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**Tuesday
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**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

HOUSE OF LORDS

WRITTEN STATEMENTS AND WRITTEN ANSWERS

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

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<i>Minister</i>	<i>Responsibilities</i>
Baroness Smith of Basildon	Leader of the House of Lords and Lord Privy Seal
Lord Collins of Highbury	Deputy Leader of the House of Lords and Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, 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, Whip
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

Tuesday, 14 January 2025

Changes to International Maritime Law

[HLWS361]

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

I am making this statement to record updates to maritime legislation as a result of changes to international law. This fulfils a commitment made to Parliament to make such a statement. The legislative changes came into force on 1 January 2025.

Some domestic maritime secondary legislation includes ambulatory reference provision to give direct effect in UK law to certain amendments to international obligations. This means that where the legislation refers to a requirement of an international instrument, this reference will be ambulatory; in other words, it is a reference to the most up to date version of that requirement. This approach ensures so far as possible that the UK keeps up to date with its international maritime obligations.

Amendments have been made to two maritime Codes which are made mandatory by the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea, 1974 (SOLAS), which is the main international instrument governing maritime safety: the International Maritime Solid Bulk Cargoes (IMSBC) Code (“the IMSBC Code”) and the International Maritime Dangerous Goods (IMDG) Code (“the IMDG Code”). Two sea areas identified in the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships, 1973 (MARPOL), which are subject to enhanced pollution protection requirements, have been established under the agreed procedure in MARPOL.

The IMSBC Code is made mandatory by Chapter VI of SOLAS and is implemented in the UK by the Merchant Shipping (Carriage of Cargoes) Regulations 2024 (SI No. 2024/637) (“the Carriage of Cargoes Regulations”). The IMSBC Code provides the international regulatory framework for the safe loading, stowage and shipment of solid bulk cargoes other than grain, and includes mandatory carriage requirements specific to each type of solid bulk cargo covered by the Code.

To remain up to date and fit for purpose, the IMSBC Code is amended in the International Maritime Organization (IMO) and a new edition adopted every two years. Changes to the IMSBC Code text are proposed to, and considered by, the IMO’s Sub-Committee on the Carriage of Cargoes and Containers (“CCC”) with participants including member states and industry bodies. The latest edition of the Code was adopted by IMO Resolution MSC.539(107) and became mandatory internationally on 1 January 2025 when, by way of the ambulatory reference provision in the Carriage of Cargoes

Regulations, it also became mandatory in the UK. It includes carriage requirements for a number of new solid bulk cargoes in order to permit and facilitate their safe transport by sea, and amendments to some existing cargo schedules.

The IMDG Code is made mandatory at the international level by Chapter VII of SOLAS, and also by Annex III of MARPOL. The IMDG Code is implemented in the UK by the Merchant Shipping (Carriage of Dangerous Goods and Harmful Substances) (Amendment) Regulations 2024 (SI No. 2024/636) (“the Dangerous Goods Regulations”). The IMDG Code provides the international regulatory framework for the carriage of dangerous goods and marine pollutants by sea. It makes mandatory provision for the classification, notification, packaging, labelling, stowage and segregation of dangerous goods to enable their safe transport by sea.

In order to keep it up to date and harmonised with the requirements for the carriage of dangerous goods in other modes of transport, the IMDG Code is updated in the IMO every two years. The latest edition of the Code was adopted by IMO Resolution MSC.556(108). It applies on a voluntary basis from 1 January 2025 and will become mandatory internationally on 1 January 2026 when, by way of the ambulatory reference provision in the Dangerous Goods Regulations, it will also become mandatory in the UK. It includes clarifications on the requirements for marine pollutants, new provisions for electric vehicles and provisions for cargo tracking devices.

