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PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)

HOUSE OF LORDS

WRITTEN STATEMENTS AND WRITTEN ANSWERS

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

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Ministers and others who make Statements or answer Questions are referred to only by name, not their ministerial or other title. The current list of ministerial and other responsibilities is as follows.

<i>Minister</i>	<i>Responsibilities</i>
Baroness Smith of Basildon	Leader of the House of Lords and Lord Privy Seal
Lord Collins of Highbury	Deputy Leader of the House of Lords and Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, Whip
Baroness Anderson of Stoke-on Trent	Spokesperson for NI Office, Scotland Office and Wales Office, 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 Cryer	Whip
Lord Hanson of Flint	Minister of State, Home Office
Baroness Hayman of Ullock	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for 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, 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, Whip
Baroness Sherlock	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Work and Pensions
Baroness Smith of Cluny	Advocate-General for Scotland
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	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Culture Media and Sport, Spokesperson, Cabinet Office, 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

Thursday, 31 October 2024

Afghanistan

[HLWS177]

Lord Collins of Highbury: My honourable friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Middle East, North Africa, Afghanistan and Pakistan (Hamish Falconer) has today made the following statement:

Today, I am updating the House on the efforts the UK Government has made to support those most in need in Afghanistan. The future of this country continues to matter to the UK due to the risk of terrorism, illegal migration, the humanitarian and food security crisis, and appalling human rights situation, particularly for women and girls.

Afghanistan remains in humanitarian crisis. According to the United Nations, over 23 million people, more than half the population, require humanitarian assistance in 2024. The FCDO has provided support to the most vulnerable and marginalised people in Afghanistan. In financial year 2023/24, we provided a total of £113.5 million in overseas development assistance to Afghanistan. All UK funding was channelled through UN Agencies, non-governmental organisations and the Red Cross Movement. Through these partnerships last year, the UK Government supported access to humanitarian assistance for more than 2.7 million people, including providing assistance to prevent malnutrition to at least 1.5 million people. The UK also helped more than 1.4 million people, of whom over one million were women, to access essential health services. We aim to ensure that more than 50% of people reached with UK assistance are women or girls.

The government has repeatedly condemned the Taliban's repressive policies and behaviour. However, like many of our allies, we maintain a limited and pragmatic dialogue with the Taliban where it is in our national interest to do so. This process was started by the previous Conservative government. This engagement does not represent legitimisation of the Taliban's actions. We will continue to hold the Taliban to account for their actions, including on the rights of women and girls, counter terrorism, human rights and maintaining humanitarian aid access.

HMG officials have engaged with the Taliban to help protect the operating space for humanitarian partners in Afghanistan, pressing on priority issues such as counter terrorism and human rights, including the rights of women and girls. We have consistently underlined the need to ensure that women continue to play an active role in the humanitarian response to the crisis in Afghanistan, and can safely access assistance and provide feedback on the quality and appropriateness of the response. We will continue to push the Taliban on this issue, and ensure women and girls remain at the heart of our aid response.

Beyond immediate humanitarian needs, the UK Government is working with the international community to support longer-term basic services for the Afghan people, including health, education and livelihoods. Through our bilateral programmes, in 2023/24, at least 83,000 children (54,000 girls) were supported to access education and at least 466,000 children (310,000 girls) were fully immunised. In February 2024, with strong UK support, the World Bank Board endorsed the provision of grant finance from the World Bank's International Development Association to Afghanistan. This funding, to which the UK Government contributes, will deliver further health, livelihoods and education programming in Afghanistan through the World Bank's Afghanistan Resilience Trust Fund.

Through newly approved UK funding we will scale up livelihoods and agriculture programming to support vulnerable Afghans to grow more food, improve their income, and be more resilient to climate change, helping tackle the humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan in more sustainable ways. New UK investments in health and education, with a focus on women and girls, support wider goals to champion rights, equality and a healthier world.

In August, the Taliban passed a "vice and virtue" law imposing wide-ranging restrictions on Afghan women, men and children and the media, including effectively removing women from public spaces. The laws have attracted widespread international condemnation. As the Foreign Secretary has said, the exclusion of women from all aspects of public life is another tragic setback for Afghanistan and its people. Officials have directly pressed the Taliban to reverse this law and, alongside likeminded international partners, have lobbied senior Taliban officials emphasising that we consider the law a grotesque backwards step. We have also condemned the law publicly through the UN, including the Human Rights Council. We will continue to raise our serious concerns and press for the reversal of these restrictions.

We continue to engage with Afghan women and are committed to providing platforms for Afghan women to speak out, advocate for their full inclusion in society, and promote their rights. In August, the Minister for the Middle East, Afghanistan and Pakistan hosted a group of senior Afghan women leaders to hear their perspectives and discuss the inclusion of women in Afghanistan's future political process. In September the Minister delivered a speech to the All Afghan Women Summit in Tirana, emphasising the UK Government's continued support to Afghanistan and solidarity with Afghan women.

In September, the Afghan embassy in London closed following the dismissal of its staff by the State of Afghanistan. This decision was not made by the UK Government. In line with international law, specifically the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations, Afghanistan is responsible for the appointment and termination of staff at its embassies. The FCDO

recognises that the closure will create challenges for Afghan citizens in the UK who require consular services.

We continue to work constructively with parties inside and outside of Afghanistan for an Afghanistan at peace with itself, its neighbours, and the international community.

BAE Systems Barrow Incident

[HLWS174]

Lord Coaker: My right hon. Friend the Minister for Defence, Procurement and Industry (The Right Hon Maria Eagle) has made the following Written Ministerial Statement:

On 30 October 2024, there was a fire in a submarine construction facility, the Devonshire Dock Hall (DDH) at the submarine build yard, run by BAE Systems, in Barrow-in-Furness.

The fire started shortly after midnight on Wednesday morning. BAE Systems implemented their emergency response plan, which moved fully to the recovery phase at 1 pm the same day. I can confirm that at no point, was there any nuclear risk from this fire.

Seven BAE Systems personnel were taken to hospital following the initial fire as a precautionary measure and all have now been released.

Once the area has been made safe a formal fire investigation will take place to establish the root cause of the fire and the extent of the damage. Until this occurs it is too soon to give a precise assessment of what, if any, impact there will be on any BAE Systems capabilities or submarine build projects. Ministers continue to engage closely with BAE Systems.

