



Daily Report

Tuesday, 14 July 2020

This report shows written answers and statements provided on 14 July 2020 and the information is correct at the time of publication (06:12 P.M., 14 July 2020). For the latest information on written questions and answers, ministerial corrections, and written statements, please visit: <http://www.parliament.uk/writtenanswers/>

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Notes:

Questions marked thus **[R]** indicate that a relevant interest has been declared.

Questions with identification numbers of **900000 or greater** indicate that the question was originally tabled as an oral question and has since been unstarred.

ANSWERS

BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

■ Airbus: Redundancy

Margaret Greenwood:

[\[71808\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the effect of the 1,400 job losses at the Airbus site in Flintshire, North Wales, on the local economy in Wirral.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The proposed job losses by Airbus in the UK are part of its planned 15,000 global job reductions due to the reduced demand for new aircraft, resulting from the global Covid-19 pandemic with airlines deferring and cancelling orders. This has required Airbus to lower production rates by around 40%. Recovery to pre-Covid-19 levels may take between three and five years.

We are working closely with Airbus to help it through the crisis and into recovery. We appreciate this is a worrying time for workers at Airbus who may be affected and will do all we can to support them through Job Centre Plus in England, and in Wales through the services offered by the ReAct programme.

Airbus and UK aerospace suppliers are benefiting from the Government's £330 billion Covid-19 business support packages, including the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme. Companies are also benefiting from our support for aviation and aerospace through UK Export Finance, the Bank of England's Covid Corporate Financing Facility, and grants for research and development.

■ Bounce Back Loan Scheme

Gill Furniss:

[\[71117\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the average time taken for banks to process applications to the Bounce Back Loan Scheme.

Paul Scully:

[Holding answer 13 July 2020]: In order to apply for the Bounce Back Loans scheme, businesses complete a short, simple, online application form, meaning that applications can be submitted and processed rapidly. The Government is providing lenders with a 100% guarantee on each loan to give them the confidence they need to quickly support the smallest businesses in the country.

The scheme has proved popular with businesses and as of 5 July, there had been 1,013,410 approved loans totalling £30.93 billion.

■ Complementary Medicine: Coronavirus

Mike Amesbury: [69659]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what the timeframe is for the reopening of complementary therapy businesses that provide (a) reflexology, (b) aromatherapy, (c) reiki and (d) massage therapy.

Paul Scully:

We have now provided close contact services like reflexology, aromatherapy, reiki and massage therapy in England, with the certainty they need to reopen from Monday 13 July, subject to them following the COVID-secure guidelines.

We appreciate that this is difficult for some businesses. Our approach is guided by the scientific and medical advice, and every step is weighed against the evidence, remembering that the more we open up, the more vigilant we will need to be.

■ Coronavirus: Disease Control

Preet Kaur Gill: [69641]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will publish guidance for businesses affected by a local lockdown due to the covid-19 outbreak on whether employees who live within a lockdown zone but work or trade outside that zone can continue to work.

Paul Scully:

Public Health England, the Joint Biosecurity Centre and NHS Test and Trace constantly monitor levels of infection across the country, and will work with local authorities to implement additional measures if needed.

The Government has published advice for workplace areas to factor in local outbreak measures. For example, the 'Shift patterns and outbreaks' section can be found at <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5eb97e7686650c278d4496ea/working-safely-during-covid-19-offices-contact-centres-110520.pdf>. This advises that shift groups, where contact is unavoidable, happens between the same people.

It is, however, for each business to carry out its own risk assessment, in consultation with their workers, to inform the actions they should take to reduce the risks of COVID-19. All companies have the same obligations to protect the health and safety of their workers and other people who may be affected by their business.

■ Coronavirus: Vaccination

John Spellar: [69428]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, pursuant to her Answer of 9 June 2020 to Question 57083, if he will place in the Library the selection criteria for the decision on where to locate the vaccines manufacture and Innovation centre.

Amanda Solloway:

As per the Hon. Member's request, I will be placing a copy of the document on the selection criteria for the Vaccines Manufacture and Innovation Centre (VMIC) in the Libraries of the House.

■ Energy**Darren Jones:**[\[69650\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, for what reason the proposed energy White Paper has not yet been published; and when he plans to publish that White Paper.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

The Energy White Paper is a priority and it will be published this Autumn. It will drive economic recovery and help deliver our climate goals. It is important it is aligned with measures we are taking to accelerate a green recovery, such as my Rt. Hon. Friend Mr Chancellor of the Exchequer's announcement on 8th July about energy efficiency measures.

■ Equality: Impact Assessments**Marsha De Cordova:**[\[71878\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether his Department has conducted Equalities Impact Assessments on its covid-19 policies.

Paul Scully:

All BEIS policies are assessed against their impact on equality. Where the Department's Covid-19 interventions have been introduced at pace, impact assessments have sometimes been done in parallel with implementation. In cases where schemes are implemented by parties outside the department, delivery partners are required to adhere to all legal requirements and equality assessments.

■ Foreign Companies: Takeovers**Anthony Mangnall:**[\[69694\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to the Written Statement of 22 June 2020, Official Report, HCWS305, Business Update, what discussions he has had with his counterparts in (a) Australia, (b) Canada, (c) New Zealand and (d) the United States on best practice for preventing business takeovers by potentially hostile state actors.

Paul Scully:

The Government engages frequently with its closest allies on a range of subjects, including investment screening. A number of our Five Eyes partners, including Australia, Canada and New Zealand have – like the UK – made changes to their investment screening regimes in response to Covid-19.

■ Infrastructure: Greenhouse Gas Emissions

Nickie Aiken:

[\[69685\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department has taken to ensure that infrastructure projects support the Government's commitment to bring greenhouse gas emissions to net zero by 2050.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

The Government is committed to reduce UK greenhouse gas emissions to net zero by 2050. Reaching this target will end the UK's contribution to global warming.

Our decisions on infrastructure will help us to deliver net zero. At the Spring Budget we announced an ambitious support package worth over £2bn for low carbon infrastructure, including £800m fund for Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS) and £1bn in support for ultra-low emission vehicles. In addition, my Rt. Hon. Friend the Prime Minister recently announced plans for 4,000 new zero-emission buses and a new plan for cycleways as part of upgrades to transport infrastructure.

The replacement of traditional gas and electricity meters with smart meters is a vital national infrastructure upgrade that will enable a more flexible energy system, without which modelling for the Committee on Climate Change estimates the costs of delivering net zero emissions by 2050 could be up to £16 billion higher each year. We have been working with industry to re-mobilise smart meter installations after the disruption caused by COVID-19, and last month confirmed a new four-year policy framework which will take effect from 2021 to drive a market-wide rollout of smart meters across Great Britain.

■ Intellectual Property: UK Relations With EU

Chi Onwurah:

[\[69547\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, pursuant to the Answer of 8 June 2020 to Question 54103 on Intellectual Property: UK Relations with the EU, what assessment he has made of the (a) national and (b) regional economic effect of the receipt by EEA intellectual property practitioners of unreciprocated access to the Intellectual Property Office.

Amanda Solloway:

Officials at the Intellectual Property Office are continuing to have many useful discussions with representative bodies over how to best address this matter once the transition period ends. They are considering ways of capturing the full range of impacts, working with stakeholders.

Chi Onwurah:

[\[69548\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, pursuant to the Answer of 8 June 2020 to Question 54103 on Intellectual Property: UK Relations with the EU, what estimate he has made of the economic effect of UK trade mark attorneys not having reciprocal rights to the EU Intellectual Property Office when EEA practitioners will have access to the UK Intellectual Property Office.

Amanda Solloway:

Officials at the Intellectual Property Office are continuing to have many useful discussions with representative bodies over how to best address this matter once the transition period ends. They are considering ways of capturing the full range of impacts, working with stakeholders.

Meat: Coronavirus**John Spellar:**[\[69425\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to the covid-19 outbreak, what discussions the Government has had with representatives of the meat industry on safety in that sector; for what reasons there is a heightened risk to workers in the meat industry of covid-19; and what steps the Government is taking to protect workers in that sector.

Paul Scully:

The Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs has convened a cross-Government taskforce, and all partners are working collaboratively in that group.

The Health and Safety Executive, who are also a member of the Taskforce, are responsible for the health and safety of workers.

Minimum Wage**Charlotte Nichols:**[\[69732\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of increasing the maximum fine for employers breaching national minimum wage legislation; and if he will make a statement.

Paul Scully:

The Government is committed to cracking down on employers who fail to pay the National Minimum Wage. We are clear that anyone entitled to be paid the minimum wage should receive it.

In the 2019/2020 financial year, HM Revenue & Customs completed over 3,300 investigations and found arrears in just over 1,200 of them. They identified £20.8 million in arrears for over 263,000 workers and issued just under 1,000 penalties, totalling £18.5 million to non-compliant employers.

The Government increased the penalties multiplier in 2016 to 200% of the value of arrears per worker, (it was 100% from 2014-16 and 50% before March 2014). In addition, the penalty cap increased to £20,000 per worker in 2016, up from £5,000 per employer before March 2014. The penalty multiplier percentage should be considered in combination with the cap per worker and the lack of any cap per employer, which means that there is no cap on the total penalty an employer may face. More information is available [here](#).

In its December 2018 response to the Labour Market Enforcement Strategy 2018/19, the Government rejected a recommendation from the Director of Labour Market

Enforcement that the penalty multiplier be increased again on the grounds that there was insufficient evidence to justify a higher penalty given the high penalty levels already in operation.

■ OneWeb

Chi Onwurah: [\[69543\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, which Departments participated in the purchase of OneWeb; and what the expected return is on the Government's investment.

Amanda Solloway:

The Government collectively reviewed and agreed to lead a successful bid to acquire OneWeb, who develop cutting-edge satellite technology in the UK and in the United States.

This investment is likely to make an economic return, with due diligence showing a strong commercial basis for investment. The deal contributes to the government's plan to join the first rank of space nations, and signals the government's ambition for the UK to be a pioneer in the research, development, manufacturing, and exploitation of novel satellite technologies enabling enhanced broadband through the ownership of a fleet of Low Earth orbit satellites.

Chi Onwurah: [\[69544\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what discussions he had with the UK Space Agency prior to the purchase of OneWeb.

Amanda Solloway:

The Government collectively reviewed and agreed to lead a successful bid to acquire OneWeb, who develop cutting-edge satellite technology in the UK and in the United States.

This investment is likely to make an economic return, with due diligence showing a strong commercial basis for investment. The deal contributes to the government's plan to join the first rank of space nations, and signals the government's ambition for the UK to be a pioneer in the research, development, manufacturing, and exploitation of novel satellite technologies enabling enhanced broadband through the ownership of a fleet of Low Earth orbit satellites.

■ Parental Leave and Pay: Childbirth

Dan Jarvis: [\[71772\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what plans he has to bring forward legislative proposals on neonatal leave and pay entitlement as announced in the March 2020 Budget.

Paul Scully:

The Government is committed to providing parents with an entitlement to take extended leave for neonatal care, to support those new mothers and fathers who need it during the most stressful days of their lives.

This is why we committed at Budget to create an entitlement to Neonatal Leave and Pay for employees whose babies spend an extended period of time in neonatal care, providing up to 12 weeks paid leave so that parents do not have to choose between returning to work and taking care of their vulnerable newborn.

The new entitlement will be brought forward in due course through the necessary legislation as part of the Employment Bill.

■ Physiotherapy: Coronavirus**Esther McVey:**[\[69530\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that soft tissue therapists can return to work.

Paul Scully:

We have now provided close contact services like Soft Tissue Therapists in England, except Leicester, with the certainty they need to reopen from Monday 13 July, subject to them following the COVID-secure guidelines.

We appreciate that this has been difficult for some businesses. Our approach is guided by the scientific and medical advice, and every step is weighed against the evidence, remembering that the more we open up the more vigilant we will need to be.

Esther McVey:[\[69532\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, for what reason soft tissue therapists were not included in the 4 July 2020 reopening plans for people dealing with medical issues.

Paul Scully:

There is clearly a risk of greater transmission in close contact services. That is why we have had to phase their introduction. We had to make difficult choices to keep the R rate below 1.

We have now provided close contact services like Soft Tissue Therapists in England, except Leicester, with the certainty they need to reopen from Monday 13 July, subject to them following the COVID-secure guidelines.

We appreciate that this has been difficult for some businesses. Our approach is guided by the scientific and medical advice, and every step is weighed against the evidence, remembering that the more we open up the more vigilant we will need to be.

■ Post Office Horizon IT System Independent Review**Marion Fellows:** [\[71096\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what the timescale is for the appointment of the Chair of the Independent Review into the Post Office Horizon system.

Paul Scully:

We plan to appoint a Chair so that they can start the inquiry by September at the latest.

■ Post Office: Annual Reports**Marion Fellows:** [\[69610\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether the Post Office Report and Accounts for the financial year ended 31 March 2020 are planned to be laid before Parliament before 22 July 2020.

Paul Scully:

The Government recognises the critical role that post offices play in communities and for small businesses across the UK, which is why we committed to safeguard the post office network and protect existing rural services. The overall number of post offices across the UK remains at its most stable in decades with over 11,500 branches thanks to significant Government investment of over £2 billion since 2010.

Post Office Limited's Report and Accounts for the financial year ended 31 March 2020 will not be laid before parliament before 22 July 2020. Under the Companies Act, firms have 9 months after the relevant financial year ends to file their accounts, meaning the end of December 2020 for Post Office Limited. Companies House has provided an optional three-month extension of this deadline due to Covid-19. In recent years Post Office Limited has laid its report and accounts before Parliament between September and December.

■ Post Office: ICT**Marion Fellows:** [\[69607\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, when will the Fujitsu's contract to provide Post Office Ltd's IT Horizon system will be up for renewal; and whether that contract contains an option to terminate before the scheduled renewal or end date.

Marion Fellows: [\[69608\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether the contract to supply Post Office Ltd's IT Horizon system be (a) put out for tender or (b) renegotiated with Fujitsu at the end of the current contract.

Paul Scully:

The Government recognises the critical role that post offices play in communities and for small businesses across the UK, which is why we committed to safeguard the post office network and protect existing rural services. The overall number of post offices across the UK remains at its most stable in decades with over 11,500 branches thanks to significant Government investment of over £2 billion since 2010.

While the Government sets the strategic direction for the Post Office, it allows the company the commercial freedom to deliver this strategy as an independent business. The details regarding contracts with Fujitsu, is an operational matter for Post Office Limited. I have asked Nick Read, the Group Chief Executive of Post Office Limited, to write to the Hon Member about this matter. A copy of his reply will be placed in the libraries of the House.

■ Postgraduate Education: Finance**Chi Onwurah:**[\[69545\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what financial support there is to cover the costed extensions to stipends of charity-funded PhD students.

Amanda Solloway:

The Government recognises that there are significant pressures on PhD students and on charities as a result of the impact of COVID-19.

This impact includes a loss of income for charities, which is why the Government has pledged £750 million to ensure Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprises, including medical research charities, can continue their vital work in supporting the country during the coronavirus outbreak.

Furthermore, on 27 June the Government also announced 2 support packages to protect research jobs and ground-breaking research projects impacted by coronavirus. Firstly, around £280 million of government funding has been made available to universities impacted by coronavirus that will fund extensions to grants and support researchers' salaries. Secondly, from this autumn UK universities will be able to access a series of government grants and long-term low-interest loans covering up to 80% of their income losses caused by an expected decline in international students, to ensure that crucial research can continue. As part of these packages, we will be asking universities to consider how they can support charity-funded research, including the PhD students involved, through this funding.

Charities and higher education providers can also access cross-cutting government support schemes, including the Business Interruption Loan Schemes and the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme.

While charities and higher education providers are independent organisations and are responsible for their own decisions on funding, the Government is continuing to work with the sector, including with the Association of Medical Research Charities, to understand the impacts of COVID-19.

■ Rainforests: Brazil

Preet Kaur Gill:

[\[68765\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what representations he has made to his Brazilian counterpart on the (a) continued deforestation of the Amazon rainforest, and (b) effect of that deforestation on UK businesses operating in Brazil.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

I am concerned by data that suggests a recent increase in deforestation in the Brazilian Amazon, and am aware of concerns raised by UK business and consumers on risks to supply chains. Government officials working in London and Brazil routinely monitor deforestation rates and risks.

We have a long-established government partnership with Brazil to tackle deforestation, promote sustainable growth and mitigate climate change, and supported by £200m of UK International Climate Finance. This includes promoting business models that can be scaled up, like a proposed green bond to help Brazilian farmers avoid moving into pristine territory, under our UK Partnerships for Forests programme, and international partnerships to incentivise at scale the protection of standing forests through REDD Early Movers. This complements UK diplomatic and technical dialogue in Brazil, working at the Federal and State levels of Brazilian Government. The HMG-convened UK Roundtable on Sustainable Soy has also been an important forum for UK businesses and consumers to work together to engage Brazilian partners on ensuring resilient, sustainable trade.

The UK stands ready to support Brazil's current and future efforts to counter increasing deforestation rates, including as new global ambition is considered for a successful UK COP26 Presidency.

■ Research: Coronavirus

Ruth Jones:

[\[71882\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to support research on the long-term health consequences of covid-19.

Amanda Solloway:

UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) and National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) have announced an £8.4 million project that will investigate the physical and mental health impacts of hospitalised patients. The Post-HOSPitalisation COVID-19 (PHOSP-COVID) study, led by Professor Chris Brightling from the University of Leicester, aims to recruit 10,000 patients from across the UK. This will make it one of the world's largest studies into the long-term health consequences of COVID-19. Results from the study will inform the development of new and better measures to treat and rehabilitate patients hospitalised with COVID-19.

■ Royal Mail and Post Office: Contracts

Marion Fellows:

[\[69609\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what the length of the new commercial agreement between Royal Mail and Post Office Ltd is planned to be; and whether he plans to alter the terms of that agreement.

Paul Scully:

The Government has no role in commercial agreements between Royal Mail and Post Office Ltd. The length and terms of such agreements are contractual matters for the businesses concerned.

■ Small Businesses: Coronavirus

Henry Smith:

[\[68687\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will take steps to review the criteria for distributing and allocating funding through the Discretionary Grant Fund to local councils for supporting businesses during the covid-19 outbreak.

Paul Scully:

The Local Authority Discretionary Grants Fund is aimed at small businesses with ongoing fixed property-related costs that are not liable for business rates or rates reliefs.

Local authorities are responsible for defining the precise eligibility for this Fund and may choose to make payments to other businesses based on local economic need, subject to those businesses meeting the specific eligibility criteria.

We are asking local authorities to prioritise the following types of businesses for grants from within this funding pot:

- Small businesses in shared offices or other flexible workspaces. Examples could include units in industrial parks, science parks, and incubators which do not have their own business rates assessment.
- Regular market traders with fixed building costs, such as rent, who do not have their own business rates assessment.
- Bed & breakfasts which pay Council Tax instead of business rates.
- Charity properties in receipt of Charitable Rate Relief, which would otherwise have been eligible for Small Business Rates Relief or Rural Rate Relief.

Businesses already in receipt of the Small Business grant or a Retail, Hospitality and Leisure grant are not eligible for this fund. Businesses who are eligible for or in receipt of the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme are now eligible to apply for this scheme.

There is currently no plan to change eligibility criteria for this scheme. Officials are keeping in close contact with local authorities to monitor the progress of the scheme.

Guidance for Local Authorities was published 13 May:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-on-business-support-grant-funding>.

CABINET OFFICE

■ Business: Closures

Jon Trickett: [70319]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many businesses have ceased trading in Hemsworth constituency since March 2020.

Chloe Smith:

The information requested falls under the remit of the UK Statistics Authority. I have therefore asked the Authority to respond.

Attachments:

1. UKSA's response [PQ70319 (1).pdf]

■ Constituencies

Jonathan Gullis: [70525]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps he is taking to ensure that equal constituency sizes are in place before the next general election.

Chloe Smith:

The Government committed, in its 2019 Manifesto, to delivering updated and equal UK Parliamentary boundaries with the aim of making sure that every vote counts the same - a cornerstone of democracy.

The Parliamentary Constituencies Bill sets the framework of future boundary reviews, including the next review due to begin in early 2021. The Bill is scheduled to complete its stages in the House of Commons on 14 July and will then proceed to the House of Lords.

This Bill provides that the next boundary review will run to a slightly shorter timetable of approximately 2 years and 7 months. This one-off change aims to ensure that updated and equal Parliamentary boundaries are delivered.

■ Coronavirus: Death

Jon Trickett: [69440]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many deaths due to covid-19 there were per head of the population in each NHS Trust area as of 28 April 2020.

Chloe Smith:

The information requested falls under the remit of the UK Statistics Authority. I have therefore asked the Authority to respond.

Attachments:

1. UKSA's response [PQ69440 (2).pdf]

■ Coronavirus: Wales**Simon Baynes:**[\[71179\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what plans the Government has to award honours to individuals and organisations that have helped to tackle the covid-19 outbreak in Wales.

Chloe Smith:

I refer the Honourable member to the answer given to PQ [68430](#) on 7 July 2020.

■ English Language: Ethnic Groups**Neil O'Brien:**[\[70493\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what proportion of (a) women and (b) men who were (i) White British, (ii) Indian, (iii) Bangladeshi, (iv) Pakistani, (v) Black African and (vi) Black Caribbean had poor English proficiency in (A) 1991, (B) 2001 and (C) 2011.

Chloe Smith:

The information requested falls under the remit of the UK Statistics Authority. I have therefore asked the Authority to respond. A copy of the UKSA response will be placed in the Library of the House.

■ Owner Occupation and Rented Housing: Ethnic Groups**Neil O'Brien:**[\[70492\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what proportion of (a) White British, (b) Indian, (c) Pakistani, (d) Bangladeshi, (e) Black African and (f) Black Caribbean households were (i) owner occupiers, (ii) social renters and (iii) private renters in each year since 1991.

Chloe Smith:

The information requested falls under the remit of the UK Statistics Authority. I have therefore asked the Authority to respond. A copy of the UKSA response will be placed in the Library of the House.

■ Public Appointments**Naz Shah:**[\[71076\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what (a) processes and (b) procedures are in place to elect members to commissions established by the Government.

Chloe Smith:

As has been the case under successive administrations, Government establishes a range of statutory and non-statutory commissions, with different functions. Where a commission's work is long term it may be listed on the public appointments Order in Council and appointments will be made by ministers in line with the Governance Code for Public Appointments. If the work of a commission is short-term, members

may be appointed in line with the long standing practice that ministers can directly appoint individuals to undertake short-term pieces of work.

■ **Rural Areas: Ministerial Responsibility**

Jim Shannon:

[\[68704\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, which Government Minister has responsibility for rural social isolation.

Chloe Smith:

The UK Government's work on loneliness is coordinated by DCMS and led by Baroness Barron. Lord Gardiner, as Rural Affairs Minister, works closely with her to make sure the needs of those living in isolated rural communities are properly considered and taken into account.

■ **Unemployment: Coronavirus**

Margaret Greenwood:

[\[71806\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many and what proportion of (a) disabled and (b) non-disabled people have lost their job as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Chloe Smith:

The information requested falls under the remit of the UK Statistics Authority. I have therefore asked the Authority to respond.

Attachments:

1. UKSA's response [PQ71806.pdf]

DEFENCE

■ **Armed Forces Compensation Scheme: Clwyd**

Simon Baynes:

[\[71173\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many armed forces veterans in Clwyd South constituency are in receipt of funds from the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme.

Johnny Mercer:

The Armed Forces and Reserve Forces Compensation Scheme came into force on 6 April 2005 to pay compensation for injury, illness or death attributable to Service that occurred on or after that date. It replaced the previous compensation arrangements provided by the War Pensions Scheme and the attributable elements of the Armed Forces and Reserve Forces Pensions Scheme. Tax-free lump sum awards are paid to all Service personnel and veterans as compensation for pain and suffering for an injury or illness that is predominantly caused or made worse by Service. Where a lump sum award has been made at tariff levels 1-11 (reflecting a more serious injury/illness), the claimant will also be awarded a tax-free index-linked income

stream known as a Guaranteed Income Payment (GIP). A GIP will be paid from service termination for life to recognise long-term loss of earnings.

The most recent statistics on the number of armed forces pension and compensation recipients by Parliamentary constituency is published on the Gov.uk website and can be found at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/location-of-armed-forces-pension-and-compensation-recipients-2019>

A further update will be published in August 2020.

■ **Armed Forces: Civil Proceedings**

John Healey:

[70981]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, when he will publish the Government's response to the consultation on Legal protections for armed forces personnel and Veterans serving in operations outside the United Kingdom, which closed on 13 October 2019.

Johnny Mercer:

We plan to publish the Government's response to the public consultation on Legal Protections for Armed Forces Personnel and Veterans serving in operations outside the United Kingdom around the time of Second Reading of the Overseas Operations (Service Personnel and Veterans) Bill.

■ **Armed Forces: Complaints**

Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck:

[71067]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many Service Complaints his Department received from armed forces personnel 15 to 18; and what the outcome was of those complaints.

Johnny Mercer:

The Service Complaints (SC) procedure exists to provide recourse to members of the Armed Forces (or those who are subject to Service Law) who are aggrieved due to the actions of either individuals, or the Service as a whole. SCs can cover a range of issues, from allowances and promotions to bullying and harassment. I can confirm that in the last calendar year (1 Jan 2019 - 31 Dec 2019), less than five SCs were received from Service Personnel aged 16 - 18. As 16 is the lowest age a person can join the UK Armed Forces, there were no SCs from those aged 15. Due to the figure being less than five (this has been rounded to comply with data protection), the outcomes cannot be given, to protect the identities of those concerned.

■ Armed Forces: Coronavirus**Stephen Morgan:** [\[71862\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps he is taking to ensure that families of service personnel stationed overseas are supported in the event that their partners serving abroad contract covid-19.

James Heappey:

The Ministry of Defence (MOD) regularly and routinely deploys large numbers of personnel overseas and as such the support network, policies and processes are well established. Families of Service personnel affected by covid-19 who are deployed abroad have the same suite of support available to all our Service Families, regardless of what caused the person to fall ill. Each family has a designated Point of Contact for the duration of a deployment to act as an intermediary for accessing welfare support from the Parent Unit. Operating in around 80 countries, we are experienced in dealing with a range of issues, both at home and abroad, with the welfare of our Service Families being of paramount importance.

Stephen Morgan: [\[71863\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps he is taking to safeguard the wellbeing of armed forces personnel stationed overseas in locations potentially prone to a covid-19 outbreak.

James Heappey:

Further to the answer given during Defence oral questions on Monday 6 July 2020, The Ministry of Defence has developed and implemented a package of Covid-19 protection measures (social distancing, isolation, quarantine and specialist medical air evacuation) for each overseas location. All non-essential travel has been halted to minimise the risk of transmission, and following assessment, those deemed most medically vulnerable have been returned home. Commanders in each theatre have the ability to suspend activity as required to ensure force protection. The Department continues to review where our personnel are serving during the pandemic and the support they may need whilst doing so.

■ Armed Forces: Housing**Theresa Villiers:** [\[69493\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many new homes have been built for service (a) men and (b) women in the last two years.

Jeremy Quin:

There have been 985 Service Family Accommodation properties built for Service personnel over the last two years as at 30 June 2020.

Theresa Villiers: [\[69494\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will make it his policy to ensure that new homes built for service (a) men and (b) women are constructed to high levels of energy efficiency.

Jeremy Quin:

The Ministry of Defence (MOD) has policy in place to ensure that providers of new build homes construct properties to achieve high levels of energy efficiency.

The MOD is also developing pilot projects this year to identify how best to maximise the energy performance of residential buildings and reduce carbon emissions. Two pilot projects will be carried out at RAF Marham and RAF Brize Norton, retrofitting innovative technologies to existing buildings.

Theresa Villiers:[\[69495\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps he is taking to improve the (a) insulation and (b) energy efficiency of buildings owned by (i) his Department and (ii) the armed services.

Jeremy Quin:

The Department has invested in energy saving initiatives within the Defence Estate, including LED lighting, improving Building Management Control, the installation of pipe lagging and the replacement of boilers and heating systems. In addition, the Defence Related Environmental Assessment Method (DREAM) is an environmental performance assessment required for new build and refurbishment projects within Ministry of Defence (MOD). DREAM has a focus on the various means to reduce energy and improve efficiency.

Energy Audits are completed across the highest consuming Area Utility sites. This promotes the identification of future opportunities to help drive down cost, consumption and CO2 emissions.

Across the MOD housing estate, the annual improvement programme includes a range of energy efficiency measures such as: the installation of new boilers, doors and windows; improving loft and external wall insulation; replacing roofs; and removal and capping of chimneys.

■ Armed Forces: Officers**Scott Benton:**[\[71910\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the socio-economic diversity among people training to become officers in all parts of the armed forces; and what steps he is taking to encourage more applicants from lower socio-economic groups to apply to join the armed forces as an officer.

Johnny Mercer:

The Ministry of Defence does not hold information on the socio-economic backgrounds of Armed Forces personnel which could inform such an assessment. However, the Armed Forces are working in line with the Government's priority to build a fairer society, aiming to attract talent from the widest possible base from across the UK, regardless of socio-economic background, educational status or ethnicity. The education and training provided allows individuals to gain the necessary skills and

experience to enable them to progress as far as their aptitude will take them, regardless of their background.

■ **Iraq: Coronavirus**

Stephen Morgan: [\[71864\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of recent trends in the level of covid-19 cases in Iraq on the operational success of Operation Shader.

James Heappey:

We are committed to the protection and wellbeing of our deployed personnel and will take all necessary steps to ensure their safety. We constantly monitor Covid-19 cases across all operational theatres, including Iraq, and employ measures to comply with both UK and host nation and coalition requirements to help contain Covid-19.

