord Coaker: Information is not held concerning the number of staff, both civilian and military, who are permitted to undertake diversity related network time, nor the percentage of overall working time or total hours they are permitted to spend on such network activity.

We align with Government guidance in supporting Civil Service staff in engaging in Network duties. The Armed Forces who form the vast majority of the workforce do not receive any facilitated time and carry out Network duties in their own time, as do many of our Civil Servants.

All staff networks working in support of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (ED&I) outcomes are eligible to apply for funding in accordance with Government Guidance on ED&I expenditure dated 14 May 2024.

Until the Government Guidance on ED&I expenditure dated is superseded, this policy will be applied to all applications for network funding.

Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government: Islands

Asked by **Lord Berkeley**

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans, including regarding location and dates, they have made for the next meeting of the Islands Forum. [HL569]

Baroness Taylor of Stevenage: Islands are a vital part of the UK's geography, culture and heritage. Ministers will be considering options for future engagement between island representatives and government to address key challenges and promote shared opportunities.

Monepantel: Northern Ireland

Asked by **Baroness Hoey**

To ask His Majesty's Government why it is not possible to export Zolvix from Great Britain to Northern Ireland. [HL753]

Baroness Hayman of Ullock: Zolvix 25 mg/ml Oral Solution for Sheep is authorised and labelled on a separate basis in Great Britain (GB) and in Northern

Ireland (NI). Only packs labelled for the NI market may be placed on the NI market. Packs labelled only for the GB market cannot be placed on the market in NI.

Motor Vehicles

Asked by **Baroness Hodgson of Abinger**

To ask His Majesty's Government how many vehicles in England are licensed in total; and what is the number broken down by (1) cars, (2) HGVs, (3) motorbikes, and (4) other categories of vehicles. [HL1119]

Lord Hendy of Richmond Hill: The table below shows the number of vehicles currently licensed in England.

Cars	28,153,927
HGVs	420,543
Motorbikes	1,204,083
Other categories of vehicles	4,682,394
Total	34,460,947

Mpox

Asked by **The Marquess of Lothian**

To ask His Majesty's Government whether any cases of Clade I or Clade Ib Mpox have been detected in the UK since 14 August. [HL1051]

Baroness Merron: As of 13 September 2024, no cases of clade I or clade Ib Mpox have been detected in the United Kingdom. The risk to the UK population of being exposed to Mpox clade I is currently considered low. However, planning is underway to prepare for any cases that we might see in the UK. This includes ensuring that clinicians are aware and able to recognise cases promptly, that rapid testing is available, and that protocols are developed for the safe clinical care of people who have the infection, and to prevent onward transmission.

Mpox: Patients

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

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to increase access to (1) testing, (2) vaccination, and (3) treatment, for Mpox patients (a) in England, and (b) globally. [HL944]

Baroness Merron: The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA), the National Health Service, and partners have well tested response capabilities to detect, contain, and treat novel infectious diseases, including Mpox.

The United Kingdom has sufficient testing capabilities in place to test for the different types of Mpox, as the UKHSA and some NHS laboratories can do the primary test for Mpox, and the UKHSA has requested that all NHS confirmed Mpox samples are sent to the Rare and Imported Pathogens Laboratory at the UKHSA, who can

provide specialist polymerase chain reaction and genomic sequencing to determine the clade type.

The UKHSA is working closely with NHS England and has developed algorithms, which have been shared across the NHS, to support referrals of suspect cases for assessment. As part of the UKHSA's well established preparedness plans, we have a supply of vaccines to vaccinate contacts of cases, and to vaccinate those in transmission networks connected to cases, as appropriate.

The Government is committed to helping the international response. The UK is the second largest donor to Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, providing £1.65 billion over the 2020 to 2025 period. We are also working closely with them on ensuring sustainable and effective access to Mpox vaccines for low and middle income countries.

Critical to the management of any infections in the UK will be the rapid identification of any possible cases, with appropriate isolation and swift follow-up to trace and support identified contacts. We are placing a strong emphasis on ensuring there are high levels of awareness among clinicians about the risk and the actions they need to take when presented with possible cases. An update on case definitions and a briefing note has been issued.

Murder of Patrick Finucane Independent Inquiry

Asked by Lord Empey

To ask His Majesty's Government what undertakings they have given, if any, to the family of the late Patrick Finucane that the scope or terms of the public inquiry into his murder, announced on 11 September, will differ from those of the inquiry previously proposed to the family. [HL1113]

Baroness Anderson of Stoke-on-Trent: The Government will follow due process under the Inquiries Act 2005 in establishing the inquiry into the death of Patrick Finucane. This will include consulting the Inquiry Chair, once appointed, on the Terms of Reference. As set out to Parliament on 11 September, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland supports the assessment from the High Court that the Inquiry should 'build on the significant investigative foundations which are already in place'. The Secretary of State has informed Mrs Finucane and her family that he will keep them updated on progress on establishing the Inquiry.

Music: Education

Asked by Baroness Nicholson of Winterbourne

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the mental health benefits of music education for children; and what plans they have to promote music in the national curriculum for primary schools. [HL1072]

Asked by Baroness Nicholson of Winterbourne

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of whether promoting music education in the national curriculum for primary schools would help diminish pressures on the NHS arising from children's mental health. [HL1073]

Baroness Smith of Malvern: The government believes that creative subjects like arts, music and drama are important elements of the rounded and enriching education every child deserves to receive. Under this government, the arts and music will no longer be the preserve of a privileged few.

Music is in the current National Curriculum, which is compulsory in all maintained schools from the age of 5 to 14 years. The government has established an independent Curriculum and Assessment Review, which will be chaired by Professor Becky Francis CBE, and one of the aims is to deliver a broader curriculum so that pupils do not miss out on subjects such as music. When the review has concluded, and subject to Parliament passing the Children's Wellbeing Bill, the department will require all state-funded schools, including academies and free schools, to follow the National Curriculum.

The department additionally supports children to learn music through the Music Hubs programme, which supports instrumental teaching in schools, as well as providing continuing professional development for teachers and access to local, regional and national ensembles. In 2022/23, Music Hubs provided support to around 90% of primary schools across England.

The department has not made a specific assessment of whether promoting music education in the National Curriculum for primary schools would help diminish pressures on the NHS arising from children's mental health. However, studies show that music education has a wide range of wellbeing benefits for children.

The government is committed to improving mental health support for all children and young people. The right support should be available to every young person that needs it, which is why the government will provide access to specialist mental health professionals in every school.

The government will also be putting in place new Young Futures hubs, including access to mental health support workers, and will recruit an additional 8,500 new mental health staff to treat children and adults.

Myanmar: Arms Trade

Asked by The Lord Bishop of St Albans

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Baroness Chapman of Darlington on 31 July (HL93), which countries they have sanctioned for providing arms to the Myanmar military. [HL728]

Baroness Chapman of Darlington: Since the start of the coup, the UK has imposed sanctions on 25 individuals and 33 entities under the Myanmar Sanctions Regulations 2021. These sanctions include a number of Russian companies, involved in supplying equipment to the Myanmar armed forces. The UK has also sanctioned individuals and entities who have facilitated weapons and equipment to the Myanmar armed forces from Russia and Belarus. We continue to keep the use of sanctions under review to reduce the Myanmar military regime's access to finance, arms and equipment.

Myanmar: Rohingya

Asked by *The Lord Bishop of St Albans*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the use of drones to target Rohingya in Myanmar. [HL907]

Baroness Chapman of Darlington: We are aware of reports of the Rohingya community being targeted by drones and other weaponry in Rakhine state. The impact of the increased conflict on all communities in Rakhine is of deep concern, and we are monitoring this escalation closely. We continue to call for the protection of civilians and the need for unhindered humanitarian access to ensure support can reach those most vulnerable. We have also reinforced the need for independent investigations into attacks to ensure perpetrators are held to account. The UK supports the work of organisations such as Myanmar Witness and the Independent Investigative Mechanism for Myanmar in collecting evidence of atrocities committed against the Rohingya and other vulnerable ethnic groups in Myanmar.

National Insurance

Asked by *The Earl of Clancarty*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they plan to further improve the provision of A1 forms, in particular for self-employed workers in the music industry touring in the EEA. [HL1110]

Lord Livermore: Since February 2023 HMRC have delivered three new online A1 application forms. These online forms are more accessible and provide a tailored customer journey for those applying for an A1 certificate.

In addition HMRC are adding automation to these forms, which will enable faster processing and reduce opportunities for error. HMRC expect the CA3837 used by self-employed workers in the music industry touring within the EEA, to be automated by October 2024.

National Insurance Contributions: Older People

Asked by *Lord Rooker*

To ask His Majesty's Government what estimate they have made of the revenue they would receive if National Insurance was paid by those aged over 65 with

incomes over the threshold; and what assessment they have made of requiring those with incomes above the threshold to pay it. [HL855]

Lord Livermore: Estimated figures of the cost of the National Insurance Contributions (NICs) exemption for those aged over 65 are published by HM Revenue and Customs in their Structural Tax Reliefs publication.

A condensed version of the table of interest has been copied below, showing estimated costs annually from 2018-19 until 2023-24.

Table: HMRC NICs Structural Cost Estimates by Financial Year
Financial Year NICs structural cost estimates (£ million)

2018-19	1,300
2019-20	1,200
2020-21	840
2021-22	1,200*
2022-23	1,200*
2023-24	1,100*

*Projected estimates based upon the 2019-20 Survey of Personal Incomes, projected in line with economic assumptions consistent with the Office for Budget Responsibility's March 2023 Economic and Fiscal Outlook.

The estimated cost of this exemption does not represent the yield if this exemption were to be abolished as other behavioural responses, including a possible increase in State Pension expenditure, would be expected to substantially reduce the yield.

National Insurance: Foreign Nationals

Asked by *Lord Hodgson of Astley Abbots*

To ask His Majesty's Government how many National Insurance numbers were issued to citizens of (1) the European Union, and (2) all other countries, within the last 12 months for which figures are available. [HL885]

Baroness Sherlock: The Department publishes quarterly statistics on National Insurance number allocations to adult overseas nationals entering the UK with the latest statistics to June 2024 available by world area and country on Stat-Xplore. The number issued in the 12 months to June 2024 by world areas is shown in the table below.

<i>NINO Registrations To Adult Overseas Nationals Entering The UK</i>	
<i>Nationality</i>	<i>Rolling year end June 2023/24</i>
European Union	69,927
Non-European Union (Other Europe)	49,302
Asia	544,241
Rest of the World	261,711
Other / unknown	14,857
Total	940,039

Source: [Stat-Xplore](#)

Note: Statistical disclosure control has been applied to this table to avoid the release of confidential data. Totals may not sum due to the disclosure control applied.

National Parks: Carbon Emissions

Asked by Lord Roborough

To ask His Majesty's Government what consideration they have given to raising the goal for National Parks to achieve net carbon neutrality by 2040. [HL996]

Baroness Hayman of Ullock: Protected Landscapes (both National Parks and National Landscapes) will be vital to our national targets, including net zero. We are exploring how the Government can empower them to deliver on their full potential - including in protecting nature's carbon sinks, such as peatlands and woodlands. The Government welcomes the international leadership from the UK's National Park Authorities in joining the Race to Zero initiative, aiming to become net zero by 2040 and significant carbon sinks by 2050.

National Security Online Information Team

Asked by Lord Strathcarron

To ask His Majesty's Government what remit they intend to give to the National Security Online Information Team. [HL729]

Baroness Jones of Whitchurch: NSOIT's remit is to tackle the greatest national security risks and public safety which the UK faces from mis and disinformation. This revised remit is kept under regular review by ministers, including to support recent events surrounding Southport.

National Security Online Information Team: Freedom of Expression

Asked by Lord Strathcarron

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of (1) the adequacy of the work of the National Security Online Information Team, and (2) the impact of that work on freedom of speech. [HL858]

Baroness Jones of Whitchurch: The work and remit of the National Security and Online Information Team (NSOIT) is kept under regular review by ministers. This includes the role which NSOIT played in responding to the recent public disorder following the tragic incident in Southport.

NSOIT's commitment to protecting freedom of expression is embedded in its policies and practices. For example, NSOIT has a blanket ban on referring content from journalists and politicians to social media platforms. Its privacy notices are available on gov.uk.

Nature Conservation

Asked by Lord Roberts of Llandudno

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the recommendations of the report by Zero Hour, *Creating a Nature-rich UK*, published on 13 September 2023. [HL1134]

Baroness Hayman of Ullock: A key recommendation of Zero Hour's "Creating a Nature-rich UK" report is for the Government to develop a coordinated plan to implement nature-based solutions, to tackle climate change and support nature recovery.

The Government is committed to protecting and restoring the environment and recognises the role of nature-based solutions in achieving this aim. We have set out our intention to accelerate progress to net zero, tackle the pollution of our rivers and seas, expand nature rich habitats such as wetlands, peat bogs and forests, and make our environmental land management schemes work for both farmers and nature.

On 30 July we announced a rapid review of the Environmental Improvement Plan to be completed by the end of the year. We will develop a new statutory plan to protect and restore our natural environment with delivery to meet each of our ambitious Environment Act targets. It will focus on cleaning up our waterways, reducing waste across the economy, planting millions more trees, improving air quality, and halting the decline in species by 2030. We will consider the use of nature-based solutions in delivery of these aims.

Asked by Lord Roberts of Llandudno

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to (1) halt, and (2) reverse, nature loss by 2030. [HL1136]

Baroness Hayman of Ullock: The Government is committed to protecting and restoring nature. In England, we are committed to halting the decline in species abundance by 2030 and reversing it by 2042. We are also committed to reducing the risk of species extinction and restoring and creating more than 500,000 hectares of wildlife-rich habitat by 2042.

Delivering these targets sits at the very heart of our mission to ensure nature's recovery. To meet them we will create, restore and connect wildlife-rich habitat, reduce pressures on species including from pollution and climate change and take targeted action to recover specific species, working in partnership with civil society, communities and business.

On 30 July, we announced a rapid review of the Environmental Improvement Plan to be completed before the end of the year to make sure it is fit for purpose. We will develop a new, statutory plan to protect and restore our natural environment with delivery to meet each of our Environment Act targets.

Ministers are reviewing new policies which will be announced in the usual way.

Nature Conservation: International Co-operation

Asked by The Lord Bishop of Norwich

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to meet international obligations for nature conservation, including the Ramsar Convention, the Bern Convention and the EU Birds and Habitats Directives. [HL1075]

Baroness Hayman of Ullock: The UK meets its obligations under the Bern Convention as well as the EU Birds and Habitats Directives through the implementation of the Conservation of Species and Habitats Regulations (2017) and the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981). The UK is also an active member of the Ramsar Convention on wetlands and protects 176 Ramsar sites, more than any other country. We are playing a proactive role in preparations for the Ramsar COP15, taking place in Zimbabwe next July. The UK Government also meets our international obligations through proactive participation in other multilateral environmental agreements, including the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species and the Convention on Migratory Species.

NHS Trusts: Stonewall

Asked by Lord Jackson of Peterborough

To ask His Majesty's Government what is the policy of (1) the Department of Health and Social Care, and (2) NHS England, on payments for Stonewall membership for NHS trusts, including the Workplace Equality Index gold award; and what assessment they have made of whether those policies are compatible with Government policy following the Cass Review. [HL1032]

Baroness Merron: The Department and NHS England do not have national policies relating to Stonewall membership for National Health Service trusts, and support NHS trusts in defining the appropriate policies to support equality, diversity, and inclusion, to align with the Government's Health Mission and priorities. As a consequence, there have been no assessments following the Cass Review.

NHS: Capital Investment

Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to increase capital expenditure in the NHS. [HL948]

Baroness Merron: Capital investment in the National Health Service increased significantly at the last Spending

Review, from approximately £4 billion in 2019/20 to nearly £9 billion in 2024/25. However, Professor Lord Darzi's independent investigation into the NHS in England, published on 12 September 2024, found that the NHS remains undercapitalised.

The Government recognises that strategic, value for money investments in capital schemes are critical to providing high-quality health and social care, increased productivity, and patient safety.

Decisions regarding future capital investment in the NHS are subject to the upcoming Spending Review. In line with the Government's plans to deliver an NHS fit for the future, and as part of our internal Spending Review preparations, the Department and NHS England are currently reviewing the NHS capital requirements, including through NHS England's assessment of long-term NHS estate needs across a range of areas.

Integrated care systems have also been developing local infrastructure strategies with help from NHS England that support key estate investment decisions.

NHS: Internet

Asked by Lord Birt

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they plan to review the ease of use of NHS online apps for making appointments with GP surgeries for flu and other jabs. [HL866]

Baroness Merron: We are currently reviewing how to improve access to general practice (GP) appointments, including vaccination appointments accessed through the NHS App. NHS App teams undertake continual rounds of user testing and data monitoring on how the online booking journeys are performing, making changes when issues are identified.

97.8 million COVID-19 and flu vaccinations have been booked by the public through the National Booking System, with specifically 73% being booked through the website, 18% through the app, and 8% through a call centre, since its launch towards the end of June 2024. Alongside this, GPs directly invite registered patients into vaccination clinics using local booking systems.

Non-crime Hate Incidents

Asked by Lord Jackson of Peterborough

To ask His Majesty's Government how many non-crime hate incidents have been recorded since the publication of statutory guidance by the Home Office in June 2023, broken down by relevant police force or police authority. [HL1034]

Lord Hanson of Flint: The Home Office does not centrally collate information on the number of non-crime hate incidents recorded by individual police forces – this data is held by individual forces.

North Korea: Human Rights

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they intend to incorporate the specific demand from the 2024 United Nations Human Rights Council resolution on the situation of human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, particularly the call for an end to human rights violations across the entire penal system in that country, into any future bilateral engagements with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. [HL777]

Baroness Chapman of Darlington: The UK continues to regularly call on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's (DPRK) government, through multilateral and bilateral channels, to address its appalling human rights record and acknowledge the many reports of serious and wide-ranging human rights violations, and to uphold its human rights obligations. The UK was pleased to co-sponsor the Human Rights Resolution on the DPRK, which was adopted by consensus on 4 April. This resolution called for an end to human rights violations across the penal system. The UK uses the Universal periodic review process to raise priority human rights concerns, and we are preparing for the DPRK's later this year. Member states do not disclose their submissions in advance, though they will be published shortly afterwards.