Barrow is the historic home of submarine building in the UK and this government is committed to delivering the Plan for Barrow, creating economic opportunity and delivering the nuclear deterrent as part of our National Endeavour

I would like to make a special mention of the emergency services, including those of BAE Systems and Cumbria whose professionalism and highly effective response safeguarded the local population and helped put this fire out.

Civil Aviation Authority Annual Progress Report

[HLWS175]

Lord Henty of Richmond Hill: My Honourable Friend, the Parliamentary Under Secretary for Transport (Mike Kane), has made the following Ministerial Statement:

The Airspace Modernisation Strategy (AMS) refresh, published on 23 January 2023, sets out, through nine elements, the ways and means of modernising airspace, focussing on the period until the end of 2040.

The Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) must report to the Secretary of State annually on the delivery of the AMS, through an annual Progress Report. This report details the progress made by industry, as well as work the CAA have conducted against each of the AMS's elements. For 2022, the Progress Report reports on the previous AMS's 15 initiatives.

In total, six of the 15 initiatives are assessed as 'requiring attention', two are on track, one has been implemented and six initiatives have been assessed as having 'major issues'.

The Department is working with the CAA to strengthen delivery and ensure greater progress is made in implementing the airspace modernisation programme. Ministers are giving the programme urgent attention and have already announced measures to tackle these challenges, including the consultation launched on 22 October on our plans to create a new UK Airspace Design Service. This will drive forward airspace modernisation and create a system that's fit for the future by delivering quicker routes, easing delays, and reducing harmful emissions.

Areas of Progress

Free Route Airspace (Initiative 2) was implemented in Scotland in 2021 and remains on track for deployment in Q1 2023 across southwest England and Wales. This will see airlines being able to fly more direct routes in upper airspace reducing aviation's carbon emissions and will save CO2 every year equivalent to the power used by some 3,500 family homes (12,000 tonnes CO2/year).

The Airspace Classification Review (Initiative 10) has made significant progress with the publication of the findings into the review of the Cotswold Region. This work has identified where airspace can be opened up for all airspace users to use (e.g., general aviation).

Under the Deployment of Electronic Surveillance Solution (Initiative 11), DfT and the CAA established the Surveillance Standards Task Force, developing national, voluntary specifications for Electronic Conspicuity. This is a key enabler in the refreshed AMS, bringing together current and new airspace users, such as drones, in order to promote a safe and integrated lower airspace.

Areas assessed as having major issues

There are a number of initiatives assessed as having 'major issues, in part because of COVID recovery and the complexities of the airspace changes in the London cluster. However, formal acceptance of ACOG's Masterplan Iteration 2 in January 2022 was a critical milestone. This was enabled in part to £9.2m funding by Government. Iteration 3 will be published later this year following a number of public engagement exercises.

Of the six initiatives requiring attention, timescales and delivery plans have been reassessed and re-baselined as a result of publication of the refreshed AMS.

I will place a copy of the Airspace Modernisation 2023 Progress Report in the libraries of both Houses.

DVLA and VCA Business Plans 2024-25

[HLWS181]

Lord Henty of Richmond Hill: My Honourable Friend, the Parliamentary Under Secretary for Transport (Lilian Greenwood), has made the following Ministerial Statement:

I am pleased to announce the publication of the 2024-25 business plans for two of the Department for Transport's Motoring Agencies: the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) and the Vehicle Certification Agency (VCA).

Each agency's business plans sets out:

- 1) the key business priorities that each agency will deliver and any significant changes they plan to make to their services, and
- 2) the key performance indicators, by which their performance will be assessed.

These plans allow service users and members of the public to understand the agencies' plans for delivering their key services and managing their finances.

The business plans will be available electronically on GOV.UK and copies will be placed in the libraries of both Houses.

The Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) 2024-25 business plan will be published separately as we continue to work with them on measures to drive down practical driving test waiting times.

Government Wine Cellar Report 2022-24

[HLWS178]

Baroness Chapman of Darlington: My honourable friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Indo-Pacific (Catherine West) has today made the following statement:

I have today placed a copy of the Report on the Government Wine Cellar for the Financial Years 2022/23 and 2023/24 in the Libraries of both Houses.

This biennial Report meets our commitment to transparency on this use of the Government Wine Cellar, covering consumption, stock purchases, costs, and value for money.

Greater Cambridge

[HLWS179]

Baroness Taylor of Stevenage: My Honourable Friend the Minister of State for Housing and Planning (Matthew Pennycook MP) has today made the following statement:

I am today updating the House on the next steps the government intends to take, in collaboration with local partners, to support ambitious and high-quality sustainable growth in Cambridge and its environs.

Sustained economic growth is the only route to improving the prosperity of our country and the living standards of working people. That is why it is this government's number one mission. The economic growth

of Cambridge has been a phenomenal success and the city's strengths in knowledge-intensive businesses within its unique innovation ecosystem are well documented, with strong connections between investors, researchers, businesses and local government. We know that Greater Cambridge has the potential to make an even greater contribution to the UK economy and the government are determined to make this happen.

While local partners in Greater Cambridge share the government's ambitions, there remain significant barriers to further growth. It is essential that the government helps to remove them to overcome the issues that have held up planned development for essential housing and laboratory space. It is also vital that we take a collaborative approach to addressing the costs that have come with success, including housing affordability pressures, traffic and congestion, and air pollution. We know what can be achieved when local authorities, central government and public bodies work in partnership to overcome these challenges. I want to sustain the constructive relationship I have established with local leaders and key partners over recent months.

The Cambridge Growth Company

The Deputy Prime Minister and I are determined to realise the full potential of Greater Cambridge to the benefit of its existing communities and the UK economy. I am therefore appointing Peter Freeman to Chair the Cambridge Growth Company, which will work with local partners to develop and start to deliver an ambitious plan for delivering high-quality sustainable growth in Cambridge and its environs.

Peter is a development and regeneration expert with a strong track record, working with private and public partners. He brings a wealth of experience in delivering complex mixed-use projects, including in his current role as Chair of Homes England and through the renowned redevelopment of King's Cross.

The Growth Company will focus on the following core activities:

- Enable and accelerate developments which align with the government's ambitions for Cambridge, and unlocking development on stalled sites.
- Develop the evidence base to support development of an infrastructure-first growth plan and a long-term delivery vehicle: working with experts to assess infrastructure requirements, including water and transport, and laying the foundations to establish a long-term delivery vehicle.
- Identify solutions to complex constraints and support a cross-government approach to unblock existing development, providing the right incentives for successful development in the long-term.