Counter-Daesh operations are continuing; however, in March, we redeployed a portion of personnel based in Iraq back to the UK following a slowing demand for training of Iraqi Security Forces, due to Covid-19. We keep this situation under close review and we remain fully committed to the Global Coalition.

■ **Joint Strike Fighter Aircraft**

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[71676\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 9 July 2020 to Question 69468 on Joint Strike Fighter Aircraft, what the estimated period of cover is for the (a) Deployed Spares Pack and (b) Afloat Spares Pack.

Jeremy Quin:

The planning assumption for a Deployed Spares Pack is that it will support 12 aircraft for the first ten days of a land-based deployment. An Afloat Spares Pack is planned to support 12 embarked aircraft for 28 days.

■ **Ministry of Defence: Tree Planting**

Theresa Villiers: [\[69491\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps he is taking to ensure that Ministry of Defence land is included in Government programmes to (a) plant trees and (b) create new forests.

Theresa Villiers: [\[69492\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, which areas of (a) Ministry of Defence and (b) armed services land is being used in relation to the tree planting programmes supported by the Government.

Jeremy Quin:

Ministry of Defence (MOD) officials are working closely with colleagues at the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and the Forestry Commission to ensure suitable MOD land is included within Government Programmes.

MOD officials are undertaking an extensive UK wide survey to establish how much potential land is available for woodland creation on its estate.

Site specific areas for new woodland are currently being finalised in Long-Term Forest Plans. MOD officials have identified potential tree planting opportunities across 25 UK sites, totalling some 750ha, potentially 1.5 - 2 million trees dependent on planting schemes.

Advanced planning work is already underway at Otterburn, Okehampton and Drifffield Training Areas.

■ **Type 26 Frigates: Procurement**

Mr Kevan Jones:

[\[70339\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 6 July 2020 to Question 65949 on Type 26 Frigates: Procurement, for what reason the decision on the second tranche of funding for the Type 26 Frigate has been delayed.

Jeremy Quin:

There is no delay; on current plans the separate approval and contract for the Type 26 Batch 2 Frigates is expected to be awarded in the early 2020s.

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

■ **Arts and Cultural Heritage: Coronavirus**

Florence Eshalomi:

[\[71934\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what financial support (a) his Department, (b) Arts Council England and (c) other public bodies are making available to support cultural and heritage organisations in London during the covid-19 outbreak.

Florence Eshalomi:

[\[71935\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what financial support is available from (a) the Government, (b) Arts Council England and (c) other public bodies for freelance and self-employed workers in the cultural and heritage sectors.

Caroline Dinéage:

On 5 July, DCMS announced a major £1.57 billion support package for key cultural organisations to help them through the coronavirus pandemic. This funding will provide targeted support to organisations across a range of sectors, including performing arts and theatres, museums and galleries, heritage sites, live music venues and independent cinema.

We also recognise the crucial role that individuals play in making our arts and creative industries world-leading. As a result of these grants and loans, organisations will be more able to resume cultural activity, albeit in a socially distanced way, which will increase employment opportunities for freelancers.

Alongside this, cultural and heritage organisations have been able to take advantage of the unprecedented support made available by the Government, including the Job Retention Scheme and a years' business rates holiday. Many will also benefit from VAT reductions announced this week. DCMS' Arms Length Bodies Historic England and the National Lottery Heritage Fund have also made emergency response packages available, totalling £55 million, for those organisations most in need. In March, Arts Council England (ACE) also announced a £160m emergency response package to complement the Government's financial measures - this includes £140 million of support for artistic organisations, and £20 million for individuals, including self-employed practitioners, so they can better sustain themselves, and their work, in the coming months. More than 9000 individuals and organisations have been successful in applying for this emergency funding.

In addition to the Government's Self-employment Support Scheme and support available via these tailored support packages, the newly announced £120 million for investment in capital projects in the culture and heritage sectors will help to get projects back on track, generating a pipeline of work for the heritage sector and supporting many freelancers and self-employed workers, including skilled crafts people.

■ Arts and Hospitality Industry: Coronavirus

Paula Barker:

[71925]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if he will take steps with the Chancellor of the Exchequer to provide immediate (a) business and employment support packages and (b) access to finance for company directors in the (i) creative sector and (ii) night time economy.

Caroline Dinanage:

We appreciate that the Covid-19 pandemic presents a huge challenge to the creative and night time industries and the freelancers and the self-employed workers within it. The Government's response has been one of the most generous and comprehensive in the world, including the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, the Self-Employed Income Support Scheme and the Bounceback Loan Scheme and business rates reliefs. In addition, the Government has adapted the welfare system so that the self-employed can access Universal Credit in full, to help people get quicker and more generous support when they need it most.

On Sunday 5 July 2020, the Secretary of State announced a major £1.57 billion support package for key cultural organisations to help them through the coronavirus pandemic. This funding will provide targeted support to organisations across a range of cultural and creative sectors including some businesses operating in the night time economy.

We are working closely with DCMS' Arm's Length Bodies to develop guidance indicating who can apply for the different elements of this funding, and we will publish detailed guidance as soon as possible in July.

■ Charities: Coronavirus

Chris Elmore:

[67728]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, with reference to the news story, Chancellor sets out extra £750 million coronavirus funding for frontline charities, published on 8 April 2020, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of extending the six month deadline for charities to spend their proportion of funding in order to allocate that funding to where it will have the greatest effect.

Mr John Whittingdale:

Government is not planning to extend the timeframes for this funding to be spent based on the fact that this package is intended to provide short term funding in response to the immediate impacts of Covid-19.

Of the £750m, £200m has been allocated to the Coronavirus Community Support Fund, which is being distributed by The National Lottery Community Fund in England. This funding will help to maintain and enhance services for vulnerable people affected by the current crisis, where delivery organisations are experiencing income disruption and/or increased demand for their services.

How to apply: <https://www.tnlcommunityfund.org.uk/funding/covid-19/learn-about-applying-for-emergency-funding-in-england>

We have published clear and comprehensive guidance on the £750 million and how organisations can apply for it on Gov.uk. This guidance will be updated frequently: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/financial-support-for-voluntary-community-and-social-enterprise-vcse-organisations-to-respond-to-coronavirus-covid-19>

■ Circuses: Coronavirus

Alex Sobel:

[71155]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what plans he has to allow circuses to reopen as covid-19 lockdown restrictions are eased.

Caroline Dinenage:

We are committed to getting the performing arts sector fully back up and running as soon as it is safe to do so. It is a priority of my department to work with the arts and cultural sectors to address the challenges of reopening.

The Secretary of State recently revealed a five stage roadmap that the government will work through to get the performing arts sectors back up and running as soon as possible:

- Stage One - Rehearsal and training (no audiences)
- Stage Two - Performances for broadcast and recording purposes
- Stage Three - Performances outdoors with an audience and pilots for indoor performances with a limited socially-distanced audience

- Stage Four - Performances allowed indoors and outdoors (but with a limited socially-distanced audience indoors)
- Stage Five - Performances allowed indoors / outdoors (with a fuller audience indoors)

On the 11th July, we moved to Stage Three. This means that performances outdoors can take place in line with this guidance. This includes marquees or tented structures where performance occurs in front of a live audience, such as tented circus events. DCMS will work with sector representative bodies to select a number of pilots for indoor performances with a socially distanced audience, as we look to move into Stage Four.

■ Creative Europe

Florence Eshalomi:

[\[71214\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what plans he has to replace Creative Europe media funding.

Caroline Dinanage:

While the Government has taken the decision not to seek participation in Creative Europe's 2021-27 programme, we remain committed to supporting the UK's thriving cultural and creative economy. We will continue to invest money directly into the UK's cultural and creative sectors, continuing to support and grow their world-class activity on the international stage. Now we have taken back control of our money, we are able to focus spending on specific UK priorities including on our world class arts, heritage and creative industries. Officials are developing options for domestic alternatives to Creative Europe, which will be considered in line with upcoming fiscal events including the Comprehensive Spending Review.

■ Culture: Coroanvirus

Tracy Brabin:

[\[71842\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, on what date organisations will be able to apply for support from the £1.57 billion cultural industries support package.

Tracy Brabin:

[\[71843\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, on what date he plans to announce the delivery partners for the £1.57 billion cultural support package.

Tracy Brabin:

[\[71846\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what proportion of the £1.57 billion cultural support package he plans to allocate to each region of England.

Florence Eshalomi:

[\[71932\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, with reference to the announcement entitled, £1.57 billion investment to protect Britain's world-class cultural,

arts and heritage institutions, published on 5 July 2020, what the (a) eligibility criteria, (b) timeline and (c) application process are for accessing this package.

Florence Eshalomi:

[\[71933\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, with reference to the announcement entitled, £1.57 billion investment to protect Britain's world-class cultural, arts and heritage institutions, published on 5 July 2020, what his timescale is for publishing details of the applications process for (a) loan and (b) grants available through that package.

Florence Eshalomi:

[\[71936\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, when the financial support from (a) his Department, (b) Arts Council England and (c) other public bodies will be made available to cultural and heritage organisations.

Caroline Dineneage:

On 5 July, DCMS announced a major £1.57 billion support package for key cultural organisations to help them through the coronavirus pandemic. This funding will provide targeted support to organisations across a range of sectors, including performing arts and theatres, museums and galleries, heritage sites, live music venues and independent cinema.

We want this package, which will be delivered through Arts Council England, Historic England, National Lottery Heritage Fund, and the British Film Institute, to support organisations across the cultural, heritage and creative sectors. We will publish further detailed guidance - including eligibility and application processes - as soon as possible in July.

Tracy Brabin:

[\[71844\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if he will publish the submission that Arts Council England made to his Department requesting support for the cultural industries.

Caroline Dineneage:

In line with its hugely important role in supporting and developing England's arts and culture, DCMS has worked closely with Arts Council England during the Covid-19 crisis to deliver tailored support packages at speed, and to develop the major £1.57 billion support package for key cultural organisations.

DCMS will continue to work closely with the Arts Council as the landscape develops, but has no plans to publish any specific submissions.

■ **Entertainments: Government Assistance**

Maria Eagle:

[\[68283\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what additional support he plans to provide to organisations that provide services to the live entertainment industry and unable to resume economic activity when the Coronavirus Job

Retention Scheme and the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme close; and if he will make a statement.

Maria Eagle:

[\[68285\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what plans he has to provide fiscal support to the live entertainment and events industry when the Job Retention Scheme and the Self-Employment Support Scheme ends in the event that companies in that industry are unable to resume economic activity as the covid-19 lockdown restrictions are eased; and if he will make a statement.

Caroline Dinenage:

On Sunday 5 July 2020, the Secretary of State announced a major £1.57 billion support package for key cultural organisations to help them through the coronavirus pandemic. This funding will provide targeted support to organisations across a range of cultural and creative sectors.

We are working closely with DCMS' Arm's Length Bodies to develop detailed guidance indicating who can apply for the different elements of this funding. We will publish this guidance as soon as possible in July.

We are committed to reopening creative businesses, including live entertainment and outdoor events, as soon as it is safe to do so. The Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport recently set out a five stage roadmap that the government will work through to get the live entertainment and outdoor events sectors back up and running as soon as possible. The ministerially-chaired Events and Entertainment Working Group was established to support the Secretary of State's Cultural Renewal Taskforce, and it focuses on developing covid-19 secure guidance to enable the safe reopening of the live entertainment and outdoor events sectors.

■ **Epilepsy: Internet**

Dame Cheryl Gillan:

[\[70944\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps his Department is taking to safeguard people with epilepsy from online harm.

Caroline Dinenage:

The government intends to introduce world-leading Online Harms legislation to make the UK the safest place to be online. We intend to establish in law a new duty of care on companies towards their users which will be overseen by an independent regulator. The Government published its Initial Consultation Response to the Online Harms White Paper in February 2020, and this set out our direction of travel on a number of key areas. We are aiming to publish a full government response to the Online Harms White Paper consultation later this year, and this will include more detailed proposals on online harms regulation.

In addition to this new legislation, it is important to make sure that the criminal law is fit for purpose to deal with online harms. DCMS and the Ministry of Justice have engaged the Law Commission on a second phase of their review of abusive and

offensive online communications. This will include considering whether co-ordinated harassment by groups of people online could be more effectively dealt with by the criminal law, whether it is targeted at individuals with epilepsy or others. The Law Commission will review existing communications offences and make specific recommendations about options for reform, to ensure that criminal law provides consistent and effective protection against such behaviour.

■ **Football: Coronavirus**

Fiona Bruce:

[71725]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what Government support is available for (a) Congleton Town FC and (b) other lower league football clubs to help sustain those clubs during the period of loss of income resulting from the covid-19 outbreak.

Nigel Huddleston:

Football clubs form an integral part of this country and it is important they are given as much support as possible during these difficult times.

In light of this, the Government announced a comprehensive and sizable package of direct fiscal support for business through tax reliefs, cash grants and employee wage support. Clubs can apply to the Football Foundation's "Club Preparation Fund" for a grant as well to make the necessary changes and modifications to allow them to reopen.

It is also vital that the football community comes together at this time, and I welcomed the Premier League announcement to advance funds of £125 million to the EFL and National League to help clubs throughout the football pyramid.

The Government will continue to liaise closely with all the football authorities to further understand the difficulties clubs are experiencing.

■ **Gyms and Swimming Pools: Coronavirus**

Daniel Kawczynski:

[71705]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, when he plans to enable (a) indoor gyms and (b) swimming pools be reopen.

Nigel Huddleston:

Sports and physical activity facilities play a crucial role in supporting adults and children to be active. As announced on 9 July, from 11 July, outdoor swimming pools will be able to open and from 25 July indoor gyms, leisure centres (including sports halls) and swimming pools in England should be able to reopen. These facilities will be able to offer on-site services to customers, provided they are COVID-secure and follow Government guidance.

The updated guidance can be found at the [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk) website and includes advice for providers of pool, gym and leisure facilities on cleaning, social distancing, and protection for staff to help venues get back up and running safely.

■ **LGBT People: Coronavirus**

Scott Benton:

[\[69729\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what discussions he has had with representatives from LGBT (a) entertainment venues and (b) trade bodies in relation to establishing safe working practices to ensure that those venues in (i) England and (ii) Blackpool can reopen safely as the covid-19 lockdown restrictions are eased.

Caroline Dinenage:

We are committed to reopening creative businesses, including LGBT entertainment and music venues, in Blackpool and across the country in line with the latest Government regulations and advice.

The Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport has set out a five stage roadmap that the government will work through to get the performing arts and live entertainment sectors back up and running as soon as possible.

The ministerially-chaired Events and Entertainment Working Group was established to support the Secretary of State's Cultural Renewal Taskforce. It focuses on developing covid-19 secure guidance to enable the safe reopening of the performing arts, music and entertainment sectors and is attended by a number of trade bodies including the Night Time Industries Association, the Music Venue Trust and the Live Comedy Association.

■ **Music: Coronavirus**

Sarah Olney:

[\[69638\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what criteria he is using to assess when it will be safe to allow choirs to recommence rehearsing and performing.

Caroline Dinenage:

We are committed to getting the performing arts sector fully back up and running as soon as it is safe to do so. It is a priority of my department to work with the arts and cultural sectors to address the challenges of reopening.

The Secretary of State recently revealed a five stage roadmap that the government will work through to get the performing arts sectors back up and running as soon as possible:

- Stage One - Rehearsal and training (no audiences)
- Stage Two - Performances for broadcast and recording purposes
- Stage Three - Performances outdoors with an audience and pilots for indoor performances with a limited socially-distanced audience
- Stage Four - Performances allowed indoors and outdoors (but with a limited socially-distanced audience indoors)

- Stage Five - Performances allowed indoors / outdoors (with a fuller audience indoors)

On 9 July we published guidance for people who work in performing arts, including arts organisations, venue operators and participants which will help people understand how they can work and take part in the performing arts safely, and keep their audiences safe. This guidance applies to training, rehearsal and pre-production activities, and performances which take place with or without a live audience, wherever these activities occur.

DCMS and PHE are supporting a study looking at C-19 transmission risks associated with singing and playing wind instruments. The PERFORM study involves leading scientists and is working with musicians and representatives from the Royal Opera House and the BBC. Its findings will inform our guidance and approach. that we want to get the performing arts industry fully up and running as soon as it is safe to do so.

Janet Daby:

[71880]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the level of financial support available to workers in the music industry, including (a) music managers, (b) artists, (c) promoters and (d) stage workers.

Caroline Dineneage:

We appreciate that the Covid-19 pandemic presents a huge challenge to the music industry and the freelancers and the self-employed workers within it. The Government's response has been one of the most generous and comprehensive in the world, including the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, the Self-Employed Income Support Scheme, the Bounceback Loan Scheme and business rates reliefs. In addition, the Government has adapted the welfare system so that the self-employed can access Universal Credit in full, to help people get quicker and more generous support when they need it most.

On Sunday 5 July 2020, the Secretary of State announced a major £1.57 billion support package for key cultural organisations to help them through the coronavirus pandemic. This funding will provide targeted support to organisations across a range of cultural and creative sectors, including music.

We are working closely with DCMS' Arm's Length Bodies to develop guidance indicating who can apply for the different elements of this funding, and we will publish detailed guidance as soon as possible.

Paula Barker:

[71924]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if he will provide a conditional timeline for the re-opening of (a) clubs, (b) concert arenas and (c) other live music venues without covid-19 related social distancing restrictions.

Caroline Dinéage:

We are committed to getting the performing arts sector fully back up and running as soon as it is safe to do so. It is a priority of my department to work with the arts and cultural sectors to address the challenges of reopening.

From the information we have been receiving from various organisations and professionals, we know that the picture is nuanced across the country, with different organisations facing different challenges when it comes to the question of reopening.

The Secretary of State recently revealed a five stage roadmap that the government will work through to get the performing arts sectors back up and running as soon as possible:

- Stage One - Rehearsal and training (no audiences)
- Stage Two - Performances for broadcast and recording purposes
- Stage Three - Performances outdoors with an audience and pilots for indoor performances with a limited socially-distanced audience
- Stage Four - Performances allowed indoors and outdoors (but with a limited socially-distanced audience indoors)
- Stage Five - Performances allowed indoors / outdoors (with a fuller audience indoors)

From the 11th July, we will move to Stage Three. This means that performances outdoors - including outdoor concert arenas with a socially distanced audience - can take place in line with this guidance. DCMS will work with sector representative bodies to select a number of pilots for indoor performances with a socially distanced audience, as we look to move into Stage Four.

■ Night Clubs: Coronavirus**Kerry McCarthy:****[71000]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether nightclubs will be eligible for funding from the £1.57 billion arts sector support package.

Caroline Dinéage:

We appreciate that the Covid-19 pandemic presents a significant challenge to the night time industries. On Sunday 5 July 2020, the Secretary of State announced a major £1.57 billion support package for key cultural organisations to help them through the coronavirus pandemic. This funding will provide targeted support to organisations across a range of cultural and creative sectors including some businesses operating in the night time economy. We will publish detailed guidance on eligibility as soon as possible in July.

Whilst the Cultural Package is extensive, it cannot support every organisation. There are a number of financial packages available to support nightclubs, including business rates relief, grants, and the Bounceback Loan Scheme. Furthermore, on rent liabilities, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government

announced on 19 June 2020 the introduction of a new code of practice for commercial property, and an extension to temporary tenant protections until 30 September 2020.

■ Performing Arts and Theatres: Coronavirus

Tracy Brabin:

[\[71845\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of providing theatres and live performance venues with a date before which they will not be able to reopen.

Caroline Dinéage:

We appreciate that this is an incredibly challenging time and that there are many cultural organisations and professionals who are currently facing difficult and uncertain circumstances. We are very alert to this issue and it is a priority of my department to work with the arts and cultural sectors to address the challenges of reopening, as and when it will be possible to do so.

From the information we have been receiving from various organisations and professionals, we know that the picture is nuanced across the country, with different organisations facing different challenges when it comes to the question of reopening.

The Secretary of State recently revealed a five stage roadmap that the government will work through to get the performing arts sectors back up and running as soon as possible:

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- Stage Five - Performances allowed indoors / outdoors (with a fuller audience indoors)

From the 11th July, we will move to Stage Three. This means that performances outdoors with a socially distanced audience can take place in line with this guidance. DCMS will work with sector representative bodies to select a number of pilots for indoor performances with a socially distanced audience.

■ Public Statues

Andrea Jenkyns:

[\[70459\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether he plans to allocate funding to local authorities that undertake a review of public statues situated in their local authority areas.

Nigel Huddleston:

The Government has no plans to provide funding for local reviews of public statues. Historic England, as the Government's adviser on the historic environment, have set out why they believe removing difficult and contentious parts of the historic environment risks harming our understanding of our collective past. They and other heritage funding bodies invest significantly in improving public access to historical objects, providing contemporary interpretation of them and supporting diverse heritage projects around the country.

EDUCATION**■ Apprentices: Taxation****John Spellar:****[69423]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to ensure Apprenticeship Levy funds can be used to support (a) current and (b) future construction apprentices after the covid-19 outbreak.

Mick Whitley:**[69691]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans the Government has to permit flexibility in the use of Apprenticeship Levy funds to help mitigate the effects of the covid-19 outbreak on (a) current and (b) potential construction apprentices.

Gillian Keegan:

Apprenticeships will be key to our recovery, especially for young people. We are looking at ensuring that we support employers, especially small businesses, to take on new apprentices this year and will provide further details in due course. The apprenticeship levy is an important part of our apprenticeship reforms, supporting employers of all sizes to make a long-term, sustainable investment in training. We will ensure that there is sufficient funding to support small businesses wanting to take on an apprentice this year.

We recognise that employers, at the moment, face increased challenges with hiring new apprentices and so we will introduce a new payment of £2,000 to employers in England for each new apprentice they hire aged under 25, and a £1,500 payment for each new apprentice they hire aged 25 and over, from 1 August 2020 to 31 January 2021. Details can be found here <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/hm-treasury>.

We are developing a campaign plan to underpin our work on supporting the recovery and getting redundant apprentices back to work. As part of this campaign we will be working with all the largest construction businesses to ensure they can restart and recover as quickly as possible. This will include encouraging the sector to take on redundant apprentices from other employers both inside and outside of construction.

In light of the challenges presented by COVID-19, we have extended the transition of non-levy paying employers onto the apprenticeship service from 1 November 2020 to

1 April 2021. Under the new system, smaller employers will have more control over the funding they use to create new apprenticeship opportunities and can reserve funds before choosing the provider that best meets their needs. Levy-paying employers can transfer up to 25% of the annual value of funds in their apprenticeship service accounts to other employers. Employers can continue to recruit and train apprentices. They already have 24 months in which to spend their funds before these expire.

We want apprentices and employers to continue with their apprenticeships and have introduced a range of flexibilities to make this easier, while maintaining the quality of apprenticeships. Flexibilities include encouraging remote delivery of training and allowing changes to end point assessment, as well as introducing additional flexibility to allow furloughed apprentices to continue their apprenticeships and undertake end point assessments.

Employers are developing new apprenticeships standards, allowing them to spend the levy on the apprenticeships training that matters for them. There are now 86 construction standards that have been designed by employers across a range of levels to meet employer demand to date and a further 12 construction standards that are currently in development.

■ Children and Schools: Coronavirus

Tim Farron:

[71708]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many electronic devices have been (a) issued to (i) children and (ii) schools and (b) requested by schools to support children during the covid-19 outbreak.

Nick Gibb:

The Government has provided laptops and tablets to disadvantaged children who would otherwise not have access and are preparing for examinations in year 10, receiving support from a social worker or are a care leaver. Where care leavers, children with a social worker at secondary school and children in year 10 do not have internet connections, the Government has provided 4G wireless routers.

The Department has delivered laptops, tablets and 4G wireless routers to local authorities and academy trusts based on the Department's estimates of the number of eligible children that do not have access to a device. Local authorities and academy trusts are best placed to identify children and young people who need devices and prioritise their needs.

The Department has published information about how many laptops, tablets and 4G wireless routers have been delivered or dispatched to local authorities and academy trusts in total, which can be viewed here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/laptops-tablets-and-4g-wireless-routers-progress-data>.

As of the end of June, over 202,000 laptops and tablets and over 47,000 4G wireless routers had been delivered or dispatched to local authorities and academy trusts.

Where local authorities and academy trusts provided evidence of a need for eligible children that is greater than their initial allocation, the Department has been working with them to provide additional devices.

■ Children in Care: Costs

Jon Trickett:

[70312]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what is the average weekly cost to the public purse is for a child in (a) residential care, (b) foster care and (c) other residential care settings.

Vicky Ford:

The department publishes data about children and young people's services, including weekly costs, which is available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/local-authority-interactive-tool-lait>.

The approximate average weekly cost in England in 2018-19 for a child in residential care was £3,945 and for foster care was £580.

■ Children: Coronavirus

Thangam Debbonaire:

[69596]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he will take to ensure that there is adequate home-school provision and support for children who are unable to return to school in September 2020 because they are shielding.

Nick Gibb:

We now know much more about COVID-19 and so in future there will be far fewer children and young people advised to shield whenever community transmission rates are high. Therefore, the majority of pupils will be able to return to school. Shielding advice for all adults and children will pause on 1 August, subject to a continued decline in the rates of community transmission of COVID-19.

This means that even the small number of pupils who will remain on the shielded patient list can also return to school, as can those who have family members who are shielding.

Where a pupil is unable to attend school because they are complying with clinical and/or public health advice, we expect schools to be able to immediately offer them access to remote education. Schools should monitor engagement with this activity.

Further information is available in our guidance on the full reopening of schools:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak/guidance-for-full-opening-schools>.

■ Construction Industry Training Board

Alex Norris:

[\[69651\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of ending the Construction Industry Training Board levy.

Gillian Keegan:

There is no assessment planned with regards to the merits of ending the Construction Industry Training Board (CITB) levy. The most recent assessment completed as a tailored review, was undertaken, and published in November 2017. As well as providing several recommendations to CITB, it concluded that the current levy process was the most appropriate way to specifically support and incentivise the sector.

■ Department for Education: Public Inquiries

Lee Anderson:

[\[62610\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will publish the (a) statutory and (b) non-statutory public inquiries being undertaken by his Department.

Nick Gibb:

The Department is not sponsoring any statutory or non-statutory public inquiries.

■ Department for Education: Taxis

Layla Moran:

[\[65005\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many private hire cars his Department has used since 2015; how long each journey was; and what the cost of those journeys were to the public purse.

Nick Gibb:

The table below provides the information requested relating to the use of private hire cars by the Department since 2015.

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	TOTALS
No. of Private Hire Cars	3568	3313	3525	4576	3576	959	19,517
Rental Days	5416	4870	5094	6817	5160	1373	28,730
Total Annual Mileage	1,217,012	1,156,713	1,373,307	2,249,283	1,702,628	683,244	8,382,187
Total Cost	£208,766	£189,879	£205,389	£263,760	£198,893	£52,110	£1,118,797

■ Digital Technology: Training

Chi Onwurah:

[69541]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans he has to help ensure digital skills are available to everybody who needs them; and what discussions he has had with organisations involved in digital skills training on delivering that training.

Gillian Keegan:

The government recognises the critical importance of digital skills both in everyday life and for the wider UK economy. That is why we have invested in digital skills that support lifelong learning and the acquisition of digital skills from foundation level right through to those required for cutting edge digital industries.

The acquisition of digital skills in the school space is supported by the National Centre for Computing Education (NCCE), backed by investment of £84 million. The NCCE are delivering a comprehensive programme to improve the teaching of computing and drive up participation in computer science, particularly amongst girls.

We are also reforming technical education, with the support of employers, including new apprenticeships in data science, creative digital design, network engineering and cyber security. The first of 3 new Digital T Levels (Digital Production, Design and Development) will be introduced this September with a further two (Digital Support and Services and Digital Business Services) to follow in 2021.

In April this year, in response to the COVID-19 outbreak, we provided opportunities for people to acquire new skills whilst at home by launching the Skills Toolkit. This Toolkit gives people access to free, high quality digital and numeracy courses and resources to help build up their skills, progress in work and enhance their career prospects. It was developed by a range of businesses, educational institutions and professional bodies.

From August 2020, adults with no or low digital skills will have full funding to undertake improved digital skills qualifications, based on new national standards for essential digital skills, up to Level 1.

Finally the Government has committed £2.5 billion investment through the National Skills Fund that provides a great opportunity to dramatically reboot the adult skills landscape. Boosting productivity and ensuring more people and places can share in the rewards that improved productivity can bring. We are keen to hear views from a wide range of stakeholders, including digital skills providers, that is why we plan to launch a consultation at a time when those who have an interest are able to engage. We will use the insights we gain to build an understanding of how best to target the fund, to ensure it has the best possible impact.

■ Education: Coronavirus

Sir Edward Davey:

[69419]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what (a) funding and (b) other support the Government has allocated to (i) the early years sector, (ii) primary schools, (iii) secondary schools; and (iv) further education institutions during the covid-19 outbreak.

Nick Gibb:

On 17 March 2020, the Chancellor confirmed that the Government will continue to pay local authorities as normal for free early years entitlement places for 2, 3 and 4 year olds to support providers. On 18 March 2020, the Government also announced a business rates holiday for many nurseries in England for the 2020 to 2021 tax year.

Many early years providers also receive private income. The Government has therefore clarified the circumstances in which early years providers can seek support through the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS). It has also provided information to early years providers on the Small Business Grant Fund and the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan. Childminders are less likely to be employers, and therefore are less likely to be eligible for support via the CJRS. We have therefore directed childminders towards guidance for the Self Employment Income Support Scheme.

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/claim-a-grant-through-the-self-employment-income-support-scheme>.

Local Authority maintained schools (including pupil referral units) and academies (including free schools) continue to receive their budgets as usual, regardless of any periods of partial or complete closure. This will ensure that they are able to continue to pay their staff, and meet their other regular financial commitments.

