

Session 2024-25
No. 51



Monday
25 November 2024

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)

HOUSE OF LORDS

WRITTEN STATEMENTS AND WRITTEN ANSWERS

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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
Baroness Gustafsson	Minister of State, Department for Business and Trade and HM Treasury
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

Monday, 25 November 2024

International Treaty on Plastic Pollution

[HLWS243]

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

Plastic pollution is one of the greatest environmental challenges the planet faces. The world produces 400 million tonnes of plastic waste each year. Scientists predict there will be a threefold increase in the amount of plastic entering the ocean between 2016 and 2040. A global agreement on plastic pollution is urgently needed to coordinate a response to this complex issue.

UNEA Resolution 5/14 initiated discussions to agree an internationally legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment. An intergovernmental negotiating committee was established with the ambition of completing its work by the end of 2024. The fifth and final planned meeting of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee is being held in Busan, the Republic of Korea, from 25 November to 1 December 2024.

The draft Treaty under discussion includes provisions on production and consumption of primary plastic polymers; problematic products and chemicals of concern in plastic; product design; waste management; emissions and releases of plastic into the environment; existing plastic pollution; just transition; financial assistance, technology transfer and capacity building; implementation and compliance; national plans; reporting; effectiveness evaluation and monitoring; awareness raising, education and research; health and final provisions on processes necessary for the establishment of an international treaty.

The Government has an ambition to catalyse the transition to a circular economy and the treaty is one of the key levers available to us to achieve the systems-wide changes needed to make that a reality.

Plastic waste has for too long littered our streets, polluted Britain's waterways and threatened our wildlife. This Government is committed to cleaning up Britain and cracking down on plastic waste. We will roll out extended producer responsibility to incentivise businesses to cut plastic packaging and the Deposit Return Scheme to incentivise consumers to recycle.

The UK is an active member of the High Ambition Coalition, a group of 67 countries seeking an ambitious treaty that will end plastic pollution by 2040 by taking a full-lifecycle approach. At INC-5 we will continue to take a leadership role and work closely with other countries to push for agreement of an ambitious and effective treaty in Busan. The science tells us that to be effective we must take action at all stages of the plastics lifecycle from production to waste management and emissions.

In developing the UK negotiating approach we have worked closely with Devolved Governments and UK Overseas Territories as well as a wide range of stakeholders, including producers, manufacturers, retailers, eNGOs and academia. On 6 November, I hosted a roundtable on the treaty for leading businesses and financial organisations ahead of His Majesty's International Sustainability Reception. Participants of the roundtable agreed a statement calling for an ambitious treaty that will create a more harmonised regulatory environment and a level playing field.

The UK remains committed to securing an agreement in Busan as a critical step towards ensuring the global action needed to end plastic pollution by 2040.

Pandemic Accord Negotiations and the International Health Regulations

[HLWS244]

Baroness Merron: My Hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Public Health and Prevention (Andrew Gwynne MP) has made the following Written Statement:

I would like to update the House regarding the most recent round of negotiations on the legally binding international agreement on pandemic prevention, preparedness and response – the Pandemic Accord – at the World Health Organization (WHO), as well as the outcome of negotiations to agree targeted amendments to the International Health Regulations (IHR). The most recent round of Pandemic Accord negotiations took place 4 – 15 November.

Pandemic Accord Negotiations:

As outlined in my statement of 9 September 2024, infectious diseases do not respect borders. The risk of another pandemic is very real – a question of “when” rather than “if”. All countries would benefit from strengthening our collective ability to prevent, prepare for and respond to the next pandemic threat. The Pandemic Accord is an important opportunity to establish a framework for a comprehensive new global approach to pandemic prevention, preparedness and response.

Co-operation with countries around the world does not compromise our sovereignty; it strengthens our security and no amendments to the Accord have been proposed or agreed that would give the WHO powers to impose domestic public health decisions on the UK. The UK Government remains committed to negotiating a Pandemic Accord that enhances UK and global health security and is firmly in the UK's national interest.

Member states of the WHO have until the World Health Assembly (WHA) in May 2025 to reach an agreement on the Pandemic Accord, following an extension agreed at the WHA in May 2024. Member States have reached provisional agreement on over 70% of the text, while negotiating on the principle that ‘nothing is agreed until everything is agreed’. At the latest round of negotiations, provisional agreement was reached on the issues of

regulatory systems strengthening, and sustainable and geographically diversified local production.

On Monday November 11, a discussion was held by Member States on whether to call a special session of the WHA in December with the aim of agreeing the Accord before the new year. Given the number of outstanding issues on which consensus is yet to be found, including on prevention, One Health, technology transfer, the pathogen access and benefit sharing mechanism, and the legal form and status of the Accord, Member States chose not to call a special session in December. However, the Government remains committed to working with others to secure an effective agreement as soon as possible and will continue to work towards the May 2025 deadline, with the option to conclude negotiations earlier if this is deemed feasible while still delivering a good agreement.

As negotiations continue, we will keep working closely with the Devolved Administrations, Crown Dependencies, and the Overseas Territories to ensure the process reflects their interests, and we will keep engaging with civil society organisations, institutions, academia, and the private sector. The latest public version of the text and other relevant documents can be found online here: <https://apps.who.int/gb/inb/index.html>.

The International Health Regulations (2005) (IHR):

The IHR are an important, legally binding technical framework that helps to prevent and protect against the international spread of disease. Amendments to the IHR, were agreed by countries at the World Health Assembly that took place from 27 May to 1 June 2024. The amendments aimed to reflect lessons learned from recent global health emergencies, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, including by improving information sharing and collaboration for public health emergency response.