The work of the Cambridge Growth Company will be supported by £10 million of new funding committed at yesterday's Autumn Budget. This funding will be used to develop an ambitious plan for housing, transport and wider infrastructure, and for the water needed to support sustainable growth.

We will continue to update Parliament on the work of the Cambridge Growth Company.

Housing and Regeneration: London

[HLWS180]

Baroness Taylor of Stevenage: My Honourable Friend the Minister of State for Housing and Planning (Matthew Pennycook MP) has today made the following statement:

Maximising housing delivery around Euston

Since the construction of Britain's first inter-city rail link between London and Birmingham, Euston has been not just a bustling London neighbourhood but a gateway to the West Midlands, North West England, North Wales and Scotland.

However, like many of London's neighbourhoods, the need for housing in the area around Euston Station far outstrips supply, resulting in higher housing costs, rising levels of overcrowding and workforce pressures. To meet the challenges and grasp the opportunities facing this important part of our capital city, bold action is required.

The Government is already taking forward plans for a much-improved Euston Station, and my department is committed to supporting the delivery of significant numbers of new homes alongside this project. To progress that work, MHCLG has established the Euston Housing Delivery Group in partnership with the London Borough of Camden. This group will advise ministers and local leaders on an ambitious housing and regeneration initiative for Euston, assessing the shape and scale of the opportunity for growth in the area, and acting as a driving force for new investment in the area.

My department will work with local leaders and communities to ensure that the redevelopment of Euston is an example of exemplary placemaking. Housing delivery and commercial development will be backed by the necessary social infrastructure and amenities to create thriving new communities and bolster existing ones. Ready access to primary healthcare, spaces in primary and secondary schools, and access to open green spaces for communities will be central to our vision.

Sustained economic growth is the only route to improving the prosperity of our country and the living standards of working people. That is why it is this government's number one mission. Regenerating Euston, at the heart of our capital city, will both contribute to housing need locally, and support economic growth nationally by releasing the productive potential of this historic neighbourhood.

The Euston Housing Delivery Group

As announced in the Budget, I am appointing Bek Seeley to Chair the Euston Housing Delivery Group. The group will:

- Assess the scale of opportunity for housing growth and regeneration beyond the existing Euston station site.
- Identify the infrastructure, services, and green space required to unlock maximum housing delivery.

- Consider how these housing opportunities can be delivered across Euston, working alongside with the Department for Transport, the Greater London Authority, and the London Borough of Camden.
- Advise central government and local leaders on an ambitious housing and regeneration scheme, as well as the routes to deliver it.

Bek has worked in the public and private sectors, has held a range of operational and commercial roles in economic development, infrastructure, built environment and public services, and has overseen major housing projects in London, Birmingham and Manchester.

The Delivery Group will be made up of industry experts in urban design, architecture, affordable housing delivery and financing large-scale projects. Their core focus will be to develop a trailblazing regeneration scheme, which will unlock more investment in Euston and drive growth, benefitting the local community and the whole nation.

We will continue to update Parliament on the work of the Delivery Group.

Publication Library Usage: England

[HLWS176]

Baroness Twycross: I am repeating the following Written Ministerial Statement made today in the other place by my Honourable Friend, the Minister for Creative Industries, Arts and Tourism, Sir Chris Bryant MP:

Libraries matter to people. They provide inspiration, education, entertainment and a safe haven for many thousands every week. In addition to their core function of providing books to lend or consult, they provide digital services, audio recordings, and information that can be vital to building a local business as well as bringing people together across communities.

Despite the value and benefit of public libraries for users, the library sector has faced several long-term challenges and the context for library engagement and delivery has changed significantly. Recent challenges include the impact of government driven austerity leading to cuts to local authority budgets; the COVID-19 pandemic which drastically affected people's engagement with and use of libraries; and the increasingly digital world. We cannot shy away from those challenges; the amount councils are spending on public libraries in England fell by almost half in real terms between 2009/10 and 2022/23.

DCMS has a statutory responsibility to superintend and to promote the improvement of local government's provision of public library services in England. The Culture Secretary is responsible for ensuring that library authorities deliver a "comprehensive and efficient" library service for their communities. DCMS works closely with sector stakeholders to achieve this, as well as to advocate for public libraries across government.

As part of that work, the government is publishing DCMS-commissioned research by Ipsos on barriers to library usage by the general public. The research explored

the barriers to and enablers of library usage through a number of focus groups and sets out potential policy interventions that could be deployed by local or national government to promote library usage. A copy of the research will be placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

This research has identified a number of ways public libraries could tackle these challenges and encourage more engagement from the public including:

- raising awareness of the range of services public libraries offer, particularly digital services;
- addressing practical barriers to engagement with public services such as opening hours and parking facilities;

- clarification of the types of spaces available for all demographics and;
- harnessing the appeal of public libraries as spaces that enable and encourage community cohesion.

We are sharing the findings to ensure library services across England can actively consider how they might act on the results. DCMS is commissioning further research to test the findings and insights from phase 1 at scale to inform policy design and implementation. I will also be meeting with library sector organisations and leaders to discuss the challenges in the sector, reflect on priority policy areas and consider how best we can support the sector.

Written Answers

Thursday, 31 October 2024

Air Force: Training

Asked by *Lord West of Spithead*

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans the UK Military Flying Training System has to resolve the obstacles in the training pipeline. [[HL1838](#)]

Lord Coaker: The majority of aircrew training delivered through the UK Military Flying Training System continues to meet Defence demand and progress. Regarding the specific issue of Rotary Wing Aircrew training recently covered by the media, I can assure you that a stepped recovery plan is in place and being implemented to ensure that the UK Military Flying System continues to deliver the number of Rotary Wing aircrew needed by Defence. Defence is closely engaging with Industry partners to resolve the issue and there is no impact to the number of tri-service aircrew commencing Operational Conversion Unit training or Operational duties.

British Indian Ocean Territory: Undocumented Migrants

Asked by *Lord Blencathra*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they intend to place in the Library of the House all correspondence between the Governor of St Helena and officials and Ministers regarding the decision to move asylum seekers who arrive in the Chagos Islands to St Helena. [[HL1761](#)]

Baroness Chapman of Darlington: Copies of the Memorandum of Understanding and supporting correspondence from the Minister or the Overseas Territories have been deposited in the library of both Houses. The St Helena Government have also published both documents on their website at www.sainthelena.gov.sh.