Further amendments to MARPOL will come into force in the UK by way of the ambulatory reference provisions in the Merchant Shipping (Prevention of Oil Pollution) Regulations 2019 (SI 2019/42) (“the Oil Pollution Regulations”) and the Merchant Shipping (Prevention of Pollution by Garbage from Ships) Regulations 2020 (SI 2020/621) (“the Garbage Regulations”). MARPOL contains mandatory requirements for the prevention and control of pollution from ships and identifies geographical areas, known as Special Areas, where sea traffic and the sensitive nature of the marine environment mean that additional control measures are required for the protection of that environment. Annex I of MARPOL, which makes provision for the prevention of pollution by oil from ships, and Annex V of MARPOL, which makes provision for the prevention of pollution by garbage from ships, both include provisions defining the Red Sea as a Special Area. Annex I further defines the Gulf of Aden as a Special Area. Until now, these Special Areas were identified in MARPOL but had not been established as such. MARPOL contains provision to allow the IMO to establish the Special Areas identified in MARPOL. By Resolutions MEPC.381(80) and Resolution MEPC.382(80), the IMO has determined that both Special Areas were established internationally on 1 January 2025. By way of the ambulatory reference provision in the Garbage Regulations, and also by way of specific provision in the Oil Pollution Regulations which replicates the MARPOL procedure, these Special Areas

were also established for the purposes of UK legislation on that date.

Further information and guidance on all amendments referred to in this statement has been published by the Maritime and Coastguard Agency and is available on www.gov.uk.

Legislative Proposals to Counter Ransomware

[HLWS362]

Lord Hanson of Flint: My hon Friend the Minister of State for Security (Dan Jarvis) has today made the following Written Ministerial Statement:

Today the Government is launching a public consultation on proposed legislative measures to combat the threat of ransomware. We want to protect UK businesses from the most harmful cyber crime facing the UK and facilitate growth.

These measures will hit ransomware criminals in their wallets, cutting off their funding; and improve reporting of these cyber incidents, to shine a light on this criminal world and provide law enforcement with the information they need to pursue criminals.

The National Crime Agency assess ransomware as the greatest serious and organised cyber crime threat, the largest cyber security threat, and a risk to the UK's national security. Ransomware incidents are continuing an upward trend.

In 2023, incidents of ransomware attacks reported to the Information Commissioner's Office reached their highest level since 2019 and private sector reporting to the National Crime Agency indicates the number of UK victims appearing on ransomware data leak sites has doubled since 2022. This is reflected globally, with 2023 resulting in the highest financial yield for ransomware criminals so far, with an industry estimate of over \$1bn.

Ransomware criminals ruin lives, wreck businesses and damage the UK economy. The impacts of ransomware - financial, reputational, psychological, and social - can be wide ranging, as seen in recent incidents, such as those affecting Synnovis the supplier of services to the NHS across London, the British Library, Capita, and Royal Mail.

It is this significant risk of harm that warrants focused and specific intervention to reduce the impact of ransomware across the UK.

We are seeking to build on existing resilience and disruption strategies, including sanctions, where the UK has already sanctioned 36 ransomware criminals, and our work with the international Counter Ransomware Initiative, where the UK led a commitment from 48 countries and two international organisations that their governments would not pay ransoms.

The Home Office has developed three world-leading tailored legislative proposals for consultation - they reflect the seriousness of the threat and the need for

transformative action. The measures will be consistent and align with the proposals in the forthcoming Cyber Security and Resilience Bill.

The three measures are:

- 1) A targeted ban on ransomware payments for the public sector and critical national infrastructure – making the essential services the country relies on the most unattractive targets for ransomware criminals.
- 2) Ransomware payment prevention regime – to increase transparency of criminal demands, and provide victims not covered by the ban with advice and guidance before they decide how to respond.
- 3) Mandatory reporting regime for all ransomware incidents – bringing ransomware out of the shadows and maximising information for law enforcement on criminal activity.

The targeted ban will protect the systems that the UK relies on every day for our most critical and essential services. We are making a strong statement to these criminals that there is no financial gain in disrupting the core of our economy.