On 19 September 2024, the WHO Director General formally notified all States Parties of the official amendments adopted by the WHA. From this date of notification, the UK has 10 months to complete the domestic review of IHR amendments and then notify the WHO Director General whether we wish to reject or reserve on any or all the amendments by 19 July 2025. Adopted amendments (that we have not rejected) would then come into force for the UK in September 2025.

DHSC officials have been leading work across Government to confirm the implications of the amendments for the UK. Officials are also working with their counterparts in the Devolved Administrations, our Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies to ensure all relevant territories are considered. This analysis will inform the decision about which amendments are in the UK's national interest and whether we wish to reject or reserve on any or all of them before the July 2025 deadline. No decision has yet been made.

In parallel with the approach to the Pandemic Accord negotiations, respect for each country's sovereignty has been a fundamental element of the IHR amendments. The UK Government will of course only formally adopt amendments to the IHR that are in the UK national interest.

The latest available full text of the agreed IHR amendments can be found online here: https://apps.who.int/gb/ebwaha/pdf_files/WHA77/A77_A_CONF14-en.pdf.

Given the significance of the Pandemic Accord negotiations, the IHR amendments, and their potential to make our country stronger and safer, I am committed to keeping the House updated at relevant and important junctures.

Written Answers

Monday, 25 November 2024

Afghanistan: Refugees

Asked by *Baroness Goudie*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the findings of the Afghan Pro Bono Initiative, in their report *Still Waiting: the Afghans Abandoned by the UK*, published in August, regarding the delays and decision-making processes for resettlement schemes for refugees from Afghanistan. [HL2312]

Lord Hanson of Flint: We are determined to honour our commitments to bring eligible Afghans to the UK. The UK has made an ambitious commitment to help at-risk people in Afghanistan and, so far, we have brought around 32,600 people to safety, including thousands of people eligible for our Afghan resettlement schemes.

Our priority right now is the relocation of those identified as eligible for resettlement under our resettlement schemes, and fixing the gaps in existing routes. That is why we affirmed our ongoing commitment to Afghans and their families by launching the ACRS Separated Families route, which provides a pathway to reunite those families who were unintentionally separated during Operation Pitting.

Agriculture: Inheritance Tax

Asked by *The Lord Bishop of Norwich*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact of the Budget's changes to agricultural property relief from inheritance tax on nature conservation on small farms. [HL2413]

Asked by *The Lord Bishop of Norwich*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact of the Budget's changes to agricultural property relief from inheritance tax on the ability of young people to own an economically viable farm in the future. [HL2414]

Asked by *The Lord Bishop of Norwich*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact of the Budget's changes to agricultural property relief from inheritance tax on the ability of future generations of a family to farm the same land. [HL2415]

Lord Livermore: The Government published information about the reforms to agricultural property relief and business property relief at GOV.UK.

It is expected that up to around 2,000 estates will be affected by the changes to APR and BPR. Up to around 520 of these are expected to relate to claims for APR

(including those that also claim for BPR), and this number falls to around 430 when claims that include AIM shares are excluded. Almost three-quarters of estates claiming agricultural property relief (or those claiming agricultural property relief and business property relief together) each year are expected to be unaffected by these reforms.

In accordance with standard practice, a tax information and impact note will be published alongside the draft legislation before the relevant Finance Bill.

Alongside these tax reliefs, the Government has also confirmed that the existing scope of agricultural property relief will be extended from 6 April 2025 to land managed under certain environmental agreements.

Asked by *Lord Taylor of Warwick*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact of the changes announced in the Autumn Budget on (1) farmers, and (2) food security. [HL2439]

Lord Livermore: The Government published information about the reforms to agricultural property relief and business property relief at GOV.UK.

Around 500 estates across the UK are expected to be affected each year from 2026-27.

In accordance with standard practice, a tax information and impact note will be published alongside the draft legislation before the relevant Finance Bill.

The UK has high food security and announcements at Autumn Budget 2024 continued to support and improve food security. The Government has provided £5 billion across this year and next to support the ongoing transition towards a more productive and environmentally sustainable agricultural sector in England. This will strengthen the domestic sector, and improve food security.

British Indian Ocean Territory: Sovereignty

Asked by *Baroness Lister of Burtersett*

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the joint statement of 3 October between the governments of Mauritius and the UK announcing that political agreement had been reached on the sovereignty of the Chagos Archipelago, what steps they are taking to ensure that all the Chagossian groups (1) in the UK, and (2) elsewhere, are consulted ahead of signing of the treaty. [HL2407]

Baroness Chapman of Darlington: Ministers and officials will continue to regularly engage with members of the Chagossian community in the UK, Mauritius and Seychelles on a range of issues, including on the implementation of the agreement between the United Kingdom and Mauritius. We recognise the importance of the islands to Chagossians and have worked to ensure this state-to-state agreement reflects their interests.

Budget October 2024

Asked by *Lord Patten*

To ask His Majesty's Government what definitions they intend by the use of the terms “small business”, “family business” and “family farm” in the Autumn Budget. [HL2417]

Lord Livermore: Small businesses are vital to high streets and communities, and essential to the success of the government's growth mission. The UK has a wide variety of businesses, which interact with the tax system in different ways. As a result, the characteristics of a small business can vary depending on the nature of the specific policy. The eligibility or applicability of individual policies will be set out in the relevant documentation for those policies.