British Overseas Territories

Asked by *Baroness Foster of Aghadrumssee*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether it is their position that British Overseas Territories should be governed by the principle of self-determination; and if so, how they have applied the principle in the case of the British Indian Ocean Territory. [[HL1864](#)]

Baroness Chapman of Darlington: The right of self-determination applies to all peoples under international law, including those of the British Overseas Territories. The British Indian Ocean territory has no permanent population and has never been self-governing. The bilateral agreement reached between the UK and

Mauritius on the exercise of sovereignty over the Chagos Archipelago reflects this context and has absolutely no bearing on the wider UK government policy regarding our other Overseas Territories.

Chagossians: Migrants

Asked by *Baroness Foster of Aghadrumssee*

To ask His Majesty's Government when the Foreign Secretary will meet members of the Chagossian community who live in the United Kingdom. [[HL1863](#)]

Baroness Chapman of Darlington: The Minister for the Overseas Territories has met with members of the Chagossian community twice since the election, including a number of Chagossians who live in the United Kingdom. Ministers and Officials will continue to regularly engage with members of the Chagossian community in the UK and internationally on a range of issues.

China: Uyghurs

Asked by *Lord Alton of Liverpool*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether the Foreign Secretary intends to take steps to ensure that China's actions against Uyghurs is recognised as genocide through international courts and by working with international partners, in accordance with his remarks in March 2023. [[HL1751](#)]

Baroness Chapman of Darlington: It is the long-standing policy of the British Government that any judgment as to whether crimes against humanity or genocide has occurred is a matter for a competent national or international court, rather than for governments or non-judicial bodies. It should be decided after consideration of all the evidence available in the context of a credible judicial process.

Regardless of any court's decision, this Government will stand firm on human rights, including China's repression of Uyghurs and others in Xinjiang. This includes raising our concerns at the highest levels of the Chinese government, and coordinating efforts with our international partners to hold China to account for human rights violations.

Asked by *The Lord Bishop of St Albans*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they recognise the treatment of Uyghur Muslims by the government of China as genocide. [[HL1829](#)]

Baroness Chapman of Darlington: It is the long-standing policy of the British Government that any judgment as to whether crimes against humanity or genocide has occurred is a matter for a competent national or international court, rather than for governments or non-judicial bodies. It should be decided after consideration of all the evidence available in the context of a credible judicial process.

Regardless of any court's decision, this Government will stand firm on human rights, including China's repression of Uyghurs and others in Xinjiang. This includes raising our concerns at the highest levels of the Chinese government, and coordinating efforts with our international partners to hold China to account for human rights violations.

Department for Culture, Media and Sport: Equality

Asked by Baroness Barran

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 Culture, Media and Sport 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 whether they have any plans to increase or reduce such funding. [HL1703]

Baroness Twycross: The delivery of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Staff Network activity is agreed between networks and departments as the employer. This includes permitted time allocation and any funding arrangements. The majority of staff time spent on diversity staff networks is voluntary and unpaid.

Currently 6 Diversity Networks are given pro-rata time allocation to support respective network activity. We have 11 FTE Network Chairs in total.

Time allocation

Diversity-related network time ranges between 10% minimum - 20% maximum (based on business need) protected time during core hours

1x10% time allocation 37 – hour week contract equates to 3.7 per chair member.

1x 20% time allocation 37 – hour week contract equates to 7.4 per chair member.

Across all 6 Networks:

- 11 people support network activity as “Chairs” with their allocated time ranging between 10% - 20%.
- 80% - 90% of their time focused on their contracted job role.

Diversity Networks

- Ability Network
- Ethnic Diversity Network
- EU & International Network
- Faith & Belief Network
- LGBT+ Network
- Social Mobility Network

Funding

When approaching EDI activity, the default must be to use internal resources and best practice in departments

and across government, as outlined in the May 2024 [Civil Service Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Expenditure Guidance](#). All external EDI spends are cleared and authorised by the Permanent Secretary.

Since the Machinery of Government (MOG) in February 2023, DCMS has typically spent <£1k per year, on Network activity, with no plans to increase or reduce such funding.

Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs: Public Expenditure

Asked by Lord Roborough

To ask His Majesty's Government whether any underspend in the 2023–24 budget for the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs will be rolled forward to enhance future years' budgets. [HL1511]

Baroness Hayman of Ullock: The Department moved £105.3 million of CDEL budget from 2023-2024 to 2024-25 using HM Treasury's Budget Exchange at Supplementary Estimates.

Department of Health and Social Care: Equality

Asked by Baroness Barran

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 Health and Social Care 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 whether they have any plans to increase or reduce such funding. [HL1700]

Baroness Merron: Diversity staff network chairs and committee members are permitted to use up to 10% of their work time for network activity, this was introduced as part of the Network Deal which was published internally in October 2023. Currently, the Department has 22 networks which fall within the diversity category, with 41 colleagues acting as chair or committee member. In addition, the chairs and committee members of those networks related to disability, race and ethnicity, and social mobility can request up to 15% of their working time for these activities. This is in recognition of these areas' alignment with the Civil Service Diversity & Inclusion Strategy and is subject to line manager discretion.

Because the Department offers working time for diversity staff network activity as a percentage of overall work time for each individual, the number of hours allocated in total will depend on an individual's working pattern, such as part time or full time, alongside line manager discretion.

The Department does not currently offer funding for diversity staff network activity, except for those networks related to disability. This is in line with the recent Civil Service Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Expenditure Guidance published on 14 May 2024 in an online-only format. The Department's disability network is named EnABLE.

The Department does not currently plan to increase or reduce funding for diversity staff networks.

Diego Garcia

Asked by Lord West of Spithead

To ask His Majesty's Government who will be responsible for civil law on Diego Garcia after any agreement with Mauritius. [HL1747]

Asked by Lord West of Spithead

To ask His Majesty's Government what flag will fly over Diego Garcia after any agreement with Mauritius. [HL1748]

Asked by Lord West of Spithead

To ask His Majesty's Government whether Mauritius will have any input into whether or where kinetic weapon strikes which are launched from Diego Garcia are targeted. [HL1749]

Baroness Chapman of Darlington: The Agreement reached on 3 October will ensure the continued full, long-term, secure and effective operation of the Joint UK/US base on Diego Garcia. The Agreement is subject to the finalisation of a treaty, which will address the specific issues raised by the Noble Lord. The UK and Mauritius have committed to finalising and signing such a treaty as quickly as possible following Mauritian elections. After signature, the treaty is required to be ratified by both the UK and Mauritius before entry into force. Parliament will have the opportunity to scrutinise the detail of the Treaty prior to ratification, in the usual way.