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to support independent investigations and documentation efforts, including those conducted by Korea Future and other human rights organisations, to uncover human rights violations in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, particularly during the period when the British Embassy in Pyongyang has been inaccessible to UK diplomats. [HL778]

Baroness Chapman of Darlington: The UK regularly calls on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's (DPRK) government, through multilateral and bilateral channels, to address its appalling human rights record and acknowledge the many reports of serious and wide-ranging human rights violations in the country, and to uphold its human rights obligations. We have encouraged the DPRK to take early measures to reopen its borders to allow officials from international human rights organisations and humanitarian NGOs to enter the country. We closely monitor reports of human rights violations with our international partners and international human rights NGOs organisations. We highly value the efforts civil society organisations take to investigate and document these human rights abuses.

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask His Majesty's Government whether their decision not to pursue human rights accountability measures under the Global Human Rights Sanctions Regulations 2020 against high-ranking officials and

entities of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea is influenced by the prospect of reopening the British Embassy in Pyongyang. [HL779]

Baroness Chapman of Darlington: The UK remains deeply concerned by reports of ongoing, widespread and systematic human rights violations in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK). The UK designated two DPRK entities through the Global Human Rights (GHR) sanctions regime in July 2020. The DPRK's Ministry of State Security (Bureau 7) and the Ministry of People's Security (Correctional Bureau) are now subject to an asset freeze. We continue to keep further listings under review.

North Korea: Sanctions

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the Council of the European Union's decision to impose sanctions on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's Minister of State Security, Ri Chang Dae, and the Onsong County Ministry of State Security Detention Centre in North Hamgyong Province, and whether they will consider a similar measure for holding perpetrators in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea accountable under the Global Human Rights Sanctions Regulations 2020. [HL776]

Baroness Chapman of Darlington: The UK remains deeply concerned by reports of ongoing, widespread and systematic human rights violations in the DPRK. The DPRK is subject to a robust sanctions regime. We continue to keep further listings under review, and do not speculate on future sanctions designations as to do so might reduce their impact.

Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty

Asked by Baroness Anelay of St Johns

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to take forward their commitment to the UN on 30 July that they would welcome discussion and feedback from other States Parties and from civil society on their National Implementation Report regarding the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. [HL565]

Lord Collins of Highbury: The UK strives for the highest possible transparency in our nuclear doctrines, policies, and capabilities, including through our National Implementation Report mandated by the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). As in past NPT review cycles, the UK intends to submit and make public its draft National Implementation Report at the third session of the NPT Preparatory Committee in 2025. We welcome feedback and discussion with other States Parties and civil society to ensure our final report to the Review Conference in 2026 is as useful as possible,

including by holding a consultation exercise facilitated by Wilton Park.

Nuclear Weapons

Asked by Baroness Anelay of St Johns

To ask His Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with NATO allies about the importance of retaining a minimum credible deterrent for as long as global conditions require. [HL562]

Lord Coaker: Since 1962, the UK has committed its nuclear deterrent to the defence of our NATO allies. The nuclear deterrent deters the most extreme threats to our national security, keeping the UK and our NATO allies safe.

As was made clear in the NATO Washington Summit declaration, nuclear deterrence is the cornerstone of Alliance security. NATO and NATO Allies will continue to take actions to enhance our deterrence and defence against all threats and challenges and across all domains. As the Prime Minister has set out, this Government has an unshakeable commitment to NATO and our nuclear deterrent.

Official Cars

Asked by Lord Young of Cookham

To ask His Majesty's Government how many cars in the Government Car Service are (1) fully electric, (2) hybrid, and (3) petrol or diesel. [HL1010]

Lord Hendy of Richmond Hill: The Government Car Service currently has the following number of vehicles in its operational fleet:

- 1) 36 fully electric.
- 20 51 Hybrid.
- 3) 20 Petrol or Diesel.

Older Workers

Asked by Lord Patten

To ask His Majesty's Government how many (1) men, and (2) women, in England and Wales are currently in paid employment at the age of (a) 75, and (b) 80 years. [HL673]

Baroness Twycross: The information requested falls under the remit of the UK Statistics Authority.

A response to the Hon Gentleman's Parliamentary Question of 03/09/24 is attached.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

Letter from the National Statistician [PQHL673 (1) (2).pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:
<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2024-09-02/HL673>

Outdoor Education

Asked by The Lord Bishop of Norwich

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the benefit of forest schools and similar nature-focused learning for child development. [HL1076]

Baroness Smith of Malvern: Forest schools provide children with frequent opportunities for outdoor play and exploration.

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) statutory framework sets the standards and requirements that all early years providers must follow to ensure every child has the best start in life.

The EYFS framework states that providers must provide access to an outdoor play area. If that is not possible, they must ensure that outdoor activities are planned and taken on a daily basis, unless circumstances make this inappropriate, for example unsafe weather conditions. The EYFS framework also specifies that young children should develop positive values towards the environment and the natural world.

By creating games and providing opportunities for play both indoors and outdoors, such as in larger parks and spaces in the local area or through forest schools, adults can support children to develop in a number of areas, including core strength, stability, balance and spatial awareness.

The department is committed to supporting all early years settings to deliver the EYFS well, for the benefit of all children.

Overseas Trade: Human Rights

Asked by Baroness Goudie

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have, if any, to deny preferential trading rights to companies from countries with poor human rights records. [HL609]

Lord Collins of Highbury: The Government is committed to working with international partners and businesses to ensure global supply chains are free from human and labour rights abuses. The UK monitors all countries on the Developing Countries Trading Scheme (DCTS) on an ongoing basis for serious and systemic violations of human rights (including gender rights), labour rights and environmental obligations based on international conventions. The DCTS includes the power to suspend a country's preferential tariffs for such violations, however, it does not have the power to individually suspend a company's trade preferences.

Overseas Trade: Misconduct

Asked by Lord Fox

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the US judgment on 5 August in the

case of United States, et al. v. Google, LLC, (No. 20-cv-3010 (APM) (D.D.C. Aug. 5, 2024), Dkt. No. 1033) and in particular, what estimate they have made of the proportion of the \$200 billion unlawful transactions identified in the judgment which pertains to UK trade; and what assessment they have made of the effect eliminating the unlawful practices identified in the judgment would have on (1) the UK's gross domestic product, and (2) the UK's tax revenue. [HL880]

Baroness Jones of Whitchurch: The Competition and Markets Authority (the CMA) is independent to Government and is responsible for investigating competition issues in the UK. In July 2020, the CMA published the final report of its market study into online platforms and digital advertising. The report showed evidence of Google having significant market power in the general search and advertising markets. Since this report, the CMA has opened investigations into suspected anti-competitive conduct by Google in the ad-tech market and the use of its 'privacy sandbox' tools.

The Government is working with the CMA to implement the Digital Markets, Competition and Consumers (DMCC) Act. Part 1 of the Act will equip the CMA with faster, more effective tools to address the causes and consequences of market power in digital markets. This includes ensuring a small number of the most powerful digital firms comply with tailored rules on how they treat consumers and other businesses. The CMA will also be able to address the causes of competition issues in digital markets, to promote more dynamic markets. These reforms are estimated to deliver £6.2bn in consumer benefits over 10 years. The DMCC Act will protect small businesses, save consumers money, boost innovation and drive growth.

Oxford Station: Access

Asked by Baroness Deech

To ask His Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with Network Rail concerning the impact on (1) local businesses, (2) older people, (3) disabled people, and (4) pregnant people, of the extended closure of Botley Road as part of the redevelopment of Oxford's rail station; and whether they intend to make resources available to Network Rail to mitigate that impact. [HL590]

Lord Hendy of Richmond Hill: I wrote to you on 2 September and explained that Network Rail and Great Western Railway are executing a plan to mitigate the impacts of the closure of Botley Road on station users, the wider public and businesses during the current closure of Botley Road. Work is under way to provide additional support for persons with reduced mobility as well as improvements to wayfinding, lighting and access to the station. Network Rail is working to produce a plan to complete the works and re-open the road. When this has been finalised I propose to meet with stakeholders to discuss it.

Peers

Asked by Lord Mann

To ask the Senior Deputy Speaker how many members of the House of Lords who have been members for more than a year have not made an oral contribution in the Chamber or in Grand Committee since 1 January 2020. [HL1128]

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: A total of 53 current members of the House of Lords who on 13 September 2024 had been members for more than a year did not have an oral contribution recorded in Hansard in the Chamber or in Grand Committee during the period 1 January 2020 to 13 September 2024. Of the 53, 26 were on leave of absence or subject to statutory disqualification for some or all of the specified period. Oath-taking has not been counted as an oral contribution for the purposes of this answer, and membership is dated from the first issue of a writ of summons.

Pension Credit

Asked by Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking (1) to encourage the take up of Pension Credit, and (2) to simplify the application process. [HL787]

Baroness Sherlock: The Department is running a national uptake campaign to encourage the estimated up to 880,000 citizens who may be entitled to Pension Credit apply for it. The Department is in the process of modernising the Pension Credit delivery and has previously undertaken an assessment of the application process and introduced online claims in addition to telephone and paper claims. DWP Agents and third-party organisations are available to support customers with the application process.

Pensioners: Christmas Bonus

Asked by Lord Rooker

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they intend (1) to remove the £10 Christmas bonus for qualifying pensioners, or (2) to restore it to its original value as a percentage of the basic pension. [HL854]

Baroness Sherlock: The Government has no current plans to revise the arrangements for the Christmas Bonus.

The Christmas Bonus is an annual, tax-free, lump sum payment to pensioners and to working age people who are in receipt of certain qualifying benefits during the relevant week which is usually the first full week in December.

Pensioners: Cost of Living

Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to ensure the wellbeing of pensioners this winter, particularly in the light of (1) the forecasted rise of

household bills, and (2) the removal of the Winter Fuel Allowance. [HL698]

Baroness Sherlock: Over the next five years we expect over 12 million pensioners are likely to see their State Pensions increase by thousands of pounds as a result of our commitment to the Triple Lock.

Additionally, the Government will invest an extra £6.6 billion over this Parliament in clean heat and energy efficiency through the Warm Homes Plan, upgrading five million homes through solutions like low carbon heating and improved insulation to reduce emissions and cut bills.

The Household Support Fund is also being extended for a further six months, from 1 October 2024 until 31 March 2025. An additional £421 million will be provided to enable the extension of the HSF in England, plus funding for the Devolved Governments through the Barnett formula to be spent at their discretion, as usual.

The Warm Home Discount scheme in England and Wales provides eligible low-income households across Great Britain with a £150 rebate on their electricity bill. This winter, we expect over three million households, including over one million pensioners, to benefit under the scheme.

We know there are low-income pensioners who aren't claiming Pension Credit, and we urge those people to apply. This will passport them to receive Winter Fuel Payment alongside other benefits – hundreds of pounds that could really help them. We will ensure that the poorest pensioners get the support they need.

Over the past two years, energy bills have fallen. Between 1 October to 31 December 2024 Ofgem's energy price cap is set at £1717 per year for a typical household. This means the price cap for October to December 2024 will be more than 5% lower (£117 less) than for October to December 2023.

Pensioners: Income

Asked by Baroness Altmann

To ask His Majesty's Government how many pensioners in the UK have annual incomes below £15,000, and of those how many are in receipt of pension credit. [HL1011]

Baroness Sherlock: For financial year 2022/23, we estimate that the number of pensioner units with gross annual income below £15,000 is approximately 1.6 million. Of those, we estimate 0.3 million are in receipt of Pension Credit.

This estimate is based on Pensioners' Incomes and Households Below Average Income data derived from the Family Resources Survey and covers private households in the United Kingdom. Income is calculated as total income of the pensioner unit, including benefits such as State Pension and Pension Credit, occupational and personal pensions, investment income and earnings.

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.

We want all eligible pensioners to apply for Pension Credit and so the Department is continuing to maximise opportunities to promote Pension Credit.

Like all means-tested benefits, a person's eligibility for Pension Credit and the amount they may get depends on their specific financial and personal circumstances. Full eligibility criteria are available on gov.uk at the following link: [Pension Credit: Eligibility - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/pension-credit-eligibility)

That's why we encourage anyone who thinks they may be entitled to check whether they can get Pension Credit.

This Autumn, we will be directly contacting pensioners who are in receipt of Housing Benefit but who may be eligible for, but not currently claiming, Pension Credit – building on last years 'Invitation to Claim' trial.

From 16th September we have launched a Pension Credit awareness campaign across press, radio and social media and I know that the devolved administrations in Wales and Scotland, along with local authorities and organisations such as Age UK, are also undertaking promotional activities.

Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education

Asked by Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have for the existing draft PSHE statutory guidance; what steps they are taking to ensure that the final version is evidence-based; and what is the timeline for action on the PSHE statutory guidance. [HL1100]

Baroness Smith of Malvern: My right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education has been clear that children's wellbeing must be at the heart of RSHE guidance for schools. Over the autumn, the government will look carefully at the consultation responses, discuss with stakeholders, and consider the relevant evidence, including the published Cass Review. Next steps will then be set out.

Pharmacy: Closures

Asked by Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made, if any, of the rate of closures of pharmacies; and what steps they are taking in response. [HL786]

Baroness Merron: There has been a reduction in the number of pharmacies since 2017. There are about 1,200 fewer pharmacies than in 2017, and over 600 fewer than two years ago.

Despite a reduction in the number of pharmacies, on average, access remains good with four in five people living within a 20-minute walk from a pharmacy and twice as many pharmacies in the most deprived areas. Patients can also access 400 distance selling pharmacies

that provide services nationally and must deliver any medicines they dispense free of charge.

The Pharmacy Access Scheme provides financial support to pharmacies in areas where there are fewer pharmacies.

The consultation with Community Pharmacy England on the national funding and contractual framework arrangements for 2024/25 was not concluded by the previous government and we are looking at this as a matter of urgency.

Planning

Asked by Lord Teverson

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they intend that the "vision led approach" required by paragraph 112 of the draft National Planning Policy Framework should be based on any or all of (1) local transport plans, (2) local cycling and walking infrastructure plans, (3) rights of way improvement plans, and (4) bus service improvement plans. [HL701]

Baroness Taylor of Stevenage: As part of the consultation on proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), we are seeking views on new NPPF paragraph 112 a), which aims to set an expectation that local authorities adopt a vision-led approach to promoting sustainable transport when identifying sites in local plans and considering planning decisions.

The NPPF consultation will close on 24 September, and we will use the responses we receive to inform future steps. Details of the consultation and how to respond can be found at the following [link](#).

The Answer includes the following attached material:

The NPPF consultation [Proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework and other changes to the planning system - GOV.UK.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:
<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2024-09-02/HL701>

Plants: Import Controls

Asked by Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle

To ask His Majesty's Government, since 30 April 2024, (1) what is the volume of consignments containing plants and plant products from the EU at Border Control Posts; and (2) what is the number of physical inspections at Border Control Posts of plants and plant products that have been (a) required and (b) completed. [HL1018]

Baroness Hayman of Ullock: Monitoring and enforcing the border controls introduced under the Border Target Operating Model (BTOM) is undertaken collaboratively between bodies including Defra, the Animal and Plant Health Agency, Border Force and HMRC.

Our checks are intelligence-led and based on biosecurity risk: It would be inappropriate for us to set out operational details such as the exact inspection details from 30 April.

Checking details, such as time taken to review consignments, could be used by bad actors looking for exploitable elements of the border to facilitate illegal imports.

Furthermore, this information is also commercially sensitive. HMG does not wish to impact trader choice of route as details of checks completed may advantage/disadvantage other ports as traders may BCP shop to find what appears on paper to be the "fastest route".

Police: Pay

Asked by Lord Stevens of Kirkwhelpington

To ask His Majesty's Government what provisions they have made to retain skilled and experienced police officers following the recommendation of the Police Remuneration Review Body in its Tenth Report for 2024 published in July (CP 1124) that each force should have discretion to set the starting salary for new constables at either pay point 1 or pay point 2. [HL946]

Lord Hanson of Flint: On 29 July, the Government announced that it had accepted the Police Remuneration Review Body's recommendation to award officers in the federated and superintending ranks a consolidated pay award of 4.75%, with effect from 1 September 2024.

The Government also announced it had accepted the recommendation that the chief officer of police in each force should be given the discretion to set the starting salary for new constables at either pay point 1 or pay point 2 on the constables' pay scale. Implementation of the recommendation is subject to detailed proposals from the National Police Chiefs' Council and Association of Police and Crime Commissioners on the circumstances in which this discretion should be used, along with transition arrangements for those constables on pay point 1, to inform amendments to the Police Regulations 2003. These proposals will be submitted to the Government in due course.

Pregnancy: Folic Acid

Asked by Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the need for an educational campaign to highlight the importance of taking folic acid supplements while pregnant to reduce the chances of brain and spinal conditions in foetuses. [HL900]

Baroness Merron: The Government and the devolved administrations recommend that women who could become pregnant, or plan to become pregnant, should take a daily supplement of 400 micrograms of folic acid before conception and up until the 12th week of pregnancy. This

is in addition to any folic acid consumed through their diet.

In England, Start for Life provides information and support to pregnant women and expectant parents on the importance of taking folic acid on their website, and through an email programme. Public health messaging by health departments across the United Kingdom raises awareness of the importance of folic acid supplementation by women who may become pregnant, and for the first 12 weeks of pregnancy. The Government keeps the need for educational campaigns under review.

The Government monitors folate intake and status through the *National Diet and Nutrition Survey* (NDNS). The latest publication reported that 89% of women of childbearing age had increased risk of neural tube defects. New NDNS data, including folate status, is due to be published in early 2025.

Pre-school Education

Asked by Lord Watson of Invergowrie

To ask His Majesty's Government when they expect to publish Sir David Bell's review of early years provision. [HL917]

Baroness Smith of Malvern: This government's vision is for the early education and childcare system to give every child the best start in life. The department's long-term intention is to reform the early years system as the foundation of opportunity and life chances for children, underpinned by a properly rewarded and motivated workforce.

Sir David Bell's review was conducted for the Labour Party prior to the general election. The findings and recommendations are informative for the department's approach, and the department will set out more detail in due course.

Press Recognition Panel

Asked by Lord Lexden

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Ponsonby of Shulbrede on 1 August (HL330), on what basis the Ministry of Justice made a payment to the Press Recognition Panel of £430,000 in April; and whether they intend to place in the House of Lords Library a copy of all correspondence between the Ministry of Justice and Press Regulation Panel relating to the payment. [HL974]

Lord Ponsonby of Shulbrede: The Royal Charter on Self-Regulation of the press sets out that The Exchequer (acting through the Lord Chancellor) will fund the Press Recognition Panel (PRP) until it becomes effective. It also sets out that in the event that the PRP considers its income is likely to be insufficient it will have a right to request further reasonable sums so it is not frustrated by a lack of funding. Whilst the Lord Chancellor is the conduit for the PRP with HM Treasury, they have no policy responsibility under the Royal Charter that created the

PRP. The PRP publish their accounts on an annual basis, confirming their annual income of £430,000.