The Government announced a range of reforms at Autumn Budget 2024 supporting small businesses. These include:

- increasing the Employment Allowance to £10,500;
- freezing the small businesses multiplier (used for properties with a rateable value below £51,000) for 2025-26, and extending the retail, hospitality and leisure (RHL) business rates relief for 1-year at 40% (up to a cash cap of £110,000 per business);
- committing in the Corporate Tax Roadmap to maintain the Small Profits Rate and marginal relief at their current rates and thresholds, as well as maintaining the £1 million Annual Investment Allowance; and
- Despite the difficult fiscal inheritance, we have been able to protect key business support programmes like Growth Hubs while increasing funding for Made Smarter Adoption, and allocating £250m to the British Business Bank's small business programmes in 2025-26.

It is expected that up to around 2,000 estates will be affected by the changes to APR and BPR. Up to around 520 of these are expected to relate to claims for APR (including those that also claim for BPR), and this number falls to around 430 when claims that include AIM shares are excluded. Almost three-quarters of estates claiming agricultural property relief (or those claiming agricultural property relief and business property relief together) each year are expected to be unaffected by these reforms.

Burkina Faso: Violence

Asked by *Lord Boateng*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of progress towards combatting the Islamist insurgency in Burkina Faso and the threat it poses to neighbouring countries. [HL2571]

Lord Collins of Highbury: The UK is monitoring the increase in terrorism and violent extremism in Burkina Faso. Rising insecurity has contributed to an alarming

increase in identity-based violence and atrocities, including by Islamic extremist groups and state forces.

I have discussed the impact of the security challenges faced by Burkina Faso and the Sahel with regional neighbours, including Senegalese PM Sonko, Ghana, Algeria, Mauritania and the Deputy Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for West Africa and the Sahel.

The UK is providing over £142 million in bilateral overseas development aid to the Sahel this financial year, to provide humanitarian support and address the drivers of conflict.

Chinese Embassy: Planning Permission

Asked by *Lord Alton of Liverpool*

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to ensure that the residents of Tower Hamlets who may be affected by the planned new Chinese Embassy have sufficient opportunity to voice their concerns to the Government about the proposed development. [HL2372]

Baroness Taylor of Stevenage: This proposal has now been called in for decision by Planning Ministers. A public local inquiry will be held at which residents and other interested parties will be able to make representations, and these will be taken into account when a final decision is made.

Commonwealth: Zimbabwe

Asked by *Lord Oates*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they will press for the publication in full of the report of the Commonwealth Observer Group to the 2023 Zimbabwe Harmonised elections prior to any further consideration of the readmission of Zimbabwe to the Commonwealth. [HL2505]

Lord Collins of Highbury: The UK greatly values the Commonwealth Secretariat's work on observation missions. The full report of the Commonwealth Observer Group to the 2023 Zimbabwe Harmonised elections has now been circulated to all members. It is for the Commonwealth Secretariat to decide when to publish the report publicly.

Dangerous Dogs

Asked by *Lord McInnes of Kilwinning*

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many XL bullies have been seized by police forces in England and Wales since January. [HL2031]

Baroness Hayman of Ullock: Since the formation of this policy under the last Government, Defra has not held information on the number of XL bullies that have been seized by police forces in England and Wales. This information will be held by individual police forces.

Developing Countries: Food Poverty

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the latest Hunger Hotspots report, published jointly by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and the World Food Programme on 31 October, what plans they have to prevent the further deterioration of the hunger crisis across the 22 countries listed in the report; and, in particular, what assistance they are providing to the five countries and territories at the highest risk of famine alert. [HL2373]

Lord Collins of Highbury: The UK is deeply concerned by the findings of the June-October 2024 Hunger Hotspots report. We are the third largest government donor to the World Food Programme (WFP) and so far in 2024 have contributed over \$400 million to WFP programs, including in Palestine, Sudan, South Sudan and Haiti. Furthermore, on 17 November the Foreign Secretary announced a major aid increase of £113 million which will support more than one million people in Sudan and neighbouring countries affected by the devastating war in Sudan.

We are also investing in lasting solutions that build food insecure households' resilience to shocks and drive sustainable growth. At the G20 Leaders' Summit on 18 November, the Prime Minister confirmed UK membership of the Global Alliance against Hunger and Poverty, to work with global partners, share expertise and unlock finance for interventions that work at scale.

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the projection in the WFP-FAO Hunger Hotspots report, published on 31 October, that the La Niña weather phenomenon is expected to exacerbate acute hunger in many regions; and what assistance they are providing to the countries and territories most affected. [HL2374]

Lord Collins of Highbury: The UK is closely monitoring the potential development of La Niña conditions and in particular the risk of food security impacts in the Horn of Africa and Southern Africa.

The UK is a committed humanitarian donor, channelling over £277 million in Humanitarian Aid to the Africa region in 2023 and is already operating humanitarian programmes in those countries of concern highlighted in the Hunger Hotspots report. Those programmes are standing-by to adapt as required. On 17 November the Foreign Secretary announced a major aid increase of £113 million for people in Sudan and neighbouring countries.

Domestic Abuse: Children

Asked by The Lord Bishop of St Albans

To ask His Majesty's Government what consideration they have given to changing the statutory definition of

domestic abuse to that those under the age of 16 can be considered victims of domestic abuse. [HL2427]

Lord Hanson of Flint: The government is considering a range of actions to address teenage relationship abuse, including considering whether any changes to the law are needed, and supporting our education system to teach children about respectful and healthy relationships and consent.

Driving Tests: Applications

Asked by Lord Young of Cookham

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they intend to make it a criminal offence to re-sell driving test slots. [HL2444]

Lord Hendy of Richmond Hill: It is currently not a criminal offence to re-sell driving test slots.

