



## Daily Report

Monday, 16 November 2020

This report shows written answers and statements provided on 16 November 2020 and the information is correct at the time of publication (06:30 P.M., 16 November 2020). For the latest information on written questions and answers, ministerial corrections, and written statements, please visit: <http://www.parliament.uk/writtenanswers/>

## CONTENTS

|   |           |   |    |
|---|-----------|---|----|
| <b>ANSWERS</b>  | <b>6</b>  | ■ Contracts: Coronavirus                              | 14 |
| BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY                | 6         | ■ Drugs: Death  | 14 |
| ■ Bereavement Leave                                     | 6         | ■ Public Sector: Procurement                          | 14 |
| ■ Business: Coronavirus                                 | 6         | <b>DEFENCE</b>  | 15 |
| ■ Charities: Shops                                      | 7         | ■ Armed Forces: Holiday Leave                         | 15 |
| ■ Copyright   | 7         | ■ Armed Forces: Muslims                               | 15 |
| ■ Coronavirus Local Authority Discretionary Grants Fund | 8         | ■ Armed Forces: Pensions                              | 15 |
| ■ Green Homes Grant Scheme                              | 8         | ■ Army: Young People                                  | 16 |
| ■ Heating: Coronavirus                                  | 9         | ■ Cadets and Reserve Forces: Firearms                 | 16 |
| ■ Hinkley Point C Power Station                         | 9         | ■ Cobham Helicopter Academy                           | 17 |
| ■ Night-time Economy: Coronavirus                       | 10        | ■ Inappropriate Behaviours in the Armed Forces Review | 17 |
| ■ Nuclear Power   | 10        | ■ Saudi Arabia: Military Aid                          | 17 |
| ■ Photography: Coronavirus                              | 10        | ■ Saudi Arabia: Navy                                  | 17 |
| ■ Physiotherapy: Coronavirus                            | 11        | ■ Saudi Arabia: Tornado Aircraft                      | 18 |
| ■ Retail Trade: Coronavirus                             | 11        | <b>DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT</b>              | 18 |
| ■ Tidal Power   | 11        | ■ Arts: Coronavirus                                   | 18 |
| ■ UK Trade With EU                                      | 12        | ■ BBC: Pay  | 18 |
| ■ Warranties  | 12        | ■ Broadband and Mobile Phones                         | 19 |
| ■ Wind Power and Solar Power                            | 12        | ■ Conspiracy and Disinformation: Coronavirus          | 20 |
| <b>CABINET OFFICE</b>                                   | <b>13</b> | ■ Crafts and Cultural Heritage                        | 20 |
| ■ Cabinet Office: Written Questions                     | 13        | ■ Culture Recovery Fund                               | 20 |
| ■ Conditions of Employment                              | 13        | ■ Facebook: Disinformation                            | 21 |

|                               |    |                                  |    |
|-------------------------------|----|----------------------------------|----|
| ■ Gambling                    | 22 | ■ Students: Coronavirus          | 38 |
| ■ Housing: Broadband          | 23 | ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND            |    |
| ■ Local Press: Coronavirus    | 24 | RURAL AFFAIRS                    | 40 |
| ■ Loneliness                  | 25 | ■ Flowers: Import Duties         | 40 |
| ■ Mobile Phones: Rural Areas  | 25 | ■ Hunting: Coronavirus           | 40 |
| ■ Rugby: Coronavirus          | 25 | ■ Per- and Polyfluorinated Alkyl |    |
| ■ Social Media: War Crimes    | 26 | Substances: Packaging            | 41 |
| ■ Telecommunications: Council |    | ■ Rivers: West Lancashire        | 41 |
| Housing                       | 26 | FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH            |    |
| ■ Voluntary Organisations:    |    | AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE           | 42 |
| Finance                       | 27 | ■ Bangladesh: Females            | 42 |
| EDUCATION                     | 27 | ■ Christianity: Human Rights     | 43 |
| ■ Assessments: Coronavirus    | 27 | ■ Extradition                    | 43 |
| ■ British Students Abroad:    |    | ■ Human Rights: Females          | 44 |
| Coronavirus                   | 28 | ■ India: Amnesty International   | 44 |
| ■ Extracurricular Activities  | 28 | ■ India: Repatriation            | 45 |
| ■ Foster Care: Coronavirus    | 29 | ■ Kashmir: Human Rights          | 45 |
| ■ Free School Meals:          |    | ■ Maternal Mortality: Overseas   |    |
| Coronavirus                   | 30 | Aid                              | 45 |
| ■ Free School Meals: Coventry | 31 | ■ North Korea: Coronavirus       | 46 |
| ■ Home Education              | 31 | ■ Pakistan: Forced Marriage      | 47 |
| ■ Members: Correspondence     | 32 | ■ Pakistan: Religious Buildings  | 47 |
| ■ National Curriculum Tests:  |    | ■ Passenger Ships: Coronavirus   | 47 |
| Coronavirus                   | 32 | HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE           | 48 |
| ■ National School Breakfast   |    | ■ Contact Tracing: Computer      |    |
| Programme: Greater London     | 32 | Software                         | 48 |
| ■ National Tutoring Programme | 33 | ■ Coronavirus: Contact Tracing   | 51 |
| ■ Overseas Students: EU       |    | ■ Coronavirus: Hospitals         | 51 |
| Nationals                     | 34 | ■ Coronavirus: Quarantine        | 51 |
| ■ Pupil Exclusions            | 34 | ■ Coronavirus: Screening         | 52 |
| ■ Pupils: Sanitary Protection | 35 | ■ Coronavirus: Supermarkets      | 53 |
| ■ Remote Education:           |    | ■ Coronavirus: York              | 53 |
| Coronavirus                   | 35 | ■ Coronavirus: York Central      | 53 |
| ■ Remote Education: Merton    | 36 | ■ Department of Health and       |    |
| ■ Special Educational Needs   | 38 | Social Care: Serco               | 53 |