The consultation explores whether the payment prevention regime should be economy wide or operate via a threshold, with the potential exclusion of individuals and/or small businesses. Such a regime would provide the Government with the ability to block payments and allow law enforcement greater oversight of ransomware, supporting disruptive operations such as the recent success of Operation CRONOS, the NCA-led global collaboration to disrupt Lockbit, one of the most prolific ransomware groups in the world.

For those ransomware incidents that do not result in a payment, we are proposing to introduce a mandatory ransomware incident reporting regime. This could include a threshold-based mandatory reporting requirement for suspected victims of ransomware, with the potential exclusion of individuals and/or small businesses. Our aim is to build the Government and law enforcement's understanding of the threat landscape and allow us to provide greater levels of support and guidance to victims.

The consultation seeks public input on key issues, including: the extent to which supply chains should be captured in the targeted ban; what support the Government can provide to victims, such as improved guidance; the appropriateness of paying ransoms in any circumstances; and the extent to which information should be shared with authorities. These world-leading measures reflect the new Government's commitment to tackling ransomware and making the UK a less attractive target for such attacks globally.

The consultation will run for 12 weeks, and the Government will publish its response in due course. Copies of the consultation document and the related options assessment will be placed in the Libraries of both Houses and made available on Gov.uk.

**UK Delegation to the Parliamentary
Assembly of the Council of Europe**

[[HLWS360](#)]

Baroness Chapman of Darlington: My honourable friend the Minister of State for Europe, North America and Overseas Territories (Stephen Doughty) has today made the following statement:

The Hon. Member for Lichfield (Dave Robertson MP) has been appointed as a full member of the United Kingdom Delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe in place of the Hon. Member for Rugby (John Slinger MP).

Written Answers

Tuesday, 14 January 2025

Ambulance Services and Hospital Beds: Standards

Asked by **Lord Kamall**

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of whether there are enough hospital beds and ambulances for this winter; and what steps are they taking to increase them. [HL3677]

Baroness Merron: The national approach on priorities for winter planning were issued by NHS England on 16 September 2024, setting out the key steps to be taken to support the delivery of high-quality care for patients this winter. Provisions for resourcing of hospital beds and ambulances for this winter are an operational matter for the National Health Service.

The NHS is managing extra demand over the winter period, by strengthening same day emergency care, offering more falls services for older people, and with upgraded 24-hour live data centres.

Avian Influenza: Special Protection Areas

Asked by **Lord Randall of Uxbridge**

To ask His Majesty's Government whether the special protection areas on General Licence 45 were reassessed following the highly pathogenic avian influenza risk-level in wild birds being increased to medium (on 7 October 2024), high (on 30 October 2024) and very high (on 18 December 2024), and under what scenario the licence would be modified or revoked. [HL3902]

Baroness Hayman of Ullock: Defra regularly assesses the local risk of HPAI to internationally protected birds on Special Protected Areas subject to the General licence 45. It has not been necessary to modify or revoke the licence as no gamebirds are being released at the times stated and the biosecurity conditions of GL45 were considered sufficiently precautionary.

Ban Conversion Therapy Coalition

Asked by **Lord Jackson of Peterborough**

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Collins of Highbury on 2 January (HL3671), on which specific dates and times have (1) Ministers and (2) officials met, online or in person, with representatives of the Ban Conversion Therapy Coalition, since 4 July 2024. [HL3815]

Lord Collins of Highbury: As previously indicated, the Government has and will continue to meet with stakeholders both in favour of, or concerned by, the prospect of this legislation. Such meetings will be disclosed in due course as part of relevant Departmental

transparency releases on gov.uk and more generally when we are ready to share our approach to this legislation.

Genetic Technology (Precision Breeding) Act 2023

Asked by **The Earl of Caithness**

To ask His Majesty's Government when they plan to publish a timetable for implementing the provisions in the Genetic Technology (Precision Breeding) Act 2023. [HL3727]

Baroness Hayman of Ullock: This is a devolved matter, and the information provided therefore relates to England only.