Diego Garcia: Chagossians

Asked by Baroness Deech

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the continuing inability of Chagossians to return to Diego Garcia and the compliance with international human rights law of their current situation. [HL1670]

Baroness Chapman of Darlington: As a result of the agreement reached on 3 October, we intend that Chagossians will be able to access the Chagos Archipelago, including Diego Garcia, under a new programme of visits to be established by the UK and Mauritius as soon as possible. This was a priority for the UK in negotiations. Mauritius has additionally confirmed its intention to launch a programme of resettlement for the Archipelago. This will not include Diego Garcia,

reflecting its status as an active military base with no permanent population.

Diego Garcia: Visits Abroad

Asked by Lord Lancaster of Kimbolton

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Baroness Chapman of Darlington on 14 October (HL1256), what plans they have for a ministerial visit to Diego Garcia before legislation relating to the sovereignty of the Chagos Islands is introduced to Parliament. [HL1884]

Baroness Chapman of Darlington: There are currently no plans for Ministers to visit Diego Garcia. The UK's Chief Negotiator, Harriet Mathews, and members of the UK's negotiating team visited the British Indian Ocean Territory in June 2024. Ministerial travel plans are not routinely published in advance of official Government visits.

Emergency Services Network

Asked by Lord Wasserman

To ask His Majesty's Government when they expect to complete the procurement of a new supplier for mobile radio and data services for the emergency services; and when they estimate it will be possible to shut down the Airwave service. [HL1746]

Lord Hanson of Flint: Any relevant information concerning this procurement process will be met in due course via the government commercial disclosure portal Contracts Finder and in the Accounting Officer Assessments published routinely on the Home Office website.

With respect to the estimated shutdown date of Airwave, the current National Shutdown Target Date is 31 December 2029.

Energy: Prices

Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they taking to support energy companies to fund support packages for customers this winter. [HL1740]

Lord Hunt of Kings Heath: The Government will continue to deliver the Warm Home Discount, which provides a £150 rebate off energy bills for eligible low-income households. We expect around 3 million households to receive this support this winter.

My Hon. Friend the Minister for Energy Consumers has met with energy suppliers on several occasions and encouraged them to build on the Voluntary Debt Commitment for this winter, and we are continuing to work with suppliers to ensure consumers are supported.

Fractures: Health Services

Asked by **Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick**

To ask His Majesty's Government what recent discussions they have had with (1) NHS England, and (2) integrated care boards, regarding the provision of fracture liaison services. [[HL1822](#)]

Baroness Merron: Fracture Liaison Services (FLS) are a globally recognised care model for secondary fracture prevention. They can reduce the risk of refracture by up to 40% for people at risk of osteoporosis.

FLSs are commissioned by integrated care boards which are well-placed to make decisions according to local need. Officials have been working closely with NHS England on how to ensure better quality and access to FLSs, including on how best to support systems.

Fraud: India

Asked by **Lord Birt**

To ask His Majesty's Government what progress they have made in their discussions with the government of India about the large-scale online organisations identified by the BBC's Scam Interceptors programme, which seek to defraud UK internet users and which operate out of Kolkata. [[HL1754](#)]

Lord Hanson of Flint: We applaud the BBC's Scam Interceptors programme for the work they have done both to warn viewers in the UK about the risk of online and telephone scams, and to highlight the practices of organised fraud gangs, operating out of India and elsewhere.

The fraud threat to the UK is varied and we continue to work with key partners from across the globe to target fraud at its source and protect the UK public. This includes engaging with the Government of India directly to see what more can be done, including on law enforcement collaboration and sharing best practice on fraud prevention.

We have also introduced a series of sector charters with industry to agree voluntary actions to protect consumers from a range of fraud. This includes the Online Fraud Charter, signed by some of the largest online platforms and services. The Charter actions seek to improve blocking fraud at source, make reporting fraud easier and decreasing the time it takes to remove fraudulent content and advertisements.

Gambling: Addictions

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

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to tackle the harmful effects of gambling. [[HL1731](#)]

Baroness Twycross: The Government is committed to strengthening protection from harmful gambling. We are acutely aware of the impact harmful gambling can have on individuals and their families. We are committed to reviewing the best available evidence from a wide range of sources and working with all stakeholders in order to support the industry and ensure there are robust protections in place to protect those at risk. We will provide further updates to the House soon.

Hospices: Children

Asked by **Baroness Goudie**

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the extent to which children's hospices rely on the annual £25 million funding from NHS England; and what plans they have to secure this funding beyond 2024–25 to prevent a shortfall in services. [[HL1866](#)]

Asked by **Baroness Goudie**

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of delays experienced by children's hospices in receiving the £25 million annual NHS England funding, which is now distributed by Integrated Care Boards, and what steps they are taking to ensure timely access to this funding in future years. [[HL1867](#)]

Asked by **Baroness Goudie**

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to ensure that children's hospices can continue to provide lifeline care if the £25 million annual funding from NHS England is not extended beyond 2024–25. [[HL1868](#)]

Baroness Merron: While 2023/24 marked the final year of the Children's Hospice Grant in its previous format, in 2024/25, NHS England continued to provide an additional £25 million of funding for children and young people's hospices, maintaining the level of grant funding from 2023/24. For the first time, this funding was transacted by integrated care boards (ICBs), on behalf of NHS England, rather than being centrally administered as before.

The Department and NHS England are aware that the shift to the dissemination of funding via ICBs in 2024/25 has not been as smooth a transition as we would have hoped. However, we are working closely with NHS England to resolve any remaining issues to the 2024/25 funding, and we are also jointly considering the future of this important funding stream beyond 2024/25.

The Minister of State for Care recently met NHS England, Together for Short Lives, and one of the co-chairs of the Children Who Need Palliative Care All-Party Parliamentary Group, Lord Balfe, to discuss children's palliative and end of life care, and this funding stream was discussed at length at that meeting.

Housing

Asked by *Lord Jamieson*

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Baroness Taylor of Stevenage on 16 September (HL630), whether they can produce a price per square metre for housing by local authority, based on the regional price estimate per square metre produced by the Office for National Statistics. [HL1718]

Baroness Taylor of Stevenage: The Office for National Statistics has published data on house price per square metre and house price per room, England and Wales, down to local authority level for 2004 to 2016. These figures are available at the following link. <https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/inflationandpriceindices/articles/housepricepersquaremetreandhousepriceperroomenglandandwales/2004to2016>

Data for more recent years have not been produced at local authority level.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

House price per square metre [House price per square metre and house price per room, England and Wales 2004 to 2016 HL1718.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at: <http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2024-10-17/HL1718>

Housing: Construction

Asked by *Baroness Scott of Needham Market*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether houses in multiple occupation will be included in their target for building new homes. [HL1774]

Baroness Taylor of Stevenage: The Government is committed to building 1.5 million homes over the duration of the parliament. New residential dwellings, including Houses in Multiple Occupation (an HMO) that have not been converted from an existing home, will be included in the target for building new homes.