|   |    |  |    |
|---|----|--|----|
| ■ Disease Control: Newcastle upon Tyne              | 54 | ■ Fairgrounds: Non-domestic Rates                  | 65 |
| ■ Intensive Care: Hospital Beds                     | 54 | ■ Flats: Insulation                                | 65 |
| ■ Mental Health Services: Children and Young People | 55 | ■ High Rise Flats and Public Buildings: Insulation | 66 |
| ■ Mental Health Services: Finance                   | 55 | ■ Housing: Construction                            | 66 |
| ■ NHS Test and Trace: Labour Turnover               | 55 | ■ Housing: Insulation                              | 68 |
| ■ Perinatal Mortality                               | 56 | ■ Local Government: Property Searches              | 68 |
| HOME OFFICE   | 56 | ■ Local Plans                                      | 68 |
| ■ Computer Misuse Act 1990                          | 56 | ■ Parking (Code of Practice) Act 2019              | 69 |
| ■ Counter-terrorism                                 | 56 | ■ Planning Permission                              | 69 |
| ■ Hezbollah   | 57 | ■ UK Shared Prosperity Fund: Northern Ireland      | 70 |
| ■ Home Office: Artificial Intelligence              | 57 | INTERNATIONAL TRADE                                | 70 |
| ■ Immigration Controls: Migrant Workers             | 57 | ■ Data Protection: Japan                           | 70 |
| ■ Immigration: Income                               | 58 | ■ Defence and Security: EU Countries               | 71 |
| ■ Islamic State                                     | 58 | ■ Food: Trade Agreements                           | 71 |
| ■ Jonathan Taylor                                   | 59 | ■ Origin Marking: Japan                            | 72 |
| ■ Migrant Workers                                   | 59 | ■ Trade Agreements: Devolved Matters               | 72 |
| ■ Migrant Workers: Shipbuilding                     | 60 | ■ Trade Agreements: Ghana and Kenya                | 72 |
| ■ Proscribed Organisations                          | 60 | ■ Trade: Developing Countries                      | 73 |
| ■ Road Traffic Offences                             | 61 | ■ Tradeshow Access Programme                       | 73 |
| HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT           | 61 | JUSTICE  | 73 |
| ■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]                  | 61 | ■ Protection of Badgers Act: Prosecutions          | 73 |
| ■ Affordable Housing and Social Rented Housing      | 63 | LEADER OF THE HOUSE                                | 74 |
| ■ Building Safety Fund: Southampton Itchen          | 64 | ■ Members: Coronavirus                             | 74 |
| ■ Covid-19 Hardship Fund                            | 64 | NORTHERN IRELAND                                   | 75 |
| ■ Estate Agents: Fees and Charges                   | 64 | ■ Abortion: Northern Ireland                       | 75 |
|   |    | ■ Consumers: Northern Ireland                      | 76 |