We have put in place additional support to help schools meet exceptional costs they may incur as a result of COVID-19. These costs may arise as result of keeping premises open during the holidays, providing support for free school meals for eligible children who are not attending school (where those costs are not covered by the national voucher scheme described below), and additional cleaning.

We have provided a centrally-funded national voucher scheme to make sure eligible pupils can continue to access free school meals, given they are not able to attend school, including through the Easter school holidays. We have also announced a COVID-19 Summer Food Fund which will enable children who are eligible for benefits-related free school meals to be supported over the summer holiday period.

We have made a commitment to boost remote education, including by providing devices and internet access for disadvantaged year 10 pupils, and those who receive support from a social worker and care leavers. We are ensuring every school that wants it has access to free, expert technical support to access Google and Microsoft's education platforms, along with training on how to use the resources most effectively and peer support. We have also supported the Oak National Academy,

which is a totally new initiative, assembling video lessons and resources for any teacher in the country to make use of if they wish to do so.

We have launched a £1 billion COVID-19 “catch-up” package to directly tackle the impact of lost teaching time, comprising £650 million to be shared across state primary and secondary schools over the 2020/21 academic year. Whilst headteachers will decide how the money is spent, the Government has supported the publication of the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) guidance, which sets out a range of evidence-based approaches, including small group tuition.

A National Tutoring Programme, worth up to £350 million, which will increase access to high-quality tuition for the most disadvantaged young people, with delivery starting later in the autumn term.

Further Education and Apprenticeship providers include further education colleges, sixth form colleges, designated institutions, independent training providers, adult and community learning providers, and higher education institutions to the extent that they provide further education or apprenticeships. They are funded in 3 main ways: by grant; under a direct contract for services with the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA); or through a funding agreement with the ESFA (where provision is delivered under a contract directly with an employer, or through advanced learner loan funded learning).

The ESFA will continue to pay grant funded providers their scheduled monthly profiled payments for the remainder of the 2019 to 2020 funding year. We have also published guidance on how providers can access the wider Government support packages, including the CJRS. Some providers may also be eligible for the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme or Coronavirus Large Business Interruption Loan Scheme, and we have directed them to guidance on eligibility. Where a provider receives Adult Education Budget (AEB), or apprenticeship funding, as part of a direct contract for services with the ESFA, and is at risk financially, they may be eligible for support (subject to meeting additional criteria) as part of the ESFA’s post-16 provider relief scheme.

On 8 July, my right hon. Friend, the Chancellor, announced a £1.6 billion package of investment in further education and skills. This investment will scale up employment support schemes, training and apprenticeships to help people looking for a job and, in doing so, will stimulate the further education market.

■ Foster Care: Coronavirus

Janet Daby:

[\[69682\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has been made of the level of support available to foster carers to meet the needs of children in care during the covid-19 outbreak.

Vicky Ford:

The COVID-19 outbreak has brought unprecedented challenges to some foster families. Our priority is to protect foster families, to keep them together and continue

to offer safety and stability to the vulnerable children they care for. That is why we have committed £125,000 between June and October to fund a new FosterlinePlus service. Foster families experiencing difficulties will have free access to a range of specialist one-to-one services. We will continue to monitor this support to better understand the issues foster families are facing and how the department can tackle them.

The government has also provided over £3.7 billion of additional funding to support local authorities in meeting COVID-19 related pressures, including within children's social care. We know that local authorities and fostering agencies are responding to the challenge by finding innovative ways to continue to support their foster carers, and we will keep this under very close review over the coming weeks and months.

■ **Holiday Play Schemes: Coronavirus**

Rachael Maskell:

[69619]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether additional holiday club places will be made available to working parents in summer 2020.

Vicky Ford:

On 23 June, my right hon. Friend, the Prime Minister, confirmed that from 4 July, all providers running holiday clubs and activities for children will be able to reopen over the summer holidays. The department has published two pieces of guidance about community activities, holiday and after-school clubs, as well as other out-of-school provision for children over the age of 5.

The department has published guidance for the sector on the protective measures they should follow to ensure they operate as safely as possible, which is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/protective-measures-for-holiday-or-after-school-clubs-and-other-out-of-school-settings-for-children-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak>.

The department has also published guidance for parents on how to minimise the spread of the virus if they choose to send their children to activities over the summer, which is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-for-parents-and-carers-of-children-attending-out-of-school-settings-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak>.

In addition, the department is funding the Holiday Activities and Food programme. This is integral to our approach to provide healthy food and activities to children over the summer. On 22 June, we announced 17 local authority areas that will benefit from the programme this summer, providing thousands of children with access to healthy meals and enriching activities, and will build on the success of the 2018 and 2019 programmes.

■ Pre-school Education: Coronavirus**Sir Edward Davey:****[69417]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to (a) tackle the impact of lost teaching time for children in early years education and (b) ensure that the most disadvantaged children are prioritised.

Vicky Ford:

Levelling up outcomes for disadvantaged children has long been a priority for government. That is why we have committed to reforms to the Early Years Foundation Stage, launched the Hungry Little Minds campaign, and since 2018, have committed more than £60 million to programmes to improve early language and literacy.

The most effective intervention government can take to address the impact of COVID-19 on early outcomes is to get children back into their nurseries.

Since 1 June, early years settings have been able to welcome back children of all ages. We want to ensure councils and early years providers are able to get children back into settings as quickly as possible, where they can be fully supported during this crucial period for their development. From 20 July, restrictions on group sizes will be lifted to enable nurseries to operate full capacity again. We will work with the sector to explore how best to continue to support children's early development.

■ Pre-school Education: Finance**Sir Edward Davey:****[69418]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether his Department plans to ring-fenced financial support for the early years education sector in the next six months.

Vicky Ford:

The early years education sector receives ring-fenced funding through the early years block of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG).

We have continued to pay local authorities their DSG funding for the childcare places they normally fund for 2 to 4-year-olds throughout the COVID-19 outbreak. This is worth a planned £3.6 billion in 2020-21 and will provide reassurance for early years settings at this time.

We expect local authorities to follow the department's position and in general, to continue paying all childminders, schools and nurseries for the early years' entitlements. We have produced guidance for local authorities on this:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-early-years-and-childcare-closures/coronavirus-covid-19-early-years-and-childcare-closures#funding>.

We continue to work closely with the early years sector to understand how it can best be supported to ensure that sufficient childcare is available for those who need it.

■ Pupils: Coronavirus

Rachael Maskell:

[69621]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what guidance his Department has provided to schools on whether it is permissible for schools to allow pupils to return on a part-time basis in the event that schools are not able to implement satisfactory safety measures during the covid-19 outbreak for all pupils to return in the autumn term.

Nick Gibb:

We are asking schools to prepare for all pupils to return full-time from the start of the autumn term. Schools should not put in place rotas. We have published guidance to support schools to plan for the autumn term. There cannot be a 'one-size-fits-all' approach and school leaders will be best placed to understand the needs of their schools and communities, and to make informed judgments about how to balance delivering a broad and balanced curriculum for all pupils with the measures needed to manage risk.

We do not consider it necessary for schools to make significant adaptations to their site to enable them to welcome all children back to school. We also do not think schools will need to deliver any of their education on other sites (such as community centres or village halls) because class sizes can return to normal and spaces used by more than one class or group can be cleaned between use. Following a risk assessment, some schools may determine that small adaptations to their site are required, such as additional wash basins. This will be at the discretion of individual schools, based on their particular circumstances.

Full guidance for schools is available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak/guidance-for-full-opening-schools>.

Marsha De Cordova:

[71877]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many disadvantaged pupils in Battersea constituency have been provided with technological support by the Government during the covid-19 outbreak.

Nick Gibb:

The Government has provided laptops and tablets to disadvantaged children who would otherwise not have access and are preparing for examinations in year 10, receiving support from a social worker or are a care leaver. Where care leavers, children with a social worker at secondary school and children in year 10 do not have internet connections, the Government has provided 4G wireless routers.

The Department has delivered laptops, tablets and 4G wireless routers to local authorities and academy trusts based on the Department's estimates of the number of eligible children that do not have access to a device. Local authorities and academy trusts are best placed to identify children and young people who need devices and prioritise their needs.

The Department has published information about how many laptops, tablets and 4G wireless routers have been delivered or dispatched to local authorities and academy trusts in total, which can be viewed here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/laptops-tablets-and-4g-wireless-routers-progress-data>. As of the end of June, over 202,000 laptops and tablets and over 47,000 4G wireless routers had been delivered or dispatched to local authorities and academy trusts. This includes 1,073 devices dispatched to Wandsworth Local Authority, in which Battersea is located, for children with a social worker and care leavers and disadvantaged year 10s.

The Department has also launched a service to provide children and young people free access to BT wifi hotspots. 10,000 families will initially be able to access the pilot scheme, which will be rolled out across England in the coming months.

In addition, the Department is also working with the major telecommunications companies to improve internet connectivity for disadvantaged and vulnerable families. For families who rely on a mobile internet connection, mobile network operators are working to provide access to free additional data while the COVID-19 outbreak requires children to learn from home and more social care services are online.

■ Social Services: Families

Chi Onwurah: [\[69542\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans his Department has for the allocation of the £2.5 million announced in the March 2020 Budget for research into the integration of family services; and which budget line this spending will be allocated from.

Vicky Ford:

The department will administer the £2.5 million for research and developing best practice around the integration of services for families. More information will be made available in due course.

■ Students: Transport

Gareth Davies: [\[69749\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will take steps to ensure that students in (a) Lincolnshire and (b) other rural areas have an adequate transport service to reach their place of work under the T-level requirement to do 315 hours of work experience.

Gillian Keegan:

Decisions about transport, including in Lincolnshire, are a matter for local transport authorities, working with transport operators.

However, students should not be prevented from undertaking a T Level industry placement due to the additional transport costs. Therefore we are taking a number of steps to ensure that students are able to access placements regardless of where they live. We have increased the travel bursaries that young people can draw on to help with travel costs and providers can use the T Level Capacity and Delivery Fund to

help with travel costs. Additionally, the National Apprenticeships Service has been looking to encourage more employers including small and medium enterprises (SMEs) to offer placements as SMEs make up the majority of employers in rural areas.

We are also looking at imaginative and innovative approaches to student transport which already exist and enable greater access to placements, in particular for students in rural areas, and how we can foster these approaches more widely for T Levels.

■ Universities: Scotland

Mhairi Black:

[\[70430\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether he made an assessment of the implications for Scottish universities of his policy on student number controls announced on 4 May 2020.

Mhairi Black:

[\[70431\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what discussions he had with the (a) Scottish Government and (b) Scottish Funding Council prior to his announcement of 4 May 2020 that student number controls would be implemented in Scottish universities.

Michelle Donelan:

My right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education, and I have regular meetings with Scottish ministers, and ministers from all the devolved administrations, about higher education issues. These discussions have included the development of student number controls policy. Departmental officials also have regular meetings and discussions with their counterparts.

Student number controls are a direct response to COVID-19. They are designed to minimise the impact to the financial threat posed by the outbreak and form a key part of the package of measures to stabilise the admissions system. We want to make sure that university places are available to all who are qualified by ability and attainment to pursue them and who wish to do so.

These controls are a temporary measure and will be in place for one academic year only. Student number controls for institutions in the devolved administrations only apply to the number of English-domiciled entrants who will be supported with their tuition fees through the Student Loans Company, and are set at a level which will allow every institution to take more first year English students than they took last year. The funding of English-domiciled students is not a devolved matter, and it is right and fair that this policy should apply as consistently as possible wherever they are studying in the UK.

Ministers will continue to work closely with the devolved administrations on strengthening and stabilising the higher education system following the COVID-19 outbreak.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS■ **Food: Labelling****Anthony Mangnall:****[69705]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with his European counterparts on best practice for food labelling schemes for the provision of information on animal welfare standards.

Victoria Prentis:

During the recent Finnish EU Council presidency, we responded to a questionnaire on the issue of a pan-European animal welfare label sent to all Member States' Chief Veterinary Officers. Voluntary animal welfare labelling systems that had already been established in some countries had been well received by consumers and enabled consumers to base their purchasing decisions on compliance with animal-welfare criteria. The Council concluded that, at the same time, animal welfare labels had opened up a market to producers for products produced to higher animal welfare standards.

We already have some of the highest welfare standards in the world, as well as a number of voluntary labelling schemes which provide assurances as to the welfare of the animals. The Government has committed to a serious and rapid examination of what can be done through labelling, to promote high standards and high welfare across the UK market, and to consult on this.

■ **Highly Protected Marine Areas: Angling****Anthony Mangnall:****[69704]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to the Benyon Review into Highly Protected Marine Areas, published on 8 June 2020, what steps his Department is taking to help ensure that historic fishing rights are maintained.

Victoria Prentis:

We welcome the publication of the Review into Highly Protected Marine Areas (HPMAs) on 8 June 2020, which is available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/highly-protected-marine-areas-hpmas-review-2019>. We will consider Richard Benyon's report and issue a formal response to him in due course.

We recognise the importance of fishing especially to coastal communities and we are seeking thriving and sustainable fisheries. HPMAs would not affect historic fishing rights as these rights can be exercised outside of any HPMAs. In considering the recommendations of the review, we will be engaging extensively with the fishing industry.

■ Housing: Tree Felling

Catherine West:

[\[71838\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps the Government is taking to incentivise home-owners to remedy subsidence damage from trees by underpinning their homes rather than felling mature trees which are vital in helping tackle climate change.

Rebecca Pow:

Responsibility for trees growing on private property lies with the property owner unless, for example the tree is endangering the public or subject to a Tree Preservation Order.

In our consultation on the England Tree Strategy, we welcome feedback on what changes need to be made to plant and protect more street trees.

■ Imports: Standards

Tim Farron:

[\[69504\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, which body will be responsible for the (a) monitoring and (b) approval of imports into the UK to ensure compliance with UK standards on (a) animal welfare, (b) food safety and (c) environmental protection after the end of the transition period; and if he will make a statement.

Tim Farron:

[\[69505\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what processes his Department plan to introduce after the conclusion of the Trade and Agriculture Commission to assessing the sanitary and phytosanitary treatments that (a) traders and (b) third party countries have used in their production processes for food imported into the UK; and if will he make a statement.

Victoria Prentis:

The delivery of import controls for animals, plants and their products is carried out by the Animal and Plant Health Agency and Port Health Authorities. This will continue to be the case after the Transition Period and we will deliver the same high level of protection as we do now.

After the Transition Period, the UK will maintain its own autonomous sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) regime to protect the public, animal and plant life and health and the environment, reflecting its existing high standards. We will repatriate the functions of audit and inspections to ensure that trading partners, including those we secure trade deals with, continue to meet our import conditions. This will provide a standing, robust system that will work alongside border controls to maintain our high standards going forward.

I am pleased that the Government has agreed to the establishment of a Trade and Agriculture Commission, the details of which have now been published by the Department for International Trade. This will ensure that the UK's trade policy fully

considers our agricultural industry and our commitment to maintain our high standards. We are on the side of UK farmers in trade negotiations and this Government will work hard to ensure any future trade deals are in their best interests and will prioritise both food production and our world-leading environmental targets.

Tim Farron: [\[69506\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what discussions (a) he and (b) his officials have had with counterparts in the Department for International Trade on the introduction of dual tariffs to protect UK (a) animal welfare, (b) food safety and (c) environmental protection standards in relation to imports; and if he will make a statement.

Victoria Prentis:

I am proud to have stood on a manifesto commitment that in all of our trade negotiations, we will not compromise on our high environmental protection, animal welfare and food safety standards. The Secretary of State and the Secretary of State for International Trade, and officials from both departments, are working together to deliver that commitment.

■ **Members: Correspondence**

Dave Doogan: [\[71889\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when he plans to respond to the correspondence from the hon. Member for Angus dated 11 June 2020 on the future of the fishing industry.

Victoria Prentis:

A reply to the hon. Member's correspondence is being prepared and will be sent out very shortly.

■ **Pets: Disease Control**

Kenny MacAskill: [\[71893\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 29 June 2020 to Question 63201, if he will provide further details on the assessments his Department has commissioned on the risks posed by ticks and tick-borne disease.

Kenny MacAskill: [\[71894\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what plans he has to review the successor to the pet travel scheme before the end of the transition period; and if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of reintroducing compulsory tick treatment for pets at UK borders.

Victoria Prentis:

We are working with the European Commission to ensure pet travel between the UK and EU continues smoothly after January 2021. The UK and Crown Dependencies submitted its application to become a Part 1 listed third country under Annex II of the

EU Pet Travel Regulations to the European Commission, and this is our preferred position. We are also planning for the event in which we become an unlisted country with our colleagues in the Devolved Administrations and Crown Dependencies. The end of the Transition Period may open up new opportunities for managing our own pet travel arrangements which we are evaluating.

Tick surveillance has shown that tick distribution and abundance is changing throughout the UK for many reasons, including habitat and climate change. Small numbers of localised infestations with non-native tick species have been reported in recent years. For these reasons, Defra strongly encourages pet owners to treat their pets to safeguard their animals against ticks and tick transmitted diseases when travelling abroad. Further advice can be obtained from their local vet, and via the Public Health England leaflet available on GOV.UK.

While Defra has no immediate plans to amend the tick controls for pet animals entering the UK, we remain concerned about the threat of ticks and tick-borne disease. A risk assessment is therefore being planned to guide future policy and Defra continues to monitor the disease situation through the Tick Surveillance Scheme.

■ **Wildlife: Licensing**

Mr Steve Baker:

[69528]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he is taking steps to implement the conclusions of the paper entitled, *Wildlife Licencing in England: Chaos, Crisis and Cure*, published by the Countryside Alliance, National Gamekeepers' Association and the Moorland Association on 29 May 2020; and if he will make a statement.

Rebecca Pow:

The paper calls for a feasibility study into Defra taking back control of individual licensing from Natural England (NE).

Last spring, following a legal challenge by Wild Justice which led NE to revoke three general licences for the lethal control of wild birds, the then Secretary of State decided to take responsibility for granting the relevant general licences under s16(1) of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. He considered it appropriate to take over this function, recognising the scale of interest and concern that had been generated by the decision to revoke. Defra issued new interim general licences on 14 June 2019, and launched a review to inform longer-term licensing arrangements. At the time, wild bird control on and near European sites and lethal control of gulls had to be excluded from those interim licences, and has been regulated since then via individual licence by NE.

I appreciate the frustrations expressed in the report regarding individual licensing, and the Secretary of State is working closely with NE to ensure that these issues are resolved as quickly as possible. NE has received a very high number of applications for control of the two gull species and for control of other species on protected sites.

NE has invested in its capacity to address the anticipated increase in licence applications. However, the information provided in a significant number (approximately 90%) of applications has not been sufficient to make informed decisions. The process of requesting and processing outstanding information from applicants has added considerably to the timescale needed to determine licence applications. We would expect this number to decrease in future years as applicants become better acquainted with the level of information required, and as wild bird control on European sites is brought back within the general licence following the review.

Defra and NE are committed to achieving a licensing regime for wild birds which is both robust and workable for users. Our review is seeking to achieve this based on extensive evidence review and consultation with stakeholders.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE

■ Brazil: Rainforests

Preet Kaur Gill:

[\[68767\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what representations has he made to his Brazilian counterpart on the (a) continued deforestation of the Amazon rainforest and (b) the effect of that deforestation on UK businesses operating in Brazil.

Wendy Morton:

The UK continues to monitor the situation in the Amazon closely and we regularly raise the environment in our ongoing dialogue with Brazil, including at ministerial level. The UK has dedicated funding to addressing the issue of deforestation in Brazil for almost a decade and is actively supporting efforts in Brazil to tackle deforestation. Since 2012, the UK's International Climate Finance (ICF) has invested £259 million in a number of programmes in Brazil aimed at supporting small landowners to increase their productivity through low-carbon farming, the acceleration of sustainable business in the forest economy, preventing forest fires, and implementing the Forest Code. The UK has committed an additional £100m for 2021-2025. We will continue to work with Brazil to ensure that supply chains are sustainable and open.

■ China: Coronavirus

Kenny MacAskill:

[\[71165\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what response he has provided to the Chinese Government for the personal protection equipment received from China during the covid-19 outbreak in the UK.

Nigel Adams:

[Holding answer 13 July 2020]: The Foreign Secretary has been in close contact with the Chinese Foreign Minister to ensure the UK and China were working together as part of the international response to the virus. The UK has engaged with China to

procure life-saving PPE, ventilators and other critical medical equipment, and to support and repatriate British nationals.

■ **China: Uighurs**

Allan Dorans:

[\[69684\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what recent representations he has made to his Chinese counterpart on the effect on the human rights of the Uyghur people of being placed in (a) detention camps and (b) state orphanages in Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region.

Nigel Adams:

We have serious concerns about the human rights situation in Xinjiang including the extra-judicial detention of over one million Uyghurs in political "re-education camps", and reports of children being forcibly separated from their parents.

On 30 June, the UK read out a statement on behalf of 28 countries at the 44th session of the UN Human Rights Council highlighting concerns about arbitrary detention, widespread surveillance and restrictions in Xinjiang, urging China to allow the High Commissioner for Human Rights meaningful access to the region. On 9 March, the Foreign Secretary raised our concerns about the human rights situation in Xinjiang with his Chinese counterpart, Foreign Minister and State Councillor Wang Yi.

I set out during an Urgent Question in the House of Commons on 29 June, these reports add to our concern about the human rights situation in Xinjiang and we are considering them carefully.

Sir Edward Davey:

[\[70300\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what representations he has made to the Chinese Government on the alleged practice of forced sterilisations among ethnic minority women in the Xinjiang region in China; and if he will make a statement.

Nigel Adams:

We are aware of reports that the Chinese Government is using forced sterilisation to minimise Uyghur birth rates. I set out during an Urgent Question in the House of Commons on 29 June, these reports add to our concern about the human rights situation in Xinjiang and we are considering them carefully. On 9 March the Foreign Secretary raised our concerns about the human rights situation in Xinjiang with his Chinese counterpart, Foreign Minister and State Councillor Wang Yi. On 30 June, the UK read out a statement on behalf of 28 countries at the 44th session of the UN Human Rights Council highlighting concerns about arbitrary detention, widespread surveillance and restrictions in Xinjiang.

Andrea Jenkyns:

[\[70458\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of imposing sanctions on people responsible for human rights violations in Xinjiang.

Nigel Adams:

It is not appropriate to speculate who may be designated under the sanctions regime in the future. We do not want to reduce the impact of the designations. We will keep all evidence and potential listings under close review.

■ **Ilois: Finance****Andrew Rosindell:**[\[69472\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to establish processes to enable Chagossians to apply for funding from the Government's Chagossian Support Package.

Wendy Morton:

We have developed the following criteria to demonstrate eligibility to access the Support Package:

- Being born in the Chagos Archipelago/British Indian Ocean Territory.
- Claiming to be of Chagossian heritage, descended from a Chagossian born in the Chagos Archipelago/British Indian Ocean Territory, with a direct maternal or paternal line of descent.

These criteria are already being applied to ensure that heritage visit places are allocated in a fair and transparent manner.

■ **Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy****Mr Kevan Jones:**[\[71678\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, which Minister is leading on the Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy; and which senior officials are working on that review.

James Cleverly:

The Prime Minister is leading on the Integrated Review with the National Security Council, with support from a cross-Whitehall team and a small team in Downing Street. On the Civil Service side, the National Security Advisor is leading on the Integrated Review, with support from the Deputy National Security Advisor.

■ **Kenya: Pensions****Ruth Cadbury:**[\[71072\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what discussions the British High Commission in Kenya has had with the Kenyan Government since February 2020 on the non-payment of pensions to people living in the UK.

James Duddridge:

This matter is the responsibility of the Kenyan authorities. However, the British High Commission in Nairobi has written to the Kenyan Ministry for Foreign Affairs, and the Head of the Department for Pensions in the Kenyan National Treasury seeking an explanation for non-payment of pensions to former Kenyan civil servants and the lack

of increase in line with inflation. Officials from the British High Commission in Nairobi will continue to push Kenyan Treasury officials directly on this issue as and when the COVID-19 situation in Kenya allows.

■ Middle East

Theresa Villiers:

[\[69487\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the historical accuracy of Government references to the 1949 Armistice Line between (a) Israel, (b) Egypt, (c) Jordan, (d) Lebanon and (e) Syria as the 1967 borders.

James Cleverly:

[Holding answer 9 July 2020]: In 1950, on de jure recognition to the State of Israel, Her Majesty's Government noted that they could not regard the present boundaries between Israel, and Egypt, Jordan, Syria and the Lebanon as constituting the definitive frontiers of Israel, as these boundaries were laid down in the Armistice Agreements. As such they were subject to any modifications which could be agreed upon under the terms of those Agreements, or of any final settlements which may replace them. Following Israel's occupation of the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, Gaza and the Golan Heights in 1967, we distinguish between the State of Israel within the pre-1967 lines and the territories occupied since 1967. It has been the position of every UK Government since 1967 that these territories were not lawfully part of the State of Israel at its creation or at any point thereafter. We are clear that the permanent borders between Israel and a future Palestinian state should be based on the 1967 lines, with mutually-agreed land swaps to reflect the interests of the Jewish and Palestinian peoples. The final status of these borders must be determined by the parties.

■ Nigeria: Boko Haram and Islamic State West Africa Province

Dr Lisa Cameron:

[\[69586\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what steps the Government is taking to support the Government of Nigeria in tackling the advance of (a) Boko Haram and (b) Islamic State West Africa.

James Duddridge:

The UK is supporting the Government of Nigeria and its neighbours in the fight against Boko Haram and Islamic State West Africa. We provide a comprehensive package of security, stabilisation and humanitarian assistance to Nigeria to help tackle the threat from these terrorist groups. This includes: capacity building support for the Nigerian armed forces, with an emphasis on adherence to internationally recognised Rules of Engagement, International Human Rights and Humanitarian law; counter-IED and bomb scene management training; and support to the Multinational Joint Task Force, a regional taskforce which seeks to coordinate military efforts in the region. The UK is also providing up to £300 million of humanitarian support to

affected communities between 2017-2022, which includes the provision of vital food assistance for 1.5 million people affected by the conflict.

Dr Lisa Cameron:

[\[69587\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with his Nigerian counterpart on the International Society for Civil Liberties and Rule of Law's finding that more than 60,000 people have been killed by Boko Haram and Islamic State West Africa since 2010.

James Duddridge:

We are aware of the report published in May by the Nigerian NGO International Society for Civil Liberties and Rule of Law. While the United Nations and the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project assess the number of fatalities to be lower, at just over 36,000 people killed in the decade-long conflict in North East Nigeria and the Lake Chad Basin, each death caused by the conflict represents a tragedy.

The UK remains committed to supporting the Government of Nigeria and its neighbours in the fight against Boko Haram and Islamic State West Africa. The Prime Minister discussed UK support for tackling the insurgency in the North East with President Buhari at the UK Africa Investment Summit in January. We provide a comprehensive package of security, stabilisation and humanitarian assistance to Nigeria to help tackle the threat from these terrorist groups and support affected communities. This includes up to £300 million of humanitarian support to affected communities between 2017-2022.

■ Travel: Coronavirus

Mr Kevan Jones:

[\[71677\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, whether his Department plans to issue guidance to people in high-risk health categories on travelling abroad during the covid-19 pandemic.

Nigel Adams:

Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) travel advice aims to provide relevant and up-to-date guidance to help British people make informed decisions about foreign travel and stay safe while overseas. No two trips or traveller are the same; our advice represents an objective assessment of the level of risk that British people generally will face in another country. People planning travel at this time, in particular those who are at higher risk of severe COVID-19, should consult the latest FCO travel advice for their destination, alongside expert travel health advice from the National Travel Health Network and Centre on the TravelHealthPro website. They may wish to consider discussing their travel plans with a health professional to help them make a decision that is right for them.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE**■ Contact Tracing: Computer Software****Dawn Butler:**[\[61677\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will publish the dates of meetings he has had with representatives from (a) Apple and (b) Google in (i) 2019 and (ii) 2020 in relation to the development of a covid-19 app.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

We have worked closely with Apple and Google and will continue to do so as we focus our efforts on taking forward a solution that brings together our app, and their framework. The Secretary of State for Health and Social Care has had no meetings with Google or Apple to discuss the app. Departmental officials have met with Apple and Google to discuss the app, including but not limited to the following dates:

26 March;

10 April;

15 April;

19 April;

22 April;

27 April;

29 April;

4 May;

21 May;

4 June;

17 June;

22 June;

and 24 June.

Sir Edward Davey:[\[62263\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will list the dates of meetings (a) he and (b) his officials have had with representatives of Apple and Google to discuss their covid-19 tracing app.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 25 June 2020]: We have worked closely with Apple and Google and will continue to do so as we focus our efforts on taking forward a solution that brings together our app, and their framework. The Secretary of State for Health and Social Care has had no meetings with Google or Apple to discuss the app. Departmental officials have met with Apple and Google to discuss the app, including but not limited to the following dates:

26 March;
10 April;
15 April;
19 April;
22 April;
27 April;
29 April;
4 May;
21 May;
4 June;
17 June;
22 June;
and 24 June.

■ **Coronavirus: Clinical Trials**

Mary Glendon:

[67640]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what lessons the Government has learnt from the ability to rapidly approve covid-19 clinical trials; and how the Government plans to implement that learning to expedite the approval process for all clinical trials.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 6 July 2020]: The response to the COVID-19 pandemic has shown that the United Kingdom healthcare research and approvals system has the agility and flexibility to respond efficiently to a national crisis. The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) and Health Research Authority (HRA) instigated procedures for rapid advice, reviews and approvals for COVID-19 trials, prioritising these and authorising them in about one week.