Housing: Regeneration

Asked by *Lord Jamieson*

To ask His Majesty's Government how they plan to work with councils and housing associations to review how the regeneration and densification of existing estates can help meet their target of 1.5 million new homes. [HL1722]

Baroness Taylor of Stevenage: Grant funding provided through the Government's Affordable Homes Programme 2021-26 can be used to fund replacement homes alongside new affordable homes, as part of wider estate regeneration plans. The Government has additionally allocated £50 million of new investment over the next two years to the Greater London Authority to unlock and accelerate existing estate regeneration schemes across the capital.

Import Controls

Asked by *Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the UK's state of readiness for the implementation of (1) safety and security declarations for imports, (2) import checks on medium-risk fruits and vegetables, and (3) checks on EU goods arriving from the Republic of Ireland to west coast ports, in relation to the Border Target Operating Model. [HL1901]

Baroness Hayman of Ullock: 1) The Government announced on 7 October that Safety and Security declarations will be required for EU imports from 31 January 2025. Readiness is assessed as being on track. A plan is in place that includes a comprehensive list of readiness activity, with engagement well underway with trade.

2) Border Control Posts (BCPs) are designed to handle high volumes of imported Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) goods and carry out reliable checks which minimise friction on traffic flow. Most BCPs can process six or more vehicles at the same time with ample space to remove or inspect products.

(i) Checks at BCPs are handled by trained staff working to standard operating procedures, ensuring inspections are undertaken safely and efficiently. Inspectors are rigorously trained and are equipped to ensure SPS goods are handled safely and with care.

(ii) GB plant health services have significantly increased the number of plant health inspection staff to service the demand for import checks in England and Wales of EU plants and plant products. Inspector levels are being monitored to ensure these meet demand and deliver checks in line with set Service Level Agreements and ensure minimal trade disruption.

3) Responsibility for biosecurity and BCP infrastructure is a devolved matter. However, Defra is working closely with West Coast ports, the Welsh and Scottish Governments to ensure that BCPs across GB can implement the Border Target Operating Model. We will ensure that importers, ports and the authorities have time to prepare for these controls to be turned on.

Incapacity Benefit

Asked by *Lord McCrea of Magherafelt and Cookstown*

To ask His Majesty's Government what percentage of the population in each region are claiming incapacity benefits. [HL1728]

Baroness Sherlock: The Department publishes quarterly statistics on benefit combinations on Stat-Xplore, which include those claiming incapacity benefits, where an individual claims one or more of Universal Credit (Health Journey), Employment and Support Allowance (ESA), Incapacity Benefit (IB), Severe Disablement Allowance (DSA), and Income Support (Incapacity Based) (IS(IB)).

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) publishes mid-year population estimates for England and Wales, and Scotland.

The administration of incapacity benefits in Northern Ireland is devolved to the Department for Communities.

The extracted statistics and the calculated estimated percentage of the total population on incapacity benefits in February 2024 are shown in the following table.

Number of individuals claiming incapacity benefits, February 2024, mid-year population estimates for England and Wales mid-2023 and Scotland mid-2022, estimated percentage of the population on incapacity benefits, February 2024.

<i>Regions</i>	<i>Claimants on incapacity benefits</i>	<i>Mid-year Population percentage of the Estimates</i>	<i>Estimated total population on incapacity benefits</i>
North East	186,734	2,711,380	6.9%
North West	474,790	7,600,126	6.2%
Yorkshire and The Humber	318,191	5,594,125	5.7%
East Midlands	244,835	4,991,265	4.9%
West Midlands	319,138	6,085,687	5.2%
East of England	260,988	6,468,665	4.0%
London	404,646	8,945,309	4.5%
South East	340,698	9,482,507	3.6%
South West	262,208	5,811,259	4.5%
Wales	218,571	3,164,404	6.9%
Scotland	364,308	5,447,700	6.7%

Source: [Stat-Xplore](#), [ONS Population Estimates](#)

Note:

i) Statistical disclosure control has been applied to this table to avoid the release of confidential data. Percentages are given to 1 decimal place.

ii) 'Claimants on incapacity benefits' includes where an individual claims one or more of Universal Credit (Health Journey), Employment and Support Allowance (ESA), Incapacity Benefit (IB), Severe Disablement Allowance (DSA), and Income Support (Incapacity Based) (IS(IB)), at the end of February 2024 and is taken from the ' [Benefit Combinations - Data from May 2019 for England and Wales](#) ' dataset and the ' [Benefit Combinations – Data from May 2019 for Scotland](#) ' dataset on Stat-Xplore.

iii) 'Mid-year Population Estimates' are produced by the Office for National Statistics for [England and Wales to mid-2023](#) and for [Scotland to mid-2022](#).

Israel: Military Aid

Asked by **Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle**

To ask His Majesty's Government which UK military training courses Israeli armed forces personnel have completed in the past 12 months, and what was the location of those courses. [[HL1920](#)]

Lord Coaker: This information is being withheld in order to protect personal information and to avoid prejudicing relations between the United Kingdom and another State.

Law Enforcement Data Service

Asked by **Lord Wasserman**

To ask His Majesty's Government when they expect the Law Enforcement Data Service to be fully operational and the Police National Computer to be retired. [[HL1744](#)]

Lord Hanson of Flint: The Law Enforcement Data Service (LEDS) is being delivered to enable the retirement of the legacy Police National Computer (PNC). The priority is to ensure that LEDS delivers full parity with all current PNC capabilities, using a modern technology foundation which enables the further evolution and modernisation of UK policing. The programme plan is to achieve this by March 2026 to align with the end of the current PNC support contract.

Law Enforcement Data Service: Costs

Asked by **Lord Wasserman**

To ask His Majesty's Government how much the Law Enforcement Data Service will have cost by the time it is fully operational. [[HL1745](#)]

Lord Hanson of Flint: All relevant information regarding the progress and cost of this project will be published in the Accounting Officer Assessments, published routinely on the Home Office website.