|  |    |   |     |
|--|----|---|-----|
| TRANSPORT  | 76 | TREASURY  | 90  |
| ■ Bicycles: Repairs and Maintenance                                  | 76 | ■ Aviation: Coronavirus                                   | 90  |
| ■ Confederation of Passenger Transport: Bus Services                 | 77 | ■ Beer: Excise Duties                                     | 91  |
| ■ Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency: Standards                     | 77 | ■ Business: Coronavirus                                   | 92  |
| ■ Driving Tests: Coronavirus   | 77 | ■ Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme                        | 93  |
| ■ Electric Vehicles: Charging Points                                 | 78 | ■ Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme: Public Sector         | 95  |
| ■ High Speed Two Railway Line: Government Assistance                 | 79 | ■ Coronavirus: Disease Control                            | 95  |
| ■ High Speed Two Railway Line: Manchester Gorton                     | 80 | ■ Directors: Coronavirus                                  | 96  |
| ■ Large Goods Vehicles: Kent   | 80 | ■ Employment: Coronavirus                                 | 96  |
| ■ Members: Correspondence  | 81 | ■ Exports: VAT  | 97  |
| ■ Public Transport: Dementia   | 81 | ■ Government Securities: Index Linking                    | 98  |
| ■ Railway Stations: Repairs and Maintenance                          | 81 | ■ Housing: Low Incomes                                    | 99  |
| ■ Railways: Bridges  | 82 | ■ Infrastructure and Public Expenditure: Carbon Emissions | 99  |
| ■ School Streets Initiative  | 84 | ■ Infrastructure and Transport: North of England          | 100 |
| ■ Shipping: Carbon Emissions   | 84 | ■ Infrastructure: Carbon Emissions                        | 100 |
| ■ Southern: Annual Reports   | 86 | ■ Infrastructure: Recycling                               | 101 |
| ■ Southern: Finance  | 86 | ■ Insurance: Older People                                 | 101 |
| ■ Southern: Public Appointments                                      | 87 | ■ Kickstart Scheme  | 101 |
| ■ Train Operating Companies: Coronavirus                             | 87 | ■ Money: Coronavirus                                      | 102 |
| ■ Trains: Innovation   | 87 | ■ Mortgages   | 102 |
| ■ Transport for Greater Manchester and Transport for London: Finance | 88 | ■ Northern Rock   | 103 |
| ■ Transport: Carbon Emissions  | 88 | ■ Pension Funds: Government Securities                    | 103 |
| ■ Transport: Infrastructure  | 89 | ■ Public Service Broadcasting: Self-employed              | 105 |
| ■ Transport: Technology  | 89 | ■ Revenue and Customs: Telephone Services                 | 106 |
| ■ Travel: Coronavirus  | 90 | ■ Sanitary Protection: VAT                                | 106 |
|  |    | ■ Self-employed: Coronavirus                              | 106 |

|  |     |   |            |
|--|-----|---|------------|
| ■ Self-employment Income Support Scheme                | 107 | ■ Pension Credit: Erith and Thamesmead                | 117        |
| ■ Self-employment Income Support Scheme: Fraud         | 108 | ■ Personal Independence Payment: Appeals              | 117        |
| ■ Stamp Duty Land Tax: Coronavirus                     | 108 | ■ Personal Independence Payment: Medical Examinations | 117        |
| ■ Taxation: Self-assessment                            | 109 | ■ Social Security Benefits: Coronavirus               | 118        |
| ■ Travel: Coronavirus                                  | 109 | ■ Social Security Benefits: Disqualification          | 118        |
| ■ Treasury: Press Releases                             | 110 | ■ Unemployment: Young People                          | 118        |
| ■ Wholesale Trade: Coronavirus                         | 110 | ■ Universal Credit: Self-employed                     | 119        |
| WOMEN AND EQUALITIES                                   | 112 | <b>MINISTERIAL CORRECTIONS</b>                        | <b>120</b> |
| ■ Disability: Discrimination                           | 112 | TRANSPORT   | 120        |
| ■ Equal Pay  | 112 | ■ Taxis: Coronavirus                                  | 120        |
| WORK AND PENSIONS                                      | 113 | <b>WRITTEN STATEMENTS</b>                             | <b>121</b> |
| ■ Coronavirus: Disease Control                         | 113 | EDUCATION   | 121        |
| ■ Department for Work and Pensions: Telephone Services | 113 | ■ Higher Education Update                             | 121        |
| ■ Disability: Pay                                      | 114 | FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE          | 122        |
| ■ Employment: Chronic Illnesses                        | 114 | ■ Falkland Islands Demining                           | 122        |
| ■ Employment: Training                                 | 115 | TREASURY  | 122        |
| ■ Kickstart Scheme: Ethnic Groups                      | 116 | ■ Treasury announcement on levelling up the economy   | 122        |
| ■ Members: Correspondence                              | 116 |   |            |
| ■ Pension Credit                                       | 116 |   |            |

**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

#### ■ Bereavement Leave

**Dr Philippa Whitford:**

**[114220]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment his Department has made of the health benefits of bereavement leave.

**Paul Scully:**

The Government recognises that the death of a family member is deeply upsetting for those involved. The death of a child is particularly tragic, and this is why the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy we introduced Parental Bereavement Leave and Pay in April this year.

All employees have right to take a reasonable amount of time off work for an emergency involving a dependant, including in the case of bereavements. The entitlement could, for example, be used to make funeral and other arrangements.

We expect employers to respond with compassion and understanding in the case of all bereavements and we have given them the tools that they need to do this. In 2014 Acas published their guidance on Managing a Bereavement in the Workplace: A Good Practice Guide. This is available on the ACAS website- [www.acas.org.uk](http://www.acas.org.uk).

#### ■ Business: Coronavirus

**James Wild:**

**[114341]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will increase the maximum permitted state aid limit of support that a business can receive under the Covid-19 Temporary Framework for UK Authorities.

**Paul Scully:**

Under the Covid-19 Temporary Framework for UK Authorities aid of up to €800,000 can be awarded to businesses affected by the coronavirus outbreak.