As of 2 July, a total of 50 trials for the treatment or prevention of COVID-19 have been approved by both the MHRA and the HRA in an average of 12 days. Both the MHRA and the HRA have produced guidance on regulatory flexibilities available to clinical trial sponsors and proportionate approaches so that trials could be run as efficiently as possible.

In collaboration with trial sponsors and partners across the healthcare system a 'lessons learned' exercise will determine which initiatives in the emergency situation would be appropriate and sustainable in the 'business as usual' situation.

■ Coronavirus: Contact Tracing

Rachael Maskell:

[\[63418\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, for what reason track and trace staff do not always have cases to follow up when they are logged on to the system.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

NHS Test and Trace is a brand, new service which has been launched at incredible speed and scale and is already identifying thousands of contacts of positive cases and preventing transmission of the virus. We have recruited 27,000 contact tracing staff in England to support the Test and Trace service who have all been trained and are fully supported in their work by public health experts.

We are working hard to identify and follow up with the contacts of all people who have a positive test result. Over 132,000 potential contacts have now been reached and asked to self-isolate.

With rates of infection relatively low it is entirely right that some call handlers have spare capacity. As restrictions lift and people return to a more normal way of life, the role of contact tracers and social distancing measures will be even more vital.

■ Hospitals: Suicide

Jeremy Hunt:

[\[67585\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many in-patient suicides were recorded at mental health hospitals in each year from 2015 to 2019 inclusive.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 6 July 2020]: The data is not available in the format requested.

■ Mental Health

Dr Rosena Allin-Khan:

[\[61552\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the answer of 18 June 2020 to question 58760, on Mental Health, if he will (a) list the dates on which he held meetings with mental health (i) trusts and (ii) organisations since 23 March 2020 and (b) provide the details of those trusts and organisations.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 23 June 2020]: Ministers meet many stakeholders in the conduct of their duties.

■ Mental Health Act 1983

Rachel Hopkins:

[\[68461\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to publish the White Paper on reforming the Mental Health Act 1983.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

We have committed to publishing a White Paper which will set out the Government's response to Sir Simon Wessely's Independent Review of the Mental Health Act 1983 and pave the way for reform of the Act. We will publish our White Paper as soon as it is possible to do so. We will consult publicly on our proposals and will bring forward a Bill to amend the Act when parliamentary time allows.

■ **Pregnancy: Ethnic Groups****Thangam Debbonaire:**[\[69757\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps the Government is taking to improve maternal mortality rates for Black women.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

Analysis of maternal deaths, stillbirths and neonatal deaths, undertaken by MBRRACE-UK, shows that poor outcomes are much higher for mothers from Black/Black British and Asian/Asian British ethnic groups and women living in the most deprived areas of the country.

Work to reduce health inequalities around maternal mortality rates is being led by Professor Jacqueline Dunkley-Bent OBE, Chief Midwifery Officer. This includes understanding why mortality rates are higher, considering evidence about what will reduce mortality rates and taking action to reduce mortality rates. The work is multi-disciplinary and involves a range of stakeholder groups, including users of maternity services.

■ **Prisoners: Females****Ms Lyn Brown:**[\[67587\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent estimate he has made of the number and proportion of women and girls who are new entrants to a custodial facility in England and Wales and who have (a) been offered and (b) have taken up the offer of a pregnancy test.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

Every woman who arrives at a prison in England is offered a pregnancy test on reception if they meet the eligibility criteria. Women can refuse to have a pregnancy test but if they do the subject is revisited with them as they settle into prison.

The take up of these tests is not nationally collected. We are unable to tell how many women take up the offer of the test as this information would sit on the patients' notes.

HOME OFFICE**■ Asylum: Coronavirus****Stuart C McDonald:**[\[71801\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she made of the level of compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty of (a) the decision on 27 March 2020 to pause asylum support cessations and evictions and (b) the decision to lift that pause on 24 June 2020, as announced to refugee sector agencies on the Strategic engagement group; and what assessment she has made of the effect on BAME asylum seekers of the covid-19 outbreak.

Chris Philp:

In accordance with our PSED duties, the HO has given due regard to equalities issues in respect of additional support provided to asylum seekers in response to COVID pandemic. The decision to temporarily extend support and accommodation for those who would otherwise no longer be eligible was undertaken in consultation with Public Health Agencies across the UK. We are continuing to work closely with public health, local government and others to plan an appropriate resumption to termination of statutory support, taking full account of equalities duties and potential impacts on those SUs with protected characteristics.

Stuart C McDonald:[\[71802\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 25 June 2020 to Question 61728 on Asylum: Coronavirus, when the advice in relation to the pause of asylum support cessations and the subsequent review was received by her Department.

Chris Philp:

We have been working closely with National and Local health Colleagues throughout the pandemic to inform our approach and have sought advice about the cessations and review a number of times.

■ Female Genital Mutilation**Hywel Williams:**[\[23441\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how much funding the Government has allocated to tackling female genital mutilation in each financial year since 2015; and how that funding was allocated.

Victoria Atkins:

FGM is a crime and it is child abuse. The Government will not tolerate a practice that can cause extreme and lifelong physical and psychological suffering to women and girls. We significantly strengthened the law in 2015 in order to improve protection for victims and those at risk, and to break down the barriers to prosecution.

The table below comprises funding allocated by UK Government departments to tackle FGM since April 2015. It excludes:

- staffing and other administrative costs;
- grants which were made to organisations to tackle both FGM and other issues, where it is not possible to break down the money spent on FGM and on those other issues; and
- components of broader funding provided to statutory agencies and office holders (namely the NHS and Police and Crime Commissioners) which those agencies and office holders chose to spend on FGM.

All figures are rounded to the nearest £1,000. Financial years run from 1 April to 31 March.

FINANCIAL YEAR	TOTAL DOMESTIC GOVERNMENT SPEND
2015/2016	£2,718,000
2016/2017	£1,664,000
2017/2018	£1,918,000
2018/2019	£1,814,000
2019/2020	£432,000

This funding comprised:

- Home Office expenditure on grants to four organisations for projects dealing solely with FGM as part of the Building a Stronger Britain Together Fund (2017/18-2019/20); and on a communications campaign to raise awareness of the risks of FGM (2017/18-2019/20).
- Department for Education expenditure on grants to the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC) (2015/16); to Barnardo's/National FGM Centre (2015/16-2019/20); and to two other voluntary sector organisations (2016/17-2017/18).
- Department of Health and Social Care expenditure on the FGM Prevention Programme (2015/16-2017/18), as well as additional funding in 2018/19 to embed the improvements delivered by that programme across NHS services.
- Funds allocated by the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government to 37 local authority areas to fund locally-driven outreach, engagement and communications on the practice of FGM (2018/19).

The Home Office also awarded £476,000 in grants to two projects dealing solely with FGM as part of the Violence Against Women and Girls Service Transformation fund. As these grants were awarded as a block encompassing three financial years, the figures cannot be broken down into financial years.

Information on the amount of funding provided by the Department for International Development (DfID) since 2015 is not available by financial year. DfID's spending by calendar year is outlined here:

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-03-02/23440/>

■ Forensic Science

Bambos Charalambous: [71850]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the timeframe is for the establishment of a panel of experts to support the work of the Independent review of scientific methodology in forensics.

Bambos Charalambous: [71851]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether the Forensics Capability Network has established its five-year roadmap to prioritise DNA and digital innovation.

Kit Malthouse:

The Forensic Capability Network (FCN) is operated by policing on behalf of all 43 police forces in England and Wales. It is developing a network of forensic science professionals which will include the Office of the Chief Scientist. Through this the FCN will establish a panel of experts in due course to support the ongoing independent review of scientific methodology in forensics.

The FCN Prospectus identifies responsibility for the FCN to develop Capability Roads Maps, of which DNA and digital innovation have been identified as priorities and as such are in development. The Prospectus can be read here:

<http://prospectus.fcn.police.uk/summary.pdf>

■ Human Trafficking

Anthony Mangnall: [69700]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to prevent human trafficking.

Victoria Atkins:

Government is committed to tackling the heinous crime of modern slavery. We are identifying more victims of modern slavery and doing more to bring perpetrators to justice than ever before.

The Home Office works with range of partners to deliver effective prevention activity including successful awareness raising initiatives like the 'Hidden in Plain Sight' campaign which targeted frontline professionals in healthcare, recruitment and financial sectors to spot the signs of modern slavery.

We are committed to improving our understanding of this rapidly evolving threat. In July 2019 the Government announced a £10 million investment to create a new Policy and Evidence Centre for Modern Slavery and Human Rights to transform the evidence base underpinning our policy response to modern slavery.

In May, at the Prime Minister's Virtual Summit on Hidden Harms, the Government reiterated the absolute priority that we prevent and protect those at risk from hidden

harms. This year we have provided a further £1.4 million funding to the Modern Slavery and Organised Immigration Crime Unit to support the police to tackle modern slavery and build capacity to crack down on organised immigration crime.

We are also continuing work to prevent modern slavery in public and private sector supply chains. On 26 March 2020, we became the first country to publish a Government Modern Slavery Statement setting out the steps we have taken to identify and prevent modern slavery in our own supply chains. To make it easier for consumers, investors and others to scrutinise the steps that businesses are taking address their risks the Home Office is creating a new gov.uk registry for modern slavery statements. We have also consulted on proposals to strengthen the transparency in supply chains legislation and will publish a response to this consultation in the Summer.

■ **Ilois: Right of Abode**

Andrew Rosindell:

[69471]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to her Department's announcement entitled, UK to extend residence rights for British Nationals (Overseas) citizens in Hong Kong, published on 1 July 2020, whether she has plans to extend those rights to (a) Chagosians and (b) descendants of Chagosians.

Kevin Foster:

Chagosians born on the British Indian Ocean Territory are British Overseas Territories Citizens, and also automatically became British citizens under the British Overseas Territories Act 2002. These individuals therefore already have the right of abode in the United Kingdom.

Under current British nationality law, citizenship is normally only passed on to one generation born abroad. British citizens can make use of existing immigration routes to bring their family members to the UK.

We have no plans to extend the arrangements for British Nationals (Overseas) set out on 1 July 2020 to Chagosians.

■ **Immigrants: Finance**

Afzal Khan:

[69672]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make an assessment of the effect of the No Recourse to Public Funds condition on BAME women.

Chris Philp:

The Home Office has published its policy equality statement on the impact of the No Recourse to Public Fund (NRPF) policy on migrants on the 10-year human rights route. It can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/application-for-change-of-conditions-of-leave-to-allow-access-to-public-funds-if-your-circumstances-change>.

The NRPF policy is based on the principle that migrants coming to the UK are expected to maintain and support themselves and their families without posing a burden on the UK's welfare system. Access to benefits and other publicly funded services reflects the strength of a migrant's connections to the UK and is normally linked to indefinite leave to remain.

People on the 10-year human rights route can apply to have the condition lifted. Other groups, such as refugees, are exempt from the condition.

■ Immigration: Health Insurance

Thangam Debbonaire:

[69598]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, in what circumstances her Department will use its discretion to waive the requirement for applicants with settled status applying for British citizenship to have had Comprehensive Sickness Insurance in order to satisfy the requirement that they have been legally residing in the UK.

Kevin Foster:

To meet the statutory requirements for naturalisation, a person of any nationality must have been in the UK lawfully during the residential qualifying period.

EEA regulations set out the requirements which individuals need to follow if they wish to reside here lawfully on the basis of free movement. In the case of students or the self-sufficient – but not those who were working here – the possession of comprehensive sickness insurance has always been a requirement.

The British Nationality Act allows us to exercise discretion over this requirement in the special circumstances of any particular case. We cannot therefore prescribe when discretion will or will not be exercised. UKVI consider cases sensitively, taking into account the nature and reasons for any period of unlawful residence alongside other information relevant to the individual.

■ National Security

Catherine West:

[71837]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the Answer of 1 November 2019 to Question 4350; what assessment she has made of the potential merits of bringing forward legislative proposals on foreign agents' registration.

James Brokenshire:

The risks posed to the UK from hostile state activity have both grown and diversified. We have to ensure that we have the necessary powers to meet current and evolving threats to the UK, both domestically and overseas.

The Home Office is continuing to review the legislation relating to hostile state activity to assess whether additional powers are required to clamp down on the activities of hostile states which threaten the UK.

As part of this, we are considering like-minded international partners' legislation to see whether the UK would benefit from adopting a form of foreign agent registration.

This work remains ongoing and has not reached conclusions yet.

■ Police: Data Protection

Chi Onwurah: [\[69552\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department plans to require police forces to put in place appropriate independent oversight and governance of extracted data that is not relevant to an investigation.

Kit Malthouse:

Data extracted in the course of a police investigation must be stored safely and securely and retained only in accordance with all relevant legislation and guidance.

We will work with operational partners to ensure public confidence in the use of extracted data in the criminal justice system.

Chi Onwurah: [\[69553\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to ensure that police forces consult data protection officers on new projects involving the use of new technologies for processing personal data.

Kit Malthouse:

Data protection legislation requires police forces to appoint a Data Protection Officer to monitor internal compliance and provide advice on data protection obligations. This includes providing advice on Data Protection Impact Assessments (DPIAs), required by law before data controllers (including police forces) begin any type of processing likely to result in a high risk to personal data. This will often include the use of new technologies for processing personal data.

Where processing is likely to result in high risk, data protection legislation also requires a police force consult with the supervisory authority – the Information Commissioner’s Office.

The Home Office works closely with various law enforcement agencies such as the National Police Chief Council and the College of Policing who are responsible for guidance for the police forces within the United Kingdom.

■ Police: Finance

Peter Kyle: [\[71828\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what plans she has to reimburse police forces with funds commensurate with additional costs incurred as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Kit Malthouse:

The Government has been clear that the Police will get the financial support they need to keep our communities safe through the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Government took immediate steps to increase the availability of funding for forces to meet cashflow pressures caused by the pandemic. We flexed half of the

£168 million Police Uplift ringfenced grant to include expenditure on COVID-19 related pressures for the first six months of the financial year. We also brought forward payment of the £142.6 million police pensions grant, which forces received in April this year.

The Home Office continues to gather evidence of forces' additional Covid-19 related expenditures since the introduction of social distancing measures, developed in close consultation with policing sector finance leads. We will use this evidence base to inform cross-Government decisions on the police's future funding needs.

■ Ports: Wales

Hywel Williams:

[71673]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent assessment she has made of the potential risk of smuggling through Welsh ports after the end of the transition period; and what steps the Government is taking to mitigate that risk.

Chris Philp:

The UK has now left the EU, providing a once in a generation opportunity to take back control and strengthen the security of the UK border as a whole.

In December, the Government announced a plan to strengthen our border security. This included introducing the collection of pre-arrival goods data to stop smuggling and enable us to more effectively target illicit commodities travelling from the EU to the UK, the power to stop EU criminals at the border once we have ended free movement, the phasing out the use of European ID cards that are regularly used fraudulently given their insecurity compared to passports as well as introducing Electronic Travel Authorisation to provide an enhanced ability to screen arrivals and block threats from entering the UK.

■ Retail Trade: Crimes of Violence

Matt Western:

[69649]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will take steps to develop a national strategy for tackling violence against retail workers.

Kit Malthouse:

The Government published its response to the Call for Evidence on Violence and Abuse Towards Shop Staff on 7 July. In response to its findings, we are already working with retailers, the police and others through the National Retail Crime Steering Group to develop and deliver a programme of work to drive down violence and abuse towards shopworkers.

You can access the report here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/violence-and-abuse-toward-shop-staff-call-for-evidence>

■ Travellers: Caravan Sites

Anthony Mangnall:

[\[69711\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to ensure that (a) police and (b) local authorities have adequate enforcement powers to disperse illegal encampments.

Kit Malthouse:

On 5 November 2019, the Government launched a consultation seeking views on measures to strengthen police powers to tackle unauthorised encampments. The consultation closed on the 5 March. We will announce the outcome of this consultation in due course.

Local authorities are best-placed to determine when it is appropriate to use their powers to evict unauthorised encampments under Sections 77 and 78 of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act (1994) and should work with the police and magistrates' courts in their local areas.

■ UK Visas and Immigration: Coronavirus

Carol Monaghan:

[\[71815\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what additional resources her Department is providing to Visa Application Centres throughout the World to help them tackle backlogs that have developed as a result of the covid-19 pandemic.

Kevin Foster:

Following initial closures as a result of global Covid-19 restrictions, Visa Application Centres (VACs) overseas and UK Visa and Citizenship Application Service (UKVCAS) centres in the UK have started reopening in a phased way, with social distancing and other public health measures in place which has resulted in reduced appointment capacity.

UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) is continuing to work with our commercial partners to ensure there is sufficient appointment availability so customers waiting for an appointment are able to enrol their biometrics and submit supporting documents safely and quickly.

Customers who have applied since services were suspended are being contacted and offered appointments in a phased way. For customers in the UK, in order to increase capacity and reduce customer contact UKVI will be reusing fingerprint biometrics for some customers who have supplied their fingerprints since July 2015. These customers do not need to attend a UKVCAS or an SSC service point appointment to provide biometric information.

■ Vetting

Rosie Cooper:

[27638]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether Disclosure and Barring Service certificates are sent by recorded or tracked delivery to ensure that it reaches the recipient.

Victoria Atkins:

The Disclosure and Barring Service dispatches disclosure certificates by second class business post.

■ Vetting: Voluntary Work

Emma Hardy:

[30796]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether additional resources will be made available to support quick Disclosure and Barring Service checks for people volunteering to support the response to the covid-19 outbreak.

Victoria Atkins:

As part of the Government's emergency planning for Covid-19 the Home Office are working closely with Disclosure and Barring Service and Department of Health and Social Care and Education officials. Information about checks for people supporting the response and people volunteering can be found in the links below.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-free-of-charge-dbs-applications-and-fast-track-barred-list-check-service>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/safeguarding-factsheet-community-volunteers-during-covid-19-outbreak>

Dame Diana Johnson:

[31459]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of waiving fees for Disclosure and Barring Service checks for people volunteering to support the response to the covid-19 outbreak.

Victoria Atkins:

Volunteers do not need a DBS check if they are carrying out tasks such as delivering shopping or walking dogs for people in their community.

The DBS has published guidance to assist community volunteering groups understand when a check may be needed.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/safeguarding-factsheet-community-volunteers-during-covid-19-outbreak>

Standard and enhanced checks are free for volunteers.

Laura Trott:

[31654]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of DBS checks being fast-tracked and the processing fees waived

to ensure that volunteers wishing to help their communities in response to the covid-19 outbreak can be vetted by community organisers.

Victoria Atkins:

Volunteers do not need a DBS check if they are carrying out tasks such as delivering shopping or walking dogs for people in their community.

The DBS has published guidance to assist community volunteering groups understand when a check may be needed.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/safeguarding-factsheet-community-volunteers-during-covid-19-outbreak>

Standard and enhanced checks are free for volunteers.

■ **Visas**

Stuart C McDonald: [71803]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, on what date she decided to reverse her plans to pilot a remote areas visa scheme.

Kevin Foster:

Given the Home Office has not had plans to pilot a remote areas visa scheme, there cannot have been a decision to reverse them.

■ **Visas: Coronavirus**

Drew Hendry: [71818]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of implementing an additional visa extension beyond 31 July 2020 for people from countries with continuing high rates of covid-19 infection.

Drew Hendry: [71819]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to support people whose visas are due to expire and are unable to return to their nations of origin as a result of ongoing covid-19 travel restrictions.

Kevin Foster:

The Home Office has put in place a range of measures to support those affected by the covid-19 outbreak. We recognise further adjustments are likely to be required to cater for all scenarios, and we are working to ensure people are not unduly affected by circumstances beyond their control.

The latest information in respect of advice for visa holders can be found on GOV.UK at: www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-advice-for-uk-visa-applicants-and-temporary-uk-residents.

This is being kept under review, including whether further extensions will be necessary. We will confirm the position for those affected shortly.

■ Visas: Migrant Workers

Sir John Hayes:

[65924]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what estimate she has made of the number of people in non-EU countries who would be eligible for Tier 2 (General) visas under the proposals for a lower skills threshold under the new points-based immigration system.

Sir John Hayes:

[65925]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what estimate she has made of the potential effect of the proposed new points-based immigration system on the level of non-EU immigration in each of the next five years compared to the level in 2019.

Chris Philp:

The Impact Assessment for the Immigration and Social Security Co-ordination (EU Withdrawal) Bill included an assessment of the potential number of skilled workers that may be eligible under the new points-based immigration system. This included two illustrative scenarios for a potential increase in non-EU nationals eligible under a lower skill and salary threshold over the next five years. Estimates were provided for all skilled workers and not split by new entrant and experienced workers.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/immigration-bill-2020-overarching-documents>

HOUSE OF COMMONS COMMISSION

■ Parliamentary Estate: Coronanvirus

Layla Moran:

[71150]

To ask the hon. Member for Perth and North Perthshire, representing the House of Commons Commission, what the cost to the public purse was of (a) securing, (b) heating, and (c) lighting empty offices on the Parliamentary Estate while (a) staff and (b) hon. Members were instructed to work from home due to the covid-19 outbreak.

Pete Wishart:

At all times the estate has been kept safe and secure and able to support Parliamentary business as required.

It is not possible to provide a specific breakdown of costs relating to empty offices during this period. The following comparison against a similar period last year has been produced. Reductions in usage may not be solely related to Covid-19.

	MARCH – MAY 2019	MARCH – MAY 2020	REDUCTION (UNITS)	APPROX. REDUCTION (£)
Natural Gas kWh	8,560,187	6,670,501	1,889,686	£29,725
Electricity kWh	7,196,453	6,328,062	868,392	£95,459
Water m3	48,313	14,294	34,019	£63,490
				£188,674

HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

■ Buildings: Insulation

Shabana Mahmood:

[\[71712\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what support he is making available to leaseholders who have incurred significant costs to improve fire safety as an interim measure before flammable cladding is removed from their properties.

Christopher Pincher:

Interim measures such as waking watch should only ever be short term and are not a substitute for remediation. The only way to make buildings safe and to remove the need for interim measures is to remove unsafe cladding as quickly as possible. That is why we are prioritising £1.6 billion public subsidy on remediation of unsafe cladding. The Minister of State for Fire, Lord Greenhalgh, is investigating what can be done to reduce the cost of waking watch for buildings that currently have them in place. This includes ensuring that waking watch costs are transparent so that leaseholders and others who commission these services can ensure that costs are reasonable. Lord Greenhalgh is meeting regularly with representatives of leaseholders affected by cladding issues to consider their views and to update them on progress.

■ Future High Streets Fund and Towns Fund: Coronavirus

Jon Trickett:

[\[70326\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what support will be made available to councils shortlisted for the Future High Street Fund and Towns Fund who need to meet the match-funding requirements but who have incurred additional financial costs as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Mr Simon Clarke:

A core ambition of both the Towns Fund and Future High Streets Fund (FHSF) is to leverage further investment and co-funding from a range of public and private sector partners. Whilst we have been clear in our guidance that there is no minimum threshold for this, co-funding will form part of our overall assessment of Town Investment Plans (TIPs) and FHSF business cases. We know, however, that COVID-19 impacts may prevent certain challenges and we will allow places to communicate how plans, including co-funding, might have been impacted.

■ High Rise Flats: Insulation**Shabana Mahmood:**[\[71709\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to the letter of 9 June 2020, reference 7195472, to the hon. Member for Birmingham Ladywood from the Building Safety Minister, whether the round table with insurance industry stakeholders in relation to high rise building insurance and cladding has taken place.

Shabana Mahmood:[\[71710\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to the letter of 9 June 2020, reference 7195472, to the hon. Member for Birmingham Ladywood from the Building Safety Minister, what steps her Department has taken since officials made contact with Brindley House leaseholders.

Christopher Pincher:

The Building Safety Minister has held three roundtables with representatives from the insurance industry. These have included discussions of the challenges in acquiring affordable buildings insurance for some high rise residential buildings. Government is continuing to work with industry to explore market solutions to this complex issue.

Shabana Mahmood:[\[71711\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what recent assessment he has made of the effect of the installation of the External Wall System, EWS1 on the ability of leaseholds to sell properties that previously had been fitted with flammable cladding.

Christopher Pincher:

The Government is aware that some lenders are requesting valuers use the EWS1 form on a wider scope of buildings than was intended and this may be having a negative effect on the mortgage market for such buildings. The Minister for Building Safety held a roundtable with mortgage lenders, who agreed a nuanced approach to risk is required. They are reviewing their policies and guidance to valuers on the use of the form.

■ Homelessness

Peter Kyle:

[71829]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment he has made of the sectors of the economy from which newly homeless or rough-sleeping people originate.

Luke Hall:

MHCLG does not currently hold information on from which sectors of the economy newly homeless or people who are newly rough sleeping originate.

The Government has taken wider steps to help protect jobs and incomes. This includes the Coronavirus Job Retention scheme to protect workers and to support those on low incomes, as well as announcing a package of temporary welfare measures. Taken together, measures, including those announced at Budget, provide over £6.5 billion of additional support through the welfare system for people affected by COVID-19.

This includes increasing the Local Housing Allowance rates for Universal Credit and Housing Benefit claimants so that they are set at the 30th percentile of market rents. The Government has taken unprecedented action to support renters during the pandemic. On 5 June we announced that the suspension of evictions from social or private rented accommodation had been extended by a further two months.

■ Islam: Festivals and Special Occasions

Tracey Crouch:

[71724]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what plans his Department has to issue guidance to people celebrate Eid Al-Adha during the covid-19 outbreak.

Luke Hall:

We know that British Muslims will be thinking about how they can safely celebrate Eid Al-Adha with their friends, family and community during this period. We have produced guidance for the safe use of places of worship during the pandemic, which can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-the-safe-use-of-places-of-worship-during-the-pandemic-from-4-july>.

Guidance is also available on how individuals can protect themselves while meeting people from outside of their household, which includes guidance on indoor and outdoor gatherings. This guidance can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/meeting-people-from-outside-your-household-from-4-july>.

We will continue to engage with faith leaders to help communities stay safe whilst marking this important time of the year.

■ Landlords

Mike Amesbury: [\[71876\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many entries have been added to the rogue landlords database in 2020.

Christopher Pincher:

As of 13 July 2020, 13 entries have been added to the database of Rogue Landlords and Property Agents in 2020.

■ Leasehold: Reform

Mike Amesbury: [\[71874\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, when the Government plans to publish the draft Leasehold Reform Bill.

Luke Hall:

The Government is committed to promoting fairness and transparency for homeowners and ensuring that consumers are protected from abuse and poor service. We are taking forward a comprehensive programme of reform to end unfair practices in the leasehold market. This includes measures to ban the sale of new leasehold houses, restrict ground rents to zero for future leases, give freehold homeowners equivalent rights to challenge unfair charges, and close loopholes to prevent unfair evictions. Given the impact of COVID-19 on the legislative agenda, we will bring forward legislation on leasehold reform as soon as Parliamentary time allows.

■ Local Government Finance: Coronavirus

Jon Trickett: [\[70322\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what fiscal plans he has to help mitigate reductions in local authorities business rates revenue as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Mr Simon Clarke:

On the 2 July my Department laid a written statement on a wide-ranging package of further financial support to ensure local government can continue to fulfil its essential role in the national response to COVID-19. This includes a commitment to support the sector through an apportionment of irrecoverable business rates losses between central and local government, to be agreed at the Spending Review. The Government has also announced that the repayment of collection fund deficits arising in 2020-21, for example because of a reduction in local revenue from business rates, will be spread over the next three years rather than the usual period of a year, giving councils breathing space in setting budgets for next year.

■ Private Rented Housing: Coronavirus**Helen Hayes:****[71831]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what plans he has to extend the suspension due to the covid-19 outbreak of private rented sector evictions scheduled to end on 22 August 2020.

Christopher Pincher:

As Government takes steps in the next phase of the COVID-19 response, it is right that we consider how measures should adapt. On 13 May the Government took decisive steps to unlock the housing market, enabling people, whether they own or rent, to move home safely if they need to.

As part of this, the current pause for possession cases in the courts will end on the 23 August. This is an important step towards transitioning out of emergency measures and allowing the market to operate, ensuring all people – landlords and tenants – have appropriate access to justice in cases that are not related to COVID-19, such as cases of anti-social behaviour and longstanding cases that pre-date lockdown measures being put in place.

However, we recognise that when possession cases are being heard, further steps may be needed to protect the most vulnerable. Landlords must follow strict procedures if they want to gain possession of their property, depending on the type of tenancy agreement in place and the terms of it. The Government has also been working closely with the judiciary, legal representatives, the advice sector and housing sector stakeholders through a working group convened by the Master of the Rolls. This group is considering arrangements that will mean that courts are better able to address the need for appropriate protection of all parties in the current legislative framework once the suspension of proceedings ends.

■ Private Rented Housing: Insulation**Mike Amesbury:****[71875]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many buildings in the private rented sector have unsafe ACM cladding.

Christopher Pincher:

The Department publishes data on the number of high-rise residential and publicly owned buildings in England with ACM cladding systems unlikely to meet building regulations. The latest data is available [here](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/building-safety-programme-monthly-data-release-may-2020):

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/building-safety-programme-monthly-data-release-may-2020>

■ Regional Planning and Development: North of England**Steve Reed:****[71776]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, which Minister has been given responsibility for the Northern Powerhouse.

Mr Simon Clarke:

The Transport Secretary has Cabinet responsibility for the Northern Powerhouse and transport, including Northern Powerhouse Rail. As Minister for Regional Growth and Local Government, I have responsibility for driving regional growth across the Northern Powerhouse and levelling up across the whole country.

Stronger Towns Fund**Steve Reed:**[\[71774\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 13 February 2020 to Question 14834 on the Towns Fund, when he plans to publish the (a) qualitative indicators and (b) quantitative indicators that formed the basis of the robust selection methodology used to choose the 100 towns.