Prison Service: Recruitment

Asked by Baroness Porter of Fulwood

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made for future graduate recruitment into the prison workforce (including for the cohort graduating in 2025). [HL1132]

Lord Timpson: HMPPS recognises the value that graduate prison officers bring to prisons and is committed to continuing to invest in its pipeline of future leaders. Several options for talent schemes, including graduate programmes, are being explored.

The contract with the current graduate scheme provider will run until October 2026. All participants will continue to receive full support from our staff to thrive in their career with HMPPS.

Prisoners' Release: Universal Credit

Asked by Lord Hain

To ask His Majesty's Government what regulations govern Universal Credit payments for prisoners immediately after their release. [HL615]

Baroness Sherlock: There are no specific regulations that govern the payment of Universal Credit (UC) to a prisoner upon release. They are treated like every other customer when they make a claim to UC. If they need urgent financial assistance when they have completed their online UC claim they can ask for a new claim advance payment which is offered to all new customers. There are provisions (Claims and Payments Regulations 2013) that allow prisoners to start to prepare their UC claim before their release, however the date of entitlement starts on the release date, and first payment is usually made around five weeks after the claim is made.

Prisoners: Employment

Asked by Lord Roberts of Llandudno

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to enable prisoners with work outside the confines of prison to be paid a wage. [HL988]

Lord Timpson: We know that employment reduces the chance of reoffending significantly, by up to nine percentage points. That is why we have committed to break the cycle of reoffending by better supporting prisons to link up with employers and the voluntary sector to get more people with convictions into work.

Release on Temporary Licence (ROTL) allows prisoners to be released temporarily into the community for specific purposes, including to engage in employment. Prisoners working on ROTL are paid the same as their counterparts in the community and are subject to the same

income tax, National Insurance and child support requirements, as well as other court ordered deductions.

In addition, the Prisoners' Earnings Act 1996 (PEA) gives governors the power to deduct up to and including 40% from prisoners' earnings on ROTL. Currently, the money deducted is given to the charity Victim Support. An average of £296 per prisoner per month was raised through the levy; totalling £4.2 million raised for the year ending March 2024.

Prisoners: Foreign Nationals

Asked by *Baroness Hoey*

To ask His Majesty's Government how many foreign prisoners are currently in prisons in England and Wales, what proportion that represents of the prison population, what proportion are sentenced for criminal offences making them eligible for deportation, and from which 10 countries the highest number of prisoners come. [HL756]

Lord Timpson: There were 10,435 (3,578 remand, 6,486 sentenced and 371 non-criminal) Foreign National Offenders (FNOs) held in custody on 30 June 2024; representing 12% of the total prison population.

See below table for top 10 nationalities held in custody on 30 June 2024:

Nationality	Number in prison in England and Wales
Albanian	1,227
Polish	911
Romanian	729
Irish	634
Jamaican	370
Pakistani	316
Lithuanian	313
Portuguese	289
Iraqi	276
Indian	273

The Government is committed to the removal of FNOs. All FNOs in receipt of custodial sentences are referred to the Home Office to be considered for deportation.

Private Education: Charities

Asked by *Lord Forsyth of Drumlean*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they intend to remove charitable status from independent schools; and if so, what is their estimate of the impact this would have on the cost of nursery education. [HL601]

Baroness Smith of Malvern: The government has not proposed to remove charitable status from independent schools.

Private Education: Fees and Charges

Asked by *Lord Forsyth of Drumlean*

To ask His Majesty's Government what is their estimate of the number of additional places which will be required by local authorities to accommodate children forced to leave independent schools as a consequence of the imposition of VAT on education fees. [HL602]

Baroness Smith of Malvern: This government is committed to ending the VAT exemption that private schools enjoy. While the impact of this policy is being fully considered, projections by the Institute for Fiscal Studies indicate that the number of pupils who may switch schools as a result of these changes is likely to represent a very small proportion of overall pupil numbers in the state sector, less than 0.5%, with any displacement expected to take place over several years. This research can be found here: <https://ifs.org.uk/publications/tax-private-school-fees-and-state-school-spending> and in the attached report.

The department will be monitoring demand and capacity using our normal processes and working with local authorities to meet any pressures.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

HL602 attachment [IFS Report - Tax private school fees and state school spending.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2024-09-02/HL602>

Asked by *Lord McCrea of Magherafelt and Cookstown*

To ask His Majesty's Government what estimate they have made of the number of private schools across the UK that are anticipated to close as a result of charging VAT on fees. [HL808]

Baroness Smith of Malvern: This government is committed to ending the VAT exemption that private schools enjoy. While the impact of this policy is being fully considered, projections by the Institute for Fiscal Studies indicate that the number of pupils who may switch schools as a result of these changes is likely to represent a very small proportion of overall pupil numbers in the state sector, less than 0.5%, with any displacement expected to take place over several years. This research is available here and as attached: <https://ifs.org.uk/publications/tax-private-school-fees-and-state-school-spending>.

The number of children in private schools has remained steady despite a 20% real terms increase in average private school fees since 2010 and a 55% rise since 2003, illustrating the sector's adaptability. While the department

cannot predict closures, the department will use indicators such as occupancy to monitor this.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

HL808_attachment
[HL808_attachment_IFS_Report_R263_Tax_private_school_fees_and_state_school_spending.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:
<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2024-09-05/HL808>

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the compatibility of their policy on charging VAT on independent schools with the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), and in particular with (1) Article 2 of the First Protocol, and (2) Article 14 of the ECHR. [HL841]

Lord Livermore: On 29 July, the Government announced that, as of 1 January 2025, all education services and vocational training provided by private schools in the UK for a charge will be subject to VAT at the standard rate of 20 per cent. This will also apply to boarding services provided by private schools.

The Government has considered the policy's interaction with Human Rights law, and is confident that it is compatible with the UK's obligations under the Human Rights Act.

Private Education: Special Educational Needs

Asked by Lord Forsyth of Drumlean

To ask His Majesty's Government how many children with special educational needs are in independent schools. [HL597]

Baroness Smith of Malvern: The department publishes annual figures on pupils with special educational needs (SEN) based on the January school census data. The most recent published figures, for January 2024, are available here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/special-educational-needs-in-england>. The publication includes a breakdown of SEN by school type which is attached and available at: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/data-tables/permalink/df44ab22-0874-49af-b4bb-08dccb80a395>.

Pupils with SEN may have an education, health and care (EHC) plan or have SEN support in school without an EHC plan. The total number of pupils with SEN is the sum of these two groups.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

HL597_Table [HL597_ Number_pupils_in_all_schools_by_type_of_SEN_provision.xlsx]

The material can be viewed online at:
<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2024-09-02/HL597>

Private Education: VAT

Asked by Lord Forsyth of Drumlean

To ask His Majesty's Government what estimate they have made of the total additional cost to military families of the planned introduction of VAT at 20 per cent on independent school fees. [HL598]

Asked by Lord Forsyth of Drumlean

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they have taken to ensure that the planned introduction of VAT on independent school fees is consistent with the European Convention on Human Rights. [HL599]

Asked by Lord Forsyth of Drumlean

To ask His Majesty's Government what estimate they have made of any additional gross earnings needed by working people to meet the cost of the planned introduction of VAT on independent school fees. [HL600]

Lord Livermore: On 29 July, the Government announced that, as of 1 January 2025, all education services and vocational training provided by a private school in the UK for a charge will be subject to VAT at the standard rate of 20 per cent. This will also apply to boarding services provided by private schools.

The Government will confirm the introduction of these tax policy changes at the Budget on 30 October. Details of the Government's assessment of the expected impacts of these policy changes will be published at the Budget in the usual way.

The Government does not expect fees to go up by 20 per cent as a result of this policy change, and the Government expects private schools to take steps to minimise fee increases.

Recognising the enormous sacrifices our military families make, the Ministry of Defence provide the Continuity of Education Allowance (CEA) to eligible Service Personnel. The Government will monitor closely the impact of these policy changes on affected military families, with any changes to this scheme considered at the upcoming Spending Review.

The Government has considered the policy's interaction with Human Rights law, and is confident that it is compatible with all of the UK's human rights obligations.

Asked by Lord Lamont of Lerwick

To ask His Majesty's Government whether VAT will be levied on school fees paid by the Government for UK private education for the children of foreign office officials serving overseas. [HL1042]

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

The Government has set out the details of this policy in the technical note *Applying VAT to Private School Fees and Removing the Business Rates Charitable Rates Relief for Private Schools* which can be found at the below link. A technical consultation on the technical note and draft VAT legislation will be open until 15 September 2024.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/vat-on-private-school-fees-removing-the-charitable-rates-relief-for-private-schools>

Asked by Lord Lexden

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they have carried out an impact assessment on their proposal to put VAT on independent school fees; and if so, whether they will publish it. [HL1047]

Lord Livermore: On 29 July, the Government announced that, as of 1 January 2025, all education services and vocational training provided by a private school in the UK for a charge will be subject to VAT at the standard rate of 20 per cent. This will secure additional funding to help deliver the Government's commitments relating to education and young people, including opening 3,000 new nurseries, rolling out breakfast clubs to all primary schools, and recruiting 6,500 new teachers. Following scrutiny of the Government's costings by the independent Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR), details of the Government's assessment of the expected impacts of these policy changes will be published at the Budget on 30 October in the usual way.

Asked by Lord Lingfield

To ask His Majesty's Government what is their estimate of the number of approved independent schools for pupils with special educational needs or disabilities in respect of which they intend to impose VAT on fees. [HL716]

Lord Livermore: On 29 July, the Government announced that, as of 1 January 2025, all education services and vocational training provided by a private school, including independent special schools, in the UK for a charge will be subject to VAT at the standard rate of 20 per cent. This will also apply to boarding services provided by private schools.

This change will not impact pupils with the most acute additional needs, where these can only be met in private schools. Where a Local Authority (LAs) funds a pupil's place in a private school because their needs can only be met in a private school, LAs will be able to reclaim the VAT on the fees from HMRC. In Northern Ireland, it will be the Education Authority who fund placements in private schools and will be able to reclaim the VAT.

Asked by Lord Black of Brentwood

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the compatibility of the proposal to impose VAT on independent school fees with the UK's obligations under Article 26(3) of the Universal

Declaration of Human Rights; and what advice they have received on this issue. [HL868]

Lord Livermore: On 29 July, the Government announced that, as of 1 January 2025, all education services and vocational training provided by a private school in the UK for a charge will be subject to VAT at the standard rate of 20 per cent. This will also apply to boarding services provided by private schools.

The Government has considered the policy's interaction with Human Rights law, and is confident that it is compatible with the UK's obligations under the Human Rights Act.

Asked by Baroness Buscombe

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the financial implications of the proposal to impose VAT on independent school fees on the parents of children supported by the Continuity of Education Allowance. [HL871]

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

Recognising the enormous sacrifices our military families make, the Ministry of Defence provide the Continuity of Education Allowance (CEA) to eligible Service Personnel. The government will monitor closely the impact of these policy changes on affected military families and the upcoming Spending Review is the right time to consider any changes to this scheme.

Asked by The Earl of Clancarty

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they intend to exempt foreign schools, including members of International French Schools UK, from the requirement for independent schools to pay VAT on their fees; and what discussions they have had on this both with the foreign schools concerned and with the ambassadors of their countries. [HL876]

Lord Livermore: On 29 July, the Government announced that, as of 1 January 2025, all education services and vocational training provided by a private school in the UK for a charge will be subject to VAT at the standard rate of 20 per cent. This will also apply to international schools in the UK who provide education and vocational services for a charge.

This will secure additional funding to help deliver the Government's commitments relating to education and young people, including opening 3,000 new nurseries, rolling out breakfast clubs to all primary schools, and recruiting 6,500 new teachers.

A technical note setting out the details of this policy has been published online here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/vat-on-private-school-fees-removing-the-charitable-rates-relief-for-private-schools>.

Draft VAT legislation has also been published alongside this technical note forming a technical consultation. The Government is engaging with a wide range of stakeholders as part of this consultation, to assess the impacts of these reforms.

Asked by Lord Kempson

To ask His Majesty's Government how they plan to assess the impact of the proposal to charge VAT on independent school fees at the upcoming spending review; and what is the latest date by which this spending review will be concluded. [HL886]

Lord Livermore: On 29 July, the Government announced that, as of 1 January 2025, all education services and vocational training provided by a private school in the UK for a charge will be subject to VAT at the standard rate of 20 per cent. This will also apply to boarding services provided by private schools.

The Government will confirm the introduction of these tax policy changes at the Budget on 30 October. 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 these policy changes will be published at the Budget in the usual way.

The Chancellor has launched a multi-year Spending Review to conclude in Spring 2025.

Asked by Lord Shinkwin

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the expected impact on (1) the mental health, and (2) the educational attainment, of children with autism and neurodiverse conditions required to move schools following the planned introduction of VAT on private school fees in January 2025; and what stakeholder groups have been involved in developing the assessment. [HL908]

Lord Livermore: On 29 July, the Government announced that, as of 1 January 2025, all education services and vocational training provided by a private school in the UK for a charge will be subject to VAT at the standard rate of 20 per cent.

This was a tough but necessary decision that will secure additional funding to help deliver the Government's commitments relating to education and young people, including opening 3,000 new nurseries, rolling out breakfast clubs to all primary schools, and recruiting 6,500 new teachers.

The Government has carefully considered the impact that this policy will have on pupils and their families across both the state and private sector. Following scrutiny of the Government's costings by the independent Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR), details of the Government's assessment of the expected impacts of

these policy changes will be published at the Budget on 30 October in the usual way.

The Government is committed to improving SEND provision in mainstream state schools, as well as ensuring state special schools cater to those with the most complex needs.

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of their duties under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in relation to the imposition of VAT on independent schools, including those catering for the needs of children with special educational needs. [HL924]

Lord Livermore: On 29 July, the Government announced that, as of 1 January 2025, all education services and vocational training provided by a private school in the UK for a charge will be subject to VAT at the standard rate of 20 per cent. This will also apply to boarding services provided by private schools.

The Government gives due consideration to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) articles when making new policy. State education is accessible to all children, regardless of their financial status and all children of compulsory school age are entitled to a state-funded school place if they need one. Education matters and is at the heart of our mission to break down barriers to opportunity so every child gets the best start in life.

The Government is also committed to ensuring that all children's needs are met. This Government's ambition is that all children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) or not, receive the right support to succeed in their education and as they move into adult life. We are committed to improving inclusivity and expertise in mainstream schools, as well as ensuring special schools cater to those with the most complex needs.

Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to ensure sufficient state school places are available following the imposition of VAT on private schools. [HL950]

Baroness Smith of Malvern: In line with research from the independent Institute for Fiscal Studies the government does not anticipate the ending of the VAT exemption that private schools enjoy to prompt notable movement into the state sector, and any movement is expected to take place over several years. This research is attached and can also be found here: <https://ifs.org.uk/publications/tax-private-school-fees-and-state-school-spending>.

There is significant spare capacity in existing state schools. The department collects pupil forecasts and school capacity data from local authorities annually through the school capacity survey and this data shows that in May 2023, 11.7% of primary capacity and 11.5%

of secondary capacity was unfilled nationally, meaning school places are available in many parts of the country. The department will monitor demand and capacity using its normal processes and continue to work with local authorities to meet any pressures.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

HL950 attachment - IFS report [HL950 attachment - IFS Report Tax private school fees and state school spending.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:
<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2024-09-10/HL950>

Asked by Lord Shinkwin

To ask His Majesty's Government what measures have been put in place to support children and the parents of children with autism and neurodiverse conditions required to move schools following the planned introduction of VAT on private school fees in January 2025; and what stakeholder groups have been involved in developing the measures. [HL909]

Asked by Lord Shinkwin

To ask His Majesty's Government what guidance is being developed for (1) local education authorities and (2) schools to support children and the parents of children with autism and neurodiverse conditions required to move schools following the planned introduction of VAT on private school fees in January 2025; and what stakeholder groups have been involved in developing the guidance. [HL910]

Asked by Lord Shinkwin

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the capacity of local education authorities to accommodate and meet the needs of children and the parents of children with autism and neurodiverse conditions required to move schools following the planned introduction of VAT on private school fees in January 2025. [HL911]

Asked by Lord Shinkwin

To ask His Majesty's Government what funding they are making available to ensure (1) local education authorities, and (2) schools, are capable of accommodating children with autism and neurodiverse conditions required to move schools following the planned introduction of VAT on private school fees in January 2025. [HL912]

Asked by Lord Shinkwin

To ask His Majesty's Government what processes they have put in place to evaluate the impact on (1) the mental health, and (2) educational attainment, of children with autism and neurodiverse conditions required to move schools following the planned introduction of VAT on private school fees in January 2025; what stakeholder groups have been involved in developing the processes; and at what intervals the evaluations will be conducted. [HL913]

Baroness Smith of Malvern: In line with research from the independent Institute for Fiscal Studies, the government does not anticipate the ending of the VAT exemption, that private schools enjoy, to prompt notable movement into the state sector and any movement is expected to take place over several years. This research is attached and can also be found here: <https://ifs.org.uk/publications/tax-private-school-fees-and-state-school-spending>.

There is significant spare capacity in existing state schools. The department collects pupil forecasts and school capacity data from local authorities annually through the school capacity survey and this data shows that in May 2023, 11.7% of primary capacity and 11.5% of secondary capacity was unfilled nationally, meaning school places are available in many parts of the country. The department will monitor demand and capacity using its normal processes and continue to work with local authorities to meet any pressures.

The department supports local authorities to ensure that every local area has sufficient places for children that need them and works to provide appropriate support where pupils with special educational needs require a place at a state-funded school.

This government's ambition is that all children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities, or in alternative provision, receive the right support to succeed in their education and as they move into adult life. The department is committed to improving inclusivity and expertise in mainstream schools.