On 20 October, UK authorities submitted a notification to the European Commission to take advantage of a new measure under the European Commission's Temporary Framework. This new measure would enable greater support to companies facing a decline in turnover during the eligible period of at least 30% compared to the same period of 2019, due to the pandemic. The support will contribute to a part of the beneficiaries' fixed costs that are not covered by their revenues, up to maximum amount of €3 million per business.

The European Commission is currently considering the notification and will provide a response in due course.

## ■ Charities: Shops

**Lucy Powell:**

[\[113559\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether charity shops are classed as essential retailers and are able to open during the second covid-19 lockdown.

**Paul Scully:**

Government has published details of guidance which sets out the restrictions that certain businesses and venues in England will be required to follow from 5 November, so that businesses can assess whether they can remain open having considered the guidance and Regulations.

All shops can continue to offer home delivery and click and collect services to customers during the national restrictions in place from 5 November.

## ■ Copyright

**Jamie Stone:**

[\[113621\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether his Department is being consulted as part of the Intellectual Property Office's consultation into the UK's future copyright exhaustion regime.

**Amanda Solloway:**

The Intellectual Property Office is an executive agency of the Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy and is working closely with its parent department and other government departments with an interest in this area, to ensure they can feed into the process to develop the UK's future exhaustion regime.

**Jamie Stone:**

[\[113622\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether he has made representations to the Intellectual Property Office on the importance of a national copyright exhaustion regime to UK (a) authors and (b) publishers.

**Amanda Solloway:**

The Government is currently considering the UK's future exhaustion of intellectual property rights regime. The Government will be consulting on this matter in early 2021 and encourages authors and publishers to feed into this process.

**Jamie Stone:**

[\[113623\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment his Department has made of the potential effect of an international copyright exhaustion framework on the ability of UK rightsholders to enforce those rights.

**Amanda Solloway:**

The Government is currently considering the UK's future exhaustion of intellectual property rights regime. The Government will be consulting on the potential impact of different exhaustion of rights regimes in early 2021 and how they may affect IP rights holders.

**Jamie Stone:**

**[113624]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the potential role of a national copyright exhaustion framework in underpinning the UK's (a) publishing industry and (b) other creative exports.

**Amanda Solloway:**

The Government is currently considering the UK's future exhaustion of intellectual property rights regime. The Government is also considering the role of different exhaustion regimes and the potential impact on different sectors such as the UK's publishing industry.

## ■ **Coronavirus Local Authority Discretionary Grants Fund**

**Nickie Aiken:**

**[113639]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment his Department has made of the effect of distributing the November 2020 local authority discretionary grant on the basis of per head of population (a) in urban centres where the ratio of businesses to residents is significantly higher than other areas and (b) more widely.

**Nadhim Zahawi:**

The Additional Restrictions Grant is allocated at £20 per head of residential population in line with wider support to areas, subject to Local Covid Alert Level 'Very High' restrictions, including Contain Outbreak Management Funds.

Overall, there is a strong positive correlation between business count and population. As a result, we see a fairly equal distribution of Additional Restrictions Grant value per business under the proposed allocation method.

The Additional Restrictions Grant is one of several grant funds being made available to local authorities to support businesses that are either being asked to close or have had their trade affected as restrictions are put in place to tackle Covid-19 and save lives. All businesses required to close will receive grants of up to £3,000 per four-week period.

## ■ **Green Homes Grant Scheme**

**Darren Jones:**

**[R] [91915]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what guidance his Department is providing to suppliers wishing to undertake work under the Green Homes Grant but who require bridging finance between undertaking that work and receiving funding allocated under that grant scheme.

**Kwasi Kwarteng:**

In-line with normal industry practice an installer can request a deposit from the customer prior to carrying out work. The deposit cannot be more than the expected customer contribution to the cost of measures under the quote provided and the installer may not charge any more than they would usually charge for a measure.



For those on the low income scheme an installer may only request a deposit where the total cost of the work exceeds the £10,000 grant. In this case, only the amount in excess will be eligible for a deposit.

Installers will be paid for the costs covered by the voucher once the work has been completed and they have confirmed receipt of any customer contribution. Most installers will get the grant payment within 5 working days.

## ■ Heating: Coronavirus

**Helen Hayes:**

**[113604]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what discussions he (a) has had and (b) plans to have with representatives of energy suppliers on support for customers for the increased costs of heating homes during Winter 2020-21 as a result of the new national covid-19 lockdown restrictions in operation from 5 November 2020.

**Kwasi Kwarteng:**

Ministers and officials regularly engage with energy companies on a range of issues relating to the impact of Covid-19 on energy businesses and their customers.

The Department secured an agreement with energy companies on 19th March 2020 to support their customers impacted by Covid-19, that, based on the circumstances could include reassessing, reducing or pausing debt repayments for households in financial distress. Government has also provided unprecedented support to protect jobs and incomes, including an extension to the furlough scheme, through to the end of March, support for the self-employed and an uplift in Universal Credit.