Mr Simon Clarke:

The Government is not able to publish the full selection methodology used to choose the 100 Towns that will work towards Town Deals at this time. This is because it includes information that relates to the formulation and development of Government policy which is still live and ongoing.

Urban Areas**Steve Reed:**[\[71775\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 13 January 2020 to Question 900118 on Urban Areas, if he will publish information on (a) how the Towns Hub will function and (b) the number of civil servants that are working on the Towns Hub.

Mr Simon Clarke:

The Towns Hub is providing support to 100 towns that are currently developing proposals to agree Town Deals as part of the £3.6 billion Towns Fund. The Towns Hub consists of central and regional teams in The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) with 17 full-time equivalents and the Towns Fund Delivery Partnership led by Arup. Furthermore, the Towns Hub is supported by colleagues across MHCLG and other government departments. More details are available in the Towns Fund further guidance.

Vulnerable Adults: Coronavirus**Rosie Cooper:**[\[71701\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if he will issue guidance on ensuring that clinically and extremely vulnerable are supported in areas that have local covid-19 lockdown restrictions imposed on them.

Rosie Cooper:[\[71702\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps the Government is taking to ensure that clinically and extremely vulnerable people

under local covid-19 lockdown restrictions (a) are safe and (b) have their basic needs met beyond the end of July 2020 when the shielding rules are eased.

Christopher Pincher:

The Government has always been clear that it will continually monitor the transmission of the virus in our communities and, if rates rise too much, our advice to those who are shielding may change.

For those shielding in Leicester, the guidance published on 23 June remains in place and those who are clinically extremely vulnerable should continue to follow it.

The Government is committed to supporting all those who are shielding.

Rosie Cooper:

[71703]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps the Government is taking to ensure that (a) at-risk and (b) vulnerable individuals (i) with irregular immigration status, (ii) who are homeless and (c) are victims of labour and sexual exploitation are provided with adequate accommodation during local covid-19 lockdowns.

Luke Hall:

The Government is committed to protecting vulnerable people and have acted decisively to ensure that we support everyone through this pandemic.

We are ensuring local authorities are supported, with £3.2 million in targeted funding to help support individuals who are sleeping rough off the streets, and an additional £3.7 billion provided to local authorities as part of the wider Government response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

This funding has been provided to help local authorities to reduce risks to public health and to support individuals on the basis of need.

We are aware of concerns about those with no recourse to public funds experiencing homelessness during the COVID-19 crisis.

The legal position on those with no recourse to public funds has not been amended.

On 6 April, in line with Public Health England guidance and social distancing measures, the Safeguarding Minister announced that all modern slavery victims accommodated by the Victim Care Contract would not be required to move on from their Government-funded accommodation for a period of three months.

On 24 May, the Housing Secretary announced plans for thousands of long-term, safe homes to support many of the vulnerable rough sleepers who have been supported during the COVID-19 pandemic. Here, vulnerable rough sleepers taken off the streets during the pandemic can get the specialist support they need to rebuild their lives. This unprecedented commitment, the biggest of its kind since the Government's Rough Sleeping Initiative began, will be backed by £160 million in 20/21 to inject 3,300 new units of accommodation into the system over the following 12 months, part of 6,000 in total. In addition, on 24 June the Housing Secretary announced that we are providing local authorities with a further £105 million to enable them to best

support the almost 15,000 vulnerable people placed into emergency accommodation during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Government recognises that these are unprecedented times, and expects local authorities to support people who are sleeping rough, and also to minimise unnecessary risks to public health, acting within the law.

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

■ Bangladesh: Migrant Camps

Stephen Kinnock:

[\[71777\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what recent steps she has taken to ensure the resumption and continuation of critical (a) routine-vaccination, (b) sexual and reproductive health and (c) gender-based violence services in Cox's Bazar Bangladesh following the covid-19 outbreak.

Nigel Adams:

We are pressing the UN and NGOs to resume vaccinations in the camps in Cox's Bazar. WHO is supporting health authorities at national and local levels and the Government of Bangladesh recently introduced a new strategy and workplan to resume vaccination outreach in all camps. Routine vaccination sessions were reduced during the initial stages of the pandemic but are now gradually improving at the national level.

The Government of Bangladesh decided early in the crisis to deliver the national 'Essential Service Package' to the refugees, which includes contraceptive options, ante and post-natal care, midwifery services, and menstruation products. These are currently designated as critical services, alongside distribution of hygiene kits.

UK aid-supported gender-based violence (GBV) activities are being implemented across 34 camps, in 35 women friendly spaces/integrated women centres. The UK has provided an additional £400,000 to UNFPA for GBV services. Part of this funding is focused on ensuring critical GBV and child protection services keep operating for all those who need them, and includes disseminating anti-GBV messaging and activities with adolescent boys and girls.

Stephen Kinnock:

[\[71778\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what recent assessment she has made of the effect of the covid-19 pandemic on the population of (a) Cox's Bazar and (b) Dhaka.

Nigel Adams:

High population density, overcrowded housing, underlying illnesses and poverty make Bangladesh, and Dhaka in particular, vulnerable to COVID-19. Bangladesh is trying to address the challenges of COVID-19 with a weak healthcare system and limited financial resources. Bangladesh's capacity to test for COVID-19 and to isolate and treat patients remains very limited. UK aid is preparing and strengthening the

health system to reach the poorest and most vulnerable communities with access to water and sanitation, awareness raising information, and food assistance to support them during the prolonged lockdown.

The Rohingya refugees in Cox's Bazar are especially vulnerable to COVID-19 due to underlying illnesses and overcrowded camps. Any disruption to essential services as a result of restrictions on agencies' access to the camps increases health and protection risks, particularly for women and girls. The impact of the virus on the livelihoods of host communities could result in increasing hostility to refugees and humanitarian agencies. UK aid is being used to establish treatment centres, distribute soap, and improve access to clean water. Our support is helping to raise awareness about personal hygiene, share information and reach out to the most vulnerable people with advice on social distancing and other prevention measures.

Stephen Kinnock: [\[71779\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, if she will increase funding to essential medical and humanitarian programmes in (a) Cox's Bazar, and (b) Dhaka for both (i) regular and (ii) covid-19 related activities in 2020.

Stephen Kinnock: [\[71780\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what plans her Department has to continue providing essential medical and humanitarian services in (a) Cox's Bazar and (b) Dhaka.

Stephen Kinnock: [\[71781\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what critical services his Department is currently funding in (a) Cox's Bazar and (b) Dhaka.

Stephen Kinnock: [\[71782\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, pursuant the Answer of 20 May 2020 to Question HL 4066 on Overseas Aid: Coronavirus, what assessment she has made of the effect of the covid-19 pandemic on the provision of and access to essential health and humanitarian services in (a) Cox's Bazar and (b) Dhaka.

Nigel Adams:

The UK has major health and humanitarian programmes in Cox's Bazar and across Bangladesh, including in Dhaka. The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the importance of essential health and humanitarian services. UK Aid has re-prioritised activities to tackle the immediate health impacts and the broader socio-economic effects on the poorest and most vulnerable. This includes the Rohingya refugees and surrounding communities in Cox's Bazar, where the UK has committed £256 million since 2017. Rapid humanitarian responses will remain a priority given Bangladesh's vulnerability to climate and man-made disasters. Any increases will depend on the outcome of the current ODA reprioritisation review.

The UK has allocated £21 million so far to support the priorities set out in the Government of Bangladesh's Preparedness and Response plan. This includes more

than £7 million to support national health systems and £3 million through UNDP to reach more than 2 million of the poorest people. More than £11 million has been allocated to existing UN and NGO partners to prepare for COVID-19 and maintain critical humanitarian services in the Rohingya refugee camps.

DFID and Unilever are collaborating on a mass global handwashing campaign, which will run across TV, radio, print and social media to help change people's behaviour in countries across Africa and Asia, including Bangladesh.

■ CDC: Climate Change

Fleur Anderson:

[71908]

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, with reference to the CDC Group's climate strategy, published on 2 July 2020, what assessment her Department has made of the compliance of CDC Group's on-going investments with the standards set out in that climate strategy.

James Duddridge:

CDC has published an ambitious new climate strategy that commits CDC to a portfolio-wide approach to achieving net zero by 2050, a just transition and stronger focus on adaptation and the building of climate resilience. A target to invest 30% of total annual commitments in 2021 in climate finance has been set.

DFID has closely engaged with CDC on the development of their new climate strategy. The commitments set out are forward-looking and will ensure CDC's approach to aligning with the Paris Agreement is fully embedded within its investment processes.

The new climate strategy builds on steps taken by CDC over recent years to integrate climate risks and opportunities into investment decision making, whilst continuing to focus on the world's poorest countries. Over the last 3 years, CDC has made climate related investments totalling over \$1 billion in renewable energy, forestry and energy and water efficiency projects.

This policy is not retrospective. Investments made prior to the launch of the climate strategy were made in accordance with policies and requirements at the time those decisions were made.

Fleur Anderson:

[71909]

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, with reference to the CDC Group's climate strategy, published on 2 July 2020, what steps her Department is taking to ensure that all existing CDC investments made prior to July 2020 comply with the standards set out in that climate strategy.

James Duddridge:

DFID has closely engaged with CDC on the development of their new climate strategy. The commitments set out are forward-looking and will ensure CDC's portfolio-wide approach to aligning with the Paris Agreement is fully embedded in its investment processes.

This policy is not retrospective. Investments made prior to the launch of the climate strategy were made in accordance with policies and requirements at the time those decisions were made.

■ **Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office**

Yasmin Qureshi: [\[71715\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, if she will ensure that there will be no forced relocations of staff through the merging of her Department and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

When the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office is formally established we will be working to transfer existing DFID employees into it. We may need a different skill or grade mix in different locations overseas to enable the new Department to deliver on its objectives; it is too early to say precisely what changes will be needed.

There will be no forced relocations of staff in the UK when the new Department is created, although we will be developing plans in due course to move UK-based roles out of London in line with the Government's wider Places for Growth agenda.

Any required changes in the location of roles or staff in the UK or overseas will be handled in accordance with relevant civil service policy and guidance.

■ **Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Conditions of Employment**

Yasmin Qureshi: [\[71714\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, by what date will staff employed by her Department and staff employed by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office have harmonised contracts as part of the proposed merger of those Departments.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

Although some work had already started on aligning terms and conditions before the Machinery of Government changes were announced, it is too early to be able to say precisely when all contracts will be harmonised. As some of the changes will have financial implications, it is expected to be after the next Spending Review.

■ **Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Statistics**

Preet Kaur Gill: [\[71849\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what steps her Department is taking to ensure that the disaggregation of data by age is (a) improved and (b) prioritised in the work of the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office; and what progress the Government has made on the implementation of the Inclusive Data Charter Action Plan.

Wendy Morton:

Responding to the needs of older people is essential in our efforts to tackle extreme poverty. This is being highlighted right now as we see the vulnerability of older people to the COVID-19 pandemic. We are paying attention to their needs in our response to our COVID-19 and are engaging internationally to push for others to do the same.

DFID published our Inclusive Data Charter Action Plan in 2019, setting out our ambitions to increase the collection and use of disaggregated data, and to improve disaggregation at a global level. This includes our £45 million investment in the World Bank Trust Fund for Statistical Capacity Building fund, which strengthens the capacity of statistical systems in developing countries, including on age disaggregated data.

We are a key stakeholder in the Titchfield City Group on Ageing, an international group set up to improve data on ageing and age disaggregation.

Overseas Aid: Standards**Dr Lisa Cameron:**[\[71081\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, whether UK overseas aid spending will be in line with the OECD Development Assistance Committee's internationally agreed standards for Official Development Assistance following the merger of his Department and the Department for International Development.

Wendy Morton:

Spending 0.7 percent of our national income on aid is enshrined in law. The UK continues to report its aid spend in line with the international definitions of Official Development Assistance as defined by the OECD Development Assistance Committee.

We will continue to look at how the UK's aid can maximise the UK's role as a force for good in the world, including through the Integrated Review. This will inform the priorities of the Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office.

As the Prime Minister said in the House, the work of UK aid to reduce poverty will remain central to the new department's mission.

Yemen: Humanitarian Aid**Mr Barry Sheerman:**[\[70330\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what steps she is taking with the United Nations to co-ordinate the provision of humanitarian aid to civilians in Yemen.

James Cleverly:

The UK is working closely with the UN and other donors at all levels, to help ensure the humanitarian response in Yemen is as coordinated as possible. This includes supporting the UN's Humanitarian Response Plan and COVID-19 strategy in Yemen.

We engage regularly with senior UN officials, including through calls between Ministers and UN Agency Leads and between DFID's Country Director for Yemen

and the UN's Humanitarian Coordinator in Yemen. We also actively participate in the UN's weekly Yemen Humanitarian Country Team meetings.

Our recently announced £160 million commitment of UK aid to Yemen is being delivered through UN and NGO humanitarian and development partners in line with the UN's Humanitarian Response Plan. We maintain constant dialogue with these UN agencies and NGOs to ensure we understand the challenges they are facing on the ground and identify ways in which we can support them through UK influence and diplomacy.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

■ Borders: Northern Ireland

Paul Blomfield: [\[71743\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what steps she is taking to mitigate the risk of a legal challenge at the WTO as a result of the (a) UK's new border regime and (b) implementation of the Northern Ireland Protocol.

Greg Hands:

The Government complies with its international obligations. The Department for International Trade continues to work with relevant government departments on the UK's WTO compliance, as a result of the UK's new border regime and the Northern Ireland Protocol. The Government will discharge its responsibilities in a way that is effective; which upholds our international obligations; and which respects the unique circumstances of Northern Ireland.

Paul Blomfield: [\[71744\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what estimate she has made of the potential cost to her Department of a defensive trade dispute brought against the UK at the WTO as a result of the UK's new border regime and implementation of the Northern Ireland Protocol.

Greg Hands:

The litigation costs associated with defensive trade disputes vary significantly depending on the nature and complexity of the individual dispute. This department has established the processes and procedures necessary to ensure that the UK will effectively represent itself independently in trade disputes from the end of the Transition Period. The Department for International Trade will continue to work with all Government departments to prepare for any potential defensive trade disputes, including ensuring appropriate provision is made to meet the costs.

Mary Glendon: [\[71766\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what discussions she has had with the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster on the Government's (a) operational plans, (b) timeframes and (c) risks associated with the UK's new customs border with the EU and implementation of the Northern Ireland Protocol from 1 January 2021.

Mary Glindon:

[\[71767\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what assessment she has made of the Government's ability to deliver a dual UK and EU tariff system in Northern Ireland from 1 January 2021.

Greg Hands:

Specifics of any discussions between the Secretary of State and the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster cannot be disclosed.

The Command Paper published on 20th June sets out a pragmatic and proportionate way to implement the Northern Ireland Protocol (the Protocol), whilst maintaining the priority to protect Northern Ireland (NI's) place in our United Kingdom.

The Department for International Trade (DIT) is working closely with officials in both the Border and Protocol Delivery Group and HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC) to implement all border delivery plans and timelines, including in relation to the delivery of tariff declaration systems, in the lead up to the end of the transition period.

■ Customs

Paul Blomfield:

[\[71745\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what discussions she has had with the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster on the Government's (a) operation delivery plans, (b) timeframes and (c) risks in relation to the delivery of tariff declaration systems on non-EU imports from 1 January 2021.

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

I cannot disclose the specifics of discussions between my Rt Hon. Friend the Secretary of State for International Trade and my Rt Hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster.

However, I can assure the Hon. Gentleman that the Department for International Trade is working closely with officials in both the Border and Protocol Delivery Group and HM Revenue and Customs to implement all border delivery plans and timelines, including in relation to the delivery of tariff declaration systems, in the lead up to the end of the transition period.

■ Government Departments: Procurement

Bill Esterson:

[\[71751\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, when she will lay the instrument of accession to the Government Procurement Agreement; and if she will make a statement.

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

The United Kingdom intends to deposit her Instrument of Accession to the Government Procurement Agreement (GPA) with the WTO Director-General on 2nd December 2020. The GPA will then enter into force for the United Kingdom, as an independent party, on 1st January 2021.

■ Import Duties

Abena Oppong-Asare: [\[69733\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what her Departments policy is for consulting with UK businesses on the effect of the UK Global Tariff on those businesses.

Abena Oppong-Asare: [\[69734\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what plans she has to mitigate a potential increase in costs to the UK consumer of imported goods in the event that a new UK-EU relationship is not agreed by the end of the transition period.

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

Free Trade Agreements (FTA) are just one way in which we can help secure greater choice and lower prices for British shoppers. We intend to achieve a zero tariff and zero quotas FTA with the EU by December 2020, so we do not expect any tariffs to apply to EU imports.

If we do not have an FTA, the “UK Global Tariff” (UKGT) will apply to EU imports, in common with imports from the rest of the world where FTAs have not yet been negotiated. The UKGT almost doubles the number of products coming into the United Kingdom that are tariff free relative to what is currently applied.

The UKGT was developed following a public consultation in which interested parties from across the United Kingdom had the opportunity to help shape the policy. The over 1,300 responses which were received were assessed in a fair and equal manner, and we remain open to feedback from interested parties. To that end, HM Government will publish a Tax Information and Impact Note (TIIN) alongside the legislation, as is standard practice for all taxes.

■ Import Duties: Food

Tim Farron: [\[69507\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what assessment she has made of the effect on the economy of a dual tariff regime for protecting UK (a) beef, (b) poultry, (c) pig, (d) dairy and (e) egg farmers from imports that do not meet UK standards; and what recent discussions she has had with the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs on those tariffs.

Greg Hands:

The Government prepares a scoping assessment examining the economic impacts of planned Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) ahead of each of its new trade negotiations. These scoping assessments for the US, Japan, Australia, and New Zealand are available on the gov.uk website and include an assessment of the possible impacts of tariff liberalisation on the UK agriculture sector.

We will not compromise on our high standards of food safety and animal welfare in any trade negotiations.

■ Import Duties: Northern Ireland

Bill Esterson:

[\[71749\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what assessment she has made of the (a) political, (b) legal and (c) reputational risks of a difference in tariff controls between Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

Greg Hands:

The Northern Ireland Protocol (the Protocol) clearly states that Northern Ireland is and remains part of the UK's customs territory.

Businesses and consumers in Northern Ireland will be able to take advantage of the UK Global Tariff and any new trade agreements this government negotiates, like the rest of the UK.

Mary Glendon:

[\[71768\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what assessment she has made of the effect on the Union of the UK applying EU tariffs by default on all goods entering Northern Ireland from 1 January 2021.

Greg Hands:

We are committed to meeting our obligations under the Northern Ireland Protocol (the Protocol). Northern Ireland is and remains part of the UK's customs territory.

Businesses and consumers in Northern Ireland should be able to take advantage of the UK tariff at the end of the transition period.

The Protocol provides that the criteria for 'not at risk' goods shall be decided by the Joint Committee before the end of the Transition Period.

■ Overseas Trade: Commonwealth

Anthony Mangnall:

[\[69696\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what steps she is taking to improve trading links between the UK and other Commonwealth countries.

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

The Commonwealth includes some of our closest friends and greatest allies. We share many bonds and I hope the Hon. Gentleman will welcome our commitment to work closely with Commonwealth countries to remove barriers and liberalise the global trading environment.

At the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in 2018, chaired by the United Kingdom, we committed to boosting intra-Commonwealth trade beyond \$2 trillion (approximately £1.5 trillion) by 2030. Commonwealth leaders also adopted the 'Commonwealth Connectivity Agenda for Trade and Investment' to enhance cooperation amongst ourselves.

In October 2019, the Secretary of State chaired the sixth Commonwealth Trade Ministers Meeting, which reaffirmed the Commonwealth's support for free trade and the rules based multilateral trading system. HM Government is also funding several

projects including the Commonwealth Trade Facilitation Programme, the Commonwealth Standards Network and the SheTrades Commonwealth Programme.

My department aims to go further in the months and years ahead.

■ Ports: Smuggling

Bill Esterson:

[\[71750\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what assessment she has made of the risk of smuggling from the EU if UK ports are not ready to carry out checks on imports after the transition period.

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC) already tackle smuggling and they will continue to do so through intelligence-led targeting. My Department continues working closely with HMRC to make sure that the United Kingdom's trade policy will be effectively operationalised at the border after the transition period ends.

Border controls on controlled goods will continue regardless of whether imports come from the European Union or Rest of the World countries. To ensure compliance with new customs procedures and controls at the border after transition period ends, my Rt Hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster recently announced a new infrastructure funding package that includes £470m to build the necessary infrastructure required.

■ Trade Agreements

Bill Esterson:

[\[71752\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what plans she has to publish a negotiating mandate for an international trade agreement with (a) Turkey, (b) Mexico and (c) Canada.

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

The Continuity Trade Programme seeks to replicate, as far as possible, the effects of existing trade agreements in which the United Kingdom participates as a member of the EU.

The United Kingdom remains committed to ensuring continuity in our trading relationships with Turkey, Mexico and Canada beyond the end of the transition period. Consistent with the approach taken for all other continuity trade agreements to date, HM Government does not intend to publish negotiating mandates for the continuity discussions with these three countries.

■ Trade Agreements: USA

Nickie Aiken:

[\[69688\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what assessment his Department has made of the effect of a trade agreement with the US on the environmental sustainability of UK agriculture.

Greg Hands:

The Government's negotiating objectives, published 2nd March, included an impact assessment on the environmental implications of a UK-US Free Trade Agreement (FTA.) We are clear that we will not compromise on our high environmental protection, animal welfare and food standards.

Recently, the Department for International Trade (DIT) and the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (DEFRA) launched the Trade and Agriculture Commission, an advisory group that will provide recommendations to the government. The Commission will help further ensure that the UK's trade policy fully considers our agricultural industry, including our commitment to maintain our high standards.

■ Trade and Agriculture Commission**Tim Farron:**[\[69503\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, if she will bring forward her legislative proposals for a Trade and Agriculture Commission.

Greg Hands:

The Trade and Agriculture Commission is an advisory board. As such, no legislation is required.

Anthony Mangnall:[\[69703\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, for how long she plans for the Trade and Agriculture Commission to be operational.

Greg Hands:

The Trade and Agriculture Commission has a fixed term of 6 months.

Emily Thornberry:[\[70343\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, whether the Trade and Agriculture Commission will be able to make its first set of recommendations to the Government before all stages of the Trade Bill and the Agriculture Bill are complete.

Emily Thornberry:[\[70344\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, whether the Trade and Agriculture Commission will be asked to make recommendations on import standards relating to (a) environmental protection, (b) food hygiene and traceability and (c) plant health and pesticides.

Emily Thornberry:[\[70345\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, whether the Trade and Agriculture Commission will remain in place until all major ongoing trade negotiations with (a) the US, (b) the EU, (c) Japan, (d) Australia, (d) Canada and (e) the other members of the Comprehensive and Progressive Trans-Pacific Partnership.

Emily Thornberry:

[70346]

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, whether she plans to sign a trade agreement with the US before the Trade and Agriculture Commission has submitted its full report to the Government.

Greg Hands:

The Trade and Agriculture Commission will act as an advisory board to my Rt Hon. Friend the Secretary of State for International Trade. It has a fixed term of 6 months. At the end of the term the Commission will submit an advisory report which will be presented to Parliament by my Department.

The Commission will produce a report which:

- Considers the policies that Government should adopt in free trade agreements to secure opportunities for UK farmers, ensure the sector remains competitive and to make sure that animal welfare and environmental standards in food production are not undermined
- Reflects consumer interests and those of developing countries.
- Considers how the UK engages the WTO to build a coalition that helps advance higher animal welfare standards across the world.
- Develops trade policy that identifies and opens up new export opportunities for the UK agricultural industry – in particular for small and medium sized businesses – and that benefits the UK economy as a whole.

The Trade and Agriculture Bills are already making their passage through Parliament. These, and our trade negotiations, are different processes on different timescales and the Bills have a different aim and scope to the Trade and Agriculture Commission.

Emily Thornberry:

[70347]

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what consultation with the Devolved Administrations was undertaken in advance of the establishment of the Trade and Agriculture Commission; and what role the Devolved Administrations will play in the proceedings of the Commission.

Emily Thornberry:

[70348]

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, whether she plans to establish the Trade and Agriculture Commission on a statutory basis.

Emily Thornberry:

[70349]

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what the timeframe is for the Trade and Agriculture Commission to (a) undertake and (b) complete its work.

Emily Thornberry:

[\[70350\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, which Minister in Government will appoint the (a) Chair and (b) membership of the Trade and Agriculture Commission, and what the (a) criteria and (b) timeframe is for their appointment.

Emily Thornberry:

[\[70351\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, whether the Trade and Agriculture Commission will (a) meet in public, (b) publish minutes of its meetings and (c) publish all evidence submitted to the Commission.

Emily Thornberry:

[\[70352\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, whether the Trade and Agriculture Commission will have the power to call witnesses to give evidence at its meetings.

Emily Thornberry:

[\[70353\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, whether the Trade and Agriculture Commission will be able to present its report to the media at the same time that is presented to Parliament by her Department.

Greg Hands:

The Trade and Agriculture Commission will act as an advisory board to the Secretary of State for International Trade. At the end of its six month term it will submit an advisory report which will be presented to Parliament by my Department.

Discussions will be supported by robust analytical and empirical data and will take place on a confidential basis.

The Chair and Members of the Commission were appointed by the Secretary of State for International Trade. They were selected for their breadth of knowledge and expertise on the issues to be considered by the Commission. Appointments are made for 6 months.

The Trade and Agriculture Commission will be supported by a Secretariat run by the Department for International Trade. The Secretariat will be responsible for sharing updates from Trade and Agriculture Commission meetings with other Government Departments and the Devolved Administrations. There are representatives from devolved administrations, notably the different National Farmers Unions, in the Commission.

Emily Thornberry:

[\[71008\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, whether the Trade and Agriculture Commission will be invited to consider whether legislation will be required to ensure that agricultural imports meet UK food standards.

Emily Thornberry:

[\[71011\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, whether she plans to consult Parliament on the (a) membership, (b) timescale, (c) terms of reference and (d) powers of the Trade and Agriculture Commission.

Emily Thornberry:

[\[71012\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, whether she plans to enable Parliament to scrutinise the outcome of the (a) Trade and Agriculture Commission's report and (b) Government response to its recommendations.

Greg Hands:

The Trade and Agriculture Commission's report will be presented to Parliament by my Department at the end of its six month term.

Details of the Commission's membership, timescale, terms of reference and powers were announced on 10 July.

The Commission will consider the policies that Government should adopt to secure opportunities for UK farmers, ensure the sector remains competitive and to make sure that animal welfare and food standards are not undermined. It has no remit to discuss food and feed safety regulation, and policy across the whole food chain, as that is regulated by the Food Standards Agency, Food Standards Scotland and the Department of Health and Social Care.

Emily Thornberry:

[\[71009\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, whether the Government will be required to respond formally to the recommendations made by the Trade and Agriculture Commission.

Emily Thornberry:

[\[71010\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, whether she plans to enable the Trade and Agriculture Commission to publish its observations on the adequacy and implications of the Government's response to its recommendations.

Greg Hands:

The Trade and Agriculture Commission's remit will end after it has submitted its report at the end of its six month term. My Department will present its report to Parliament.

■ UK Trade with EU: Customs

Paul Blomfield:

[\[71746\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what assessment she has made of the adequacy of the Government's preparations to carry out full checks on controlled goods entering the UK at EU-facing ports from July 2021 where infrastructure to implement those controls does not currently exist.

Paul Blomfield:

[\[71747\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what assessment she has made of the level risk of an increase in goods smuggled into the UK from the EU as a result to the Government's phased introduction of border controls; and what assessment she has made of the effect of smuggled goods on trade negotiations with non-EU countries.

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC) already tackle smuggling and they will continue to do so through intelligence-led targeting. My Department continues working closely with HMRC to make sure that the United Kingdom's trade policy will be effectively operationalised at the border after the transition period ends.

Border controls on controlled goods will continue regardless of whether imports come from the European Union or Rest of the World countries. To ensure compliance with new customs procedures and controls at the border after transition period ends, my Rt Hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster recently announced a new infrastructure funding package that includes £470m to build the necessary infrastructure required.

Bill Esterson:[\[71748\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what assessment she has made of the risk of legal challenge against the UK at the WTO as a result of the UK's plans to phase in border checks on imports from the EU after the transition period.

Greg Hands:

The Government does not disclose the content of any legal advice. However, as set out in the staging of import controls announcement in June, and reiterated in the announcement of the Border Operating Model, the Government will have controls in place for controlled goods from January 2021 and all goods (both controlled and standard) in place from July 2021.

■ UK Trade with EU: Import Duties**Gareth Thomas:**[\[71660\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what assessment she has made of the effect of potential difficulties in collecting tariffs on EU imports from 1 January 2021 on the (a) operation of the UK's trade policy and (b) negotiations on free trade deals with non-EU countries.

Gareth Thomas:[\[71661\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what assessment she has made of the level of risk that EU tariffs will be applied by default to all goods travelling to Northern Ireland from outside the UK and EU in the event that the system for applying both (a) UK and (b) EU tariffs is not operational by 1 January 2021.

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

HM Government is committed to meeting our obligations under the Northern Ireland Protocol, whilst ensuring that there is minimal disruption to the everyday lives of people across the province.

The discussions with the European Union on the Protocol have begun; the first Northern Ireland Specialised Committee took place on the 30th April. We will continue to engage constructively in those fora to ensure a pragmatic and proportionate implementation of the Protocol.

We expect the European Union tariff to only be payable on goods that are deemed to be at risk of subsequently moving into the European Union. The criteria for determining which goods are 'not at risk' is a matter for consideration at the Joint Committee.

JUSTICE

■ Domestic Abuse

Jim Shannon:

[\[70399\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether he has held discussions with his counterparts in the devolved Administrations on tackling domestic abuse throughout the UK.