To ensure fairness for everyone wanting to book a practical driving test, the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) continues to work hard to combat the unscrupulous practice of reselling tests, often at significant profit. The agency encourages all customers to book a test through the official channel on GOV.UK where customers can book, change and cancel tests. The agency does not license any service to resell test slots.

DVSA operates an online booking service (OBS) for approved driving instructors (ADI) and trainers so that they can book and manage driving and riding tests for their pupils. DVSA has made changes to the OBS by stopping automatic online registrations to use the service, ensuring each company that registers employs an ADI and removing access for any companies not linked to driving instructors.

In January 2023, DVSA changed the terms and conditions for using the booking service to reduce the selling of tests for profit. Since then, the agency has issued 327 warnings, 779 suspensions, and closed 727 business accounts for misuse of its booking service.

DVSA is deploying enhanced bot protection to stop automated systems from buying up test slots unfairly.

DVSA's work in this area is continuing and will continue to take steps to address these practices.

Employees' Contributions and Income Tax

Asked by Lord Patten

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of whether there are categories of employed payers of income tax and national insurance who are not included in the category of "working people". [HL2418]

Lord Livermore: The Government is committed to not raising taxes on working people, which is why it is not increasing the basic, higher or additional rates of income tax, their National Insurance contributions or VAT.

Employers' Contributions

Asked by *Lord Taylor of Warwick*

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to ensure that the meeting of employment targets is not affected by the increase in National Insurance contributions for businesses. [HL2438]

Lord Livermore: The government is committed to reducing labour market inactivity and has set a bold long-term ambition to reach an 80% employment rate. To support this ambition, the government will soon publish the Get Britain Working White Paper which sets out plans focused on supporting young people and those out of work due to ill-health to enter and stay in work.

Energy: Infrastructure

Asked by *Lord Alton of Liverpool*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment, if any, they have made of the adequacy of the Planning Inspectorate's capacity to consider human rights impacts in the sourcing of materials during the examination of applications for Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects relating to energy. [HL2375]

Asked by *Lord Alton of Liverpool*

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have, if any, to review the National Policy Statements under the Planning Act 2008, which require the consideration of human rights impacts in the sourcing of materials in the examination of applications for Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects related to energy. [HL2376]

Baroness Taylor of Stevenage: As public authorities, HMG and the Planning Inspectorate have a duty to act in a way that is compatible with Human Rights in the exercise of their functions under the Planning Act 2008.

It is a matter for government law and policy, such as trade rules and international agreements that determine how the sourcing of materials is regulated, and the Planning Inspectorate will examine applications in a way which is compatible with such requirements. It is implicit that the holder of a Development Consent Order (DCO) will comply with the law on sourcing materials, including human rights impacts such as slavery.

On the 8th July the Chancellor committed to updating relevant National Policy Statements (NPSs) within the year. This review will target NPSs covering the types of national infrastructure which are most critical to achieving the Government's growth and clean energy missions. This will include any NPSs that consider the human rights impacts in the sourcing of materials. Government will launch a consultation on proposed changes to these NPSs in the new year.

Energy: Meters

Asked by *Lord Taylor of Warwick*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact of regional disparities in the use of smart meters. [HL2437]

Lord Hunt of Kings Heath: There are different levels of smart meter penetration across Great Britain. The Department collects and publishes annual statistics on electricity smart meter installation progress at a regional level.

The latest regional statistics show that at the end of March 2024, 64% of domestic electricity meters across Great Britain were smart.

Local Authorities with the highest number of smart meters (74% - 75%) are in the East Midlands, North East, and Yorkshire and The Humber. London and Scotland have experienced slower progress to date, where 54% and 51% of meters were smart respectively.

Financial Services: Croatia

Asked by *Viscount Waverley*

To ask His Majesty's Government what implications the presence of Croatia on the Financial Action Task Force grey list has for the provision of British banking services in relation to that country. [HL2483]

Lord Livermore: The Financial Action Task Force (FATF) publicly lists jurisdictions with weak anti-money laundering and counter terrorism financing regimes. The Money Laundering Regulations 2017 (MLRs) require regulated businesses, including banks, to undertake 'enhanced due diligence' in respect of business relationships and transactions involving countries on the FATF's lists, defined as 'High Risk Third Countries'.

Croatia was listed by the FATF in June 2023, so is a High Risk Third Country for the purposes of the MLRs. While enhanced due diligence measures are required, there is no expectation that services linked to a particular country should be withdrawn due to a country's listing by the FATF.

Flags

Asked by *Lord Lucas*

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by the Minister of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government on 15 October (HC7508), whether (1) the transgender pride flag, and (2) the bisexual pride flag, benefit from deemed consent under Class 7 of Schedule 3 to The Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisement) (England) Regulations 2007; and whether this is reflected in any guidance issued. [HL2410]

Baroness Taylor of Stevenage: Flag advertisements which benefit from deemed consent are set out in Class 7 of Schedule 3 to The Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisement) (England) Regulations 2007. Guidance is set out in [Flying flags: A plain English guide](#).

The Answer includes the following attached material:

Flying Flags guide [Flying flags_ a plain English guide - GOV.UK.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:
<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2024-11-11/HL2410>

Gender and Sex: Research

Asked by *Baroness Jenkin of Kennington*

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Vallance of Balham on 22 October (HL1416), what involvement (1) officials, and (2) Ministers have had in the drafting and content of the review of data, statistics and research on sex and gender, commissioned by the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology, since the general election; and whether they will list the additional stakeholders who have been consulted since the general election. [HL2399]

Lord Vallance of Balham: This is an independent review, and Professor Sullivan is fully responsible for the report's contents and for engaging with relevant stakeholders. Where stakeholders have been engaged since the general election, the decision was made by Professor Sullivan.