The Department is assessing the level and impact of Covid-19 on households this winter and we will continue to review options to support energy customers.

## ■ Hinkley Point C Power Station

**Sarah Owen:**

**[R] [114334]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is he taking to ensure that safe construction methods are followed at Hinkley Point C during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Nadhim Zahawi:**

Throughout the pandemic, inspectors from the Office for Nuclear Regulation (ONR) have continued to travel to the Hinkley Point C site to conduct urgent and essential regulatory inspections. These are to ensure that both the normal stringent health and safety requirements, and the COVID-19 social distancing measures, are being properly followed.

The ONR's Chief Inspector has assured the Department that he is satisfied that EDF's measures at the site are robust and comprehensive, and that they are being implemented and enforced appropriately.

## ■ Night-time Economy: Coronavirus

**Alyn Smith:**

[113637]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether his Department consulted representatives from the night time economy sector on the effect of covid-19 restrictions on that sector; and if he will make a statement.

**Paul Scully:**

The Government recognises the impact COVID-19 has had on night time economy businesses. Both BEIS and the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) have worked closely with the sector throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

We have introduced an extensive package of support accessible to night time economy business, including the furlough scheme, which has been extended until March 2021, Local Restrictions Support Grants of up to £3000 per month, as well as loans, business rates relief and imposing a moratorium on the forfeiture of a lease for non-payment of rent until 31 December in England and Wales. In addition, so far over £500m of direct grants from the £1.57bn Cultural Relief Fund have helped 3000 cultural organisations, including nightclubs such as Ministry of Sound, Fabric and MADE Festival.

## ■ Nuclear Power

**Sarah Owen:**

[R] [114333]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent assessment he has made of the contribution of the civil nuclear power sector to the UK's economy.

**Nadhim Zahawi:**

The Nuclear Sector Deal, jointly authored by the Government and industry and published in June 2018, indicated that the nuclear sector contributes on average £12.4 billion to the UK economy each year, with each UK civil nuclear worker adding an average £96,600 in Gross Value Added (GVA).

## ■ Photography: Coronavirus

**Karen Bradley:**

[114153]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether photography businesses specialising in pets can continue to operate during the November 2020 covid-19 lockdown provided that the business is conducted outdoors, with only the pet owner and the photographer present and ensuring social distancing is observed.

**Paul Scully:**

England's new national restrictions closures guidance from Cabinet Office can be found [here](#). This states 'photography studios' must close. However, it also states that businesses that provide services (rather than goods) are not required to close, unless listed in section 2 of the guide.

The Cabinet Office's guidance states that Government cannot provide comments on individual cases of whether or not a business is permitted to open. It is for each business to assess whether they are a business required to close having considered the guidance and regulations.

#### ■ **Physiotherapy: Coronavirus**

**Hywel Williams:**

**[114078]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, for what reasons sports therapists' premises in England are required to close during the second national covid-19 lockdown while physiotherapists', chiropractors', osteopaths', sports rehabilitators' and podiatrists' premises are permitted to stay open during that lockdown.

**Paul Scully:**

Massage therapists qualified to levels 1-3 are considered personal care service providers which are required to close under the [national restrictions](#) for England, but they can continue to sell retail goods online or via click-and-collect.

Massage therapists qualified to level 4-6 are classified as clinical practitioners. Further information regarding them can be sought from the Department for Health and Social Care.

#### ■ **Retail Trade: Coronavirus**

**Charlotte Nichols:**

**[91933]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if businesses permitted to remain open can sell goods provided by businesses that are required to cease trading by the November 2020 covid-19 restrictions.

**Paul Scully:**

In England, COVID-secure businesses can continue to sell goods – such as a hairdressing salon selling shampoo or beauty products – online or via click-and-collect. If a business is able to trade goods in a COVID-secure manner while following the [new national restrictions](#) and all of the other trade requirements behind selling another good, they can.

#### ■ **Tidal Power**

**Alan Brown:**

**[113594]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what estimate his Department has made of the number of developers of tidal stream technologies operating in the UK.

**Kwasi Kwarteng:**

Recent reports commissioned by the industry suggest that there are 22 active tidal stream developers in the UK.

## ■ UK Trade With EU

**Dan Jarvis:**

[\[113551\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he has taken to ensure that supply chains for perishable goods are maintained in the event that the UK and EU do not agree a deal on their future relationship by the end of the transition period.

**Paul Scully:**

The Department is not responsible for all supply chains of all perishable goods.

The Department of Health and Social Care, in consultation with the Devolved Administrations and Crown Dependencies, is working with trade bodies, product suppliers, and the health and care system to make detailed plans to help ensure continued supply of medicines and medical products to the whole of the UK, including Northern Ireland, at the end of the transition period.

## ■ Warranties

**Karen Bradley:**

[\[114154\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he has taken to ensure that warranties on the products of companies that become insolvent and then reopen are honoured.