Alex Chalk:

The Ministry of Justice, alongside our partners on this agenda at the Home Office, continue to have a regular dialogue with the devolved administrations about the progress of the Domestic Abuse Bill.

The measures in the Bill relate to devolved matters in Scotland and Northern Ireland, however, with the agreement of the Scottish Cabinet Secretary for Justice and the Northern Ireland Minister of Justice, the Bill as introduced on 3 March 2020 includes measures extending the extraterritorial jurisdiction of the criminal courts in Scotland and Northern Ireland to certain violent and sexual offences. I welcome the fact that the Scottish Parliament and Northern Ireland Assembly have approved a legislative consent motion in respect of these provisions in the Bill insofar as they apply to Scotland and Northern Ireland on 17 and 23 June respectively.

The matters to which the provisions of the Bill relate are not within the legislative competence of the National Assembly for Wales. Nonetheless, there has also been extensive engagement with the Welsh Government, particularly over the remit of the Domestic Abuse Commissioner in Wales.

In addition, the Ministry of Justice recently published the report of its panel of experts looking into how the family courts manage cases involving domestic abuse and other serious offences. This report covered both England and Wales and we continue engagement with the Welsh Government about a proposed implementation plan.

■ Offences against Children: Sentencing

Tom Tugendhat:

[\[69612\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many times (a) he, (b) Ministers of his Department and (c) officials of his Department have met with representatives of the Sentencing Council to discuss sentencing for child cruelty offences in the last 18 months.

Chris Philp:

Ministers meet the Chairman of the Sentencing Council regularly to discuss a range of issues related to sentencing. The Sentencing Council meets on a monthly basis to

discuss matters relating to sentencing and guidelines and a representative of the Lord Chancellor attends those meetings. Officials in the MoJ also meet regularly with members of the Office of the Sentencing Council and discuss a wide range of issues.

The Sentencing Council has published a definitive guideline for child cruelty offences, which came into force on 1 January 2019.

■ Offences Against Children: Sentencing

Tom Tugendhat:

[\[70440\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of bringing forward legislative proposals similar to the provisions of the Child Cruelty (Sentences) Bill introduced in the 2017-19 Parliament.

Alex Chalk:

The Government has no current plans to bring forward legislative proposals that seek to increase the penalties for the offences of causing or allowing death or serious injury to a child or child cruelty at this stage.

The Government will, however, continue to keep the maximum penalties for these specific offences closely under review.

■ Prisoners' Release: Coronavirus

Janet Daby:

[\[69683\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what (a) financial and (b) social support the Government is providing to prisoners who are being released from prison during the covid-19 outbreak.

Lucy Frazer:

It is vital for prison leavers to access those services that would meet their individual needs during the pandemic.

The financial support given by HMPPS to prison leavers comprises the following elements:

- A Discharge Grant (the Grant) of £46, which is paid directly to eligible prisoners on release. An eligible prisoner is essentially one who is sentenced and serves more than 14 days in custody;
- A Discretionary Payment (DP) of up to £50 that Governors may pay a genuine accommodation provider to help the individual secure a release address; and
- A travel warrant or fares paid upon release to their destination within the UK (including the Channel Islands, the Isle of Man or the Republic of Ireland), which are issued regardless of the prisoner's eligibility for a Grant.

The Grant, however, is entirely separate from the subsistence grant, which is payable to those who are eligible for release under the End of Custody Temporary Release (ECTR) scheme only. The purpose of these grants is to help prison leavers on

release, so that they are supported while accessing other legal sources of income such as applying for benefits.

The higher rate of the Subsistence Grant is set at £80 to reflect the more limited amount of time prisoners have had to prepare for their release under the ECTR scheme.

We have invested an additional £22m per annum over the remaining life of the CRC contracts to deliver an enhanced Through the Gate resettlement service to people leaving prison to prepare them for release. The enhanced service includes the requirement that CRCs complete specific, tailored, tasks to help prisoners to secure and maintain settled accommodation, gain employment and manage debt and their financial affairs. During the Covid period most of this support is being provided remotely after CRCs invested in greater use of mobile technology to maintain levels of contact with offenders in the community in a safe and efficient manner. After a prison sentence, service users are supervised and supported by Probation Officers in the Community.

A further £8.5m has been secured to support individuals at risk of homelessness on their release from prison for up to eight weeks of targeted support, together with the necessary help required to ensure individuals move on into permanent accommodation. This scheme was originally due to run until 26th June; however, we have recently undertaken our first review and, following this, have extended the scheme until 31 July. This is an exceptional measure reflecting the current challenges.

■ Prisoners: Communication

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[70362\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what was the mean prisoner communications monitoring requirement across all (a) adult male, (b) adult female and (c) youth custodial facilities in England and Wales in 2019.

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[70363\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what proportion of the (a) adult male, (b) adult female, and (c) youth custodial populations had a default 5 per cent communications monitoring requirement in 2019.

Lucy Frazer:

The information requested could only be obtained at disproportionate cost as records are not held centrally.

SCOTLAND**Universities: Scotland****Mhairi Black:**[\[70432\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, what discussions he has had with Scottish universities on the Government's 4 May 2020 announcement on student number controls.

Mr Alister Jack:

Funding decisions affecting students who live in England are for the Department of Education to determine, however Scotland Office Ministers and officials have had a number of discussions with Universities Scotland on this matter.

In those discussions we have reiterated the point that the Scottish Government has a responsibility to ensure that the university sector in Scotland is properly funded.

TRANSPORT**British Airways: Staff****Chi Onwurah:**[\[69546\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent discussions he has had with British Airways about job retention.

Kelly Tolhurst:

The Department for Transport is in close contact with the aviation sector, ensuring that the Government is kept fully aware of the latest developments with all firms and to understand where additional policy measures could address specific industry issues.

British Airways is able to draw upon the unprecedented package of measures announced by the Chancellor to protect jobs and incomes, including the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme covering 80% of furloughed employees' usual monthly wage costs, up to £2,500 a month, alongside the associated Employer National Insurance contributions and pension contributions.

I and the Secretary of the State have met with both British Airways and IAG, and I continue to encourage BA and the unions to engage constructively with each other.

Bus Services: Coronavirus**Ms Marie Rimmer:**[\[69611\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will provide additional bespoke support to the leisure coach industry in response to the covid-19 outbreak.

Rachel Maclean:

HM Treasury has made several measures available to UK businesses, including the leisure coach industry to financially support them through this time.

We are encouraging all operators to make use of the wide range of support measures which have been announced by the Chancellor, including £330 billion of Government support through loans and guarantees, designed to reach as many businesses as possible. The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (JRS), part of this package, has been extended until the end of October.

We are continuing to engage with the coach sector to understand what the ongoing risks and issues are, and how these could be addressed in light of the coronavirus outbreak.

Grahame Morris: [\[71727\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will make financial support available to coach operators during the covid-19 outbreak.

Grahame Morris: [\[71728\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, for what reasons coach operators were not included in the financial support package for bus operators.

Grahame Morris: [\[71731\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will make an assessment of the number of coach operators who (a) have ceased business and (b) are at risk of closure due to the financial impact of covid-19.

Rachel Maclean:

We are encouraging coach operators to make use of the wide range of support measures the Chancellor announced. These amount to £330 billion of loans and guarantees for businesses, including the Covid-19 Jobs Retention Scheme to help firms retain members of staff, which has been extended until the end of October 2020. We are continuing to engage with the coach sector to understand what the ongoing risks and issues are, and how these could be addressed in light of the Coronavirus outbreak.

■ Electric Scooters: Visual Impairment

Sarah Olney: [\[69636\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the effect of e-scooters on blind people.

Rachel Maclean:

The Department has carried out a preliminary assessment of the impacts of e-scooters on blind people. We recognise that people with disabilities, in particular blind or visually-impaired people, may be more affected by some of the negative impacts of e-scooter use. However, there is limited evidence available. Trials have been designed to enable us to gather robust evidence of the impact of e-scooters on all road users. We have attempted to minimise the impacts on pedestrians during trials, for example by not allowing e-scooter use on pavements and asking local areas to consider in their trial plans ways to avoid scooters creating an obstruction when not in use.

■ Ferries: Coronavirus

Ruth Jones:

[\[71887\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of measures to protect lifeline ferry services in the UK from the economic effects of the covid-19 outbreak.

Kelly Tolhurst:

The emergency package of up to £10.5m granted by the Government on 24 April has safeguarded vital lifeline services in Isle of Wight and the Isles of Scilly during the Covid-19 outbreak. The package has ensured the continued access for these communities to healthcare services on the mainland and protected the flow of critical supplies to these regions.

I am grateful for the continued efforts by lifeline operators in running their crucial services throughout the global pandemic. We continue to work closely with the providers of these services and all relevant local stakeholders.

Officials and I also liaise with our counterparts in the Devolved Administrations on the support they are providing to lifeline services in other parts of the UK.

■ High Speed 2 Railway Line: North West

Chris Clarkson:

[\[69744\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many businesses in the North West of England have secured HS2 contracts.

Andrew Stephenson:

So far, at least 99 organisations registered in the North West of England have delivered work on HS2 to date. HS2 Ltd recognises the strong capabilities of the supply chain in the North West, especially from a rail, manufacturing and aerospace perspective. It is a region which will play a significant role in the delivery of HS2 and HS2 Ltd looks forward to continuing their programme of engagement to help ensure that businesses across the North West continue to secure HS2 contracts, grow and develop.

Chris Clarkson:

[\[69745\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he is taking steps to help ensure that businesses in the North West secure HS2 contracts.

Andrew Stephenson:

HS2 Ltd has undertaken a comprehensive programme of market engagement since 2013, engaging with over 5,000 businesses of all sizes and types, across all UK regions, to raise awareness of the opportunities available on HS2 and how to access them. This includes a range of engagements specific to the North West where HS2 Ltd has hosted or supported a HS2 supply chain conference in Manchester, two Local Enterprise Partnership events, two UK Northern Powerhouse conferences, a HS2 roadshow event in Liverpool, two Trans-City Rail conferences, two Chambers of Commerce events (South Cheshire and West Cheshire and North Wales), a

Sellafield supply chain event, and have a planned Lancashire Chamber of Commerce event.

■ High Speed Two

Dame Cheryl Gillan: [\[71647\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, for what reason the minutes of the audit and risk assurance committee for High Speed Two have not been published since December 2019.

Andrew Stephenson:

I appreciate that the publication of these minutes has taken longer than is typically expected. Unlike the Board minutes, the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee minutes do not have a confirmed schedule of publication, though High Speed Two Limited aims to publish them as soon as practicable.

High Speed Two Limited have confirmed that any unpublished minutes will be published by 17 July.

■ Public Transport: Greater London

Bambos Charalambous: [\[69647\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what proposals he has made to TfL on fares for under 18s to travel in London.

Rachel Maclean:

The £1.6 billion Extraordinary Funding and Financing Agreement to enable Transport for London (TfL) to continue operating services contained a series of conditions to facilitate safe travel on public transport in London, including the temporary suspension of free travel for under 18s.

The Department is working closely with TfL on how the temporary suspension can be operationalised, whilst ensuring that any child eligible for free home to school travel under the Education Act 1996 will still receive this. The Department is also completing an Equality Impact Assessment, which will consider whether there are further categories of children that should receive free transport.

■ Railways: Coronavirus

Andrew Rosindell: [\[69473\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that railcard holders who have been unable to use their card during the covid-19 outbreak receive appropriate compensation or an extension.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

Railcards are sold and managed by the Rail Delivery Group on behalf on the rail industry. Proposals for amendments to existing Railcard policies are for the Rail Delivery Group to bring forward. The Rail Delivery Group is working with train companies on a number of ways to assist Railcard holders, in light of the current

COVID-19 related travel restrictions. Departmental officials have been engaging regularly with the Rail Delivery Group as they consider possible changes to Railcard conditions.

■ Railways: Disability

Sarah Olney:

[\[69637\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department has taken to ensure that Train Operating Companies provide training to their staff on responding effectively to the disability and accessibility needs of train users.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

All train operators are required by the Office of Rail and Road to provide disability awareness training to all frontline staff, and all new staff including senior and key managers, as a condition of their licence. The Office of Rail and Road is responsible for monitoring and enforcing the delivery of disability training by train operators.

■ Roads: Rural Areas

Kenny MacAskill:

[\[69719\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the Road Safety statement of July 2019, what progress his Department has made on setting up a Rural Road Users Advisory Panel.

Rachel Maclean:

The Department for Transport has commenced with initial scoping work on a Rural Roads Working Group. The focus of this group is to bring together a range of groups to better understand the diverse issues of road safety in rural areas.

Work will continue to be progressed as quickly as possible once the current focus on handling the COVID-19 crisis and our recovery has eased.

■ Shipping

Anthony Mangnall:

[\[69702\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to support and develop the UK's shipping sector.

Kelly Tolhurst:

The maritime sector plays an important role for the UK economy, facilitating 95% of our global trade, and has continued to do so throughout the Covid-19 pandemic by enabling the delivery of critical goods, including medicine and personal protective equipment. However, it has also faced significant disruption and the government has provided financial support to ensure that lifeline services and critical freight services continue to operate.

Maritime 2050, which was published in January 2019, sets out an ambitious joint plan between the government and the maritime industry for how the UK will continue to be

a world leading maritime nation and develop to meet the challenges and opportunities of the future.

Given the changes that Covid-19 has caused, we are working with the maritime sector to consider where new recommendations could be made in addition to Maritime 2050, or existing recommendations accelerated, to help the maritime sector recover from Covid-19 and continue to grow. We will publish a route-map setting out these actions later in the year.

■ Trains: Diesel Fuel

Kerry McCarthy: [\[71686\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what estimate his Department has made of the proportion of the UK rail fleet that is composed of rolling diesel stock; and what the expected proportion will be in (a) 2025, (b) 2030 and (c) 2035.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

Out of a national fleet of over 14,000 vehicles, there were approximately 3,400 passenger vehicles in service at the beginning of July 2020 that formed part of a diesel powered train. Decisions about the necessary pace of removal of diesel trains from the network to decarbonise the railway will be informed by ongoing work led by Network Rail.

Kerry McCarthy: [\[71687\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will bring forward the 2040 target for the phasing out of diesel rail stock.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The Government is developing an ambitious Transport Decarbonisation Plan to achieve net zero emissions across all modes of transport. We will use electrification and alternative technologies such as battery and hydrogen trains to remove diesel trains from the network and decarbonise the railway.

Ongoing work led by Network Rail will inform decisions about the pace of rail decarbonisation to achieve net zero, the deployment of different decarbonisation technologies on each part of the network, and delivery of the ambition to remove all diesel-only trains from the railway by 2040.

TREASURY

■ Arts and Hospitality Industry: Coronavirus

Paula Barker: [\[71926\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will take steps with the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport to introduce full VAT exemption on ticket sales in the (a) creative sector and (b) night time economy.

Jesse Norman:

In light of the COVID-19 outbreak, the Chancellor has pledged a range of measures to help individuals and businesses through the crisis, including grants, loans and relief from business rates worth more than £300 billion.

To support over 150,000 businesses and protect 2.4 million jobs following the lifting of the Covid-19 lockdown, the Government will temporarily apply a reduced rate of VAT (5%) to tourist attractions and goods and services provided by the hospitality industry.

The Government has also announced a major £1.57 billion package to support key cultural organisations during this crisis. This funding will provide targeted support to organisations across a range of sectors, including performing arts and theatres, museums and galleries, heritage sites, live music venues and independent cinema.

■ Construction: VAT**Tom Hunt:**[\[69716\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what further assessment his Department has made of the effect of plans to introduce a reverse VAT charge for building and construction services on the (a) liquidity of mid-market construction firms and (b) Government's infrastructure plans.

Jesse Norman:

The Government remains committed to introducing the VAT reverse charge for building and construction. VAT fraud in this sector still presents a significant risk to the Exchequer.

There are several UK anti-fraud reverse charge measures and their impact on business and supply chains is now well understood and explained in the Impact Assessment. The Government has listened carefully to industry concerns regarding the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and has further delayed the introduction of the reverse charge by a period of five months from 1 October 2020 until 1 March 2021.

HMRC will continue to work closely with the construction industry, providing support and communications to ensure that businesses are fully aware and can prepare for cashflow challenges ahead of the implementation date.

■ Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme**Jon Trickett:**[\[69442\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many companies (a) applied for and (b) received cash grants in excess of £1,000,000 through the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme as at 29 April 2020.

Jon Trickett:[\[69443\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, which companies (a) applied for and (b) received cash grants in excess of £1,000,000 through the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme as at 29 April 2020.

Jesse Norman:

The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme is administered through the Pay As You Earn (PAYE) system. Up to and including 29 April 2020, 322 PAYE schemes had each submitted claims totalling in excess of £1,000,000.

HM Revenue and Customs hold information on when payments were made under the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme but not when the payments were received by PAYE schemes.

Jon Trickett:[\[70321\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps he is taking to ensure that organisations using the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme do not use funding from that scheme as part of an employee's notice period.

Jesse Norman:

The CJRS is designed to protect jobs and keep people in employment. In cases where terminations of employment or redundancies are unavoidable, employers must abide by the rules. This includes giving a notice period and consulting staff before a final decision is reached.

Employers may continue to claim under the scheme for a furloughed employee who is serving a statutory notice period subject to eligibility based on contract of employment.

However, in the present difficult times, the Government would not expect an employer to take advantage of the CJRS, which has brought benefit to employers and employees alike, in order to make someone redundant on less favourable terms than they would otherwise have received.

Jon Trickett:[\[70324\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many people in each region of the UK are benefiting from the Coronavirus Retention Scheme.

Jesse Norman:

HM Revenue and Customs published statistics on the total number of employments furloughed by region of the UK on 11 June 2020. A further release is due on 15 July 2020.

The information published covers the number of employments furloughed under the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme since the start of the scheme. Within this figure one person could be furloughed from more than one job. The latest statistics and further information are available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/coronavirus-job-retention-scheme-statistics-june-2020>

Mr Gregory Campbell:[\[71674\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps he has taken to prevent abuse of the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme since 1 July 2020.

Jesse Norman:

More than £27.4 billion has been claimed through the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS), supporting 1.1m employers and 9.4m furloughed jobs. The vast majority of employers have used the scheme responsibly. Compliance and anti-fraud measures have been built into the administration of the scheme since its inception.

Since 1 July, Her Majesty's Revenue & Customs have enabled employers who have overclaimed the CJRS to pay back part or all of their grant; this includes employers that have accidentally overclaimed without intending to abuse the scheme.

Employers can either correct overclaims in their next claim or make a payment to HMRC.

Since the start of the scheme, the Government has asked employees to report any concerns about CJRS fraud to HMRC. Fraudulent abuse of the scheme can be reported through HMRC's online reporting form, which can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/hm-revenue-customs/contact/report-fraud-to-hmrc>.

HMRC will not hesitate to act on reports of abuse and the first arrest made in relation to CJRS fraud took place on 8 July.

■ Department for Work and Pensions: Public Expenditure**Neil Gray:****[71788]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his oral contribution of 8 July 2020, Official Report column 976, how he plans to allocate that additional £1.2 billion to the Department for Work and Pensions.

Steve Barclay:

DWP has been provided with £1.2bn this financial year to significantly expand and enhance work search support across Great Britain. This includes: £895m to double the number of work coaches; £150m additional investment into the Flexible Support Fund to provide direct support at a local level; £95m to expand the scope of the Work and Health Programme; and £40m over two years to fund private sector capacity to introduce a job finding support service.

■ Energy: VAT**Mr Steve Baker:****[69527]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of treating mechanical ventilation with heat recovery as an energy saving measure in order for such ventilation to qualify for a reduced rate of VAT.

Jesse Norman:

Until the transition period negotiated as part of the Withdrawal Agreement is complete, the current UK VAT rules will continue to apply.

However, HM Treasury and HM Revenue and Customs are working closely together to consider any changes that may be needed to ensure that the VAT system supports

the Government's objectives for both the Net Zero Review and its wider fiscal and economic strategy.

■ Government Assistance: Coronavirus

Dr Philippa Whitford:

[\[71800\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate his Department the number of (a) people and (b) businesses not eligible for any of the Government's financial support packages during the covid-19 outbreak.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Government has provided a comprehensive economic response that is one of the most generous globally, taking unprecedented steps to support families, businesses and the most vulnerable. As well as the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) and Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS), this package includes a suite of government-backed loans and grants to businesses, tax deferrals, rental support and mortgage and consumer credit holidays.

This comprehensive package also includes extra funding for the welfare safety net, to get us through the outbreak and help those unable to access other forms of support. The temporary welfare measures include increases to Universal Credit and Local Housing Allowance, a relaxation of the Universal Credit minimum income floor and making Statutory Sick Pay easier to access. We have also announced above £300bn of guaranteed loans for supporting businesses to access finance through The Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme, and the Coronavirus Corporate Financing Facility and the Coronavirus Large Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CLBILS). On 27 April, we also announced the new Bounce Back Loans Scheme, which will ensure that the smallest businesses can access up to £50,000 loans in a matter of just days

Now, as outlined in the Summer Economic Update, our Plan for Jobs will support, protect and create jobs. This plan will make available up to £30 billion to help kickstart the nation's economic recovery ahead of a fuller package of medium-term recovery measures in the upcoming Autumn Budget and Spending Review.

■ Hospitality Industry: Coronavirus

Catherine West:

[\[71841\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what financial support he is offering the night time economy.

Kemi Badenoch:

The night-time economy is an essential part of the UK economy, bringing in an estimated £60 billion every year. Businesses in this sector have access to a range of support measures including, but not limited to, the Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grant Fund, government-backed loan schemes, VAT deferral, and a 12-month business rates holiday for eligible retail, leisure and hospitality businesses in England.

Many businesses involved in the night-time economy, such as live music venues and theatres, will benefit from the Government's world-leading £1.57 billion support package for the arts, culture and heritage industries announced on 5 July. The sector will also benefit from the further support announced by the Chancellor on 8 July including a temporary reduction in the VAT rate to 5% for accommodation, attractions and the hospitality sector and the Eat Out to Help scheme.

As we cautiously reopen the economy, the government will continue to engage with businesses and representative groups with the aim of ensuring that support provided is right for businesses involved in the night-time economy and for the economy as a whole.

■ **Housing: Coronavirus**

Stuart Anderson:

[\[70495\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will allocate funding for financial support for people who are moving homes whose household income has been adversely affected by the covid-19 outbreak.

Jesse Norman:

The Government has introduced a temporary increase to the Nil Rate Band of Residential SDLT from £125k to £500k. This will apply from 8 July 2020 until 31 March 2021 and will mean that nearly 9 out of 10 people getting onto or moving up the property ladder will pay no SDLT at all, saving on average £4,500. The Government has also raised the Local Housing Allowance rate to the 30th percentile, providing additional financial support for private renters. These measures, alongside other interventions in the Plan for Jobs announced by the Chancellor on 8 July, mean that people can be more confident to move.

■ **Import Duties: Northern Ireland**

Louise Haigh:

[\[71820\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what plans HMRC has to categorise all goods entering Northern Ireland as at risk from 1 January 2021.

Jesse Norman:

HMRC are not making plans to categorise all goods entering Northern Ireland as 'at risk'.

As the Government said in the Command Paper published on 20 May, "there should be no tariffs on goods remaining within the UK customs territory. Only those goods ultimately entering Ireland or the rest of the EU, or at clear and substantial risk of doing so, will face tariffs."

This principle needs to be formalised with the EU within the Withdrawal Agreement Joint Committee.

The UK will not pay any of the tariffs it collects to the EU.

Louise Haigh:

[\[71821\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to paragraph 27 of CP226 The UK's Approach to the Northern Ireland Protocol, whether HMRC has taken steps to develop a system to reimburse tariffs on goods at risk of entering the EU.

Jesse Norman:

As Great Britain and Northern Ireland are in the same customs territory, no tariffs will be due on goods coming from Great Britain and staying in Northern Ireland, unless those goods are at risk of onward movement into the European Union.

Goods arriving in Northern Ireland from the rest of the world will pay the UK's tariff unless the goods are at risk of moving into the EU.

As set out in the Command Paper published on 20 May, in order to ensure that trade flows freely, the Government will make full use of the provisions in the Protocol giving the Government the powers to waive and/or reimburse tariffs on goods moving from Great Britain to Northern Ireland, even where they are classified as 'at risk' of entering the EU market.

■ Labour Market: Coronavirus

Margaret Greenwood:

[\[71809\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the recommendations in the report entitled, The Full Monty Facing up to the challenge of the coronavirus labour market crisis, published by the Resolution Foundation in June 2020.

Jesse Norman:

As the Chancellor has said, protecting against significant job losses is the most urgent challenge the Government faces as it moves into phase two of the economic response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Last week, the Chancellor announced the Plan for Jobs, a package worth up to £30 billion to support, protect and create jobs, with this focus on jobs being welcomed by the Resolution Foundation. This broad package includes measures such as the Kickstart Scheme to create hundreds of thousands of high quality six-month work placements aimed at young people at the highest risk of long-term unemployment, doubling the number of Work Coaches in Jobcentres, the Job Retention Bonus and the Green Homes Grant. The Government considers views from a wide range of organisations, including the Resolution Foundation, and takes account of these as it develops policy.

■ Members: Correspondence

John Spellar:

[\[69426\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, when he plans to reply to the letter of 3 April 2020 from the right hon. Member for Warley regarding Ms Foley.

Jesse Norman:

The letter the Rt Hon. Member for Warley refers to was passed to HM Revenue and Customs and a response was issued on 4 May 2020. HMRC have confirmed that a further copy of that reply was sent to the Rt Hon. Member on 8 July 2020.

■ Minimum Wage**Charlotte Nichols:****[69731]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many national minimum wage compliance officers HMRC has employed in each year since 2010.

Jesse Norman:

The Government is determined that everyone who is entitled to the National Minimum Wage (NMW) receives it.

All businesses, irrespective of size or business sector, are responsible for paying the correct minimum wage to their staff.

If anyone thinks they are not receiving at least the minimum wage, they can contact Acas, in confidence, on 0300 123 1100 or submit a query online using the link: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/pay-and-work-rights-complaints>.

The table below provides a breakdown of staff numbers working in NMW enforcement and compliance in each year from 2010/11 to 2019/20.

YEAR END	FULL-TIME EQUIVALENT (FTE), AT YEAR END
2010/11	142
2011/12	139
2012/13	142
2013/14	158
2014/15	183
2015/16	251
2016/17	352
2017/18	412
2018/19	429
2019/20	442

There are also additional staff across HMRC who contribute to enforcing the NMW, including lawyers, technical advisers, and those specialising in criminal investigations. These staff are not included in the numbers outlined above.

■ Non-domestic Rates: Leisure and Service Industries

Jon Trickett:

[\[70323\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will extend the business rate discount scheme to companies in the retail, hospitality and leisure sector until the end of financial year 2020-21.

Jesse Norman:

On 17 March, the Chancellor announced a business rates holiday for eligible businesses in the retail, hospitality and leisure sector, irrespective of rateable value. All eligible businesses will pay no business rates for the 2020-21 financial year.

■ Press: Subscriptions

Daisy Cooper:

[\[69713\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent assessment he has made of the potential merits of introducing tax credits for (a) print and (b) online subscriptions to (i) newspapers and (ii) magazines.

Jesse Norman:

The Government recognises the important role that media organisations, including newspapers and magazines, play at a national and local level in our democracy and the life of our communities.

In light of this, the Cabinet Office has spent up to £35m from April to June to place Covid-19 public health messages in local and national newspapers. This advertising partnership with UK media titles has been supporting the familiar voices of over 600 national, regional and local titles across England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

In addition, as announced at Budget on 11 March, the Government legislated to apply a permanent zero rate of VAT to supplies of e-publications from 1 December 2020 to support literacy and reading in all its forms. Following the outbreak of Covid-19, the Government then legislated to bring forward the implementation date to 1 May 2020, helping to reduce the cost of access to online publications while many people are confined to their homes and schools are closed.

There are a wide range of factors to consider before introducing a new income tax relief. The Government is committed to managing the public finances in a disciplined and responsible way, targeting support where it is most needed. New tax reliefs are difficult to target in this way. They are of greatest benefit to those paying higher rates of tax and do not benefit low-income individuals whose income is already below the personal allowance.

■ Protective Clothing: VAT

Julian Sturdy:

[\[69529\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of extending the personal protective equipment VAT zero rating beyond 31 October 2020.

Jesse Norman:

The temporary zero-rate of VAT on sales of Personal Protective Equipment for protection from infection has been extended to 31 October 2020. This extension forms part of the Government's response to the coronavirus emergency.

The Government has taken extraordinary action to introduce this zero-rate. A temporary measure is appropriate to ensure the widest range of businesses, charities and individuals can benefit from this tax relief during the coronavirus emergency. The Government will continue to respond dynamically to this emergency, and will take all necessary steps in the future.

■ Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grant Fund and Small Business Grants Fund: Exhibitions

Dame Cheryl Gillan:

[\[71648\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether exhibition businesses are (a) covered by and (b) qualify for support from the (i) Small Business Grant Fund and (ii) the Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grant Fund.

Kemi Badenoch:

If an exhibition company meets the criteria for the Small Business Grant Fund or the Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grant Fund, it can receive a grant from these schemes. Under the SBGF, businesses can receive a £10,000 grant per property, for each property in receipt of Small Business Rate Relief or Rural Rate Relief. Under the Retail, Hospitality or Leisure Grant Fund, businesses can receive a £10,000 grant per property, for each property occupied for retail, hospitality or leisure purposes with a rateable value of £15,000 or below and which is not in receipt of SBRR or RRR; and a £25,000 grant per property, for each property occupied for these purposes with a rateable value between £15,000 and £51,000.