As per the Terms of Reference, a draft version of the report was submitted to the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology and to the Cabinet Office ahead of the final version of the report. Ministers have not been involved in the drafting of the report. As per usual practice, officials have provided light-touch, optional feedback on matters of drafting.

Gynaecology: Waiting Lists

Asked by *Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of waiting lists for gynaecology appointments within NHS England; and what steps they will take to reduce them. [HL2629]

Baroness Merron: It is unacceptable that patients are waiting too long to get the care they need. The Department and NHS England are continuously monitoring data on performance and demand for elective care, including for gynaecology services.

At the end of September 2024, the gynaecology waiting list in England stood at 587,909, with 54.6% of Referral to Treatment (RTT) patient pathways waiting within 18 weeks. The median average RTT waiting time for gynaecology incomplete pathways was 15.9 weeks in September 2024.

Tackling waiting lists is a key part of our Health Mission. We will deliver an extra 40,000 operations, scans, and appointments per week, including for gynaecology services, in our first year of Government, as a first step in our commitment to ensuring that patients can expect to be treated within 18 weeks.

There are a range of efforts underway to address the challenges identified and to reduce the time patients are waiting for gynaecological care, including support to trusts where performance is of concern, ongoing efforts to transform outpatient pathways, and the use of surgical hubs which provide high volume low complexity surgery.

In addition, women's health hubs bring together healthcare professionals and existing services to provide integrated women's health services in the community. Women's health hubs aim to improve access to care, patient experiences, and health outcomes for women, whilst reducing healthcare inequalities.

Healthwatch England

Asked by *Lord Bradley*

To ask His Majesty's Government what are the current terms of reference of Healthwatch England. [HL2694]

Baroness Merron: Healthwatch England is the independent statutory national champion for people who use health and social care services. Its functions include gathering and communicating the views of the public on their needs and experiences of health and social care services. Healthwatch England also provides support and assistance to the 152 Local Healthwatch organisations in England.

High Speed 2 Line: Finance

Asked by *Lord Hain*

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Livermore on 7 November (HL1982), whether they will provide a more precise answer to the question of how much funding under the Barnett formula they estimate will go to (1) Scotland, (2) Wales, and (3) Northern Ireland as a result of the latest total for public investment in HS2. [HL2397]

Lord Livermore: At spending reviews, the Barnett formula is applied to changes in a department's overall budget (at department-level) rather than to specific programmes like HS2 (at programme-level). It is for the devolved governments to allocate their funding in devolved areas as they see fit and they are accountable to the devolved legislatures for their decisions.

The Block Grant Transparency publication breaks down all changes in the devolved governments' block grant funding since the 2015 Spending Review up to and including Main Estimates 2023-24. The most recent report was published in July 2023.

High Speed 2 Line: Old Oak Common Station

Asked by *Lord Berkeley*

To ask His Majesty's Government how many passengers they expect to use the new station at Old Oak Common travelling between Reading and Birmingham using HS2. [HL2381]

Lord Hendy of Richmond Hill: Old Oak Common is expected to become one of the busiest stations in the country, with HS2 Ltd forecasts showing it will serve up to 250,000 passengers each day, and provide journey opportunities from the Southwest to Birmingham, Heathrow, the North and North West. Demand for specific routes will be based on the finalised service pattern, but we want to give passengers as much choice as possible to complete their journeys.

Asked by *Lord Berkeley*

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Davies of Gower on 15 December 2023 (HL801), what are their latest estimates of journey times for passengers arriving at the planned new station at Old Oak Common by HS2 travelling to Bond Street station via (1) HS2 to Euston and then the Northern Line, and (2) the Elizabeth Line directly, including allowances for transfer between platforms, train or underground frequency, and access to street level. [HL2382]

Lord Hendy of Richmond Hill: I (Lord Peter Hendy) previously highlighted that the previous Government wrote to you on journey times from Old Oak Common to central London and, after a correction, provided you with the below response for travel to Bond Street.

<i>Old Oak Common to Bond Street</i>	<i>In vehicle time (mins)</i>	<i>Walk time (mins)</i>	<i>Wait time (mins)</i>	<i>Total (mins)</i>
Via HS2 to Euston and London Underground	12.6	16.7	1.3	30.6
Via Elizabeth Line	9.8	13.8	1.2	24.8

The estimated 'in vehicle' and 'walk' times quoted are outputs from the Station Choice Model. This forms part of the Planet Framework Model, which is used to assess the impacts of HS2.

The breakdown of in-vehicle time for passengers travelling to Bond Street via HS2 to Euston is as follows: 6 minutes between Old Oak Common and Euston on HS2 and 6.6 minutes on the London Underground. It is not possible to further break down the walk time in the journey without commissioning further work.

Immigration: Detainees

Asked by *The Lord Bishop of Chelmsford*

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the remarks by Lord Hanson of Flint on 14 October (HL Deb cols 17GC–20GC), when they intend to publish the terms of reference for the Home Office review into immigration detention, including Rule 34 and 35 of the detention centre rules. [HL2388]

Lord Hanson of Flint: The Adults at Risk review should be completed by Spring 2025. It is a wholesale review of the Adults at Risk policy, including Rule 34 and Rule 35 of the detention centre rules. To ensure the review is not constrained, there are no formal terms of reference.