**Paul Scully:**

Extended warranties form a binding contract between the party offering the extended warranty and the consumer. Under UK law, guarantees and warranties are not required to be given, but are benefits in addition to consumers' rights under the Consumer Rights Act 2015. Where the business of an insolvent company is sold, the purchasing entity is under no statutory requirement to honour a warranty provided by the insolvent company. Imposing such an obligation could impact on the prospects for the sale of viable parts of a business, reducing the returns to creditors, as well as harming the chances of saving jobs through a successful business sale.

## ■ Wind Power and Solar Power

**Wera Hobhouse:**

[\[91912\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether the Government has set a target for the amount of (a) solar PV, (b) onshore wind, and (c) offshore wind deployed by 2030.

**Kwasi Kwarteng:**

Renewable technologies will make a critical contribution to meeting our 2050 net zero commitment, alongside firm low carbon power such as nuclear and gas or biomass generation with carbon capture, usage and storage, and a significant increase in flexibility. The role of government is to enable the market to deliver the levels of deployment required whilst minimising both emissions and systems costs.

We recognise that achieving our 2050 net zero target will require increased deployment across a range of renewable technologies, including sustained growth of both onshore wind and solar by 2030. This is why we announced on 2 March 2020 that onshore wind and large-scale solar PV projects will be able to compete in the next Contracts for Difference (CfD) allocation round. The round will open in late 2021 and aim to deliver up to double the renewable capacity of last year's successful round, potentially providing enough clean energy for up to 10 million homes.

By 2030 we aim to build a world leading offshore wind industry. We have set a target to deliver 40GW of capacity by 2030, which represents an increase of 10GW against our previous ambition. This increase, including a new target of 1GW of floating offshore wind by 2030, will galvanise industry, open up new possibilities in areas of deeper water around our coastline, and demonstrates that the UK will be at the forefront of the green industrial revolution as we accelerate our progress towards net zero.

## CABINET OFFICE

### ■ Cabinet Office: Written Questions

**Rachel Hopkins:**

[\[112151\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, when he plans to answer the named day Question tabled by the hon. Member for Luton South on 13 October 2020 on contractor relief.

**Julia Lopez:**

I refer the hon. Member to my [answer](#) to PQ 102966. May I apologise for the delay in responding to the question.

### ■ Conditions of Employment

**Damian Hinds:**

[\[91870\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what assessment he has made of long term trends in the level of zero-hours contracts, casual labour, piece work, commission-only sales and other types of non-guaranteed-hours employment as (a) people's sole or primary and (b) additional employment.

**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 response PQ91870 [PQ91870.pdf]

**■ Contracts: Coronavirus****Beth Winter:**[\[114344\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what assessment he has made of (a) value for money and (b) supplier performance for each Government contract issued in response to the covid-19 outbreak.

**Julia Lopez:**

The private sector has played a vital role in the government's response to the covid-19 outbreak. Being able to procure at speed has been critical in providing the government's response, however we have been clear that all contracts, including those designed to tackle coronavirus issues, must continue to offer quality public services and achieve value for money for taxpayers.

**■ Drugs: Death****Grahame Morris:**[\[114142\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what proportion of drug-related deaths registered in 2019 involved combinations of cocaine with (a) opiates, (b) fentanyl and (c) other synthetic opiates.

**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 response PQ114142 [PQ114142.pdf]

**■ Public Sector: Procurement****Rachel Hopkins:**[\[102966\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether contractor relief identical to that set out in Procurement Policy Notice PPN 02/20 will be given from 31 October as a result of the ongoing COVID-19 outbreak; and if he will make a statement.

**Julia Lopez:**

I apologise for the delay in replying to this question. PPN 02/20 was critical in ensuring departments provided contractual relief to suppliers to maintain delivery of critical public services. This was replaced by PPN 04/20, published in June, which set out how contracting authorities should put in place transition plans with their suppliers to ensure contracts are flexible enough to deal with potential future lockdowns. Departments remain able to provide contractual relief and can seek approval from HM Treasury for spend where there is a strategic business need.

**DEFENCE****■ Armed Forces: Holiday Leave****Paula Barker:**[\[113681\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the compliance of his Department's rules on annual leave carry-over with the Working Time (Coronavirus) (Amendment) Regulations 2020; and if he will make a statement.

**Johnny Mercer:**

The Ministry of Defence amended its policy for civilian employees' annual leave carry-over to comply with the change to the Working Time (Coronavirus) (Amendment) Regulations 2020. This was done immediately and in line with Cabinet Office guidance. This means that none of our key workers should lose their statutory leave entitlement of 20 days (if they work full time) excluding public holidays because the necessary carry-over provision is in place. We collect and analyse metrics on annual leave and discuss our findings with the departmental Trade Unions.

**■ Armed Forces: Muslims****Fleur Anderson:**[\[113661\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many British-born Muslims who joined the armed forces from (a) 2016 to (b) 2019 completed the minimum length of service before exiting the armed services.