Where children have an education, health and care plan which requires a local authority funded place at an independent school, they will not be affected by the VAT changes, as the responsible local authority will be able to reclaim VAT.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

IFS Report attachment [IFS Report - Tax private school fees and state school spending.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:
<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2024-09-09/HL909>

Private Rented Housing: Tenancy Agreements

Asked by Lord Carrington

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of how long landlords and letting agents will need to take to prepare for, and update processes, when section 21 repossessions end. [HL585]

Asked by Lord Carrington

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact that ending fixed term tenancies in the private rented sector will have on lending to (1) individual residential landlords, and (2) build-to-rent developers. [HL587]

Baroness Taylor of Stevenage: The Government is delivering its manifesto commitment to transform the experience of private renting by levelling the playing field decisively between landlords and tenants. The Renters' Rights Bill will replace section 21 'no fault' evictions with a modern tenancy system, giving renters greater security and protections.

The Government welcomes private investment into housing, and new tenures in the private rented sector such as those offered by Build to Rent providers. These can provide tenants with greater stability and more choice. The Department will continue to engage – and work – with the Build to Rent sector to understand their needs in the process of designing any regulation.

The department will publish an impact assessment for the Renters' Rights Bill in due course. We will work closely with all parts of the sector to ensure a smooth transition to the new system and will provide sufficient notice ahead of implementation.

Property Management Companies: Qualifications

Asked by Baroness Hayter of Kentish Town

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the qualifications that private property managers must hold before taking on the management of (1) private residential buildings and (1) mixed-tenure residential buildings. [HL883]

Baroness Taylor of Stevenage: Managing agents perform a critical role in managing and maintaining buildings, so it is vital that they provide a good service and are accountable to leaseholders for their actions. Many agents do so and with a high level of professionalism. The Government has not undertaken a specific assessment of the qualifications that managing agents must hold but we welcome the work of the industry itself to drive up standards across the sector. This includes ongoing efforts to encourage greater take up of professional qualifications and the development of Codes of Practice.

The Government will act quickly to provide homeowners with greater rights, powers, and protections over their homes by implementing the provisions of the Leasehold and Freehold Reform Act 2024, including those designed to increase service charge transparency.

Over the course of this Parliament, the Government will further reform the leasehold system. We will enact remaining Law Commission recommendations relating to enfranchisement and the Right to Manage, tackle unregulated and unaffordable ground rents, reinvigorate commonhold through a comprehensive new legal framework, and ban the sale of new leasehold flats so commonhold becomes the default tenure.

Asked by Baroness Hayter of Kentish Town

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they have taken to ensure that property managers of private or mixed tenure high-rise residential buildings are sufficiently competent to manage fire safety risk. [HL884]

Lord Hanson of Flint: The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (FSO) places a range of legal duties on Responsible Persons (the person in control of a premises), chief among which are the need to undertake a fire risk assessment to identify any general fire safety precautions that need to be taken to ensure that the premises, and people within it, are safe from fire.

In order to help Responsible Persons discharge their duties we publish a range of guides that include an explanation of their legal duties, how to complete a fire risk assessment in specific types of premises including purpose-built blocks of flats and guidance on specific issues such as how to undertake checks on fire doors. Responsible Persons have a duty under Article 18 of the FSO to appoint a competent person to assist them in implementing any preventative and protective measures identified in the fire risk assessment and our guidance provides advice on when and how to do this.

Public Footpaths: Coastal Areas

Asked by Baroness Scott of Needham Market

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they still intend to ensure that the King Charles III England Coast Path is fully walkable by the end of 2024 and, if not, whether they have a revised timetable for delivery. [HL1003]

Baroness Hayman of Ullock: Unfortunately, the King Charles III England Coast Path (KCIIECP) will not be fully walkable by the end of 2024. However, by the end of December 2024 up to 62% of the KCIIECP will be completed, along with the wider coastal access rights between the path and mean low water (coastal margin), and provision to roll back the trail with an eroding coast and reduced occupiers' liability towards the public that the KCIIECP provides.

This will result in 95% of the English coast being walkable through a combination of completed KCIIECP / coastal access rights (as above), public rights of way and de facto access.

Work continues on the KCIIECP, with another 57 miles opening this week in Lincolnshire and more commencements planned this year. 1251 miles are now open and available for public use, with works taking place on another 1144 miles. Less than 300 miles are yet to be approved.

We are working at pace to ensure completion as soon as possible. We will develop a revised timetable with Natural England for 2025/2026 to determine when all 2700 miles of the KCIIECP will be complete and open to public access.

Public Sector: Pensions

Asked by **Lord Empey**

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the long-term (1) cost, and (2) sustainability, of public sector pensions; and what assessment they have made of how such pensions compare to those paid in the private sector. [HL744]

Lord Livermore: The Independent Public Service Pension Commission led by Lord Hutton recommended in March 2011 that projected public service pension benefit payments as a percentage of estimated future GDP is the most relevant measure of their future affordability. This is because most public service pensions are financed through taxation, which is closely related to GDP.

The Office for Budget Responsibility [forecast in 2022](#) that spending on public service pensions will fall from 2 per cent of GDP at present to 1.7 per cent by 2071-72. An updated forecast is expected to be published in the near future.

Remuneration in the main public sector workforces tends to be weighted towards pension relative to pay compared to packages typically available in the private sector. The total remuneration package needs to be considered when making any comparisons. The recommendations by the independent Pay Review Bodies for the main public service workforces take account of the total reward for each workforce, including the relevant pension scheme.

Asked by **Lord Empey**

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they have any plans to review the level of state contributions to public sector pensions. [HL745]

Lord Livermore: The rate of employer contributions paid to the main unfunded public service pension schemes is assessed as part of scheme valuations every four years. The most recent employer contribution rates were implemented in April 2024.

Pupils: Attendance

Asked by **Lord Mann**

To ask His Majesty's Government how many children in England (1) never attend school, and (2) do not regularly attend school. [HL889]

Asked by **Lord Mann**

To ask His Majesty's Government which are the 10 schools in England with the lowest rates of pupil attendance. [HL890]

Baroness Smith of Malvern: The department collects data on children missing education from local authorities on a voluntary basis. This includes compulsory school aged children not registered at school or otherwise receiving suitable education. The latest figures are available here: [\[statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/children-missing-education\]\(https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/children-missing-education\). In autumn 2023/24, there were an estimated 33,000 children missing education, which includes adjustments made for non-response and is based on a figure of 30,400 reported by 94% of local authorities.](https://explore-education-</p>
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The Children's Wellbeing Bill will legislate for local authority registers of children not in school. This will include a duty on parents to provide the necessary information for these registers if their child is eligible, which would improve the accuracy of data and ensure that fewer children slip under the radar when they are not in school.

Pupil absence is collected in the school census. The latest figures are available here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/pupil-absence-in-schools-in-england>.

The department publishes figures on the number of pupils who are persistently absent, which means missing 10% or more of possible sessions, and severely absent, which means missing 50% or more of possible sessions. In autumn 2023/24, 19.4% of pupil enrolments were persistently absent (1.4 million pupil enrolments) and 2.0% of pupil enrolments were severely absent (142,000 pupil enrolments).

It should be noted that 'regular attendance' is defined as having no absence, apart from absence due to attendance at a dual-registration or approved educational activity. This information is not readily available.

School level information also forms part of the pupil absence publication. Absence rates for all schools in England in autumn 2023/24 is attached. The data requested is available in the attached table.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

HL889_HL890_Table
[HL889_HL890_all_schools_absence_rates.xlsx]

The material can be viewed online at:
<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2024-09-09/HL889>

Radicalism

Asked by **Lord Goodman of Wycombe**

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by the Parliamentary Under-Secretary for Housing, Communities and Local Government on 5 September (HC2635), and further to the Written Statement by Baroness Swinburne on 14 March (HLWS336), whether they continue to maintain (1) the definition of extremism, and (2) the engagement principles, set out in that Statement; and what changes have been made to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government's (a) work in this area, and (b) funding of that work, since the general election. [HL965]

Asked by **Lord Goodman of Wycombe**

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by the Parliamentary Under-Secretary

for Housing, Communities and Local Government on 9 September (HC2987), and further to the Written Statement by Baroness Swinburne on 14 March (HLWS336), whether the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government is continuing to fund and support the new counter-extremism centre of excellence. [HL966]

Asked by Lord Goodman of Wycombe

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by the Parliamentary Under-Secretary for Housing, Communities and Local Government on 9 September (HC2987), and further to the Written Statement by Baroness Swinburne on 14 March (HLWS336), what steps they are taking to counter Islamist extremism and ideologies. [HL967]

Lord Khan of Burnley: This government takes the threat of extremism very seriously and we will continue to work with partners to tackle extremism in all its forms. The rapid review ordered by the Home Secretary will consider the current understanding of extremism, including Islamist and far-right extremism. Following the conclusion of the rapid review, we will be setting out our strategic approach, which will ensure that we have the strongest possible response.

Railways: Concessions

Asked by Lord Berkeley

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of (1) the effect of the planned reductions in the percentage discounts for student, senior, services and other railcards on numbers of rail passengers; and (2) the effect of the ensuing increase in fares on the overall cost of passenger railway to the Government. [HL572]

Lord Hendy of Richmond Hill: The cost of railcards has not increased in ten years. This minor revision applies railcard discounts in line with the advertised '1/3 off'. We expect it to have a minimal impact on passengers and the cost of the railway to government, given it is not anticipated to have a material impact on revenues or demand.

Railways: Mobility Scooters

Asked by Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle

To ask His Majesty's Government what expectation they have for train operating companies and ticket websites to provide information to passengers using mobility scooters about their use of a pass policy for the scooter, either when wheelchair seats or passenger support is booked. [HL1098]

Lord Hendy of Richmond Hill: Train and station operators are required by their operating licences to establish and comply with an Accessible Travel Policy (ATP) which must be approved by the Office of Rail and Road. An ATP sets out, among other things, the

arrangements and assistance that an operator will provide to protect the interests of disabled people using its services and to facilitate such use.

The guidance states that operators must set out their policies regarding the carriage of mobility scooters and other mobility aids for mobility-impaired people on their trains. Operators must make the reasoning behind their policies clear, particularly with regard to any policy excluding the carriage of some or all mobility scooters and mobility aids.

We would expect all customers purchasing a ticket that require assistance to complete their journey to be directed to the Passenger Assist Scheme.

Railways: North of England

Asked by Lord Berkeley

To ask His Majesty's Government what funding they are making available for the development of Northern Powerhouse Rail between now and April 2025; and how many staff are currently engaged on this project. [HL571]

Lord Hendy of Richmond Hill: The Northern Powerhouse Rail accounting officer assessment summary published on 30 July set out that £54m has been budgeted for development work on the scheme in 2024/25. Expenditure of a further £34m is anticipated on the High Speed Rail (Crewe – Manchester) Bill, excluding purchase costs for land and property.

There are around 40 full-time equivalent officials in the Department for Transport working on Northern Powerhouse Rail. This is reflective of the current stage of development and proposals. The Department for Transport is supported in its development of Northern Powerhouse Rail by Network Rail, HS2 Ltd and Transport for the North.

Regeneration: Northern Ireland

Asked by Lord Rogan

To ask His Majesty's Government when the regeneration funds of £20 million each for Londonderry and Coleraine, announced on 6 March, will be released. [HL765]

Baroness Taylor of Stevenage: The government has inherited an extremely difficult fiscal environment and has a responsibility to fix the foundations of our economy, to ensure economic stability.

The department will set out further details on next steps and confirmation of the revised timelines in due course.

Research: Databases

Asked by Lord Clement-Jones

To ask His Majesty's Government whether the hosting of the National Data Library will be the subject

of a strategic procurement in order to buy, make and sell more in Britain. [HL929]

Baroness Jones of Whitchurch: The National Data Library will transform the way the Government manages our national strategic data assets.

It will focus on maximising the value of data for the public good, on growing the economy and creating new jobs, and on delivering data-driven AI-powered public services.

Decisions on the design and implementation of the National Data Library will be taken in due course.

Retail Trade: Urban Areas

Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to protect high street businesses, particularly independent traders. [HL1091]

Baroness Jones of Whitchurch: This Government is focused on its five-point plan to breathe life back into Britain's high streets. We understand how important the high street is to our businesses which is why our plans include tackling retail crime, ensuring a level playing field between online and high street businesses, stamping out late payments and ending the blight of empty spaces. This work will ensure that our high streets are great places for our businesses, supporting economic growth across the UK.

I am looking forward to working with the Sector Councils for Retail and Hospitality on the strategic issues facing the sectors, including high street regeneration and investment, labour and retail careers, sustainability and supply chain resilience.

Rivers: Walking

Asked by Baroness Scott of Needham Market

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have for the delivery of nine new river walks, how these will be selected, and what is the timetable for delivery. [HL1001]

Baroness Hayman of Ullock: Defra is progressing plans to designate nine new National River Walks across England, one in each region, to enhance access to nature. This is a priority for the department and we are currently considering several delivery options, as well as reviewing where existing river walks are in place. Further details will be provided in due course.

Road Traffic (New Drivers) Act 1995

Asked by Baroness Seccombe

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have, if any, to amend the Road Traffic (New Drivers) Act 1995. [HL769]

Lord Henty of Richmond Hill: The government does not have any current plans to amend the Road Traffic (New Drivers) Act 1995.

Roads: Freight

Asked by Earl Attlee

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they have received the report by the Earl Attlee, Harassment of the Heavy Haulage Industry by West Midlands Police, dated 10 May; and if so, whether they found it to be inaccurate, unfair or technically incorrect. [HL1097]

Lord Henty of Richmond Hill: I can confirm that the Department for Transport has received a copy of the noble Lord's report. In common with other road traffic laws, policing of abnormal loads is an operational matter for the police. Any complaints about West Midlands Police's handling of abnormal loads movements should be taken up with the Chief Constable.

Roads: Oxford

Asked by Baroness Deech

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the performance of Network Rail in replacing the Oxford railway bridge which has involved closing the main road (A420) into the city centre for the past 16 months and postponing the reopening indefinitely. [HL591]

Asked by Baroness Deech

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the economic and social cost to Oxford of the closure of the A420 into the city; and what steps they plan to take, if any, to ensure that Network Rail is held accountable for the impact of the long-term closure of the road. [HL592]

Lord Henty of Richmond Hill: Network Rail has not undertaken an assessment of the impacts and social costs resulting from the continuing closure of the A420 (Botley Road) to deliver the Oxford station improvements. Network Rail is working to produce a plan to complete the works and re-open the road. When this has been finalised I propose to meet with stakeholders to discuss it. I wrote to you on 2 September and explained that Network Rail and Great Western Railway are executing a plan to mitigate the impacts of the road closure on those accessing the station and city centre, including persons with restricted mobility. I expect Network Rail to continue to promote Oxford as being open for business throughout this critical and challenging phase.

Robbery and Shoplifting: Hertfordshire

Asked by The Lord Bishop of St Albans

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the number of robbery and shoplifting offences in Hertfordshire; and what steps

they plan to take to tackle those crimes in that area. [HL689]

Lord Hanson of Flint: Police recorded crime for England and Wales showed a 30% annual rise in shoplifting offences and 8% in robbery offences for year ending March 2024. Hertfordshire Police Force saw a 25% rise in shoplifting and a 35% rise in police recorded robbery offences in the same period.

In cases of shoplifting, more and more offenders are using violence and abuse against shopworkers. We will not stand for this. This Government will introduce a new offence for assaulting a retail worker to protect the hardworking and dedicated staff that work in stores. We will also end the effective immunity, introduced by the previous Government, granted to low-value shoplifting of goods under £200.

Tackling serious violence, including robbery, is a priority for this Government. One of the ways we are doing this is through close working with the National Police Chiefs' Council's Personal Robbery Steering Group.

Rodenticides: Safety

Asked by Baroness Hoey

To ask His Majesty's Government who are the members of the Health and Safety Executive's UK Rodenticide Stewardship Government Oversight Group that oversees second generation anticoagulant rodenticides and their effect on non-target species. [HL757]

Baroness Sherlock: The UK Rodenticides Stewardship Government Oversight Group is chaired by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) and comprises representatives of other government stakeholders, who are HSE Northern Ireland; Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs; UK Health Security Agency; Natural England; and the Welsh and Scottish Governments. The group relies on analysis of environmental monitoring data provided by an independent research institute.

Rolling Stock: Disability

Asked by Lord Berkeley

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to require all new passenger trains to be built with step-free access through at least one set of doors per carriage. [HL574]

Lord Henty of Richmond Hill: The Government is committed to ensuring that everyone has the same access to the rail network regardless of their needs. When procuring new trains operators are expected to minimise the height of the train door relative to the standard platform height to improve access and minimise risks for all passengers.

Under current accessibility requirements contained within the Persons with Reduced Mobility National Technical Specification Notice, operators are required to provide boarding ramps to provide step-free access to passengers boarding or alighting from trains.

Step-free access is also possible with existing rolling stock at stations which have been modified with raised platforms or built to enable level boarding.

Rolling Stock: Procurement

Asked by Lord Bradshaw

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of how the leasing market for rolling stock may develop in future; and what assessment have they made of the experiences of rolling stock procurement (1) by Transport for London, (2) by the private sector, or (3) abroad. [HL582]

Lord Henty of Richmond Hill: The Government will expect Great British Railways when it is operating to deliver the best outcomes for the taxpayer. This will include formulating a long term plan for railway rolling stock, giving greater certainty over long term life, monitoring the leasing market and financing options on a continuing basis, as well as learning lessons from international comparators where relevant. It is expected that this will enable a better market and a reduction in costs to the public purse.

Russia: Shipping

Asked by Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to deter third-country service providers from engaging with UK sanctioned vessels in Russia's shadow fleet. [HL1081]

Baroness Chapman of Darlington: The UK has sanctioned 25 oil tankers operating within Putin's shadow fleet. This has disrupted those vessels' ability to take part in the Russian oil trade. We frequently engage with third countries on the shadow fleet, as these vessels undermine international maritime standards and practices, pose environmental risks, and support Russia's illegal war in Ukraine. While the UK cannot comment on future sanctions, anyone assisting UK-sanctioned vessels and the activity of Russia's shadow fleet more generally may be in breach of our sanctions and be liable in the event of an accident.

Asked by Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps the Treasury are taking to regulate higher transparency and due diligence standards in the UK's maritime services sector to prevent Protection and Indemnity insurers from facilitating the operations of vessels within Russia's shadow fleet. [HL1084]

Baroness Chapman of Darlington: The action the UK and its partners have taken to limit Russian energy revenues is having a significant impact, including reducing Russia's oil and gas revenues by 24 percent in 2023 compared to 2022. It is illegal for UK maritime services including insurers to engage with oil tankers where the oil is traded above a given price. The FCDO regularly engages with maritime service providers including to emphasise that if they facilitate shadow fleet activity they may be in breach of UK sanctions and could be at risk of enforcement action. The Government is committed to rigorously enforcing our sanctions and keeps all our sanctions under review.