Asked by *The Lord Bishop of Chelmsford*

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the remarks by Lord Hanson of Flint on 14 October (HL Deb cols 17GC–20GC), whether the review into immigration detention will consider the recommendations of the Brook House Inquiry and reassess which of its recommendations to accept. [HL2389]

Lord Hanson of Flint: The Adults at Risk review forms part of the response to one of the recommendations of the Brook House Inquiry (Recommendation 9: Review of the operation of Rule 35 of the Detention Centre Rules 2001). However, it will not cover all areas of the Brook House Inquiry and will not reassess the recommendations made.

Innovation: Finance

Asked by *Baroness Randerson*

To ask His Majesty's Government why this year's Innovation Accelerator funding was limited to three city regions in England and Scotland; and what plans they have to extend it to Wales and Northern Ireland. [HL2423]

Lord Vallance of Balham: The announcement in the Budget extends funding for the three city regions piloting the Innovation Accelerator programme for an additional year. Longer-term decisions regarding the future of the programme, including any extension to new areas, will be considered as part of the next phase of the Spending Review.

Ministers: Official Cars

Asked by *Lord Robathan*

To ask His Majesty's Government how many vehicles of the Government Car Service were available for ministerial use on 11 November in (1) 2016, (2) 2023, and (3) 2024. [HL2426]

Baroness Twycross: The number of Government Car Service (GCS) vehicles allocated for Ministerial use on the 11th November for the specified years is:

- i) 2016: 87.
- ii) 2023: 114.
- iii) 2024: 122.

NHS: Productivity

Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to increase productivity within the NHS. [HL2524]

Baroness Merron: The Government is taking comprehensive steps to increase productivity within the National Health Service. The recent Autumn Budget committed to achieving a 2% productivity growth target in 2025/26. To support this, over £2 billion has been allocated to enhance NHS technology and digital infrastructure. This investment aims to improve electronic patient records, enhance cybersecurity, and expand access through the NHS App. These measures will free up staff time and reduce administrative burdens, increasing overall productivity gains.

The NHS is also working on a 10-Year Health Plan which will set out key reforms to address the recommendations from Lord Darzi's review. These reforms will also drive productivity improvements, and include the aims to optimise clinical workflows, enhance integration between primary, secondary, and community care, and increase focus on preventive measures for chronic diseases.

Office for Equality and Opportunity: Equality

Asked by Baroness Stedman-Scott

To ask His Majesty's Government what is the policy of the Office for Equalities and Opportunities on white privilege. [HL2436]

Baroness Smith of Malvern: We established the Office for Equality and Opportunity to lead work to ensure that whoever you are, wherever you come from, and irrespective of your race or ethnicity, Britain is a country that will respect your contribution and give you a fair chance to get on in life.

Officials in the OEO are working across government to tackle race inequalities, including through our Equality (Race and Disability) Bill, announced in the King's Speech, which will introduce mandatory ethnicity and disability pay gap reporting for larger employers and extend the right to make equal pay claims to ethnic minority and disabled people.

Old Oak Common Station: Construction

Asked by Lord Berkeley

To ask His Majesty's Government how many platforms are being built at the new HS2 station at Old Oak Common for Great Western trains. [HL2379]

Lord Hendy of Richmond Hill: At Old Oak Common, there will be 8 platforms constructed for use by Great Western trains, the Elizabeth Line and Heathrow Express and an additional 6 platforms for high-speed services.

Asked by Lord Berkeley

To ask His Majesty's Government how many trains per hour will be affected, diverted or cancelled between Reading and London Paddington as a result of the construction of the new HS2 station at Old Oak Common; how these figures compare to the current number of trains per hour from (1) the South West, (2) South Wales, (3) Bristol, and (4) Bath; and for how long are any disruptions expected. [HL2380]

Lord Hendy of Richmond Hill: Construction of Old Oak Common Station temporarily blocks access to London Paddington during planned blockades including between 27 and 29 December 2024. Plans are in place to enable passengers to continue their journey by rail as far as possible. On other occasions, 2 out of 4 lines will be closed for engineering work, reducing the number of services able to operate. The future construction programme for Old Oak Common Station is currently under review.

Pakistan: Development Aid

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask His Majesty's Government what consideration they have given to religion in equality impact assessments for allocating Official Development Assistance to Pakistan in each of the past three years; and how many visits or meetings they have undertaken to Christian, Hazara and Ahmadi Muslim groups in the past year. [HL2537]

Lord Collins of Highbury: UK Official Development Assistance to Pakistan is targeted to where it is most needed and effective including, where appropriate, to minority religious communities. The British High Commission in Islamabad conducts a yearly Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) Assessment, where they assess performance on integrating equality considerations into their policy and programme work, including impact on religious minorities. UK officials regularly meet with religious minority communities in Pakistan. The British High Commission's (BHC) Political Counsellor visited Sargodha, Punjab on 23 July to meet with church leaders and Christians affected by blasphemy attacks. UK Officials met with members of the Ahmadi community in October, to discuss recent threats made against the community in Punjab. On 28 March, BHC Islamabad hosted an Interfaith Iftaar, attended by over 80 leaders from 12 faiths.

Planning Permission

Asked by Lord Banner

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they intend to bring into force section 73B of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, pursuant to section 110 of the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023; and if so, when. [HL2378]

Baroness Taylor of Stevenage: The Government is committed to reforming the planning system, via the new National Planning Policy Framework and the Planning Infrastructure Bill. As part of these reforms, we are also considering which provisions from the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023 we will implement and will present more detail on these in due course.