**James Heappey:**

In the period 1 January 2016 to 31 December 2019, an estimated 85 personnel joined the untrained Regular Armed Forces and self-identified as British-born Muslims; personnel are not mandated to provide their religious identity. As at 1 April 2020, an estimated 35 of these personnel had not joined the full-time trained strength, either because they had left their Service prior to 31 March 2020 or because they were still in training. There is no standard minimum length of service across the Armed Forces.

**Fleur Anderson:**[\[113662\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many formal complaints were received from British-born Muslim armed forces personnel in service from (a) 2016 to (b) 2019.

**Johnny Mercer:**

In the period 1 January 2016 to 31 December 2019 the number of admissible Service Complaints made by British-born Muslim Armed Forces personnel was 10 (rounded). This figure is based on single Service estimates.

**■ Armed Forces: Pensions****Mr Richard Holden:**[\[113666\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, further to the Answer of 23 October 2020 to Question 104201, what the contribution rates are for (a) employers, (b) employees in

service personnel pensions and for what reason neither rate is shown on the pay slips of service personnel.

**Johnny Mercer:**

The Armed Forces' Pension Schemes (AFPS) are non-contributory. Occupational pensions are neither a source of pay nor a source of income until the point at which the pension becomes payable, which is why the rate is not shown on pay slips. We send annual Pension Benefit Information Statements to our personnel, but we recognise there is scope to improve how we communicate the benefits of the AFPS, including through the planned creation of a digital portal for members to access pension benefit information.

■ **Army: Young People**

**Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck:**

[\[114199\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 4 Nov 2020 to Question 109376 on Army: Young People, what the outcomes were of the 60 cases of violent behaviour by staff.

**Johnny Mercer:**

It will take some time to gather the information required to answer the hon. Member's question and I will write to her shortly.

■ **Cadets and Reserve Forces: Firearms**

**Mark Pritchard:**

[\[113525\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will improve security at (a) Army Reserve centres and (b) cadet organisations that house weapons for small arms training or drill practice.

**James Heappey:**

Physical security is being improved at Reserve Forces and Cadets Association (RFCA) locations by the Army through the delivery of Project Aintree; a rolling programme of upgrades to armouries and ammunition stores to ensure they are compliant with Home Office legislation and the MOD's security policy.

The Army's security assurance regime includes all RFCA units, and all staff receive mandated security training in respect to weapons and ammunition. As part of the continuous improvement process, the Army is developing a security education video which is focused on improving the security culture of Cadet adult volunteers.

In 2019, following a review of Cadet weapon security, the MOD's Directorate of Security & Resilience directed the Army relocate its holdings of Cadet s1 and s5 weapons<sup>[1]</sup> to reduce its risk exposure whilst physical security upgrades continue to be implemented.

[1] As defined in the Firearms Act 1968



## ■ Cobham Helicopter Academy

**Lloyd Russell-Moyle:**

[\[114285\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether Cobham Helicopter Academy is required to inform the Ministry of Defence about the nationalities of foreign military personnel that it trains at a site adjacent to RAF St Mawgan in Newquay.

**James Heappey:**

Cobham Helicopter Academy is not required to share this information routinely. The Ministry of Defence has no involvement in the way the Cobham Helicopter Academy operates and the training it provides.

## ■ Inappropriate Behaviours in the Armed Forces Review

**Mrs Sharon Hodgson:**

[\[114088\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 16 September 2020 to Question 88829 on Inappropriate Behaviours in the Armed Forces Review, (a) if the follow-up report to the Wigston Review was submitted to the Secretary of State by 15 October 2020 and (b) if he will publish that report in the public domain.

**Johnny Mercer:**

Danuta Gray's review into progress implementing the recommendations of the Wigston Review was submitted to the Secretary of State for Defence in October 2020. The Secretary of State has committed to publishing the report in the public domain.

## ■ Saudi Arabia: Military Aid

**Lloyd Russell-Moyle:**

[\[114286\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, have any British personnel accompanied the deployment of Giraffe radars to Riyadh since February 2020 to assist Saudi Arabia to track and identify objects in its airspace.

**James Heappey:**

UK Defence personnel have accompanied the deployment of Giraffe radars to Riyadh. This deployment is purely defensive in nature and helps Saudi Arabia with the very real threats it faces.

## ■ Saudi Arabia: Navy

**Lloyd Russell-Moyle:**

[\[114288\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, are Royal Navy personnel on loan to the Royal Saudi Naval Forces (RSNF) permitted to sail on RSNF vessels off Yemen.

**James Heappey:**

All Royal Navy personnel currently on loan to the Royal Saudi Naval Forces (RSNF) are in land-based roles and are not permitted to board RSNF vessels.

**■ Saudi Arabia: Tornado Aircraft****Lloyd Russell-Moyle:**[\[114287\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many Royal Saudi Air Force Tornado pilots were taught to fly the Tornado by the RAF in (a) the UK and (b) Saudi Arabia.

**James Heappey:**

It is over 20 years since Tornado conversion training was delivered by the RAF to Saudi pilots in the UK. Information on the number of Saudi pilots trained during this period is no longer held.