Russia: Ukraine

Asked by Lord Browne of Ladyton

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of (1) the current state of the global crude oil fleet, and (2) the number of vessels that have 'gone dark' since Russia's invasion of Ukraine. [HL738]

Lord Hendy of Richmond Hill: The Department for Transport holds data on the number and type of vessels within the world fleet, and as of 31 December 2023 there were 15,700 chemical and oil tankers in the world fleet with a total deadweight tonnage of 714 million tonnes.

The Government are aware of 'going dark' activities conducted by vessels since the Russian invasion of Ukraine. However, it is not possible to ascertain the exact figure of 'dark vessels' or 'dark periods', as while they can be due to deceptive practices, they may also be for safety reasons in high-risk areas or arise from technical issues and GPS jamming. The Joint Maritime Security Centre (JMSC) have established a (Russian) Maritime Sanctions Assessment Team focusing on the movements of oil tankers that are assessed to be associated with the movement of Russian oil.

Safety of Rwanda (Asylum and Immigration) Act 2024

Asked by Lord Kempson

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they intend to repeal the Safety of Rwanda (Asylum and Immigration) Act 2024 and, if so, when. [HL887]

Lord Hanson of Flint: The Home Secretary set out the government's position in respect of the Illegal Migration Act in her statement to the house on 22nd July 2024. Any legislative plans flowing from the statement will be set out in the normal way in due course.

Salmon: Conservation

Asked by Lord Pearson of Rannoch

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the answer by Baroness Hayman of Ullock on 12 September (HL Deb cols 168GC–172GC), what

assessment they have made of excluding cattle from the catchment areas of salmon spawning streams. [HL1131]

Baroness Hayman of Ullock: This is a devolved matter, and the information provided therefore relates to England only. A specific national assessment on excluding cattle from the catchment areas of salmon spawning streams has not been undertaken because the potential impacts of cattle on salmon spawning streams are well documented.

ScaleUp Institute

Asked by Viscount Camrose

To ask His Majesty's Government how they intend to support the ScaleUp Institute. [HL875]

Baroness Jones of Whitchurch: Scale-up businesses are a critical part of the UK's economy, driving innovation and economic growth. The work of the ScaleUp Institute and its partners in continuing to nurture the health of our scale-up ecosystems is as important as ever.

This Government will work closely with the Scaleup Institute and the private sector more broadly to create the right conditions for businesses to scale-up.

Ministers will support the work of the ScaleUp Institute through various mechanisms such as attendance at key events and engaging representatives from their organisation and membership as part of Government policy making.

Self-assessment: Forms

Asked by Lord Moylan

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they plan to make the online self-assessment tax return form SA100 available to download, so that taxpayers wishing to submit paper returns do not have to telephone His Majesty's Revenue and Customs to obtain it. [HL661]

Lord Livermore: The Government wants to encourage as many people as possible to complete their self assessments online. HMRC therefore asks taxpayers who do not initially opt to complete their return online to call HMRC. This approach allows HMRC to speak to taxpayers to encourage them to file online, or to find out if they need additional support and guidance to do so, before sending them a paper form if needed. The SA100 form is available for download on gov.uk.

Semiconductors: Training

Asked by Lord Jackson of Peterborough

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to support collaboration between universities and industry on upskilling to address skill gaps in the domestic supply chain of semiconductor chips. [HL1121]

Lord Vallance of Balham: This Government recognises the importance of skills as a crucial factor in maximising the potential of our semiconductor sector, driving growth, and creating high-quality jobs throughout the UK. My officials are collaborating with stakeholders across industry and academia to understand the challenges faced by the semiconductor sector in order to take the necessary steps needed to expand the talent pool for the long term. The newly announced Skills England will play a vital role in bringing together government, industry and training providers to address the skills needs of the coming decade.

Sheffield Station: Tickets

Asked by Lord Scriven

To ask His Majesty's Government what discussions they have had, if any, with train operating companies regarding the practice of conducting ticket checks at the footbridge of Sheffield railway station, which is a public right of way. [HL768]

Lord Hendy of Richmond Hill: Deploying revenue protection staff to deter ticketless travel, and doing so in a reasonable and efficient manner, is a matter for train operating companies.

Revenue protection offers passengers an additional level of safety and security whilst travelling on the rail network.

Shipping: Russia

Asked by Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to mitigate the environmental risks posed by ageing and poorly maintained vessels in Russia's shadow fleet, particularly those using high sulphur fuels in UK territorial waters and the Strait of Dover. [HL1082]

Lord Hendy of Richmond Hill: The UK is working to deter and disrupt the Russian shadow fleet. At the European Political Community Summit in July, we led efforts to ask European partners to sign a Call for Action that seeks to address the risks that the shadow fleet poses to maritime safety and security, and, crucially, the environment.

The Department for Transport takes robust measures to ensure all sea vessels in UK territorial waters, including the Strait of Dover, comply with environmental law.

Sinn Féin

Asked by Lord Caine

To ask His Majesty's Government what (1) meetings, and (2) phone or video calls, the Prime Minister's Chief of Staff has had with representatives of Sinn Féin since the general election. [HL1104]

Baroness Twycross: Special advisers are required to abide by the Code of Conduct for Special Advisers at all

times and are required to make declarations in line with published transparency guidance. Under the guidance, which was also in place for the previous Administration, details of meetings between special advisers and the devolved governments or political parties are not disclosed.

Sizewell C Power Station

Asked by Lord Berkeley

To ask His Majesty's Government what factors will be considered when making a final investment decision in relation to Sizewell C, and whether this decision is dependent on further regulatory approval. [HL864]

Lord Hunt of Kings Heath: Work continues to secure a Final Investment Decision (FID) for Sizewell C. Any decision to take FID will consider all relevant factors and be supported by the Full Business Case (FBC) and a Value for Money Assessment, in line with HM Treasury's Green Book guidance.

Skills England

Asked by Lord Allen of Kensington

To ask His Majesty's Government when they intend to introduce the Skills England bill. [HL554]

Baroness Smith of Malvern: The Skills England Bill will be introduced as soon as Parliamentary time allows. The Bill will transfer functions from the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education to Skills England, and will be an important part of steps taken to establish Skills England in phases over the next 9 to 12 months.

Sleeping Rough

Asked by Lord Truscott

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they will take to eradicate rough sleeping in England; and what is their timescale for doing so. [HL1137]

Baroness Taylor of Stevenage: Homelessness and rough sleeping levels in England are far too high. This has a devastating impact on those affected and harms our communities.

We must address this and deliver long-term solutions. The Government is considering these issues carefully and is committed to putting Britain back on track to ending homelessness. To do this we will develop a new cross-government strategy, working with mayors and councils across the country.

Small Businesses

Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the decline in confidence among

small businesses following (1) rises in energy prices, (2) the increase in material costs, and (3) the anticipated rise in employment costs. [HL734]

Baroness Jones of Whitchurch: We recognise that recent times have been challenging for business. The Government is committed to support small businesses. Our Plan for Small Business set out nine pledges, including a pledge to reduce the cost of energy bills. We will be setting out further detail over the coming months.

Small Businesses: Taxation

Asked by *Lord Taylor of Warwick*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the annual loss of tax revenue from small businesses. [HL949]

Lord Livermore: HMRC is committed to tackling all forms of non-compliance, including evasion. Each year HMRC makes an annual assessment of the tax gap, which is the difference between the amount of tax that should, in theory, be paid, and the amount that is actually paid. The latest published tax gap is for 2022-23 and was 4.8% of theoretical liabilities, or £39.8bn. The element attributable to small businesses is 60% (£24.1bn) of that overall tax gap.

HMRC publishes these estimates in its annual 'Measuring the Tax Gap' report. <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/measuring-tax-gaps>

The tax gap derives from a wide range of non-compliant behaviours, from simple errors at one end of the spectrum to more deliberate behaviours at the other, requiring different approaches to tackle it. The Government is committed to ensuring that businesses and individuals pay the taxes they owe.

Social Rented Housing: Construction

Asked by *Lord Birt*

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Baroness Taylor of Stevenage on 6 August (HL248), what percentage of the 1.5 million homes that the Government is committed to delivering in this Parliament will be social homes. [HL576]

Baroness Taylor of Stevenage: The Government has committed to delivering 1.5 million homes this Parliament, delivering the biggest increase in social and affordable housing in a generation. We are proposing reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework that are designed to support the delivery of affordable housing, including ensuring that councils can prioritise the types of affordable homes their communities need. We have given councils greater flexibility to use their Right to Buy receipts to deliver replacement affordable housing (these flexibilities will be in place for an initial 24 months, subject to review). Further details will be announced in due course.

Social Security Benefits: Disability

Asked by *Baroness Buscombe*

To ask His Majesty's Government what percentage of residents of Ceredigion in Wales are currently in receipt of disability benefits. [HL870]

Baroness Sherlock: The table below shows the number of claimants in February 2024 who are on the different disability benefits, Personal Independence Payment (PIP), Disability Living Allowance, including the Child element (DLA) and Attendance Allowance (AA).

PIP	DLA	AA	Total
4,449	1,293	2,785	8,527

This information can be found on the published datasets on [Stat-Xplore - Log in \(dwp.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/statistics/explore)

The latest available population estimates published by the Office of National Statistics on [Population estimates - local authority based by single year of age - Nomis - Official Census and Labour Market Statistics \(nomisweb.co.uk\)](https://www.nomisweb.co.uk) show that the estimated population of Ceredigion in April 2023 is 73,050.

This means that 12% of the residents of Ceredigion in Wales were claiming disability benefits in February 2024.

Social Security Benefits: Housing

Asked by *Baroness Lister of Burtersett*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the findings of the papers (1) Capped and trapped: how the benefit cap makes it almost impossible to find affordable housing, and (2) An impossible move?, by CASE, published in July. [HL654]

Baroness Sherlock: No assessment has been made.

Our Back to Work Plan will provide further support and help to improve the lives of working people. People who are working and earning money are much less likely to be affected by the benefit cap.

Customers can apply to their local authority to be considered for additional financial support through Discretionary Housing Payments or the Household Support Fund.

Social Security Benefits: Medical Examinations

Asked by *Baroness Browning*

To ask His Majesty's Government how many assessors trained and qualified in autism will work in each of the five regions under the Department for Work and Pension's Health Assessment Advisory Service. [HL925]

*Asked by **Baroness Browning***

To ask His Majesty's Government what qualifications are stipulated for assessors of people on the autism spectrum by the Health Assessment Advisory Service. [HL926]

Baroness Sherlock: The department and the Health Assessment Advisory Service (HAAS) are fully committed to supporting those with mental health conditions.

All health professionals (HPs) within the five regions of HAAS are fully qualified in their health discipline and have passed strict recruitment and experience criteria. They must also be registered with a relevant regulatory body such as the General Medical Council, the Nursing and Midwifery Council, Health and Care Professions Council or European Economic Area equivalent. The department has not specified that HAAS employ HPs who are specialists in specific conditions or impairments. Instead, the focus is on ensuring they are experts in disability analysis, focusing on the effects of health conditions and impairments on the claimant's daily life.

All HPs receive comprehensive training in the functional assessment of mental health conditions and disabilities, including Autism. From 09 September 2024 the educational material for all HAAS HPs was provided by DWP. As part of our review, we identified best practice in the NHS and have implemented the Oliver McGowan training as part of the mandatory training requirements for every HP. This training is recognised to be of significant value to HPs in ensuring they have the skills and knowledge to provide safe, informed, and compassionate assessments to claimants with autism and learning disabilities. This is in addition to our comprehensive education programme for HPs.

Following the completion of core training to undertake the role, HPs will engage in an annual training programme, and HAAS has been provided with materials (such as Continual Professional Development modules) to support the development of their HPs where learning needs are identified. This approach ensures that both service wide and individual training needs are met and will be of benefit to those with neurodiversity where applicable.

Social Security Benefits: Pay

*Asked by **Baroness Buscombe***

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to ensure that information published about the total value of benefits paid to claimants, including available discount schemes and grants, can be readily compared with employee salaries, which are usually quoted before tax. [HL958]

Baroness Sherlock: The Government has no such plans. Independent, free and anonymous benefit calculators are available that can help individuals to see how their benefits are affected if they start work or

increase their hours. Benefit calculators can be found on gov.uk.

Solar Power: Warehouses

*Asked by **Lord Bach***

To ask His Majesty's Government what consideration they have given to making the installation of solar panels on newly constructed warehouses mandatory. [HL953]

Lord Hunt of Kings Heath: Future standards will set our new homes and buildings on a path that moves away from relying on volatile fossil fuels and towards more secure, clean energy. The Government will therefore take the opportunity, where appropriate, to encourage the fitting of solar panels on new homes and buildings. Changes to permitted development rights rules will mean more businesses will be able to install solar panels on their roofs without going through the planning system. The Government is providing fiscal incentives to encourage businesses to install rooftop solar, through tax relief and business rate exemptions for installing and generating solar power.

*Asked by **Lord Bach***

To ask His Majesty's Government what consideration they have given to making the installation of solar panels on warehouses constructed within the last 30 years mandatory before 31 December 2030. [HL954]

Lord Hunt of Kings Heath: Future standards will set our new homes and buildings on a path that moves away from relying on volatile fossil fuels and towards more secure, clean energy. The Government will therefore take the opportunity, where appropriate, to encourage the fitting of solar panels on new homes and buildings. Changes to permitted development rights rules will mean more businesses will be able to install solar panels on their roofs without going through the planning system. The Government is providing fiscal incentives to encourage businesses to install rooftop solar, through tax relief and business rate exemptions for installing and generating solar power.

*Asked by **Lord Bach***

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of how many warehouses (1) do, and (2) do not, have solar panels installed, broken down by county. [HL955]

Lord Hunt of Kings Heath: Solar power is at the heart of our mission to make Britain a clean energy superpower. Whilst solar panels on warehouses form a critical part of this mission, the Department does not hold this information.

South East Asia: Patrol Craft

*Asked by **Baroness Goldie***

To ask His Majesty's Government whether the deployment of HMS Tamar and HMS Spey or

successor ships in south-east Asia will continue. [HL962]

Lord Coaker: Yes, the current intent is to retain a persistent forward presence with HMS TAMAR and SPEY in the Indo Pacific. The ships regularly engage in activities with Southeast Asian states, including participation in military exercises, maritime activity with the Five Power Defence Arrangements, and defence and diplomatic engagement.

South Sudan: Elections

Asked by *The Lord Bishop of St Albans*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the risk of renewed violence in South Sudan during that country's upcoming election. [HL943]

Lord Collins of Highbury: National-level conflict ended following the 2018 Peace Agreement, but pockets of armed conflict at the subnational level continue. This is exacerbated by the worsening humanitarian and economic crises, climate shocks and the impact of the war in Sudan. In August 2024, the Minister for Development urged the South Sudanese Government to make progress towards peaceful, credible and inclusive elections as the best means to achieve peace and stability.

South Western Railway: Crime

Asked by *Lord Patten*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the levels of reported crime on the Salisbury and Yeovil Railway. [HL1079]

Lord Hendy of Richmond Hill: The British Transport Police (BTP) are responsible for policing the rail network across England, Wales and Scotland. They recorded the following number of incidents at stations on the Salisbury and Yeovil railway line: 2020/21 58, 2021/22 55, 2022/23 87 and 2023/24 83. The increase from 2021/22 is in line with increasing passenger numbers on the rail network following the easing of travel restrictions during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Along with data from the rest of the railway, the BTP will continually review crime trends and patterns from the Salisbury and Yeovil line, and gather intelligence to inform their daily operational deployments, including both uniform and plain clothes officers.

If passengers see or experience crime on the rail network, they should report this to BTP using the 61016 text service, via the Railway Guardian app or online. In an emergency, they should always call 999.

Southern Africa: Droughts

Asked by *The Lord Bishop of St Albans*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the findings set out by UNICEF in

their press release 'Almost 300,000 Children Threatened by Severe Acute Malnutrition in Six Drought-Affected Countries in Southern Africa', published on 25 July; and whether they intend to provide additional aid in response to that drought. [HL686]

Lord Collins of Highbury: Severe drought has tipped Southern Africa into a food security crisis. In response, the UK is adapting existing programmes to support national responses and deploying technical assistance to affected countries, including a regional adviser to improve humanitarian risk analysis and coordination. The UK is a major contributor to pooled humanitarian funds which have allocated over £35 million to tackle drought. We are a founding member and donor of Africa Risk Capacity, which has provided timely disaster risk financing payouts to member states, and of the Child Nutrition Fund, which supports the detection, prevention and treatment of Severe Acute Malnutrition.

Space Technology

Asked by *Viscount Camrose*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they intend to continue with plans to publish the Space Workforce Action Plan; and if so, when. [HL874]

Lord Vallance of Balham: The government is determined to develop the skilled workforce that the UK needs across the whole economy, including in space. That is why it is creating Skills England and will bring forward a comprehensive strategy for post-16 education to break down barriers to opportunity, support the development of a skilled workforce, and drive economic growth through our industrial strategy. Decisions about sector specific workforce action plans will be taken in due course.

Special Advisers

Asked by *Baroness Neville-Rolfe*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether the salaries of all special advisers have now been finalised; and when they intend to publish the list of special advisers, as required under the Constitutional Reform and Governance Act 2010. [HL1068]

Baroness Smith of Basildon: In line with the Constitutional Reform and Governance Act 2010, the list of special advisers and their pay bands will be published in the relevant Annual Report on Special Advisers.

Asked by *Baroness Hayter of Kentish Town*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they plan to make regulations under section 2(5) of the Transparency of Lobbying, Non-Party Campaigning and Trade Union Administration Act 2014 to amend section 2(3) of that Act to cover communications to a special adviser, as defined in that Act. [HL617]

Baroness Twycross: With reference to PQ 1250 and PQ 1251 from 23rd July of this year, the Government is

committed to establishing a new independent Ethics and Integrity Commission. As part of that, the government will consider whether any changes are required to improve transparency around lobbying and will update Parliament as necessary.