Prisoners: Rehabilitation

Asked by Baroness Porter of Fulwood

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they keep a record of all charities (1) working with prisoners, and (2) working with former prisoners helping them to readjust after release. [HL2511]

Lord Timpson: The Ministry of Justice maintains a contract register to record and report against all suppliers, including charities, who provide goods or services to the Department on a contracted basis. Details of awarded contracts with a minimum value of £10,000 or more are published on Government Contracts Finder.

All HMPPS contracts and grants, in which providers work with prisoners and former prisoners, including those awarded to charities are recorded on the Department's contract management system and the Government Grants Information System (GGIS).

Volunteering arrangements do not operate under contract as there is no financial consideration. For unpaid work placements, these are formalised through Memorandums of Understanding (MoU) which are signed by both the placement provider and the Ministry of Justice. These arrangements are not held on the contract register; however a list of MoUs is maintained.

The provision of services to prison leavers through charities or other Government Department/Local Authority contracts was previously a blind spot in which no formal agreement was in place as these services are delivered at no costs to the Ministry of Justice. This has been rectified through the development of a collaboration agreement, which is a relatively new initiative and we are working with regions to develop these and collate the information centrally to enable the tracking of these arrangements through Commissioning and Contract Management teams.

Private Education: VAT

Asked by Lord Botham

To ask His Majesty's Government what consideration they have given to differentiating between independent

schools with (1) fewer than 200 pupils, and (2) more than 200 pupils, with regard to the imposition of VAT. [HL2387]

Lord Livermore: Ending tax breaks for private schools will secure additional funding to help the government deliver its commitments to the 94% of children who attend state schools.

The Government has published a detailed response to the consultation conducted between July and September. The Government carefully considered over 17,000 responses from a range of stakeholders including schools, school associations, and parents. This was published online and can be found on gov.uk.

Public Transport: Care Leavers

Asked by Baroness Pidgeon

To ask His Majesty's Government what consideration they have given to supporting care leavers aged 18 to 25 with their access to public transport, including reviewing whether to extend the English National Concessionary Travel Scheme to those individuals. [HL2420]

Lord Hendy of Richmond Hill: This government recognises the importance of supporting care leavers, and is keeping public transport affordable having announced a new £3 cap on single bus fares in England outside London throughout the entirety of 2025.

Local authorities in England can and have implemented a wide range of their own local fares initiatives, including some discount schemes for care leavers, utilising alternative funding, such as Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) funding. In the Autumn Budget, the government confirmed £640 million in new BSIP funding for local authorities in England outside London in 2025/26.

Railways: Birmingham and Greater Manchester

Asked by Baroness Randerson

To ask His Majesty's Government what options they are considering for the proposed new rail link between Birmingham and Manchester; and whether they plan to consider forms of public-private partnership. [HL2421]

Lord Hendy of Richmond Hill: While we recognise the concerns about connectivity between Birmingham and Manchester, we will not reverse the previous government's decision to cancel Phase 2 of HS2, and our primary focus now is the safe delivery of HS2 between Birmingham and London at the lowest reasonable cost. We are committed to a long-term approach to infrastructure and investment, taking account of local transport priorities. We are taking into consideration the recent proposal from the Mayors of Greater Manchester and the West Midlands for enhancing rail connectivity between the Midlands and the North-West, including their

ideas for private sector partnerships. We will thoroughly review the fiscal position we have inherited before setting out a clear plan to address capacity and connectivity issues in due course.

Roads: Repairs and Maintenance

Asked by Lord Birt

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the RAC's estimate that there were over one million potholes on UK roads in 2023, as set out in the RAC Pothole Index, published on 23 April 2024; what plans they have to review and identify the most effective methods of road construction for reducing the number of potholes that form; and what plans they have to review and identify the optimum techniques and technologies available for filling in potholes when they do occur. [HL2385]

Lord Hendy of Richmond Hill: RAC's pothole estimate was based on 81 local authority responses to a Freedom of Information request carried out in 2023. The Department agrees that pothole formation occurs more frequently in the winter months, where increased water and ice cause ingress and subsequent road defects to occur.

Whilst the Department does not require notification when highway authorities discover, receive reports of, or repair individual defects on the local highway network, local highway authorities are required to provide road condition information to the Department annually as part of the data obligations set out in the Single Data List. The Department publishes this information on gov.uk as part of its annual statistical releases.

This Government takes the condition of local roads very seriously and is committed to maintaining and renewing the local highway network. At Budget 2024, the Chancellor announced an extra £500 million for local highway maintenance for the 2025/26 financial year, an increase of nearly 50% compared to the current financial year. The Government will confirm funding allocations to English local highway authorities in due course.

The Department for Transport (DfT) allocates this funding to local highways authorities so they can most effectively spend this funding on maintaining and improving their respective network, based upon their local knowledge, circumstances, and priorities. It is up to the respective highway authority how best to spend this funding to fulfil their statutory duty under Section 41 of the Highways Act 1980, but the DfT strongly advocates a risk-based whole lifecycle asset management approach to local authority highways maintenance programmes. This considers all parts of the highway network, such as bridges, cycleways, and lighting columns, and not just the fixing of potholes.

Roundabouts: Safety

Asked by Lord Birt

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to review the (1) design, and (2) safety of major roundabouts with multiple lanes, entrances and exits. [HL2384]

Lord Hendy of Richmond Hill: Whether a roundabout is suitable for any location is entirely a matter for the relevant highway authority to decide upon, taking into account local factors including safety. They are also responsible for reviewing any such installations should concerns arise. National Highways publishes detailed advice on the design of roundabouts in the 'Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (DMRB)'. Use of DMRB is mandatory for the Strategic Road Network, but is available as guidance for all highway authorities.