The Secretary of State has recently announced that the secondary legislation necessary to implement the precision breeding Act for plants in England will be laid by the end of March.

Defra is also considering the animal welfare framework outlined in the precision breeding Act.

Asked by **Lord Trees**

To ask His Majesty's Government when they intend to lay the secondary legislation required to implement the Genetic Technology (Precision Breeding) Act 2023, following their announcement to do so in September 2024. [HL3914]

Baroness Hayman of Ullock: This is a devolved matter, and the information provided therefore relates to England only.

The Secretary of State has recently announced that the secondary legislation necessary to implement the Precision Breeding Act for plants in England will be laid by the end of March.

Defra is also considering the animal welfare framework outlined in the Precision Breeding Act.

Hospitality Industry and Retail Trade: Business Rates

Asked by **Lord Booth-Smith**

To ask His Majesty's Government how much they estimate the typical restaurant, café, bar or pub will pay in business rates, factoring in the retail, hospitality and leisure relief, for 2025–26 relative to 2024–25. [HL3799]

Lord Livermore: Without any Government intervention, Retail, Hospitality and Leisure relief would have ended entirely in April 2025, creating a cliff-edge for businesses. Instead, the Government has decided to offer a 40 per cent discount to Retail, Hospitality and Leisure properties up to a cash cap of £110,000 per business in 2025-26 and frozen the small business multiplier.

By tapering Retail, Hospitality and Leisure relief to 40%, rather than letting it end, the government has saved

the average pub, with a rateable value (RV) of £16,800, over £3,300 in 2025.

At Budget, the Government also announced that from 2026-27, it intends to introduce permanently lower tax rates for high street RHL properties. This permanent tax cut will ensure that they benefit from much-needed certainty and support. The Government intends to fund this by introducing a higher multiplier on the most valuable properties, which includes the majority of large distribution warehouses, including warehouses used by online giants.

The rates for any new business rate multipliers will be set at Budget 2025 so that the Government can take into account the upcoming revaluation outcomes as well as the economic and fiscal context.

Hunting

Asked by Lord Swire

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the remarks of Temporary Assistant Chief Constable Matt Longman, the national police lead on hunting, that he is "very happy" with claims of two-tier policing of hunts in favour of saboteurs, and how they intend to respond. [HL3561]

Lord Hanson of Flint: National portfolio leads are a matter for the NPCC.

Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme

Asked by Baroness Hodgson of Abinger

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to renew the Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme beyond its current expiry date of 31 March. [HL3735]

Baroness Twycross: We will announce the outcomes of the Business Planning process, including for the Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme, soon.

Ministers' Private Offices: Official Cars

Asked by Baroness Finn

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by the Parliamentary Secretary to the Cabinet Office on 2 December 2024 (HC16599), whether (1) the Cabinet Office, or (2) the Government Car Service, has produced guidance for departmental private offices on the allocation of car provision to senior officials; and what criteria determine whether a senior official should be granted the use of a government car. [HL3879]

Baroness Twycross: Neither the Cabinet Office nor the Government Car Service (GCS) provides guidance to departmental private offices on the allocation of cars for senior officials. Individual departments determine the criteria for the use of a government car in accordance with the Ministerial Code and the Civil Service Management Code.

Public Inquiries

Asked by Lord Wigley

To ask His Majesty's Government how many statutory public inquiries established under the Inquiries Act 2005 are currently still active; whether each inquiry has a target date for its completion; and whether there are financial resources ear-marked to cover the ongoing costs. [HL3780]

Baroness Twycross: There are currently 10 statutory public inquiries established by HM Government under the Inquiries Act 2005 still active. Each inquiry has a sponsor department whose role includes covering ongoing costs. The duration of an inquiry is a matter for the inquiry chair, who usually has target dates for completion.

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