Special Educational Needs

Asked by Baroness Fraser of Craigmaddie

To ask His Majesty's Government how many children with special educational needs and disabilities do not receive an education, health and care plan within the legal time limit of 20 weeks from the initial request; and what potential measures for improvement they have identified. [HL931]

Asked by Baroness Fraser of Craigmaddie

To ask His Majesty's Government how many children with special educational needs and disabilities are currently not able to be placed in a suitable school. [HL932]

Baroness Smith of Malvern: The department publishes information on education, health and care (EHC) plans annually at: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/education-health-and-care-plans>, which includes a section titled "Timeliness – EHC plans issued within 20 weeks". Here and attached you can see information on how many EHC plans were issued within 20 weeks, both where this is the statutory time limit and where statutory exceptions to that time limit apply.

Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) introduced a strengthened area special education needs and disabilities (SEND) inspection framework in January 2023, which led to a greater emphasis on the outcomes being achieved for children and young people. It is the primary tool to maintain a focus on high standards in the SEND system across all partners.

The department is working to monitor, support and challenge local authorities as needed, working closely with NHS England to tackle any weaknesses that sit with health partners. Where a council does not meet its duties, including the 20 week timeliness, the department will offer a range of universal, targeted and intensive support through managed programmes, such as the Sector Led Improvement Partners, which provides peer-to-peer tailored support. Councils identified as having issues with the 20 week timelines are subject to additional monitoring by the department. Where the department has concerns about their capacity to make the required improvements, it will secure specialist SEND advisor support to help identify barriers and improve the service.

The department does not hold data on how many children with SEND are currently not able to be placed in a suitable school.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

HL931_HL932_attachment
[HL931_HL932_data_education_health_and_care_plans.xlsx]

The material can be viewed online at:
<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2024-09-10/HL931>

Asked by Baroness Fraser of Craigmaddie

To ask His Majesty's Government what percentage of appeals on decisions relating to education, health and care plans result in the granting of a plan to the child. [HL933]

Lord Ponsonby of Shulbrede: In the 2022-23 academic year (the latest period for which statistics are published), there were 986 disposals against the refusal to make an education, health, and care (EHC) plan. Of the 668 which went before the Tribunal to determine, 635 (64% of all disposals) resulted in an order for an EHC plan to be made.

St Pancras Station

Asked by The Earl of Clancarty

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they plan to make Eurostar St Pancras a CITES designated port. [HL1107]

Baroness Hayman of Ullock: There are no plans to make Eurostar St Pancras a CITES designated port following a review by UK Border Force that concluded it does not currently have the necessary capacity and infrastructure to undertake CITES checks. This will be kept under review.

Stonewall: Arm's-length Bodies and Government Departments

Asked by Baroness Stedman-Scott

To ask His Majesty's Government what is their policy on (1) Whitehall departments, and (2) arms-length bodies, spending taxpayers' money on affiliating to Stonewall. [HL694]

Baroness Twycross: Government departments and arm's-length bodies are responsible for decisions about whether to buy services from third sector organisations to support equality, diversity and inclusion in their organisations. Currently no government department is a member of Stonewall.

Sub-Saharan Africa: Sepsis

Asked by The Lord Bishop of St Albans

To ask His Majesty's Government what further steps they will take to tackle drug-resistant sepsis in sub-Saharan Africa. [HL998]

Lord Collins of Highbury: Over 1 million people die every year from drug-resistant sepsis. The UK Government is supporting action, through its multilateral, bilateral and research investments, to combat antimicrobial drug resistance. This includes support to the Global Fund and Gavi. The UK's Fleming Fund

programme is also strengthening drug-resistance surveillance systems, building more than 260 surveillance centres, in eleven partner countries in sub-Saharan Africa. We must continue to scale up global efforts and that is why the UK is working to secure an ambitious agreement at the High-Level Meeting on Antimicrobial Resistance on 26 September.

Sudan: Food Supply

Asked by The Lord Bishop of St Albans

To ask His Majesty's Government what further steps they will take to tackle starvation in Sudan. [HL945]

Lord Collins of Highbury: The conflict between the Sudanese Armed Forces and Rapid Support Forces has created a humanitarian disaster in Sudan, with over 9 million people facing emergency or famine like conditions. On 1 August, the Foreign Secretary tweeted to highlight the findings of the IPC Famine Review Committee that famine existed in Northern Darfur's Zamzam IDP camp, and there was a high likelihood of its presence elsewhere. He also reiterated that the use of starvation as a weapon of warfare is a war crime. On 6 August, the UK, as United Nations Security Council (UNSC) penholder on Sudan, called an urgent Council session to discuss the findings. On 22 August, the Minister for Development announced an additional £15 million of vital assistance to Sudan, South Sudan and Chad to support vulnerable people forced to flee violence and seek safety. This brings the UK's ODA for Sudan this year to £97 million, most of which is vital humanitarian assistance.

Sudan: Humanitarian Situation

Asked by The Marquess of Lothian

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking alongside international partners to address what on 9 September the World Health Organisation called the "extreme health and humanitarian crisis" in Sudan. [HL1053]

Lord Collins of Highbury: The conflict between the Sudanese Armed Forces and Rapid Support Forces has created a humanitarian disaster in Sudan, with over 9 million people facing emergency or famine like conditions. On 1 August, the Foreign Secretary tweeted to highlight the findings of the IPC Famine Review Committee (FRC) that famine existed in Northern Darfur's Zamzam IDP camp, and there was a high likelihood of its presence elsewhere. He also reiterated that the use of starvation as a weapon of warfare is a war crime. On 6 August, the UK, as United Nations Security Council (UNSC) penholder on Sudan, called an urgent Council session to discuss the FRC's findings. On 22 August, the Minister for Development announced an additional £15 million of vital assistance to Sudan, South Sudan and Chad to support vulnerable people forced to flee violence and seek safety. This brings the UK's ODA

for Sudan this year to £97 million, most of which is vital humanitarian assistance.

Tankers: Pollution Control

Asked by Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they plan to (1) introduce, and (2) enforce, tougher environmental standards, such as mandatory insurance cover and compliance with International Maritime Organisation heavy fuel standards, for oil tankers entering UK territorial waters and the Exclusive Economic Zone. [HL1083]

Lord Hendy of Richmond Hill: The government has implemented, and enforces, a variety of mandatory environmental measures related to the use and carriage of oil, including heavy fuel oil, by sea. International standards are primarily set out in the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL), to which the UK is a signatory. Annex I of MARPOL makes provision for the prevention of pollution by oil from ships and includes mandatory requirements such as construction standards of oil tankers, limitations on size and arrangement of cargo tanks, damage stability requirements and a robust survey and certification regime. Compliance with these requirements is enforced by the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA) through surveys of UK registered ships and Port State Control inspections of non-UK ships when in UK ports. Non-compliance is managed through the detention of ships, prohibition notices and, where necessary, prosecution.

With regard to insurance, within certain tonnage limitations, UK ships and ships coming to or from the UK must have certificates to prove that they have the relevant compulsory civil liability insurance against oil pollution and liability insurance for the locating, marking and removing of wrecks in the event that the ship causes a pollution incident or is wrecked. Insurers must meet the UK's criteria to provide appropriate cover and be approved by the MCA before a compulsory insurance certificate can be issued.

Tanzania: Human Rights

Asked by The Lord Bishop of St Albans

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the human rights implications of the removal of the Ngorongoro division in Tanzania from the voters' register. [HL816]

Lord Collins of Highbury: On 22 August, the Arusha High Court suspended the Government of Tanzania's notice which ordered the dissolution of wards, villages and hamlets in Ngorongoro district. The following day the Tanzanian authorities confirmed that service provision including voting rights in upcoming local elections would be restored.

The British High Commission in Dar es Salaam meets regularly with community leaders and civil society

representatives on this issue. We will continue to monitor the situation closely and encourage relevant parties to engage in meaningful dialogue.

Taxation

Asked by Lord Sharkey

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Baroness Vere of Norbiton on 13 May (HL4179), when they expect to publish the summary of responses and details of next steps for the Tax Simplification for Alternative Finance consultation, which closed on 9 April. [HL692]

Lord Livermore: On 16 January 2024, under the previous Government, HM Treasury published a consultation proposing changes to the Capital Gains Tax (CGT) rules that apply to alternative financial arrangements. The consultation closed on 9 April 2024 and this Government is carefully considering all responses. A response document will be published in due course.

Taxis: Rural Areas

Asked by Lord Stevenson of Balmacara

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the potential role of rural taxi services in reducing pressure on bus services in low-population areas of the country, thereby improving environmental performance. [HL1005]

Lord Hendy of Richmond Hill: Taxi and private hire vehicle policy is a devolved matter in all UK nations. The role the trade can play in providing flexible transport services, especially in rural areas, is recognised in Department for Transport guidance issued to licensing authorities in England.

The Rural Mobility Fund demand responsive transport (DRT) minibus pilot, currently underway in 14 different local authorities, is exploring whether DRT can provide a solution in rural and suburban areas, either alone or in conjunction with other services. A comprehensive monitoring and evaluation process is in place, consisting of a process evaluation and an impact evaluation. The final process evaluation report is due next year.

Teachers: Vacancies

Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to address teacher shortages. [HL771]

Baroness Smith of Malvern: High quality teaching is the factor that makes the biggest difference to a child's education. There are now 468,693 full-time equivalent (FTE) teachers in state-funded schools in England, but we must do more to ensure we have the workforce needed to provide the best possible education for every child in all parts of the country, which is why the government has set

out the ambition to recruit 6,500 new expert teachers with a focus on key shortage subjects.

The first crucial step towards achieving this is to ensure teachers get the pay they deserve, which is why the department has accepted in full the School Teachers' Review Body's recommendation of a 5.5% pay award for teachers and leaders in maintained schools from this September.

The department wants to ensure teaching is once again an attractive and respected profession. It is committed to resetting the relationship with the teaching profession. My right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education, has already spoken to various stakeholders and teachers working at the front end and continues to do so. The department is now developing the Social Partnership to work more closely with the sector unions to ensure they have a stronger voice on policies that affect their work.

Alongside teacher pay, financial incentives are one of the most effective ways to increase teacher supply, and we are continuing to support teacher trainees with tax-free bursaries of up to £28,000 and scholarships of up to £30,000 in shortage subjects. For 2024/25 and 2025/26, we are also offering a Targeted Retention Incentive worth up to £6,000 after tax for mathematics, physics, chemistry and computing teachers in the first five years of their careers who choose to work in disadvantaged schools.

Recruiting more teachers is a key part of the department's Opportunity Mission. This government is also committed to tackling long standing retention challenges to ensure teachers stay and thrive in the profession, including by addressing teacher workload and wellbeing, and supporting schools to introduce flexible working practices. The department has made key resources available to help teachers better manage their workload.

Technology: Economic Growth

Asked by Baroness Anelay of St Johns

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they will continue to (1) support the UK-Brazil Tech Hub, and (2) develop the global network of international tech partnerships, to build digital ecosystems that would facilitate sustainable economic growth and development. [HL563]

Baroness Jones of Whitchurch: Minister Clark demonstrated the Government's continued support for the excellent work of the UK-Brazil Tech Hub during her visit to Brazil in early September. As part of the UK's Digital Access Programme, the Hub continues to make a real difference for local Brazilian communities by improving digital inclusion, building local capacity, and supporting local digital entrepreneurship and innovation.

The Government is strengthening ties with international partners and building the UK's reputation as a strong, reliable partner, while harnessing the power of science and technology for global benefit. Supporting partners to transform their economies in a sustainable and inclusive

manner is critical to strengthen the entire science and technology ecosystem and achieve our technology ambitions.

Tennis: Finance

Asked by Baroness Lister of Burtersett

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to improve investment in tennis facilities across the United Kingdom, particularly in deprived areas, in recognition of the achievements of Sir Andy Murray following his recent retirement. [HL719]

Baroness Twycross: Sir Andy Murray has contributed a huge amount to British sport throughout his long career, both on and off the court. We know how important access to facilities is as part of the legacy of our sporting heroes, so people can try the sports they see on screen. The Government has committed to continue to support grassroots facilities across the UK.

As part of the Park Tennis Court Programme, the Department for Culture, Media and Sport and the Lawn Tennis Association are investing over £30 million between 2022-2024 to deliver improvements to over 3,000 park tennis courts across Great Britain. The renovation works include the installation of digital access gates, court nets, fencing, re-surfacing, and re-painting - all of which aim to improve access and increase participation in tennis, whilst prioritising the courts in the most deprived communities.

Terrorism: Public Inquiries

Asked by Lord Empey

To ask His Majesty's Government what criteria they apply when assessing requests for public inquiries into the deaths of persons as a result of terrorist activity in the United Kingdom. [HL1027]

Lord Hanson of Flint: A Government Minister may establish an Inquiry if particular events have caused, or are capable of causing, public concern. The Inquiries Act 2005 sets this out in statute and can be viewed here: [Inquiries Act 2005 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://legislation.gov.uk).

Thames Water: Nationalisation

Asked by Baroness Jones of Moulsecoomb

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Baroness Hayman of Ullock on 8 August (HL429), what plans they have to conduct their own analysis on the cost of taking Thames Water into public ownership, and whether they plan to consider alternative calculations from other agencies such as by Moody's Ratings who calculated that the cost would be £14.5 billion. [HL800]

Baroness Hayman of Ullock: We have no plans to nationalise Thames Water or other water companies so are not considering alternative calculations on

renationalisation. We continue to carefully monitor the situation at Thames Water. The Government is also focused on tackling the public's immediate concerns to clean up the nation's polluted waterways and turn around the sector's performance.

Tickets: Sales Methods

Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to protect consumers from highly inflated ticket prices resulting from the use of dynamic pricing software. [HL697]

Baroness Twycross: This government recognises that fans should be kept at the heart of live events, and we are concerned to see vastly inflated prices excluding many ordinary fans from having the opportunity to enjoy their favourite musicians.

That is why we have committed to introducing new protections for consumers on ticket resales, and we will launch a consultation in the autumn to seek views on potential options.

Following recent events, we will also examine issues around the transparency and use of dynamic pricing as part of our upcoming consultation this autumn. We welcome the Competition and Markets Authority's announcement that it is also urgently reviewing recent developments in the ticketing market, including the use of dynamic pricing.

Dynamic pricing as a practice is not prohibited under consumer protection law. However, businesses using dynamic pricing are required to be fair and transparent in their dealings with consumers, and ensure they provide timely, clear and accurate information about their pricing practices. Failure to comply with these requirements may result in a breach of consumer law and could be followed by enforcement action.

We recognise that this is a complex area, and will work with artists, industry and fans to create a fairer system.

Trade Agreements: Gulf Cooperation Council

Asked by Lord Scriven

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they intend to include specific clauses on human rights in their free trade agreement with the Gulf Cooperation Council; if so, what the clauses will consist of and how they will be monitored; and if they will not be included, why not. [HL856]

Baroness Jones of Whitchurch: The UK is a leading advocate for human rights around the world. This work takes place separately to negotiations on free trade agreements.

While aspects of trade policy can provide the opportunity to address other issues in a bilateral

relationship, free trade agreements are not generally the most effective or targeted tool to advance human rights issues.

Trade deals like the UK-GCC FTA will be aligned with the trade and industrial strategies, to bring prosperity to communities across the country and fulfil our mission of securing the highest sustained growth in the G7.

Trade Competitiveness

Asked by *Lord Taylor of Warwick*

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to ensure the UK remains an attractive destination for businesses. [HL824]

Baroness Jones of Whitchurch: We are committed to ensuring the UK remains a leading destination for companies to invest and do business. The International Investment Summit in October will showcase our commitment to partnering with global businesses to secure the investment we need for growth. We are answering investors' calls for stability and predictability with our new Industrial Strategy, providing long-term confidence to invest. The National Wealth Fund will bring together key institutions to offer compelling propositions to investors.

Trade Promotion

Asked by *Lord Macpherson of Earl's Court*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they will make a statement on the future of the system of Prime Minister's trade envoys. [HL659]

Baroness Jones of Whitchurch: We are carefully considering the Prime Minister's Trade Envoy programme in the context of the new Government's trade objectives. We will update the house in due course on the programme's future.

Trains: Wheelchairs

Asked by *Lord Berkeley*

To ask His Majesty's Government which types of passenger train operating on which routes allow wheelchair users to board and alight without assistance. [HL573]

Lord Henty of Richmond Hill: There are a number of classes of rolling stock currently in use, or being introduced into service, that feature lower floors and retractable steps to fill gaps between the train and the platform.

The units are Class 745 and Class 755 operating on routes with Greater Anglia, Class 231 and Class 756 operating on routes with Transport for Wales, and Class 777 on routes with Merseyrail.

Transport

Asked by *Baroness Randerson*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they have any plans to introduce a National Transport Strategy. [HL898]

Lord Henty of Richmond Hill: The Government will develop a long-term strategy for transport, as laid out in our manifesto. This strategy will set out the Government's vision and plan for delivering a modern and integrated transport system which better meets the needs of people across the country.

Treasury: Equality

Asked by *Lord Farmer*

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Baroness Sherlock on 7 August (HL344), how many staff in (1) the Treasury, (2) HM Revenue and Customs, and (3) Valuation Office Agency, are permitted to undertake diversity-related network time during core working hours; what is the percentage of overall working time they are permitted to spend on such network activity; how many hours are allocated in total; what are the names of each of the networks being funded; and what plans they have to (a) increase, or (b) reduce, such funding. [HL1114]

Lord Livermore: HMT has eight diversity networks:

- i) Carers Network
- ii) Disability Action Group, incorporating the Neurodiversity Network
- iii) Ethnic Diversity Network
- iv) Faith and Belief Network incorporating Christian Fellowship, Treasury Jewish Network and Treasury Muslim Network
- v) LGBT* Network
- vi) Social Mobility Network
- vii) Treasury All Ages Network
- viii) Women in the Treasury

HMRC has seven Diversity Networks:

- i) Carers
- ii) Disability
- iii) PRISM
- iv) Race
- v) Religion or Belief
- vi) Sex and Gender
- vii) Social Mobility

The Valuation Office Agency (VOA) has seven Diversity & Inclusion (D&I) networks:

- i) Carers
- ii) Disability
- iii) Gender
- iv) Faith & Belief

- v) LGBTQ+ allies
- vi) Race
- vii) Social Mobility

It is expected that staff manage any network activity they engage in without detriment to their role. These networks are not centrally funded.

Tree Planting

Asked by Lord Kemsell

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they have a target for how many trees should be planted in England during the current Parliament; and, if so, what is the target. [HL715]

Baroness Hayman of Ullock: We remain committed to the statutory target to increase tree canopy and woodland cover in England to 16.5% by 2050. We have announced a rapid review of the Environmental Improvement Plan and will introduce a new, statutory plan to protect and restore our natural environment and to deliver our ambitious targets to save nature.