Schools: Ventilation

Asked by Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to improve ventilation and air filtration in early years and school settings, in the light of a recent study which suggests that COVID-19 infection can cause cognitive impairment in children up to 12 months post-infection. [HL2237]

Baroness Smith of Malvern: The department supports and works with a wide range of academics to understand research relating to the impact of air quality on school users.

Between January 2022 and April 2023, the department provided over 9,000 air cleaning units to over 1,300 settings that had been identified with poor ventilation. The department has published guidance on how to use CO₂ monitors and air cleaning units, which can be accessed here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/using-co-monitors-and-air-cleaning-units-in-education-and-care-settings>.

The department also publishes non-statutory guidance on indoor and outdoor air quality in 'Building Bulletin 101: Guidelines on ventilation, thermal comfort and indoor air quality in schools' (BB101), which can be found in the attached document and also accessed at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/building-bulletin-101-ventilation-for-school-buildings>.

The responsible body, relevant local authority, academy trust or voluntary-aided body are responsible for ensuring the health, safety and welfare of pupils when in their care.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

BB101_Guidelines_on_ventilation_thermal_comfort_an
[BB101_Guidelines_on_ventilation_thermal_comfort_and_indoor
_air_quality_in_schools.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:
<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2024-11-04/HL2237>

Small Businesses: Location

Asked by *Lord Taylor of Warwick*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of reports that small businesses are considering relocating overseas due to concerns about changes announced in the Autumn Budget. [HL2567]

Lord Livermore: The Budget announced generous tax reforms to support small businesses. Most notably, more than doubling the Employment Allowance to £10,500; commitments in the Corporate Tax Roadmap to maintain the Small Profits Rate and marginal relief at their current rates and thresholds, as well as maintaining the Annual Investment Allowance; and freezing the small businesses multiplier for 2025/26.

The UK tax system remains internationally competitive and one of the best places to grow a business. Commitments to not raise Corporation Tax, as well as assurance over future tax changes, provide businesses with the stability and certainty necessary to plan and invest with confidence.

The Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) “welcomed the record increase to the Employment Allowance for small businesses, as well as the protection for small businesses in England from inflationary business rate hikes.”

South Wales and South West: Economic Situation

Asked by *Baroness Wilcox of Newport*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the potential for growth in South Wales and Western England over the next five years; and whether the English Devolution White Paper will include measures to maintain collaboration to support the cross-border economy in that area. [HL2443]

Baroness Taylor of Stevenage: A recent economic assessment undertaken by Oxford Economics, commissioned by Western Gateway on behalf of HMG, forecasts that the West of England and South Wales economies have the potential to grow by 1.4% a year between 2024 and 2029, slightly ahead of the UK excluding London, and if fully recognised, also ahead of other comparable growth areas such as the Oxford-Cambridge Arc and the Scottish Central Belt.

HMG is also currently undertaking the [consultation phase of our new industrial strategy](#) delivering a 10-year plan for growth across the UK and would encourage all regions to participate to be part of a modern and ambitious economic vision for the country.

HMG has already announced the Council of Nations and Regions, which will support cross-border collaboration by bringing together the Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister and the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster with the heads of the devolved governments

and the mayors of combined authorities, combined country authorities and the Mayor of London, to consider shared opportunities and lessons on best practice across the UK.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

Industrial strategy [Invest 2035_ the UK's modern industrial strategy - GOV.UK.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2024-11-11/HL2443>

Students: Fees and Charges

Asked by *Lord Johnson of Marylebone*

To ask His Majesty's Government, for the purposes of increases in undergraduate tuition fees in the 2025–26 academic year, which higher education providers in the Approved (fee cap) category of registration with the Office for Students are providers without a Teaching Excellence Framework award but with an Access and Participation Plan. [HL2400]

Asked by *Lord Johnson of Marylebone*

To ask His Majesty's Government what is the reason for limiting higher education providers without a Teaching Excellence Framework award but with an Access and Participation Plan to undergraduate tuition fee increases of only £25 for full-time courses in the 2024–25 academic year. [HL2401]

Baroness Smith of Malvern: The government recognises that UK higher education (HE) creates opportunity, is an engine for growth in our economy and supports local communities. In recognition of the financial challenges the sector is facing, the government has made the difficult decision to increase tuition fee limits for the 2025/26 academic year in line with the forecast rate of inflation of 3.1%. This will provide additional financial help for HE providers in 2025/26 after seven years of no increases to maximum tuition fees, meaning that fee limits have not kept pace with inflation.

Maximum fees for approved (fee cap) providers without a Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) award and with an access and participation plan will increase by £275 in the 2025/26 academic year from £9,000 to £9,275.

This 3.1% increase is in line with the same percentage uplift to maximum fees for approved (fee cap) providers with a TEF award and with an access and participation plan from £9,250 to £9,535.

There are 58 providers in the approved (fee cap) category of the Office for Students (OfS) Register that do not have a TEF award but do have an access and participation plan for 2024/25. The OfS Register, with these providers, can be viewed here: <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/providers/regulatory-resources/the-ofs-register>.

Travellers: Equality

*Asked by **Baroness Whitaker***

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to address the inequalities faced by Romani, Roma, and Irish Traveller communities; and which team within the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government is responsible for leading that work. [[HL2441](#)]

Baroness Taylor of Stevenage: The Government takes all forms of discrimination and inequality seriously. Efforts to reduce the challenges faced by any group or community – including those from Romani, Roma, and Irish Traveller communities - is at the heart of our mission to rebuild this country. Delivering opportunities for all is work that spans the roles and responsibilities of all parts of this government. We will continue to strive every day, across a range of policy areas and teams, to bring opportunity to people across our country.

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