Nurses: Schools

Asked by **Baroness Goudie**

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to increase the number of school nurses to ensure adequate coverage across the country. [[HL1807](#)]

Asked by **Baroness Goudie**

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to end the geographical disparity in care by ensuring equitable distribution of school nurses on the basis of need. [[HL1808](#)]

Asked by **Baroness Goudie**

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to implement a robust system to track the school nurse workforce to enable informed decision-making and resource allocation. [HL1809]

Baroness Merron: We are committed to creating the healthiest generation of children ever. The child health workforce, including school nurses, who lead the delivery of the Healthy Child Programme is central to how we support children, young people, and families.

We are also committed to training the staff we need to ensure everyone receives care from the right professional, when and where they need it. We will want to assure ourselves, and the National Health Service, that the current workforce plan will deliver the reform needed. We will also need to do this in light of the 10-Year Health Plan.

Local authorities are best placed to determine local workforce needs, as they know their communities best. Determining the skills and workforce requirements should be underpinned by a local plan and led by the area's identified health needs.

The Chief Public Health Nurse Office has established a programme of work which aims to improve the delivery of the Healthy Child Programme, which includes school nursing. This will include a review of the school nursing workforce data in England.

Personal Independence Payment: Medical Examinations

Asked by **Baroness Thomas of Winchester**

To ask His Majesty's Government what is the average waiting time for Personal Independence Payment assessments. [HL1741]

Baroness Sherlock: These figures can be found at part 6 of the Personal Independence Payment: Official Statistics to July 2024 and are [published](#) quarterly as part of the Personal Independence Payment (PIP) statistics on GOV.UK.

As of July 2024, clearance times for normal rules new claims are 15 weeks "end to end" (from registration to a decision being made) and 10 weeks from the assessment provider (AP) referral to the DWP decision on entitlement.

The clearance times in July 2023 were 15 weeks and 10 weeks respectively. The clearance times peaked in August 2021 at 26 weeks "end to end" (from registration to a decision being made) and 21 weeks from the AP referral to the decision.

This was partly because claims that had been allowed a longer deadline for return of the PIP 2 form during the period late February to late May 2021 were reaching clearance, and partly because priority in some areas was given to claims that had been waiting longer for processing due to the COVID-19 disruption.

Planning: Greater London

Asked by **Lord Jamieson**

To ask His Majesty's Government whether there will be any consequences for London boroughs and the London Assembly if they fail to meet the targets set out in the National Planning Policy Framework. [HL1721]

Baroness Taylor of Stevenage: I refer the noble Lord to my answer to Question [HL1467](#) on 23 October 2024.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

[HL1467 \[HL1467 - Written questions and answers.pdf\]](#)

The material can be viewed online at:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2024-10-17/HL1721>

Police: Roads

Asked by **Baroness Neville-Rolfe**

To ask His Majesty's Government what policy, memorandum of understanding or guidance is held by the Home Office as a public authority for the purposes of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 in relation to the operation of the Special Escort Group's blue-light policing on public highways. [HL1766]

Lord Hanson of Flint: The Special Escort Group (SEG) is part of the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) and is operationally independent. The policy for the deployment of the SEG is a matter for the MPS.

The government's protective security system is rigorous and proportionate. It is our long-standing policy not to provide detailed information on those arrangements, as doing so could compromise their integrity and affect individuals' security.

Prisoners' Release: Women

Asked by **Lord Carlile of Berriew**

To ask His Majesty's Government in order to reduce reoffending and enable rehabilitation what steps they are taking to support women released from custody, including those with additional vulnerabilities such as substance use treatment. [HL2018]

Lord Timpson: My Rt. Hon. Friend the Lord Chancellor has announced the creation of a Women's Justice Board, with the clear goals of reducing the number of women in prison and addressing the distinct needs of women in the criminal justice system.

A bespoke resettlement model, with embedded probation pre-release provision, is in place in all women's prisons. Pre-release teams screen for resettlement needs and signpost to specialist services within the prison, such as Prison Banking Administrators, Healthcare, and Rehabilitative Services. In liaison with the Community Offender Manager, they support pre-release planning activity throughout the period in custody.

Women-specific Commissioned Rehabilitative Services contracts deliver bespoke and specialist support to women on probation, including assisting physical and mental wellbeing; access to accommodation and employment; support with any finance, benefit and debt needs; maintaining relationships with families; and supporting any dependency and recovery needs.

We know that treatment is effective in reducing substance misuse, re-offending and other harmful outcomes. The Ministry of Justice works in partnership with the Department of Health & Social Care and NHS England to ensure that continuity of care is in place for all women leaving prison who have continuing drug and or alcohol treatment needs.

Prisoners: Children

Asked by Lord Mott

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to identify and support the children of prisoners. [HL2038]

Asked by Lord Mott

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to fulfil their commitment to identify the children of prisoners and break the cycle of crime. [HL2041]

Lord Timpson: The Government recently published the first official statistics to estimate the number of children affected by parental imprisonment using administrative government data. It is estimated that between 1 October 2021 and 1 October 2022 there were around 193,000 children with a parent in prison. We recognise the importance of being able to identify children with a parent in prison to make sure they receive the support they need, which is why our Family Support Workers help to re-establish family ties where appropriate, and help to facilitate visits from prisoners' children.

The Ministry of Justice is working closely with the Department for Education to determine how we can do more to effectively identify these children and provide support for both them and for the parent in prison. The support will be informed by learnings from previous interventions and pilots, and engagement both with those with lived experience and organisations from the Voluntary, Charity and Social Enterprise sector.

Public Appointments

Asked by Lord McCrea of Magherafelt and Cookstown

To ask His Majesty's Government whether all public appointments by Ministers since the election have gone through open appointment processes; and whether any rules on advertising appointments have been circumvented. [HL1730]

Baroness Twycross: The Governance Code on Public Appointments sets out the process and principles that

underpin all public appointments made to bodies listed in the Public Appointments Order in Council. It sets out that, in exceptional cases, Ministers may decide to appoint a candidate without a competition, although they must make this decision public and must consult the Commissioner for Public Appointments.

Ministers across government departments are responsible for ensuring that their appointments are made in accordance with the Governance Code or the appropriate framework.

Royal Fleet Auxiliary

Asked by Lord West of Spithead

To ask His Majesty's Government whether Royal Fleet Auxiliary ships are classed as military. [HL1841]

Lord Coaker: Royal Fleet Auxiliary (RFA) ships are owned and managed by the Ministry of Defence for the purposes of the Naval Service but are not considered part of the Armed Forces of the United Kingdom. They are regarded as 'Government Ships' under the Merchant Shipping Act 1995.