Asked by Lord Roborough

To ask His Majesty's Government what consideration they have given to requiring the Forestry Commission to increase the number of tree species supported for new planting in order to increase the resilience of forests to climate change. [HL995]

Baroness Hayman of Ullock: The UK Forestry Standard (UKFS) supports both coniferous and broadleaf woodlands. The latest update to the UKFS will come into force on 1 October 2024. All afforestation projects in England should conform to the UKFS requirements to ensure that the right trees are being planted in the right place and version five does not allow a single species to constitute more than 65% of a new forest. Primary and secondary forestry species, as defined by Forest Research, are eligible for funding through the England Woodland Creation Offer; in addition, emerging forestry species can constitute up to 15% of the trees planted although this element will be screened to ensure they are appropriate to the site and local wildlife, and their planting sites are recorded.

Trifluoromethane

Asked by Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the extent to which the release of trifluoromethane (HFC-23) from manufacturing and other processes within the UK is being prevented in line with the 2016 Kigali Amendment to the Montreal Protocol; and what steps they are taking internationally to support and move towards such measures being taken around the world. [HL784]

Baroness Hayman of Ullock: HFC-23 emissions in the UK are reported annually in the National Greenhouse Gas

Emissions Inventory submitted to the UNFCCC and have been assessed to be insignificant (~0.0MtCO₂e) for all reported years since 2010. Since 2012, HFC-23 emissions have represented less than 0.1% of the UK's territorial HFC emissions.

As a donor country to the Montreal Protocol's Multilateral Fund, the UK provides financial support for developing countries to comply with their Kigali Amendment obligations, including those regarding HFC-23.

Truancy

Asked by Lord Laming

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to reduce the number of children who frequently fail to attend school. [HL648]

Baroness Smith of Malvern: This government has been clear that absence from school is a key barrier to overcome, because if pupils are not attending school they cannot benefit from good teaching and learning.

Thanks to the efforts of the sector, there are more learners in school almost every day this year compared to last. However, with 1.6 million children still persistently absent, missing 10% of lessons or more, poor attendance remains a major challenge.

That is why the department will work with the sector to bring breakfast clubs to all primary schools, so that every child is in on time and ready to learn. The department will also introduce new annual Ofsted reviews of safeguarding, attendance, and off-rolling. The department will also tackle mental health issues among young people by providing access to specialist mental health professionals in every school.

This is in addition to activity to support schools and local authorities to tackle the school absence challenge. This includes:

- Setting clear expectations for schools, trusts and local authorities to provide a 'support first' approach: the 'Working together to improve school attendance' guidance requires schools, trusts and local authorities to work together to tackle absence and became statutory in August 2024. For those facing complex barriers to attendance, schools are asked to have sensitive conversations with children and families and work with them to put support in place for their individual needs. This guidance is attached and can be viewed here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-improve-school-attendance>.
- Supporting schools and local authorities to use data to target interventions: schools and local authorities can access an attendance data tool to identify and intervene where pupils are at risk of persistent absence. Sharing of attendance data has also become mandatory for all schools.
- Attendance mentors operating in five local authorities with high absence levels.

- 31 attendance hubs across the country, sharing best practice across the sector.

Wider measures such as the pupil premium, the special educational needs and disabilities and alternative provision improvement plan, and the holiday activities and food programme also benefit attendance.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

Working together to improve school attendance [HL648 - Working together to improve school attendance guidance.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:
<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2024-09-02/HL648>

Tuna: Quotas

Asked by *Lord Roborough*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the current quota for landing bluefin tuna in the light of the success of the species in UK territorial waters. [HL997]

Baroness Hayman of Ullock: The UK Government has been actively assessing and adjusting the quota for landing eastern Atlantic bluefin tuna (BFT), reflecting the species' resurgence in UK waters. As an independent member of the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT), in 2023 the UK received a quota of 65 tonnes, which was an increase from previous years. This quota was divided to support both commercial and tag and release scientific fisheries, with 39 tonnes used for a small-scale trial commercial fishery.

In 2024, the UK quota is 66 tonnes. Sixteen tonnes are being used for recreational fishing and 39 tonnes for the continued trial commercial fishery. The remaining quota is being used for commercial bycatch and tagging programmes.

Decisions on how the quota is used have been made to ensure that BFT fisheries meet our international commitments, contribute to delivering Fisheries Act 2020 objectives, and reflect stakeholder interests including both the commercial and recreational sectors. In 2023, Defra commissioned an evaluation of UK BFT fisheries. The report has been published here: [Impact Evaluation of Bluefin Tuna Quota Allocation - MF0740 \(defra.gov.uk\)](#). Defra is continuing to evaluate the social, economic, and environmental impacts of UK BFT fisheries in 2024.

Any changes to the future UK BFT quota will depend on whether the Total Allowable Catch (TAC) established by ICCAT increases or decreases (the next TAC will be established in 2025 for the years 2026-2028) and on the outcomes of ongoing negotiations on quota shares at ICCAT.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

Impact Evaluation of BFT quota allocation [HL997 attachment.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:
<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2024-09-11/HL997>

UK Internal Trade: Northern Ireland

Asked by *Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of barriers to trade presented by the "Not for EU" labelling scheme including whether the labelling requirements make UK products appear inferior to consumers. [HL901]

Baroness Hayman of Ullock: Not for EU' labelling is a requirement of the Windsor Framework and does not represent a change in standards of production and quality. Defra works closely with the agri-food sector to support them with labelling requirements and to ensure the continued supply of goods into Northern Ireland. The previous Government consulted on the proposal to extend the 'Not for EU' labelling requirement across Great Britain. This Government is carefully considering the evidence provided and no legislation to give effect to these arrangements has yet been taken forward.

UK Research and Innovation

Asked by *Viscount Camrose*

To ask His Majesty's Government how they intend to support the UKRI Metascience Unit. [HL872]

Lord Vallance of Balham: As part of the Government's response to the Nurse Landscape Review, the Department of Science Innovation and Technology and UK Research and Innovation Metascience Unit was established in late 2023 with an initial £10m commitment from Financial Year 2024-25 to support a range of activity from research grants to in-house experiments on UKRI's processes. The Metascience Unit recently launched their first funding call, with up to £2m co-funding from US-based foundation Open Philanthropy, bringing the total call size to £5m.

UK Shared Prosperity Fund

Asked by *Lord Hutton of Furness*

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have for the future of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund. [HL710]

Baroness Taylor of Stevenage: Decisions on funding post March 2025 are a matter for the Budget on October 30th.

We recognise the challenges this brings for some projects. We are working closely with local authorities and key stakeholders to ensure a smooth transition to future funding, so communities continue to benefit from this vital support. In the meantime, officials remain available to discuss any issues impacting delivery.

UK Trade with EU

Asked by **Baroness Neville-Rolfe**

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made regarding whether the third stage of the Border Operating Model is on schedule to operate effectively and efficiently and without causing disruption; and what representations they have received from businesses on the third stage commencement and implementation of the Border Operating Model. [HL980]

Lord Livermore: The UK currently applies a waiver for goods coming from the EU from Safety & Security (ENS) declarations. The Government will provide an update in due course on the plans for safety and security requirements and HMRC will carry out technical engagement accordingly.

UK-EU Trade and Co-operation Agreement

Asked by **Lord Empey**

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to raise issues pertaining to the terms and operation of the Windsor Framework in their discussions with the European Union as part of the upcoming review of the Trade and Cooperation Agreement. [HL595]

Baroness Twycross: In its manifesto, the Government set out its commitment to implementing the Windsor Framework and protecting the UK internal market – as well as improving the UK's trade relationship with the EU. The Government will continue to have regular and constructive dialogue with the EU on a wide variety of matters, including the Windsor Framework.

Undocumented Migrants: English Channel

Asked by **Lord Sharpe of Epsom**

To ask His Majesty's Government how many asylum seekers have arrived illegally in the UK by small boats since 5 July; and what is the breakdown of those arrivals by (1) nationality, (2) gender, and (3) age. [HL1088]

Lord Hanson of Flint: The Home Office publishes daily small boat arrival figures in the 'Small boat activity in the English Channel' transparency release on gov.uk; however, this includes all small boat arrivals, not just those who have claimed asylum.

The Home Office also publishes statistics on small boat arrivals to the UK in the 'Irregular migration to the UK statistics' release on gov.uk. Data on asylum applications from small boat arrivals, by nationality, sex, and age, is published in table Irr_D02 of the 'Irregular migration to the UK detailed datasets', with the latest data up to the end of June 2024. Data on asylum applications from small boat arrivals for July to September 2024 will be published in November 2024.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

Irregular Migration Datasets [irregular-migration-to-the-UK-detailed-dataset-year-ending-jun-2024.xlsx]

The material can be viewed online at:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2024-09-12/HL1088>

Asked by **Lord Taylor of Warwick**

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the increasing number of migrant deaths when attempting to cross the English Channel. [HL772]

Lord Hanson of Flint: Channel crossing attempts by migrants in small boats have always been lethally dangerous, with the Channel being a very busy shipping lane. The first recorded fatalities occurred in August 2019. Since the start of 2024, there have been 12 fatal incidents involving the deaths of 37 people. Crossings are getting more and more dangerous as time goes on, with the danger and the risk rising as quality of boats deteriorates and more people are crammed on board.

The 'vessels' used to make these crossings are not of commercial manufacture. They are poorly constructed, from cheap and flimsy materials, are unseaworthy, underpowered, and lack safety equipment. They founder frequently, and for each fatal incident there are plenty of other near misses where boats have begun to deflate and people have gone in the water.

The criminal gangs who facilitate these crossings have no interest in the welfare of their clients, only in the pursuit of profit. It is for this reason that boats are increasingly seen to be overcrowded, with the most vulnerable packed into the middle of the boat where crushing and other injuries, such as fuel burns, become more likely.

We are working closely with the French to reduce the risk to life from these crossings and with partners across Europe to bring the evil people smuggling gangs to justice.

Universal Credit: Disqualification

Asked by **Baroness Lister of Burtersett**

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of any disparities in Universal Credit sanctioning between ethnic groups between April 2023 and April 2024, and the reasons for such disparities. [HL721]

Baroness Sherlock: Statistics on the ethnic group of those who have received a Universal Credit (UC) adverse sanction decision from April 2023 to April 2024, are available in section 4.2 of the latest release of the Benefit Sanction Statistics publication and in table 7.1 on the latest data tables on the GOV.UK website.

However, these statistics are descriptive and as such do not facilitate consideration of disparities. To measure any disparities would require analysis of the sanction rate,

which is calculated by dividing the number of claimants undergoing a sanction by the number of UC claimants who are in conditionality regimes where sanctions can be applied, at a point in time.

The level of ethnicity declarations for those claimants included within the sanction rate measure, which would be needed to assess any disparities, has not reached the minimum level of 70% in any month. The Department will continue to monitor the level of ethnicity declarations in relation to the sanction rate with the goal of publishing statistics on sanction rate and ethnicity once the 70% threshold is reached.

Universities: Finance

Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to ensure that universities remain and do not close down despite financial difficulties. [HL733]

Baroness Smith of Malvern: The department is committed to creating a secure future for our world-leading universities so they can deliver for students, taxpayers, workers and the economy. The government has already started reviewing options to deliver a more robust higher education (HE) sector but it will take time to get it right.

Sir David Behan has been appointed as interim Chair of the Office for Students (OfS) to oversee the important work of refocusing their role to concentrate on key priorities, including prioritising the financial stability of the HE sector.

However, the government recognises the immediate financial strain that some providers are under and is working closely with the OfS to monitor any risks and to ensure students' best interests are protected.

Ultimately, HE providers are independent from the government and therefore it is their responsibility to ensure they have a sustainable business model.

Asked by Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the financial state of universities; and what steps they are taking to address issues in this regard. [HL789]

Baroness Smith of Malvern: The Office for Students (OfS), the independent regulator of Higher Education (HE) in England, publishes an annual report on the financial health of the HE sector.

The OfS' most recent report, published in May 2024, showed that the financial position of the HE sector has become increasingly challenging. The report can be found at:

<https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/media/ly1buqlj/financial-sustainability-report2024.pdf>, as attached.

The government recognises the immediate financial strain that some providers are under, and the department is working closely with the OfS to monitor any risks to

ensure there are robust plans in place to mitigate them. Sir David Behan has been appointed as interim Chair of the OfS to oversee the important work of refocusing their role to concentrate on key priorities, including prioritising the financial stability of the HE sector.

This government is committed to creating a secure future for our world-leading universities so they can deliver for students, taxpayers, workers and the economy. This government has already started reviewing options to deliver a more robust HE sector, but we recognise it will take time to get it right.

Ultimately, HE providers are independent from government and therefore it is their responsibility to ensure they have a sustainable business model.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

HL789_attachment
[HL789_Financial_sustainability_report_2024.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2024-09-05/HL789>

Universities: Health

Asked by Lord Stevens of Birmingham

To ask His Majesty's Government which scientific criteria they apply in deciding whether an educational institution can describe itself as a Health Sciences University; whether these criteria could apply to an institution teaching homeopathy and other alternative therapies; and which peer-reviewed research or externally-assessed teaching the Office for Students relied upon in deciding to allow the Anglo-European College of Chiropractic and University College of Osteopathy to rebrand themselves as the Health Sciences University. [HL695]

Baroness Smith of Malvern: When a provider requests to change its name, a strict criteria and assessment process is followed. The provider will already have undergone considerable scrutiny when being awarded Degree Awarding Powers (DAPs), including input from quality experts, drawn from the sector, to test the provider against multiple criteria. Indefinite DAP's status is the main eligibility test for providers to be able to go through the title process.

In this instance, the provider gained degree awarding powers in 2016 and so was able to apply for university title as per the rules set out in the Office for Students' (OfS) 'Regulatory advice 13: how to apply for university college and university title', which is attached and also available at:

<https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/regulatory-advice-13-how-to-apply-for-university-college-and-university-title/#:~:text=and%20university%20title-,Regulatory%20advice%2013%3A%20How%20to%20apply%20for%20university%20college%20and,as%20part%20of%20their%20name.>

The department and the OfS were notified in September 2023 regarding the provider changing its name. When considering the proposed new name for a provider, the OfS must have due regard to the need to avoid names that are, or may be, confusing. In addition, in the instance of the newly named Health Sciences University, the OfS operated an open consultation on the proposed name. This ran from 22 February 2024 to 21 March 2024, and determined the regulator's final decision. The OfS approach is set out in their case report 'Approval of proposed new name for AECC University College - Office for Students', which is attached and can also be found at:

<https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/approval-of-proposed-new-name-for-aecc-university-college/>.

In addition to the OfS process, regulations brought into force under the Companies Act 2006 means that the department has responsibility for confirming that it has no objection to the use of the sensitive word 'university' in a business name. The OfS published approval of the proposed new name from 'AECC University College' to 'Health Sciences University' in July 2024. The department then considered the request from the provider to change its name to 'Health Sciences University' and was satisfied that the use of the word 'university' was appropriate in this context. The department had no objection to the use of the term 'university' in the proposed business name 'Health Sciences University' and issued the provider with a non-objection letter on 18 July 2024.

During this consultation the OfS did not receive any responses questioning the merit of the subject area(s) of the provider.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

Approval of proposed new name for AECC University
[Approval_proposed_new_name_aecc_university_college.pdf]

Regulatory advice 13: how to apply for university
[Regulatory_advice_13_how_to_apply_for_university_college_and_university_title.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:
<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2024-09-02/HL695>

Universities: Research

Asked by **Baroness Crawley**

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to review the Research Excellence Framework process for universities, and whether they plan to replace it with a less onerous and more cost-effective process. [HL878]

Lord Vallance of Balham: The next research assessment exercise, REF2029, will be completed in 2029. It is led by Research England and the Devolved Funding Bodies in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. These funding bodies are engaging with the sector to

lighten the bureaucratic burden wherever possible, for example by using existing data sets.

DSIT recognises the need to reduce bureaucracy across the research system as much as possible. The department is working with the sector and funders to achieve this.

Urban Areas: Finance

Asked by **Baroness Scott of Bybrook**

To ask His Majesty's Government whether all 75 towns that have been chosen to receive £20 million of funding through the Long-term Plan for Towns, including Harlow, will receive the full amount; and if so, when. [HL822]

Baroness Taylor of Stevenage: The government has inherited an extremely difficult fiscal environment and has a responsibility to fix the foundations of our economy, to ensure economic stability.

The department will set out further details on next steps and confirmation of the revised timelines in due course.

Veterans

Asked by **Baroness Hoey**

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to put the posts of the four Veterans Commissioners on a statutory footing; and on what timescale. [HL844]

Lord Coaker: Veterans' Commissioners are currently appointed by Ministers. The Ministry of Defence, through the Office for Veterans' Affairs, continues to work closely with the Veterans' Commissioner for Wales (VCfW), and the Scottish Veterans' Commissioner (SVC), who is appointed by and reports to the Scottish Government (SG). The Northern Ireland Office (NIO) is working through the next steps to appoint a new Northern Ireland Veterans' Commissioner.

Visas: Arts

Asked by **The Earl of Clancarty**

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to negotiate a visa-waiver agreement with the EU that allows UK artists and support staff to work in any part of the EU for up to 90 days in a period of 180 days. [HL1105]

Asked by **The Earl of Clancarty**

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to negotiate bilateral agreements for work permits with individual EU member states which do not currently offer cultural exemptions for work of up to 90 days. [HL1106]

Baroness Twycross: The Government is committed to working collaboratively across departments to address the issue of musicians, performing artists and their support staff being able to tour across the EU. We will engage

with the new European Commission and EU Member States, and explore how best to improve arrangements for touring across the European continent without a return to free movement. Our priority remains ensuring that UK artists can continue to thrive on the global stage.

Visas: Families and Married People

Asked by The Lord Bishop of Manchester

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have, if any, to increase the minimum income threshold for applications for a (1) spousal, and (2) family, visa. [HL660]

Lord Hanson of Flint: To help ensure we reach the right balance and have a solid evidence base for any change, the Home Secretary has announced her intention to commission the Migration Advisory Committee (MAC) to review the financial requirements in the Family Immigration Rules. The government will consider their recommendations before making any changes.

Visas: Married People

Asked by The Lord Bishop of St Albans

To ask His Majesty's Government whether it remains their policy to increase the minimum income for spouse/partner visas to £38,700 by 2025. [HL1087]

Lord Hanson of Flint: The Home Secretary has commissioned the Migration Advisory Committee (MAC) to review the financial requirements in the Family Immigration Rules. Conducting a review of the financial requirements across the family routes will ensure we have a clear and consistent system.