The Government is aware that some small businesses have found themselves excluded from the existing business grants schemes because of the way they interact with the business rates system. That is why the Government has allocated up to an additional £617 million to Local Authorities to enable them to give discretionary grants to businesses in this situation. The Government's intention is for Local Authorities to prioritise the following types of business when making discretionary grants:

- Small businesses in shared offices or other flexible workspaces, for example industrial parks, science parks, incubators etc, which do not have their own business rates assessment;
- Regular market traders who do not have their own business rates assessment;

- B&Bs which pay Council Tax instead of business rates; and
- Charity properties in receipt of charitable business rates relief which would otherwise have been eligible for Small Business Rates Relief or Rural Rate Relief

Exhibition companies may fall into one of the above categories. Local Authorities may also choose to pay grants to businesses outside of these priority groups, according to local economic need, so long as the business was trading on 11th March, and has not received any other grant funded by central Government (with the exception of grants from the SEISS).

Businesses which have not received a grant should have been able to benefit from other measures in the Chancellor's unprecedented package of support for business, including:

- An option to defer VAT payments by up to twelve months;
- The Bounce Back Loan Scheme, which will ensure that small and micro businesses can quickly access loans of up to £50,000 which are 100 per cent guaranteed by the Government;
- The Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme, now extended to cover all businesses including those which would be able to access commercial credit;
- The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, to support businesses with their wage bills; and
- The Self-Employment Income Support Scheme, to provide support to the self-employed.

The Business Support website provides further information about how businesses can access the support that has been made available, who is eligible, and how to apply: <https://www.businesssupport.gov.uk/coronavirus-business-support/>.

In addition to these measures, the Chancellor announced further support for businesses at the Summer Economic Update, including the Jobs Retention Bonus, which will grant businesses £1,000 for each furloughed staff member that they bring back and keep employed until the end of January 2021, and a VAT cut for the hospitality and tourism sectors.

■ Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grant Fund: Bus Services

Grahame Morris:

[71729]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make the Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grant Fund available to coach operators.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Government recognises that this is a very challenging time for businesses in a wide variety of sectors. Small businesses occupying properties for retail, hospitality or leisure purposes are likely to be particularly affected by Covid-19 due to their reliance on customer footfall, and the fact that they are less likely than larger businesses to have sufficient cash reserves to meet their high fixed property-related costs. The

Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grant Fund is intended to help small businesses in this situation.

The Government will allocate up to an additional £617 million to Local authorities to enable them to make discretionary grants to businesses which have been excluded from the existing grants schemes because of the way they interact with the business rates system. Local Authorities can also choose to make discretionary grants to other kinds of businesses, such as coach operators, if they feel there is a particular local economic need. However, the priority of all the grants schemes continues to be to help the smallest businesses, and small businesses which are facing significant property-related costs and operate in sectors which have been particularly hard hit by the steep decline in customer footfall.

Businesses which have not received a grant should have been able to benefit from other measures in the Chancellor's unprecedented package of support for business, including:

- An option to defer VAT payments by up to twelve months;
- The Bounce Back Loan Scheme, which will ensure that small and micro businesses can quickly access loans of up to £50,000 which are 100 per cent guaranteed by the Government;
- The Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme, now extended to cover all businesses including those which would be able to access commercial credit;
- The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, to support businesses with their wage bills; and
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In addition to these measures, the Chancellor announced further support for businesses at the Summer Economic Update, including the Jobs Retention Bonus, which will grant businesses £1,000 for each furloughed staff member that they bring back and keep employed until the end of January 2021, and a VAT cut for the hospitality and tourism sectors.

■ Roads: Freight

Louise Haigh:

[71823]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate he has made of the cost of the Goods Vehicle Movement Service; and what category of risk has been assigned for that service being delivered on (a) time and (b) budget.

Jesse Norman:

HMRC are confident that they will have the Goods Vehicle Movement Service (GVMS) ready to be implemented at border locations where a pre-lodgement model is adopted on 31 December 2020 to use for all movements supporting the Northern Ireland Protocol, and by the time staging in of full controls for EU movements is

complete by July 2021. Spending on the GVMS in 2020/21 is funded from within HMRC's EU Transition budget allocation of £382 million.

Louise Haigh:

[\[71824\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether the Infrastructure Projects Authority has awarded an RAG delivery confidence rating for the Goods Vehicle Movement Service.

Jesse Norman:

The Goods Vehicle Movement Service (GVMS) project is part of a wider programme of work delivering system and business process changes for the end of the transition period. The Infrastructure Projects Authority conducted a review of this programme of work in May and provided a delivery confidence assessment for the programme, not its constituent projects.

This programme of work is part of the Government Major Projects Portfolio (GMPP). The Government's publication strategy sets out that the Delivery Confidence Assessment from the Q2 GMPP report for a programme is made public in the IPA's next Annual Report.

HMRC will have the GVMS ready to be implemented at border locations where a pre-lodgement model is adopted on 31 December 2020 to use for all movements supporting the Northern Ireland Protocol, and by the time that staging in of full controls for EU movements is complete by July 2021.

■ Self-employment Income Support Scheme

Jon Trickett:

[\[69452\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, for what reasons people classed as self-employed for the 2019-20 tax year only are ineligible for the Self-employment Income Support Scheme.

Jesse Norman:

In order to ensure that the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS) is deliverable, only those who submitted a tax return for 2018-19 are eligible to apply.

This was a difficult decision and it was taken for practical reasons.

Although the self-employed can file returns for the 2019-20 tax year, if HMRC were to rely on these returns for the SEISS there would be an opportunity for fraudulent activity through returns where no trading activity has taken place, where trading profits have been inflated to increase the size of the grant, or where trading profits have been reduced to below the £50,000 threshold in order to become eligible.

Unfortunately, HMRC would not be able to distinguish genuine self-employed individuals who started trading in 2019-20 from fake applications by fraudulent operators and organised criminal gangs seeking to exploit the SEISS.

The newly self-employed may still be eligible for other elements of the unprecedented financial support provided by the Government. This package includes Bounce Back

loans, tax deferrals, rental support, increased levels of Universal Credit, mortgage holidays, and other business support grants.

■ **Small Businesses: Tax Allowances**

Jim Shannon:

[\[70396\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent discussions he has had on the potential merits of tax relief for small business owners that pay their staff above minimum wage.

Jesse Norman:

BEIS and HM Treasury Ministers have regular discussions on a number of different topics, including employment and business support. However, in line with the practice of successive administrations, details of ministerial discussions are not generally disclosed.

The Government keeps all tax policy under review and regularly receives proposals for new tax reliefs. When considering any new relief, HM Treasury must ensure that the relief would be effective at meeting its objectives, would not be subject to abuse, and would represent good value for money for the taxpayer.

At Spring Budget, the Government supported businesses by making further significant cuts to business rates and also delivered on its commitment to increase the Employment Allowance from £3,000 to £4,000. This allowed businesses and charities to claim up to £4,000 off their National Insurance contributions from April 2020. Businesses can also deduct 100% of staff costs from their corporation tax bill. These measures are on top of having the lowest corporation tax in the G20.

■ **Stamp Duties: Coronavirus**

Gavin Robinson:

[\[71783\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of applying the Stamp Duty exemption retrospectively for house sales within the agreed thresholds since the start of the (a) covid-19 lockdown and (b) current financial year.

Jesse Norman:

To boost the housing market and confidence, the Government has decided to cut Stamp Duty Land Tax (SDLT) by temporarily increasing the nil band rate of SDLT to £500,000. This applies from 8 July 2020 to 31 March 2021.

Property sales which have not yet been substantially performed will still be eligible to take advantage of the Stamp Duty Holiday.

■ **Statutory Sick Pay: Coronavirus**

Jon Trickett:

[\[69449\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what information his Department holds on the number of people whose statutory sick pay was affected by the HMRC Statutory Sick Pay

Calculator incorrectly calculating SSP as payable from the fourth day and not the first day of sickness in the most recent period for which figures are available.

Jon Trickett:

[\[69450\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that employers accessing the Coronavirus Statutory Sick Pay Rebate Scheme are able to recoup money that they have paid out in sick pay from the first day of an employee's sickness absence.

Jesse Norman:

The Chancellor announced at Budget on 11 March 2020 that employees would be entitled to Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) from day 1 in respect of COVID-19 related absences. The Chancellor also confirmed that the Government would refund the costs of up to two-weeks' SSP for COVID-19 related absences to employers.

These changes had effect from 13 March 2020 and the new system for the SSP rebate launched on 26 May 2020. The Government has ensured that all the guidance available on GOV.UK is correct. The SSP calculator included a caveat to employers while it was being updated to reflect the latest position on SSP entitlement.

The Government is not aware of any employers having been adversely affected as a result of the updates to the guidance or the calculator and the new rebate service has a customer satisfaction score of above 90%.

WORK AND PENSIONS

■ Child Maintenance Service: Coronavirus

Drew Hendry:

[\[61733\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment her Department has made of whether the Child Maintenance Service is facing additional delays in the handling of cases as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Mims Davies:

The CMS has made temporary changes to services to ensure we continue to support separated parents as part of our wider efforts to provide financial support through the welfare system.

The CMS has updated guidance on telephone and online services to encourage parents to report changes online where possible, except where changes must be reported by phone.

In order to ensure that receiving parents do not lose out in the long run, the Service will update cases with notified changes as soon as possible. Where payments have been missed the Service will take action to re-establish compliance and collect any unpaid amounts that may have accrued.

Matt Western:

[\[66175\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the effectiveness of the Child Maintenance Service in enforcing payments for resident parents during the covid-19 outbreak.

Mims Davies:

Where payments have been missed we have asked parents to report the changes via the self-service portal.

In order to ensure that receiving parents do not lose out in the long run, we will update cases with notified changes as soon as possible. Where payments have been missed the Service will take action to re-establish compliance and collect any unpaid amounts that may have accrued.

No one will get away with giving false information. Those found to be abusing the system can be subjected to the full extent of our enforcement powers and the Child Maintenance Service will pursue these, where appropriate.

■ Children: Maintenance

Munira Wilson:

[\[58096\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, when she plans to reinstate a Child Maintenance Service telephone service for people to report their ex-partner who has stopped paying child maintenance.

Mims Davies:

[Holding answer 15 June 2020]: The priority of the Child Maintenance Service during this period has been to ensure the flow of child maintenance payments received are paid out to receiving parents.

Where payments have been missed, we have asked parents to report the changes via the self-service portal. Missed payments will continue to accrue as arrears and over time, we will ensure that everyone pays or receives the right amount of child maintenance.

Karin Smyth:

[\[64244\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the effect on the administering of child maintenance of the redeployment of staff from the Child Maintenance Service to help process the increase in claims for universal credit resulting from the covid-19 lockdown.

Mims Davies:

[Holding answer 29 June 2020]: The Child Maintenance Service (CMS) is making temporary changes to services to continue to ensure we can deliver our priorities to support separated parents and also to help wider efforts to provide essential financial support to more people.

Child Maintenance services can be accessed online with parents urged to make use of this in the first instance, and phone lines remain open for those who need them.

The CMS has updated guidance on telephone and online services to encourage parents to report changes online where possible, except where changes must be reported by phone.

Over time the CMS will ensure that everyone pays or receives the right amount of child maintenance. No one will get away with giving false information and those abusing the system could find themselves subject to the full extent of our enforcement powers.

Mr Clive Betts:

[\[66811\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 16 June 2020 to Question 57092 on Children: Maintenance, whether the redeployment of staff led to the decision by the Child Maintenance Service to suspend initiating new enforcement action; and what assessment he has made of the effect of that suspension on parents.

Mims Davies:

[Holding answer 6 July 2020]: The CMS has made temporary changes to services to ensure we continue to support separated parents as part of our wider efforts to provide financial support through the welfare system.

Taking substantial enforcement action relies on third parties, including Her Majesty's courts, bailiffs and the banks, which are currently not in a position to support significant enforcement action. We are committed to working with third parties to pursue enforcement action as soon as possible, where necessary.

Those found to be abusing the system at this difficult time can be subjected to the full extent of our enforcement powers.

■ Department for Work and Pensions: Coronavirus

Marsha De Cordova:

[\[71879\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department has taken to (a) undertake and (b) publish Equalities Impact Assessments on its covid-19 policies.

Mims Davies:

The Secretary of State has complied with her duties under the Equality Act 2010 in respect of Covid 19 policies.

■ Disability

Margaret Greenwood:

[\[71807\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent progress she has made on the development of a national strategy for disabled people.

Justin Tomlinson:

The National Strategy for Disabled People is a key manifesto commitment for this Government and its delivery remains important for ministers, including No. 10. Its significance is even greater, as we re-build the UK's economy and society following

the Covid-19 pandemic. We are now focusing on meaningful engagement with stakeholders, strengthening our evidence base and keeping momentum to deliver the high ambition strategy that the Prime Minister has called for.

■ Economic Situation

Neil Gray:

[\[71795\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what proposals she put to the Chancellor of the Exchequer in advance of his statement entitled, Summer Economic Update.

Mims Davies:

The Department for Work and Pensions has been working closely with HM Treasury on Our Plan for Jobs, which builds on and bolsters the existing support offered by our Job Centre Plus network.

Our initial proposals shared with the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and later announced at the Summer Economic Statement on 8 July include:

- Providing enhanced work search support by doubling the number of work coaches in Jobcentre Plus before the end of the financial year
- Plans to introduce a new Kickstart Scheme in Great Britain, a £2 billion fund to create hundreds of thousands of high quality 6-month work placements aimed at those aged 16-24 who are deemed to be at risk of long-term unemployment.
- An Expanded Youth Offer which involves expanding and increase the intensive support offered by DWP in Great Britain to young jobseekers, to include all those aged 18-24 in the Intensive Work Search group in Universal Credit.
- Expansion of the Work and Health Programme to offer new support to those who lose their job as a result of COVID including introducing additional voluntary support for those on benefits that have been unemployed for more than 3 months.
- Plans to increase the funding for the Flexible Support Fund by £150 million including to increase the capacity of the Rapid Response Service. It will also provide local support to claimants by removing barriers to work such as travel expenses for attending interviews.
- Expanding Sector Based Work Academies directed at priority areas, e.g. construction, infrastructure and social care. The sector-based work academy scheme offers training, work experience and a guaranteed job interview to those ready to start a job.
- Job finding support service which involves providing £40 million to fund private sector capacity to introduce a job finding support service in Great Britain. This online, one-to-one service will help those who have been unemployed for less than three months to increase their chances of finding employment

■ Employment: Coronavirus**Margaret Greenwood:** [71805]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the effect of the covid-19 outbreak on the disability employment gap.

Justin Tomlinson:

The latest data show that by Q1 2020, which covers the period up to the end of March 2020, there were 1.4 million more disabled people in work compared to Q1 2014, and the employment rate gap had closed from 33.8 percentage points to 28.6 percentage points in just six years. These data may be viewed here:

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/datasets/labourmarketstatusofdisabledpeoplea08>

There will be a period until we have the robust data needed to fully assess any effects of the economic downturn on disabled people's employment. We will continue to monitor employment of disabled people using the quarterly Labour Force Survey and other relevant sources.

■ Jobcentres: Bristol**Thangam Debbonaire:** [69599]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what the performance figures are for the Bristol assessment centre against the consultation centre target that 90 per cent of all claimants are seen within 30 minutes of their consultation time, for the last 12 months.

Justin Tomlinson:

For the last 12 months, the percentage of individuals seen at the Personal Independence Payment (PIP) Bristol Assessment Centre within 30 minutes of their appointment time is 77.9%. This covers the period July 2019 to the 17 March 2020 when face-to-face assessments were suspended. We continue to work closely with suppliers to improve the waiting times whilst maintaining a high level of customer satisfaction.

■ Jobcentres: Staff**Neil Gray:** [71784]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the Chancellor's summer economic update of 8 July, whether the doubling of the number of work coaches will be made up of (a) new posts or (b) redeployments.

Mims Davies:

With reference to the Chancellor's summer economic update of 8 July and the doubling of the number of work coaches, the majority of these [13500] roles will be new posts.

Neil Gray:

[\[71787\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the Chancellor's summer economic update of 8 July, how many of the 30,000 work coaches will be allocated to each (a) devolved nation and (b) constituency.

Mims Davies:

It is too soon in the recruitment process to be able to identify how many of the new work coaches will be allocated to each devolved nation or constituency. However, Scotland plans to recruit c450 new work coaches between now and the end of October in the first wave of recruitment. Central England and Wales region will recruit c1200 new work coaches in the same time period, split between Central England and Wales. Further planned recruitment later in the year will grow these numbers.

■ Local Housing Allowance

Afzal Khan:

[\[69671\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent assessment her Department has made of the potential merits of increasing the local housing allowance to the 50th percentile.

Will Quince:

There has been no such assessment.

We increased Local Housing Allowance rates to the 30th percentile of local rents, providing additional financial support for private renters in response to calls from homelessness charities. This significant investment of almost £1 billion ensures over 1 million households will see an increase, on average, of £600 per year.

For renters whose circumstances mean they may require more support, Discretionary Housing Payments are also available. We have already provided £180m in Discretionary Housing Payment funding to local authorities to support vulnerable claimants with housing costs in the private and social rented sector in England and Wales for 2020/21. This includes an extra £40m announced at the spending round.

■ Pension Credit: Hemsworth

Jon Trickett:

[\[70315\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many and what proportion of pensioners in Hemsworth constituency are in receipt of pension credit.

Guy Opperman:

As of November 2019, there were 2,626 Pension Credit claimants in Hemsworth.

The department does not hold information on the number of pensioners in Hemsworth constituency.

■ Personal Income: Scotland

Dr Philippa Whitford: [\[68355\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the Citizens Basic Income Feasibility Study Steering Group report entitled Assessing the Feasibility of Citizens' Basic Income Pilots in Scotland, if she will meet with Scottish Government officials to discuss that report and its recommendations.

Dr Philippa Whitford: [\[68356\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the Citizens Basic Income Feasibility Study Steering Group's report entitled Assessing the Feasibility of Citizens' Basic Income Pilots in Scotland, if she will hold discussions with (a) the Scottish Government and (b) HMRC on the potential merits of a universal basic Income pilot in Scotland.

Will Quince:

[Holding answer 7 July 2020]: I do not intend to meet with the Scottish Government officials to discuss the report on the feasibility of piloting a Citizens Basic Income (CBI) in Scotland as I do not think a CBI is the right approach for the UK. A CBI does not take any account of people's needs and circumstances, is not targeted at the poorest in society and would be hugely expensive.

This government believes Universal Credit is the right strategy for the UK because it simplifies the benefits system, promotes and incentivises work and provides targeted support to those in most need in a way that is affordable.

■ Personal Independence Payment

Anthony Mangnall: [\[69709\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she is taking to improve the service personal independence payment claimants receive.

Justin Tomlinson:

In response to the Covid crisis, DWP put in place significant easements to support customers, including pausing reviews, stopping face to face assessments, introducing telephony assessments and providing customers with more time to return their PIP 2 forms. We are constantly seeking to improve the service further, currently testing a new digital claim form option with a view to wider implementation later this year.

■ Poverty: Children

Afzal Khan: [\[63495\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department is taking to tackle the number of BAME children living in poverty; and what success criteria her Department sets to measure outcomes on that matter.

Will Quince:

This Government provides a strong welfare safety net, spending over £95 billion in the last financial year on working age welfare benefits. Total welfare spending in 2019/20 was £225bn.

Our current focus is on supporting people financially during these unprecedented times. Our long-term ambition remains to build an economy that supports employment, ensuring opportunities for all to enter and progress in work where possible.

We are committed to levelling up skills and opportunity across the country. Using data from the Race Disparity Audit, updated annually since October 2017, and DWP's own analysis we are continuing to help those underrepresented in the labour market, for example we are investing £90m towards activities that address disparities in youth unemployment.

■ Social Security Benefits: Medical Examinations**Neil Gray:**[\[70414\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what criteria her Department has used to determine the type of medical assessment available to claimants, since her Department's suspension of face to face medical assessments on 17 June 2020.

Justin Tomlinson:

As has always been the case, our assessment providers will initially try to complete paper based assessments, where there is sufficient evidence to make a recommendation. If this is not the case, providers will currently look to offer a telephone assessment, where appropriate. We offer reasonable adjustments for claimants who may need additional support to engage in a telephone assessment. Face to face assessments remain suspended and we will continue to review this in line with the latest public health advice.

Neil Gray:[\[70415\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many claimants have been unable to participate in a medical assessment for (a) personal independence payment, (b) employment support allowance and (c) universal credit since her Department's suspension of face to face medical assessments on 17 June 2020.

Justin Tomlinson:

The information requested is not held.

■ Social Security Benefits: Coronavirus**Sir Edward Davey:**[\[70954\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department has taken to provide additional financial support to (a) employment and support allowance and (b) personal independence payment recipients during the covid-19 outbreak.

Justin Tomlinson:

The Government has announced a suite of measures that can be quickly and effectively operationalised to benefit those facing the most financial disruption during the pandemic.

■ State Retirement Pensions: British Nationals Abroad**Ruth Jones:**[\[66197\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the effect of her policy on pensions uprating on people eligible for a state pension who reside in a Commonwealth country.

Guy Opperman:

The policy on the up-rating of UK State Pensions paid to recipients living in a Commonwealth country is clear and is a long-standing policy of successive post-war Governments that has been in place for over 70 years. The annual index-linked increases are paid to UK State Pension recipients where there is a legal requirement to do so. For example, where UK State Pension recipients are living in countries where there is a reciprocal agreement that provides for the uprating of the UK State Pension. The Government has no plans to change this policy.

■ Statutory Sick Pay**Afzal Khan:**[\[69670\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent assessment her Department has made of the potential merits of increasing the rate of statutory sick pay.

Justin Tomlinson:

This Government has a strong safety net that helps people who are facing hardship and are unable to support themselves financially. Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) provides a minimum level of income for employees when they are off work sick. It is paid in full by employers who may also decide to pay more than the statutory minimum through Occupational Sick Pay. SSP is just part of our welfare safety net and our wider government offer to support people in times of need.

Where an individual's income is reduced while off work sick and they require further financial support, they may be able to claim Universal Credit and new style Employment and Support Allowance, depending on their personal circumstances. Many of those on low incomes are already in receipt of benefits. For those on Universal Credit, their award will rise if their income falls.

■ Statutory Sick Pay: Coronavirus**Jon Trickett:**[\[69451\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the covid-19 outbreak, what steps her Department is taking to ensure that the general public is aware that statutory sick pay is payable from the first day of sickness.

Justin Tomlinson:

Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) guidance is available for the general public to access at <https://www.gov.uk/statutory-sick-pay>.

The guidance states that employees may get SSP for every day they are off work if they cannot work because of coronavirus (COVID-19). The SSP guidance can also be accessed through the coronavirus (COVID-19) hub on GOV.UK: <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>

■ Unemployment: Hemsworth**Jon Trickett:****[70317]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the effect of the covid-19 outbreak on the level of unemployment in Hemsworth constituency.

Mims Davies:

Estimates of the number of people who are unemployed for sub-regional geographies in the UK are compiled by the Office for National Statistics (ONS). At parliamentary constituency level these estimates are subject to a high degree of statistical uncertainty. This is because the sample of the Annual Population Survey, upon which the estimates are based, includes small numbers of people matching this description at this level.

The latest available data is available on the NOMIS website (<https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/>) and covers the period January to December 2019.

■ Universal Credit: Nurses**Jonathan Reynolds:****[71757]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether the new NHS bursary for student nurses will be included as income when calculating a claimant's entitlement for universal credit.

Will Quince:

In Universal Credit, as in the legacy benefit system, the majority of people engaged in full-time education will not be entitled. This is because students in advanced education normally receive, and are expected to access, support from other sources, such as educational grants and loans. Students in non-advanced education are normally expected to remain at home whilst attending school/college and be supported by their family.

The new NHS bursary is payable to degree level student nurses and their course will also be eligible for a maintenance loan. Where an eligible claim to Universal Credit has been made, maintenance loan income is taken into account when calculating an award. Any grant income, such as a student nursing bursary, is fully disregarded, except any specific amount in the total grant which covers the rent costs or maintenance costs of another person which are already included in the Universal Credit award.

■ Victim Support Schemes: Finance**Sir Mark Hendrick:****[69457]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what plans she has to allocate additional funding to support domestic abuse victims to maintain (a) employment and (b) economic independence.

Will Quince:

DWP is committed to providing the best possible support for all our claimants, including the most vulnerable in society. This includes those who are, or have been, victims of domestic abuse and economic abuse.

DWP has a number of employment schemes that claimants, including victims of abuse, can access to improve their employability and skills. The Work and Health Programme gives 'priority' early access to victims of abuse. This programme supports people to enter and stay in work, and involves referrals to public, private and voluntary providers.

Alongside the landmark Domestic Abuse Bill, the Government is providing £35 million to combat domestic abuse. This is on top of the £2 million we have already made available since the Covid-19 crisis, to support domestic abuse charities and raise awareness of the support available. We are also providing £3 million that will go to specialist services for children who have both been directly and indirectly affected by domestic abuse.

Government Departments are working together to look at the overall support we provide for victims and to ensure that it is holistic and effectively fulfils their needs, so that victims can rebuild their lives.

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

CABINET OFFICE

■ Amendments to the Withdrawal Agreement

Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office (Michael Gove): [\[HCWS365\]](#)

At its second meeting on 12 June 2020, the Withdrawal Agreement Joint Committee, co-chaired by the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, Rt Hon Michael Gove MP, and European Commission Vice President, Maroš Šefčovič, adopted one Decision to correct errors and omissions in the Withdrawal Agreement (Decision No. 1/2020).

Decision No. 1/2020 makes technical changes to Part I Annex I - Social Security Coordination and Part Five - Financial Provisions of the Withdrawal Agreement.

The changes to Part I Annex I add in two decisions made by the Administrative Commission for the Coordination of Social Security Systems to the list of Decisions and Recommendations already set out. Decision No. F3 specifies how the amount of family benefits should be calculated for a recipient. Decision No. E7 states that, as of 3 July 2019, the transmission of data between the institutions shall be carried out by electronic means through the Electronic Exchange of Social Security Information (EESSI) system and based on the exchange of Structured Electronic Documents. These decisions were approved by the EU on 19 December 2018 and 27 June 2019 respectively.

The changes to Part Five include amendments to Articles 135, 137, 143, 144 and 150 that reflect the actual date of the UK's departure from the EU on 31 January 2020. An additional amendment was made to Article 145 to provide legal certainty to UK beneficiaries in respect of grants made under the Research Fund for Steel and Coal until the closure of these projects.

The Decision was published by the UK and the EU on 14 July 2020.

EDUCATION

■ Children's Social Care Update

The Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Children and Families (Vicky Ford): [\[HCWS368\]](#)

On 24 April 2020 regulations were introduced to provide local authorities and children's social care providers with temporary flexibilities to support them to focus on core safeguarding duties during the coronavirus pandemic. We made no amendments to primary legislation, and the vast majority of statutory duties in secondary legislation remained unchanged. The regulations – the Adoption and Children (Coronavirus) (Amendment) Regulations 2020 – are due to lapse on 25 September 2020.

When the regulations were introduced, we faced exceptional circumstances, with social workers and others facing decisions that they had never faced before. There was an urgent need to take action to ensure that local authorities and others supporting children and young people could focus on core safeguarding responsibilities should the worst-case scenario come to pass. We needed to prepare for very significant rates of staff sickness coupled with family illness potentially leading to many more children needing to be found emergency care. We were aware that the coronavirus pandemic would have a real impact on the lives of children and families, and that this would be a difficult time for them.

Protecting vulnerable children has been at the heart of the Government's response to the virus. These regulations formed part of that response, alongside keeping schools and other settings open for vulnerable children, substantial additional investment, and additional support direct to children, young people, and their families.

The Government has always been clear that these temporary amendments should be used only when absolutely necessary and only if consistent with the overarching safeguarding and welfare duties that have remained in place. Our guidance sets out clear safeguards about how and when they should be used:

- where staff shortages, due to sickness or other reasons, make it difficult or impossible to meet the original requirements.
- where making use of flexibilities to take a different approach is the most sensible, risk-based response in light of other demands and pressures on services, this might involve focusing services on those most at risk.
- where there is a consequential reason to make use of flexibilities, for example, due to limited capacity in other providers or partners making it difficult or impossible to comply with the original requirements.

Our monitoring has shown that the majority of the regulatory flexibilities have been rarely used and only when needed in response to coronavirus.

Our approach to monitoring is based on a triangulation of information we are gathering from a range of delivery partners to understand which of the regulations are being used and why. We are actively seeking regular feedback from a variety of sources including local authorities, social workers, charities, Ofsted, and other key partners. We will continue to engage on this scale whilst the regulations remain in place.

Our monitoring data shows that the regulations are being used infrequently. Out of 128 local authorities we have spoken with in June and July, 87 have used at least one regulation, although many have only used them on a limited number of occasions and in a limited number of areas.

The most used related to the fostering and adoption regulations, notably allowing medical reports to be considered at a later stage in the adoption and fostering process though still prior to approval. This has minimised delays in approving adopters for children needing a new, forever, family. Similarly, relaxations around panels have allowed for the continued recruitment of foster carers and a continued functionality of processes.

Virtual engagement with children and families has often been used alongside face to face visits and, in some cases, this has resulted in greater levels of contact between children, young people, parents, and carers – and improved engagement from some young people.

Senior leaders in children's social care have set out to the Government and Ofsted how they have approached the use of the temporary regulations and explained that they have robust sign-off processes in place for when a regulation has been used. Ofsted report that local authorities have said decisions on the use of the regulations are being made with the child at the heart of the case, in line with the principles in the guidance, including assessing risks and working on a collaborative basis.

We have always been clear that these temporary amendments will remain in place only for so long as they are needed.