Serbia: Politics and Government

Asked by Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth

To ask His Majesty's Government what discussions they have had, if any, with the government of Serbia regarding the All-Serb Assembly joint declaration of June 2024. [HL1789]

Baroness Chapman of Darlington: The UK has underlined with Serbia's leadership concerns about the "All Serb Assembly" in June and the subsequent Declaration. The UK consistently emphasises at senior levels the importance of Serbia's role in building and supporting regional stability; Minister of State Stephen Doughty did so most recently in October meetings with Foreign Minister Djuric and the Serbian Ambassador in London. We encourage Serbia to adhere to the commitments made by all Western Balkans leaders at the 2018 London Summit on good neighbourly relations.

Social Security Benefits

Asked by Baroness Lister of Burtersett

To ask His Majesty's Government what they estimate the total cost for all types of benefits available to working age adults and children will be for each 0.1 per cent increment increase in April 2025. [HL1725]

Baroness Sherlock: The Secretary of State for Work and Pensions is required by law to undertake an annual review of benefits and State Pensions, based on a review of trends in prices and earnings growth in the preceding year. The Secretary of State announced her decisions to Parliament on 30 October.

The basic and new state pensions, and the standard minimum guarantee in pension credit, will be increased by 4.1%, in line with the increase in average weekly earnings in the year to May-July 2024. Other state pension and benefit rates covered by the statutory review will be increased by 1.7%, in line with the increase in the consumer prices index in the year to September 2024. The full list of proposed State Pension and benefit rates for 2025/26 will be published in November.

This increases expenditure on state pensions and benefits by £6.9 billion in 2025/26 compared with not uprating in 25/26, of which, £4.7 billion will be from state pensions and pensioner benefits, £0.9 billion from disability and carers benefits, and £1.2 billion from working-age benefits.

Statistics on the number and type of families and individuals in families benefitting from the uprating of benefits, were also made available on 30 October. Further detail can be found here [Benefit uprating: estimated number and type of families and individuals in families benefitting from the uprating of benefits in financial year 2025 to 2026 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#).

No estimate has been made of what the total cost for all types of benefits available to working age adults and children would be for each 0.1 per cent increment increase in April 2025.

St Helena: Asylum

Asked by Lord Blencathra

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they made an assessment of the impact on public services on St Helena of the decision to move asylum seekers who arrive in the Chagos Islands to St Helena; and if so, whether they intend to publish that assessment. [HL1758]

Asked by Lord Blencathra

To ask His Majesty's Government what accommodation will be provided to house asylum seekers relocated from the Chagos Islands to St Helena. [HL1759]

Asked by Lord Blencathra

To ask His Majesty's Government what security and policing assessment has been conducted regarding the decision to move asylum seekers from the Chagos Islands to St Helena with respect to the latter. [HL1787]

Baroness Chapman of Darlington: The UK Government is working to support the Saint Helena Government to ensure appropriate arrangements are in place for any migrants who may arrive. If the St Helena Government considers that a migrant presents a danger to the security of St Helena, they may refuse entry to that individual. A copy of the recent MoU between the UK and St Helena has been placed in the libraries of both houses.

Asked by Lord Blencathra

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they intend applications of asylum seekers moved from the Chagos Islands to St Helena to be processed while they are on St Helena, and over what timescale. [HL1786]

Baroness Chapman of Darlington: Immigration is a matter for the St Helena Government. The St Helena Government will be responsible for processing any asylum claims and for the timescale by which any claims are resolved. The UK Government will provide technical support to help develop capacity and capability in St Helena's immigration department.

Taiwan: Foreign Relations

Asked by Lord Dodds of Duncairn

To ask His Majesty's Government what is their current policy on access to senior UK ministers for ministers of the government of Taiwan. [HL1714]

Baroness Chapman of Darlington: The UK's position on Taiwan has not changed. There is a longstanding and historic pattern of ministerial engagement between the UK and Taiwan, which underpins our cooperation in a range of areas, and support our strong and growing relations with a likeminded democratic partner.

UK Internal Trade: Northern Ireland

Asked by Lord Dodds of Duncairn

To ask His Majesty's Government what is the proportion of goods moving into Northern Ireland from Great Britain that are deemed to be at risk and are therefore subject to full EU compliance requirements. [HL1712]

Lord Livermore: As set out in the Safeguarding the Union Command Paper, more than 80% of all freight movements from Great Britain to Northern Ireland will be treated as not at risk and will move within the UK internal market system. That commitment will be monitored by the Independent Monitoring Panel and will take effect once the internal market system comes into force fully next year.

Asked by Lord Dodds of Duncairn

To ask His Majesty's Government what is the total cost of the arrangements for trading between Great Britain and Northern Ireland borne by (1) His Majesty's Government, (2) the Northern Ireland Executive, (3) other Northern Ireland public authorities, and (4) the private sector. [HL1713]

Baroness Jones of Whitchurch: The Department for Business and Trade does not hold comprehensive data on these matters. The UK Government is committed to implementing the Windsor Framework in good faith and protecting the UK internal market. Windsor Framework implementing arrangements have been designed to ease the flow of goods between Great Britain and Northern

Ireland, and reduce administrative and other business burdens.

Undocumented Migrants: English Channel

Asked by Lord McCrea of Magherafelt and Cookstown

To ask His Majesty's Government how many migrants have entered the UK in small boats since the general election; and how many entered the UK in small boats in the five months up to the general election. [HL1726]

Lord Hanson of Flint: From 5 July 2024 until 17 October 2024, a total of 13,983 migrants arrived in the UK having crossed the Channel in small boats. Between 5 February 2024 (five months before the election) and 4 July, the total was 12,239.

It has been the normal pattern since the start of the small boat crossing in 2018 for arrivals in the summer months to exceed those in the earlier part of the year.

The table below provides the equivalent figures for the same time periods in prior years.

<i>Year</i>	<i>Arrivals 5 Feb – 4 July</i>	<i>Arrivals 5 July – 17 October</i>
2023	10,035	14,683
2022	11,561	24,199
2021	6,370	12,686
2020	2,399	4,802
2019	547	784
2018	4	17

Asked by Lord McCrea of Magherafelt and Cookstown

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they plan to reopen hotels to house migrants crossing the Channel in small boats. [HL1727]

Lord Hanson of Flint: The accommodation estate is under constant review, as the Home Office continues to identify a range of options to minimise the use of hotels and ensure better use of public money, whilst maintaining sufficient accommodation to meet demand.

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