There will be no changes to the current threshold of £29,000, or the ways in which the Minimum Income Requirement can be met, until the MAC review is complete.

Visas: Seasonal Workers

Asked by Baroness O'Grady of Upper Holloway

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they have taken to ensure that all seasonal worker scheme operators have complied with the requirement that all workers must receive a minimum of 32 hours' pay for each week of their stay in the UK; and what plans they have, if any, to investigate scheme operator practice to ensure compliance with this requirement. [HL1077]

Lord Hanson of Flint: The Home Office has a designated Seasonal Worker Scheme (SWS) team that regularly conducts visits to individual farms employing seasonal migrant workers. Checks are undertaken to ensure workers are offered a minimum of 32 hours employment per week and are paid at the appropriate rates.

Scheme operators that are responsible for the recruitment of the migrant workers are obliged to retain

records of working hours and wages and these are inspected annually by sponsorship compliance officers. If discrepancies are discovered, then the SWS team will commence action against the respective scheme operator. This can include suspension or revocation of an operator's licence.

From March 2023 to date, 241 farm visits have been conducted and 1,700 migrant workers interviewed. We will continue to consider how best to tackle labour exploitation in the Seasonal Worker Scheme.

Asked by Baroness O'Grady of Upper Holloway

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the revocation of Ethero's licence as a scheme operator under the seasonal worker visa scheme, whether that company still holds a Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority licence; and if so, what plans they have to review that licence. [HL1078]

Lord Hanson of Flint: Ethero still hold a GLAA licence and the GLAA are considering appropriate measures in light of the revocation.

War Crimes: Occupied Territories

Asked by Lord Godson

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they have granted the war crimes team within the Metropolitan Police Service a general power proactively to investigate alleged war crimes in the Occupied Territories, or whether that team only investigates such allegations following specific requests by the International Criminal Court in accordance with the International Criminal Courts Act 2001. [HL959]

Lord Collins of Highbury: The Counter Terrorism Policing (CTP) War Crimes Team, hosted by SO15, is a small team that has national responsibility for investigating war crimes and crimes against humanity. It is funded directly by CTP and operates across the UK. The CTP War Crimes Team, which is hosted within the Met's Counter Terrorism Command, has received around 170 referrals relating to the ongoing Israel-Hamas conflict since 7 October. It would not be appropriate to comment on the specific nature of each and every referral, or the referrer, but each case is reviewed in line with War Crimes/Crimes Against Humanity Referral Guidelines, jointly agreed by police and the Crown Prosecution Service. The operational independence of policing is integral to this process. At this time, there is no UK-based investigation into any matters relating to this particular conflict.

Water Companies: Nationalisation

Asked by Baroness Jones of Moulsecoomb

To ask His Majesty's Government why compensation to shareholders would be required for a water Company in the Special Administration Regime, if they decided that public ownership was a necessary

precondition of environmental and public health regulations being met. [HL801]

Baroness Hayman of Ullock: A Special Administration Regime (SAR) is not a form of renationalisation. It is a tool to ensure vital public services continue to be provided after a company fails.

Compensation for shareholders is not a requirement for placing a company into a SAR.

Asked by Baroness Jones of Moulsecoomb

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Baroness Hayman of Ullock on 8 August (HL429), what assessment they have made of the changes that have taken place since the publication of The cost of nationalising the water industry in England by the Social Market Foundation on 5 February 2018, and the impact of these changes on the cost of compensation to stakeholders. [HL845]

Baroness Hayman of Ullock: If the whole water industry was nationalised, share- and debt-holders would need to be compensated, which could cost over an estimated £99 billion. This is based on Ofwat's Regulatory Capital Value (RCV) 2024 figures for companies in England and Wales. This figure is higher than the Social Market Foundation's 2018 estimates because the industry's RCV has grown over the past six years, following new investment in infrastructure and RPI inflation.

Given the significant costs attached, the Government has no intention to nationalise water companies. It would take years to unpick the current ownership model, during which time the sector's issues would only get worse. The Government instead wants to tackle the situation as quickly as possible by improving the privatised regulated model.

That is why, alongside providing the regulators new powers to take tougher and faster action through the Water (Special Measures) Bill, the Government has also announced a full review of the water system. This will shape further legislation that will fundamentally transform how the current system works and clean up our rivers, lakes and seas for good.

Water Supply: Colne Valley

Asked by Baroness Jones of Moulsecoomb

To ask His Majesty's Government whether the 30-day constant rate water quality trial, conducted at the Blackford public water source in South Harefield in April and May by Affinity Water Ltd and HS2 Ltd, found any construction-related changes to the water quality at that site, prior to plans to restart abstraction at Blackford pumping station. [HL639]

Baroness Hayman of Ullock: The Environment Agency is aware of the trial at the Blackford public water source in South Harefield in April and May, however, the Environment Agency has not yet seen the results. Affinity

Water expect to finalise the trial's report in October and the Environment Agency expects to see it then. Any action carried out by the Environment Agency will be dependent upon the result of the trial. The Environment Agency continues to provide advice and guidance to both Affinity Water and HS2 Ltd.

West of England Line

Asked by Lord Patten

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the effects of there being only one railway line between Salisbury and Yeovil on (1) the travelling public and (2) the carriage of goods. [HL1080]

Lord Henty of Richmond Hill: We are aware of the issues between Salisbury and Yeovil and the lack of resilience due to the nature of this single line. Department officials continue to work with the South Western Railway and Network Rail in providing as much resilience as possible, including by increasing the Operator management resource tasked specifically to look at West of England line issues.

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 rail freight. Currently freight only operates between Salisbury and Worting Junction (Basingstoke).

There is no freight operation between Salisbury and Yeovil Junction. Network Rail is working with stakeholders and industry partners to understand the capacity and performance issues on the West of England Line and identify how these can be mitigated.

Wills

Asked by Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay

To ask His Majesty's Government when they intend to respond to the consultation on the storage and retention of wills and other documents submitted in applications for probate which closed on 23 February; and what steps they have taken to ensure that no such documents have been destroyed in the meantime. [HL894]

Lord Ponsonby of Shulbrede: The response to the consultation will be published shortly.

No wills or other defined documents have been destroyed. The consultation sought views on changes to modernise the storage of documents submitted in applications for probate. If the Government did decide to proceed with the proposal in the consultation no documents would be destroyed without Parliament agreeing to legislative changes.

Windrush Compensation Scheme

Asked by **Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth**

To ask His Majesty's Government how many claims for compensation under the Windrush Compensation Scheme remain outstanding; and when they expect to settle the remaining claims. [HL788]

Lord Hanson of Flint: The requested information can be found on Tab WCS_05 of Windrush Compensation Scheme data: July 2024 - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk) released on 29 August 2024. As at end of July 2024, 856 compensation claims were in the Work in Progress category.

We will ensure the victims of the appalling Windrush scandal have their voices heard and the compensation scheme is run effectively, with a new Windrush Commissioner.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

Tab WCS_05 of Windrush Compensation Scheme data [windrush-compensation-scheme-data-tables-jul-2024.xlsx]

The material can be viewed online at:
<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2024-09-05/HL788>

Wines: Excise Duties

Asked by **Lord Moynihan**

To ask His Majesty's Government what consideration they have given to either (1) extending, or (2) making permanent, the wine temporary easement period in order to meet the core principles outlined in The new alcohol duty system consultation, which ran from 27 October 2021 to 30 January 2022, to make the alcohol duty system (a) simpler, (b) more economically rational, and (c) less administratively burdensome. [HL849]

Asked by **Lord Moynihan**

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of challenges of producing wine which is accurately and predictably within a range of 0.5 per cent alcohol by volume (ABV) for the purposes of taxation, given that wine is an agricultural product and dependent on weather; and what assessment they have made of the impact of introducing alcohol duty bands of 0.5 per cent ABV on (1) businesses, and (2) the consumer. [HL850]

Asked by **Lord Moynihan**

To ask His Majesty's Government how the proposed increase in the number of taxation bands for wine will reduce the administrative burden on the wine trade, as outlined in the consultation The new alcohol duty system, which ran from 27 October 2021 to 30 January 2022. [HL852]

Lord Livermore: The Chancellor and Exchequer Secretary regularly receive representations on the tax

system from a wide range of stakeholders and welcome their views.

The current, temporary duty easement for wine is due to end on 1 February 2025.

Wines: Packaging

Asked by **Lord Moynihan**

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to support the wine industry with the added cost of packaging required as part of the Extended Producer Responsibility Scheme; and how much they expect the scheme to add to a 750ml wine bottle in addition to (1) the additional duty in 2023, and (2) further duties resulting from the new wine duty regime to be introduced in 2025. [HL851]

Baroness Hayman of Ullock: The Government is committed to supporting the wine industry and ensuring the UK has a thriving and diverse economy to drive growth.

The Government published illustrative base fees in August 2024 to support industry with their readiness in advance of the Extended Producer Responsibility for packaging (pEPR) scheme being implemented from next year.

Producers can use these illustrative base fees to begin understanding their estimated pEPR costs. These are not the final fees; they are our initial estimate, based on the best evidence available. Government intends to publish refined figures for the illustrative base fees by the end of September 2024.

Final fee rates for the first year of EPR for packaging (2025/26) will be released in summer 2025, following the 1 April 2025 deadline to submit packaging totals supplied by registered producers for the preceding calendar year.

The pEPR will contribute to Government's mission to transition Britain to a circular economy and will work alongside the wine industry to meet this aim.

Winter Fuel Payment

Asked by **Lord Foulkes of Cumnock**

To ask His Majesty's Government what measures they propose to help the poorest pensioners who will lose their winter fuel allowance. [HL604]

Baroness Sherlock: Over the next five years we expect over 12 million pensioners are likely to see their State Pensions increase by thousands of pounds as a result of our commitment to the Triple Lock.

We are providing support for pensioners through our Warm Homes Plan which will support investment in insulation and low carbon heating – upgrading millions of homes over this Parliament. Our long-term plan will protect billpayers permanently, reduce fuel poverty, and get the UK back on track to meet our climate goals.

The Household Support Fund is also being extended for a further six months, from 1 October 2024 until 31 March

2025. An additional £421 million will be provided to enable the extension of the HSF in England, plus funding for the Devolved Governments through the Barnett formula to be spent at their discretion, as usual.

The Warm Home Discount scheme in England and Wales provides eligible low-income households across Great Britain with a £150 rebate on their electricity bill. This winter, we expect over three million households, including over one million pensioners, to benefit under the scheme.

We know there are low-income pensioners who aren't claiming Pension Credit, and we urge those people to apply. This will passport them to receive Winter Fuel Payment alongside other benefits – hundreds of pounds that could really help them. We will ensure that the poorest pensioners get the support they need.

Asked by Lord Foulkes of Cumnock

To ask His Majesty's Government what is their assessment of the proposals from (1) Age UK, and (2) Martin Lewis, to mitigate the losses faced by the poorest pensioners who will lose their winter fuel allowance. [HL605]

Baroness Sherlock: Over the course of this Parliament we expect over 12 million pensioners are likely to see their new State Pensions increase by £1700 as a result of our commitment to the Triple Lock.

We are also providing support through our Warm Homes Plan which pensioners will benefit from. This will support investment in insulation and low carbon heating – upgrading millions of homes over this Parliament. Our long-term plan will protect billpayers permanently, reduce fuel poverty, and get the UK back on track to meet our climate goals.

The Warm Home Discount scheme in England and Wales provides eligible low-income households across Great Britain with a £150 rebate on their electricity bill. This winter, we expect over three million households, including over one million pensioners, to benefit under the scheme.

The Household Support Fund is also being extended for a further six months, from 1 October 2024 until 31 March 2025. An additional £421 million will be provided to enable the extension of the HSF in England, plus funding for the Devolved Governments through the Barnett formula to be spent at their discretion, as usual.

With regards to the suggestion that Winter Fuel Payments are paid to pensioners according to their council tax band, this would not be possible as my Department does not hold data on people's council tax banding. Additionally council tax band is not always an accurate reflection of someone's income.

We know there are low-income pensioners who aren't claiming Pension Credit, and we urge those people to apply. This will passport them to receive Winter Fuel Payment alongside other benefits – hundreds of pounds that could really help them. We will ensure that the poorest pensioners get the support they need.

Asked by Lord Kempson

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the potential health and social care impacts of the proposed loss of winter fuel payments. [HL712]

Baroness Sherlock: The Government is committed to a preventative approach to public health. Keeping people warm and well at home and improving the quality of new and existing homes will play an essential part in enabling people to live longer, healthier lives and reducing pressures on the NHS.

Our continued commitment to the triple lock means the full new state pension is forecast to increase by a further £1,700 over this course of the parliament.

The Household Support Fund is also being extended for a further six months, from 1 October 2024 until 31 March 2025. An additional £421 million will be provided to enable the extension of the HSF in England, plus funding for the Devolved Governments through the Barnett formula to be spent at their discretion, as usual.

The Warm Home Discount scheme in England and Wales provides eligible low-income households across Great Britain with a £150 rebate on their electricity bill. This winter, we expect over three million households, including over one million pensioners, to benefit under the scheme.

We are also providing support through our Warm Homes Plan which pensioners will benefit from. This will support investment in insulation and low carbon heating – upgrading millions of homes over this Parliament. Our long-term plan will protect billpayers permanently, reduce fuel poverty, and get the UK back on track to meet our climate goals.

Asked by Lord McCrea of Magherafelt and Cookstown

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact on pensioners of the withdrawal of the Winter Fuel Allowance. [HL804]

Baroness Sherlock: Winter Fuel Payments will continue to be paid to pensioner households with someone receiving Pension Credit or certain other income-related benefits. They will continue to be worth £200 for eligible households, or £300 for eligible households with someone aged 80 and over.

Immediate support for pensioners includes our commitment to the Triple Lock, with over 12 million pensioners set to benefit through the course of this parliament, with the full yearly rate of the new State Pensions forecast to increase by around £1700.

We know there are low-income pensioners who aren't claiming Pension Credit, and we urge those people to apply. This will passport them to receive Winter Fuel Payment alongside other benefits – hundreds of pounds that could really help them. The government will work with external partners and local authorities to boost the uptake of Pension Credit and to target additional support

to the poorest pensioners. We will ensure that the poorest pensioners get the support they need.

We are also providing support for pensioners through our Warm Homes Plan which will support investment in insulation and low carbon heating – upgrading millions of homes over this Parliament. Our long-term plan will protect billpayers permanently, reduce fuel poverty, and get the UK back on track to meet our climate goals.

The Household Support Fund is also being extended for a further six months, from 1 October 2024 until 31 March 2025. An additional £421 million will be provided to enable the extension of the HSF in England, plus funding for the Devolved Governments through the Barnett formula to be spent at their discretion, as usual.

The Warm Home Discount scheme in England and Wales provides eligible low-income households across Great Britain with a £150 rebate on their electricity bill. This winter, we expect over three million households, including over one million pensioners, to benefit under the scheme.

Over the past two years, energy bills have fallen. Between 1 October to 31 December 2024 Ofgem's energy price cap is set at £1717 per year for a typical household. This means the price cap for October to December 2024 will be more than 5% lower (£117 less) than for October to December 2023.

Our other steps include cutting waiting times in the NHS which will help many pensioners currently waiting in pain and discomfort for treatment, and delivering the economic stability which is so crucial for pensioners.

Winter Fuel Payment: Pension Credit

Asked by Baroness Altmann

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact of removing Winter Fuel Payments, without further warning, on (1) pensioners whose incomes are a small amount above the Pension Credit threshold, and (2) those who are entitled to Pension Credit but do not claim it. [HL556]

Baroness Sherlock: The Department continues to maximise opportunities to promote Pension Credit and to raise awareness of its wider benefits and to encourage pensioners to apply. The department uses a range of creative media including TV, press, radio and social media to boost awareness of the benefit. We engage with stakeholders, including other Government Departments, Councils, and charities, to harness their help and support to raise awareness through their networks and channels.

The Government is ensuring pensioners are supported through our commitment to protect the Triple Lock, over 12 million pensioners will benefit, with many expected to see their new State Pension increase by around £1700 over the course of this Parliament.

Additionally, the Government will invest an extra £6.6 billion over this Parliament in clean heat and energy efficiency through the Warm Homes Plan, upgrading five

million homes through solutions like low carbon heating and improved insulation to reduce emissions and cut bills.

The Household Support Fund is also being extended for a further six months, from 1 October 2024 until 31 March 2025. An additional £421 million will be provided to enable the extension of the HSF in England, plus funding for the Devolved Governments through the Barnett formula to be spent at their discretion, as usual.

The Warm Home Discount scheme in England and Wales provides eligible low-income households across Great Britain with a £150 rebate on their electricity bill. This winter, we expect over three million households, including over one million pensioners, to benefit under the scheme.

Yazidis: Genocide

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the reports that evidence collected by the UN Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/ISIL is being shared with Kurdish authorities; whether doing so was in accordance with the consent of victims and survivors; and what risks were identified. [HL838]

Lord Collins of Highbury: UNITAD has collated and processed a considerable body of evidence of Daesh atrocities in Iraq since its establishment in 2017, facilitating accountability for Daesh/ISIL members for their crimes. Evidence collated by UNITAD can be shared with the Government of Iraq and Kurdistan Regional (Government), subject to certain provisions within UNITAD's Terms of Reference. Firstly, evidence that may lead to the application of the death penalty cannot be shared. Furthermore, the Terms of Reference for UNITAD contain explicit provisions around the responsible handling of evidence, including a requirement for informed consent from originators before evidence can be shared more widely.

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the UN Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/ISIL as it comes to the end of its mandate; and what arrangements have been agreed in relation to the evidence it has collected so far, in particular (1) where and how it will be stored, (2) how it will be used, and (3) what will happen to the evidence which has not been processed yet. [HL839]

Lord Collins of Highbury: The UK played a leading role in UNITAD's establishment. UNITAD has collated and processed considerable evidence of Daesh atrocities since its establishment in 2017. It has contributed significantly to addressing the legacy of Daesh in Iraq, including the generation of high-quality evidence which has supported trials in third countries, and capacity building of the Iraqi judicial system. The UK will

continue to work with Iraq and international partners to ensure that Daesh are held accountable for the crimes they have committed following the UNITAD's closure, and that international efforts to support survivor and minority communities continue.

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