The extraordinary measures the Government has taken over the last few months means that we are now in a much better position to ease the restrictions that everyone has faced. Given the lower level of coronavirus now present, there is a significantly reduced need for local authorities and providers to use these flexibilities. I therefore intend to update guidance immediately to make it clear that there should no longer be a need to use most of these flexibilities and will be writing to local authorities and providers accordingly. Where they do use flexibilities, local authorities and providers should ensure that they have strong justification.

I would also like to provide further clarity about the future of these flexibilities and am today announcing that, subject to a short period of consultation, the overwhelming majority of these regulations will expire as planned on 25 September.

The Government believes that there may be circumstances in which some services continue to face specific and exceptional challenges into the autumn. As more children are seen by schools, and social distancing eases further and hitherto hidden harms come to light, we must be prepared for the potential additional demands that may still be placed on services.

I am therefore minded, subject to consultation, to extend a very small number of temporary changes for a further period. These regulations specifically address the following points.

- Medical reports

In order to become a foster carer or adoptive parent, one needs to provide a medical report from a General Practitioner. As restrictions are eased and schools return, we expect that there may be more children needing care than is usual, and therefore there will be a higher need for potential adopters and foster carers. Our National Health Service still faces significant challenges as we enter a period of recovery. Therefore, I am minded to extend the amendments that allow more time for General Practitioners and other health professionals to provide information to support the process of approving much needed potential adopters and foster carers. This does not remove the requirement for

medical reports to be provided but moves the time during the process that the report must be provided before the child is placed with the foster parent or adoptive parent.

- Virtual visits

We must be able to keep essential services, such as social worker visits, operating during any local lockdowns, and in cases where households are being required to self-isolate due to a case, or suspected case, of coronavirus, or contact with someone who has tested positive for coronavirus, in line with medical advice from the NHS test and trace service. Therefore, I am suggesting that it may be appropriate to continue to enable visits in these situations to happen virtually. However, in all other situations I would expect face to face visits to take place. Moreover, in my view the flexibilities regarding timing of these visits should lapse, as the provision for virtual visits should now provide sufficient flexibility on the basis that workforce capacity, the original reason for these flexibilities being introduced, is now no longer the concern that it was.

- Ofsted inspections

Ofsted inspections have not taken place since March so Ofsted will need a period of catch-up before it can resume normal service. As announced last week, Ofsted are planning to carry out a phased return to routine inspections. This will include risk-based assurance visits to children's social care settings, based on the previous inspection judgement, the amount of time since a setting was last inspected and other information Ofsted hold about the setting. These assurance visits will occur between September 2020 and March 2021. At this point full graded inspections will recommence. I am therefore recommending that the suspension of the existing frequency regulation for Ofsted inspections be extended until 31 March 2021, to allow Ofsted to provide the most assurance, to the sector and the wider public, about the safety and care of children.

A short consultation will launch later this week to inform final decisions and I would encourage all interested parties to respond. Should a new Statutory Instrument be proposed to extend any flexibility beyond 25 September 2020, Parliament will be provided with the customary 21 days opportunity to scrutinise the regulations before they come into force.

Our guidance has been clear that the regulatory flexibilities should only ever have been used with senior management oversight and that all decisions should be recorded. I am, however, considering how additional safeguards on the use of the flexibilities could be employed. Our consultation will therefore seek views on this question.

As inspections resume, Ofsted will want to be assured that any flexibilities have been used in the best interests of children, following careful risk assessment and with clear records of decisions made by local authorities and providers. As such, local authorities and providers must maintain a focus on child-centred practice and continue to record their decisions and ensure that these records are available for Ofsted. Inspectors will want to see the best possible practice for children. Whilst routine inspections have been suspended, Ofsted has continued to inspect where they have been made aware of safeguarding concerns. They have acted swiftly and have taken action to restrict children going into a home or stop a home operating in 23 cases. They have continued to start

proceedings to cancel the registration of homes or managers where this is the right thing to do. And while they have prioritised registration of new children's homes, they have still refused to register people they did not think were suitable.

Throughout this pandemic, social workers, charities, and others working to support our most vulnerable children and families have worked tirelessly to ensure that they continue to receive the support they need. I would like to place on record my personal gratitude, and that of the whole Government, for everything they have done and continue to do. I would also like to acknowledge the extremely difficult circumstances many children and families have faced during this pandemic.

Protecting vulnerable children remains our top priority, as it does for local authorities and children's social care providers across the country. As the country begins to return to a more normal way of life, it is absolutely right that this also applies to children's social care.

■ Higher Technical Education Reform

The Secretary of State for Education (Gavin Williamson):

[\[HCWS362\]](#)

Today, I am pleased to launch the government's new reforms of higher technical education in England.

Take up of higher technical education in England is low and has been falling, leading to skills shortages across our economy. Employers are struggling to access the higher technical skills they need to grow and thrive and learners are missing out on the opportunities that a higher technical education can bring. To build a more prosperous, productive and fairer country that needs to change.

We are already taking action to strengthen technical education, with the rollout of T Levels, investment in our further education colleges and up to £290 million for flagship Institutes of Technology. Now we need to take the next step in levelling up our skills system and reverse the generational decline in higher technical education.

Our vision is for higher technical education to be a popular and prestigious choice that delivers the skills employers and learners need. We want to encourage more students to continue studying after T Levels or A levels, and we want higher technical education to attract workers of all ages looking to upskill and retrain.

At the moment, there are thousands of higher technical qualifications, with no national assurance that they provide the skills employers need. Some qualifications and courses are excellent, but overall there is low awareness and varying quality. The range of terminology, qualifications and provider types creates a complex landscape that is hard for employers and learners to navigate.

We will be establishing a high-quality system of higher technical education where learners and employers can have confidence in high-quality courses, whether they are taught in a further education college, a university or an independent training provider. The reforms being set out today are a vital first step in achieving that.

We will introduce a national scheme to approve higher technical qualifications that provide the skills that employers need, starting with digital qualifications, and followed by health and science and construction qualifications. This scheme will be delivered through the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education, and the Institute will be guided by employer-led national standards.

We want providers offering high-quality higher technical courses to have access to industry standard facilities and equipment, teachers with relevant industrial experience and pedagogical expertise, and close links to employers. At the heart of this are our flagship Institutes of Technology and our National Colleges. We will work with the Office for Students and Ofsted, drawing on their regulatory expertise, to ensure that higher technical education best meets the needs of learners and employers and provides value for money.

Finally, we will raise the profile and understanding of the best higher technical education courses through a government-backed brand, a communications campaign and improvements to information, advice and guidance.

Reforming and growing higher technical education will be a long-term endeavour. We will continue to develop and implement our reforms carefully and work closely with everyone who shares our goal of improving higher technical education. Together we can transform higher technical education and better support learners and employers across England.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

■ Flood and coastal erosion risk management policy

Secretary of State (George Eustice):

[[HCWS360](#)]

I recognise the immense impacts that flooding and coastal erosion can have on homes and businesses across the country. That is why this government is committed to reducing the risk of harm to people, the environment and the economy from flooding and coastal erosion – as shown by our £2.6 billion investment in flood and coastal defences since 2015 to better protect 300,000 homes by 2021.

At the Budget we committed to double our investment in the flood and coastal defence programme in England over the next six years to £5.2 billion which will better protect a further 336,000 properties by 2027. In addition to this record funding, I am today announcing a further investment of up to £170 million to accelerate work on 22 shovel-ready flood defence schemes to boost jobs, businesses and economic growth as part of the economic recovery from coronavirus. These projects will commence in 2020 and 2021 to drive growth and unlock a range of benefits for local economies across the country – from Sheffield to Bude.

As part of the government's continuing action to tackle climate change, we have today set out a package of measures to better protect and prepare the country against flooding and coastal erosion for the long-term. I have today published a new Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Policy Statement for England which represents the most

substantive update to our national effort to tackle flood and coastal erosion risk in a decade - since the Flood and Water Management Act 2010.

I am announcing further details of the £200 million programme which will support 25 local areas to drive innovation to increase resilience to flooding and coastal erosion – and I am proposing to take forward changes to the Flood Re scheme which will accelerate uptake of property flood resilience measures.

The long-term Policy Statement sets out the government's ambition to create a nation more resilient to future flood and coastal erosion risk. It outlines five ambitious policies and over 40 supporting actions which will accelerate progress to better protect and better prepare the country against flooding and coastal erosion in the face of more frequent extreme weather as a result of climate change.

These actions will, not just, reduce the likelihood of flooding and coastal erosion but will also reduce the impacts if flooding does happen. They will work together to increase resilience across the country. The Policy Statement will encourage wider and more comprehensive action by all those with a part to play to drive down flood risk from every angle through these five policies:

i. Upgrading and expanding our national flood defences and infrastructure

We will continue to build the new flood defences that the nation needs, investing in more permanent, demountable and temporary defences – building on the success of our £2.6 billion investment to better protect 300,000 properties since 2015. As announced at the Budget, over the next six years, we will invest a record £5.2 billion in the flood and coastal defence programme in England. This will better protect a further 336,000 properties and reduce national flood risk by up to 11% by 2027.

ii. Managing the flow of water more effectively

We will deliver an integrated approach to managing water to better protect communities from flooding and provide wider benefits for water resource management and the environment. As part of this, we will increase the number of water management schemes within and across catchments to reduce flood risk and help manage drought risk. We will also do more to tackle surface water flood risk.

iii. Harnessing the power of nature to reduce flood and coastal erosion risk and achieve multiple benefits

We will double the number of government funded projects which include nature-based solutions to reduce flood and coastal erosion risk. We will strengthen links between natural flood risk management and wider environmental and social benefits and explore how we can do more to deliver multiple benefits.

iv. Better preparing our communities

We will ensure that every single home currently at high risk of flooding is better protected or better prepared. We will maintain and enhance our planning policies that direct new development away from areas at risk. We will ensure our communities and businesses have the information they need to take ownership of their resilience. Our policies will help

to ensure that buildings, important infrastructure sites and key public services are better prepared to manage flood risk. We will work together to support communities, including when flooding happens and in recovery.

v. Enabling more resilient places through a catchment-based approach

We will adopt a catchment-based approach which means considering the full range of actions that could be taken in an area, upstream and downstream, by a variety of bodies to improve resilience. We will transform the current approach to local flood and coastal erosion risk planning so that every area of England will have a more strategic and comprehensive local plan by 2026 which drives long-term local action and investment. In areas facing significant coastal erosion and impacts from sea levels rising, we will support local areas to implement long-term plans to manage risk.

Alongside the Policy Statement, the Environment Agency will shortly lay before Parliament its National Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Strategy for England. The Strategy which will provide direction to the work of risk management authorities on the ground and includes strategic objectives to improve the resilience of the nation through to 2100.

The new £200 million innovative resilience programme will test and demonstrate actions which are needed to deliver the ambition outlined in the Policy Statement. As well as delivering innovative actions in 25 selected areas, the evidence gained from the programme will enable successful approaches to be identified and implemented more widely.

In July 2019 Flood Re published their first Quinquennial Review into the scheme - a legislative requirement every five years - and made a number of proposals to government. Having carefully considered these proposals I am today announcing that we will consult on a number of them, including some proposals which go further in order to increase the uptake of Property Flood Resilience and better support customers and insurers to recognise the benefits. The proposals will improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the scheme and incentivise the use of property flood resilience measures to make properties more resilient to flooding.

The actions the government is committing to today will strengthen our approach to tackling flood and coastal erosion risk for the long-term and demonstrates the UK's world-leading work to tackle climate change. They will improve our health and wellbeing, enhance our environment and support our economic recovery. Taken together this means that our country will be significantly more resilient to flooding and coastal erosion and will ensure that every place can thrive in a changing climate.

HOME OFFICE**■ HMICFRS's Inspection Report: 'An inspection of the National Crime Agency's Criminal Intelligence Function'**

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Priti Patel): [\[HCWS363\]](#)

The National Crime Agency (NCA) leads the fight against serious and organised crime (SOC). It has the power to task other law enforcement partners and a capability, with local to international reach, to disrupt the impact of SOC on the UK.

This is the sixth HMICFRS inspection of the NCA and examines the effectiveness of its criminal intelligence function. The focus is specifically on capabilities, resourcing, alignment with the 2018 SOC Strategy and the National Strategic Assessment (NSA), ability to provide a single, authoritative, strategic assessment of threat, and compliance with national intelligence standards and existing legislation

I have asked HMICFRS to publish the report on my behalf. It will be published today and will be available online at www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk. I will arrange for a copy to be placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

The inspection found that the NCA is meeting its statutory obligation to provide a criminal intelligence function and has the resources and systems in place to effectively manage information. Some deficiencies were identified in relation to PND license provision, the need for timely submission of regional threat assessment and ensuring staff and systems are equipped to adequately manage sensitive intelligence. HMICFRS made four recommendations which, once addressed will improve procedures and strengthen the Agency's criminal intelligence capability.

It is for the NCA's Director General to respond to these recommendations, in line with the requirements of the Crime and Courts Act 2013.

■ Reappointment of Lynne Owens as Director General of the NCA

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Priti Patel): [\[HCWS359\]](#)

I have reappointed Lynne Owens to be the Director General of the National Crime Agency for a further two years from January 2021. The Director General holds an extremely important position in UK Law Enforcement, leading and coordinating the response to Serious and Organised Crime (SOC). SOC affects more UK citizens than any other national security threat and costs us more than £37 billion every year.

It is customary to advertise the post of DG NCA to attract the very best talent available from as wide a field as possible – and, under normal circumstances, I would pursue this approach. However, this year is different for two important reasons. First, the UK is facing a threat unparalleled in peacetime from the coronavirus pandemic, and the NCA is playing a key part by working closely with its law enforcement partners to ensure that we are stopping the organised criminals who despicably try to use the crisis to their advantage.

Second, the way in which the UK tackles SOC is at a crucial stage in its development. The Independent Review of SOC conducted by Sir Craig Mackey has concluded, and the findings are being explored by the Home Office. The Government will announce its response later in the year, but developing the capabilities and role of the NCA will be key to that response. The NCA must continue with its excellent work, but it must also strive to develop and improve to ensure we stay ahead of the threat from SOC.

There is an overwhelming need, therefore, for an experienced leader at the NCA to provide stability while we tackle the coronavirus pandemic and to ensure effective delivery of this Government's manifesto commitment to strengthen the Agency. I have no doubt that in Lynne's reappointment we will continue to see the work of a fantastic leader. During a career in law enforcement over 30 years, she has built up a wealth of experience holding a variety of different positions from frontline policing to Chief Constable of Surrey and, of course, Director General of the NCA.

HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

■ Planning update

Secretary of State for the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (Robert Jenrick): [\[HCWS367\]](#)

Planning update: preventing loss of cultural venues and planning conditions for holiday parks

Introduction

The Nation's cultural and tourism industries are vitally important to the economy and the communities they serve. Many businesses in the sector have, and are continuing to face, severe disruption due to Covid-19. This Statement comes into effect immediately.

Preventing loss of theatres, concert halls and live music performance venues

The Covid-19 pandemic presents particular challenges for organisations that depend on engaging with audiences and visitors in person. It has forced thousands of cultural institutions to close their doors, including theatres, concert halls and live music performance venues across the country. This is why my Right Honourable Friend the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture Media and Sport announced £1.57 billion in financial support for the sector on 5 July to help these venues survive this period, and enable them to re-open when it is safe and economically viable to do so.

However, Covid-19 will continue to prevent the full reopening of a number of these venues for some time. This means that previously viable businesses face unprecedented financial difficulty. The Government recognises that the temporary closure of theatres, concert halls and live music performance venues due to Covid-19 has the potential to lead to permanent loss of important cultural and economic assets, and is determined that otherwise viable facilities are not lost forever.

The purpose of this Written Ministerial Statement, is to set out how local planning authorities should approach decision-making to prevent the unnecessary loss of these

venues. With immediate effect, local planning authorities should have due regard to their current circumstances when considering whether to grant planning permission for a change of use or demolition of a theatre, concert hall or live music performance venue that has been made temporarily vacant by Covid-19 business disruption.

Where an alternative use or demolition for a long-term vacant theatre, concert hall or live music performance venue is proposed, local planning authorities should consider the application in the normal way. The Theatres Trust is a statutory consultee under the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015 (S.I. 2015/595) for applications seeking to develop any land where there is a theatre and will have an opportunity to comment on any application relating to theatres.

This policy remains in place until 31 December 2022 unless superseded by a further statement.

It is also our intention to make an amendment to the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development (England) Order 2015 (S.I. 2015/596) to remove permitted development rights for demolition of theatres, concert halls and live music performance venues.

Caravan and Holiday parks

The Government also recognises that the tourism industry will need to be able to adapt to secure its financial future. In response to Covid-19 the majority of UK businesses closed in March 2020, including caravan and holiday parks. This has had a significant impact on the financial viability of over 2,200 businesses in this sector that employ around 46,000 staff. These parks are a mainstay of their local economies, providing employment and supporting local services and businesses.

Caravan and holiday parks in England were able to reopen from 4th July 2020. Extending their operation beyond the usual summer season will be invaluable to parks as the sector begins to recover. We are aware that current planning conditions may limit their open season. The temporary relaxation of these planning restrictions can play a vital role in helping local businesses to get up and running again.

The National Planning Policy Framework already emphasises that planning enforcement is a discretionary activity, and local planning authorities should act proportionately in responding to suspected breaches of planning control. Given the current situation, while local planning authorities must have regard to their legal obligations, they should not seek to undertake planning enforcement action which would unnecessarily restrict the ability of caravan and holiday parks to extend their open season.

Where local planning authorities consider it appropriate to require an application to vary relevant planning conditions (where for instance there is a risk of flooding or where parks are situated close to protected sites) they should prioritise the application and make an early decision to provide certainty to caravan and holiday park operators. In doing so, they should consider the benefits of longer opening season times to the local economy as it recovers from the impact of Covid-19.

This Written Ministerial Statement only covers England.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE**■ Negotiations on the UK's future trading relationship with Australia: Update**

Secretary of State for International Trade (Elizabeth Truss): [\[HCWS361\]](#)

Trade negotiators from the UK and Australia held the first round of negotiations for a UK-Australia Free Trade Agreement (FTA) between 29 June and 10 July 2020.

We are now one step closer to an ambitious, wide-ranging free trade agreement with one of our oldest friends. An FTA with Australia can bring investment, better jobs, higher wages and lower prices just when we need them the most.

Both teams of negotiators recognised the unprecedented circumstances we find ourselves in and reiterated that more global trade is essential to support post-Covid economic recovery.

Negotiations were conducted virtually and covered discussions on all areas of a comprehensive trade agreement.

The discussions covered the following areas:

- Anti-Corruption and Transparency
- Competition
- Cross-cutting general provisions
- Customs
- Digital/e-commerce
- Environment
- Financial Services
- Trade in Goods and Trade Remedies
- Good Regulatory Practice
- Intellectual Property
- Investment
- Labour
- Procurement
- Rules of Origin
- Services, including Movement of Natural Persons and Professional Business Services
- Small and Medium-sized Enterprises
- State Owned Enterprises
- Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures
- State to State Dispute Settlement

- Technical Barriers to Trade
- Telecommunications

We also had positive exploratory discussions on Clean Growth, Development, Women's Economic Empowerment, and Innovation.

Discussions between negotiators were productive and reflected our shared ambition to secure a comprehensive deal to boost trade and investment between our like-minded economies.

Teams discussed their respective objectives and agreed a forward plan for future talks. Our positive discussions in round one have laid the groundwork for the UK and Australia to achieve high-quality outcomes across the agreement.

The UK and Australia are aligned in many areas which will enable us to make quick progress across many chapters. In discussions, both countries emphasised a desire to be particularly ambitious in areas including services, digital trade and in supporting Small and Medium-sized Enterprises to benefit from the opportunities that increased trade provide.

The Government is committed to negotiating a comprehensive agreement with Australia and we look forward to making further progress. We will explore the option of face-to-face negotiations when it is safe to do so. The Government will make its next statement on progress following the second round of talks, currently planned for September.

TRANSPORT

■ HS2 Safeguarding

Minister of State for Transport (Andrew Stephenson):

[\[HCWS358\]](#)

I am today publishing additional Safeguarding Directions to protect a site in Leeds which we anticipate may be needed to build Phase 2b of the HS2 project.

The site is not currently in use. Any future planning application affecting the land that has been identified in the Safeguarding Directions and associated map would first need to be discussed with HS2 Ltd, and if necessary the Secretary of State, before being determined for as long as the Safeguarding Directions remain in place.

The owner of the site has been made aware of the Safeguarding Directions prior to their publication as has the local planning authority, Leeds City Council. By protecting the site now, the Government guards against potentially conflicting development, which could otherwise disrupt the construction of HS2, and/or increase the costs of building the new railway.

I am not publishing updated Safeguarding Directions for the remainder of the future Phase 2b route at this stage.

The final scope and phasing of HS2 Phase 2b will be determined following publication of the Government's Integrated Rail Plan, which is expected to be published by the end of the year.

The Government periodically reviews land requirements needed for the project and updates the extent of safeguarding accordingly. It is anticipated that land requirements for Phase 2b HS2 will be updated prior to the deposit of a relevant hybrid Bill.

I am placing a copy of the Safeguarding Directions in the libraries of both Houses.

Attachments:

1. Safeguarding Directions [200714 - Safeguarding directions.pdf]

TREASURY

■ Annual European Union Finances Statement

The Chief Secretary to the Treasury (Steve Barclay):

[\[HCWS366\]](#)

I am today laying before Parliament, “the European Union Finances 2019: statement on the 2019 EU Budget and measures to counter fraud and financial mismanagement” (CP 256). This is a routine annual publication and is the thirty ninth in the series.

The statement gives details of revenue and expenditure in the 2019 European Union (EU) Budget, recent developments in EU financial management and measures to counter fraud against the EU Budget. It also includes a chapter and annex on the use of EU funds in the UK over the period.

The document also provides an updated HM Treasury estimate of the value of the financial settlement, which was made legally binding by the passage of the European Union (Withdrawal Agreement) Act 2020. Exit from the EU on 31 January 2020 resulted in some UK and EU payments that would originally have been paid post-withdrawal being paid while the UK remained a Member State. HM Treasury estimate that the current value of the financial settlement is £30.2bn. This remains within the Government’s reasonable central range of £35-39bn, adjusted to take into account the UK’s 31 January 2020 exit date. In Annex E, HM Treasury provides an updated summary of the financial settlement, other costs set out in the Withdrawal Agreement and short-term public expenditure costs.

■ OBR 2020 Fiscal Sustainability Report and response to the OBR 2019 Fiscal Risks Report

The Chancellor of the Exchequer (Rishi Sunak):

[\[HCWS364\]](#)

Today’s publication of the Office for Budget Responsibility’s (OBR) *2020 Fiscal Sustainability Report* (FSR) fulfils the OBR’s legal obligation to publish an analysis of the sustainability of the public finances over the long-term and an assessment of the public sector balance sheet at least once every two years. This report has been laid before Parliament today and copies are available in the Vote Office and Printed Paper Office. The OBR also produces a biennial *Fiscal Risks Report* (FRR) to which the government is required to respond within a year. This statement provides the government’s response to *Office for Budget Responsibility - Fiscal risks report July 2019* [CP131], laid 18 July 2019[1].

The action the government has taken in response to the COVID-19 pandemic was necessary to protect public health, support household incomes, and to minimise permanent damage to the economy – thereby supporting growth, employment and the public finances over the medium to long term. As the OBR have said in the FSR: “ *The outlook would have been much worse without the measures the Government has taken. These have provided additional financial support to individuals and businesses through the lockdown. They should also help to limit any long-term economic scarring, by keeping workers attached to firms and helping otherwise viable firms stay in business*”.

OBR 2020 Fiscal Sustainability Report

The magnitude and duration of the economic shock caused by COVID-19 will have important consequences for the medium and long-term fiscal position. In all three scenarios the OBR have published in the FSR, the level of borrowing this year is significantly higher than expected in the OBR’s Spring Budget forecast. Public sector net borrowing is projected to reach between 13% and 21% of GDP in 2020-21, with differences across scenarios reflecting the size of the economic shock. This in turn means that public sector net debt is also projected to be higher compared to the Spring Budget forecast under all scenarios, although the OBR have highlighted that low borrowing costs help to make this more affordable in the near-term. The gilt market is deep and liquid with a good track record in responding smoothly to increases in gilt supply. Underlying demand for the UK’s debt remains strong, with borrowing costs at historical lows, signalling confidence in the UK’s institutions.

The government has taken significant action to support the recovery and minimise permanent damage from the pandemic. In the long-run, the OBR also expect demographic change and other cost pressures in health spending to put upward pressure on public spending while leaving revenues broadly unchanged. The government is committed to fiscal sustainability and ensuring the long-term health of the public finances. The government will set out further details on its plans to put the public finances back on a sustainable footing over the medium-term at the next Budget, alongside an updated OBR forecast. As part of this, as set out in the March Budget, HM Treasury is reviewing the UK’s fiscal framework to ensure it remains appropriate for the macroeconomic context, while ensuring the sustainability of the public finances. The FSR provides important analysis and scenarios which will be used to inform this review.

Managing fiscal risks from COVID-19

In July 2019, the OBR published their second Fiscal Risks Report covering the main risks to the public finances at that time. With COVID-19 now clearly the most significant immediate source of fiscal risk facing the UK, this response to the report focuses on how the government is managing the fiscal risks associated with the pandemic.

The work of the last ten years in bringing borrowing and debt back under control means that the UK was well-placed to respond to the immediate and long-term challenges posed by COVID-19.

The government acted quickly to implement interventions containing the initial economic shock from the pandemic. When designing these interventions, the government drew on

the experience gained from HM Treasury's Balance Sheet Review[2] and international best practice[3] to ensure that fiscal risks are managed effectively. The IMF commended the government's powerful response to the initial shock of COVID-19, finding the interventions to be large, substantial and carefully targeted[4].

In the first phase of the economic response to COVID-19, the government kept people attached to their work, protected their incomes and supported businesses, delivering one of the most generous and comprehensive packages of support globally, with a fiscal response totalling £160 billion. While the economic impacts of COVID-19 and the government's necessary response have come at a significant fiscal cost, the costs of failing to act to support public services, businesses, and workers would have been much higher.

Building on the action taken in the face of the immediate threat posed by the virus, the government is now proceeding with the second phase of its response, supporting the UK's economic recovery while continuing to prioritise people's health. The Plan for Jobs announced last week, made up to £30 billion available to help kickstart the nation's economic recovery while continuing to prioritise people's health by: introducing a new Job Retention Bonus to encourage firms to keep on furloughed workers; supporting jobs with direct help to find work and to gain the skills people need to get a job; protecting jobs in the hard-hit hospitality and accommodation sectors and at attractions by supporting demand for these businesses, giving them confidence to reopen; creating jobs with action to get the property market moving, to increase and bring forward infrastructure investment, and to make homes greener, warmer and cheaper to heat.

The third phase of the government's plan will be set out in the autumn with measures to support the longer-term recovery through a Budget and a Spending Review. These will detail further plans to invest in public services, to support innovation and growth-enhancing infrastructure with a National Infrastructure Strategy, to seize global opportunities and to level up opportunity across every region and nation of the UK.

Wider fiscal risk management

While the immediate focus of government action is on dealing with COVID-19, the management of the wider risks facing the UK public finances remains important. The government has acted to address a number of the risks that were discussed by the OBR in FRR 2019.

To address the long-term challenge of low productivity growth, Budget 2020 announced measures investing in UK infrastructure, backing tech and innovation, making tax changes to support firms to invest, and introducing measures to support a dynamic and competitive economy. The Prime Minister also announced on 30 June that we will be improving the quality, speed and efficiency of delivering infrastructure through a new Infrastructure Delivery Taskforce named Project Speed.

In the longer-term, climate change remains a significant challenge for the wider public finances. Demonstrating the government's commitment to mitigating climate change, in November 2019, the Chancellor launched an HM Treasury review into how the transition to net zero greenhouse gas emissions will be funded and where the costs will fall. Spring

Budget allocated £640 million for tree planting and peatland restoration, over £1 billion for ultra-low emission vehicles and introduced tax measures to encourage greater energy efficiency and reduce plastic waste. The UK is also increasing its International Climate Finance support for developing countries to at least £11.6 billion. To improve the UK's climate resilience, the government announced a doubling of investment in flood and coastal defences in England to £5.2 billion over the next six years. The devolved administrations will benefit from the Barnett consequential of this substantial increase in government investment in flood and coastal defences.

To manage risks associated with non-bank financial intermediation and increase the resilience of the UK financial system, in the remit for the Financial Policy Committee (FPC), HMT recommended that the FPC publishes a detailed assessment of the oversight and mitigation of systemic risks from the non-bank sector. The FPC has confirmed it will publish preliminary findings in the August Financial Stability Report, followed by a more detailed report that outlines gaps in non-bank resilience and potential measures that may be taken to increase resilience.

The OBR also highlighted fiscal risks related to tax reliefs. The government recognises the need to monitor and evaluate existing tax reliefs; the government will continue to monitor their use and act where appropriate, for example through the recent reforms to Entrepreneurs' Relief, and the planned changes to the entitlement to use Red Diesel. HMRC is committed to increasing the number of published costs of tax reliefs and in May 2020 published cost estimates for another 47 non-structural tax reliefs. HMRC will continue to build on this to increase transparency.

[1] <https://obr.uk/frr/fiscal-risks-report-july-2019/>

[2] The Balance Sheet Review (BSR) was launched in 2017 to identify opportunities to dispose of assets that no longer serve a policy purpose, improve returns on retained assets, and reduce the risk and cost of liabilities.

[3] <https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/SPROLLs/covid19-special-notes>

[4] <https://www.imf.org/en/News/Articles/2020/04/14/tr041420-transcript-of-april-2020-world-economic-outlook-press-briefing>