The RAF has not delivered such training in Saudi Arabia.

**DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT****■ Arts: Coronavirus****Sarah Olney:**[\[113190\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that the Government's emergency funding package for people working in arts and culture is delivered as soon as possible.

**Caroline Dinenage:**

Each Arms Length Body, Arts Council England, Historic England, National Lottery Heritage Fund, and the British Film Institute, is responsible for delivering the Fund and were chosen due to their long established grant delivery role, and their expertise and understanding of the sectors in which they operate. This has enabled funding to be delivered at pace whilst still ensuring robust due diligence is conducted through the applications and distribution process.

In total, over £500m of the Culture Recovery Fund has been allocated. This is across capital and recovery grants and is in addition to £188m allocated to the devolved administrations as part of the Barnett formula, and £100m for the national cultural institutions and English Heritage Trust.

**■ BBC: Pay****Jim Shannon:**[\[111518\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what discussions he has had with the BBC Trust on (a) a pay freeze for BBC top tier earners and (b) steps taken by the BBC to tackle the gender pay gap.

**Mr John Whittingdale:**

The BBC is operationally and editorially independent from the government, and the amount it pays its top management and talent is a matter for the BBC.

The BBC Trust was abolished and replaced by the BBC Board at the start of the current Charter.

The government believes that publicly-funded bodies should apply the highest standards, ensure pay restraint and value for money, and be as open and transparent as possible. That is reflected in the requirement for the BBC to publish salary details of all BBC staff paid over £150,000, which we introduced from the beginning of this Charter.

The government welcomes the new Director General's commitment to a 'leaner organisation', and is pleased to see that the BBC has reduced its gender pay gap this year, so that it is now significantly lower than the national average. The government is committed to eliminating the gender pay gap and I am proud that the UK is one of the first countries in the world to introduce mandatory gender pay gap reporting.

We note the recent recommendations of the EHRC and encourage the BBC to take action to quickly resolve any outstanding issues regarding equal pay. As a public service broadcaster funded by the licence fee, the BBC has a responsibility to set an example for others and lead the way in promoting equality in the workplace.

## ■ Broadband and Mobile Phones

**Helen Hayes:**

[\[114266\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what estimate he has made of the number of (a) elderly people and (b) people who are clinically extremely vulnerable to covid-19 who do not have access to (i) a smart phone and (ii) secure broadband; and what steps he is taking to reduce levels of digital exclusion among those groups.

**Caroline Dinenage:**

Estimates based on Ofcom data suggest that between 4,920,000 - 5,780,000 people aged 70+ do not personally use a smartphone. Between 2,390,000 - 3,220,000 people aged 70+ do not have household access to connected devices. We do not have robust data on the digital access of people who are clinically extremely vulnerable to covid-19 and we are seeking to improve our understanding of this issue.

In March, the government agreed a set of voluntary commitments with telecommunications providers to support and protect vulnerable consumers and those who might become vulnerable as a result of Covid-19. This included a commitment to work with customers who are finding it difficult to pay their bills to ensure that they are treated fairly and appropriately supported. The Government also brokered a deal with providers which have allowed half a million NHS staff to benefit from better connectivity, and also ensured that a number of websites, including the NHS website, are zero-rated.

The introduction of the digital entitlement means that from August 2020, adults with no or low digital skills can undertake new digital skills qualifications up to Level 1 free of charge. The Government also supports the Future Digital Inclusion programme focussing on those hardest to reach. Since 2014, the programme has helped over 1.4 million people to gain the digital skills they need for life and work.

## ■ Conspiracy and Disinformation: Coronavirus

**Conor McGinn:**

[\[113586\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment he has made of trends in the level of activity of hostile states in relation to spreading disinformation and conspiracy theories on covid-19.

**Caroline Dinenage:**

The Government takes the issue of disinformation very seriously. During the Covid-19 pandemic, it continues to be vitally important that the public has accurate information about the virus, and DCMS is leading work across Government to tackle disinformation.

That is why we stood up the Counter Disinformation Unit up on 5 March to bring together cross-Government monitoring and analysis capabilities. The Unit's primary function is to provide a comprehensive picture of the extent, scope and impact of disinformation and misinformation regarding Covid-19 and to work with partners to ensure appropriate action is taken.

Whilst disinformation can come from a range of sources, we know that certain states routinely use disinformation as a foreign policy tool. The UK, along with our G7 and Nato partners, is working hard to protect our democracies against disinformation as we work together to tackle the shared threat of Covid-19

We continue to monitor for any disinformation campaigns and any related conspiracy theories so that we can respond to them quickly and effectively. We are focused on addressing disinformation by any actor, whether state or non-state.

## ■ Crafts and Cultural Heritage

**Sir John Hayes:**

[\[111427\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps his Department is taking to support the heritage and craft sector.

**Nigel Huddleston:**

The Cultural Recovery Fund of £1.57bn is awarding lifeline grants that will preserve culturally significant sites and organisations. It will help ensure access to arts, culture and heritage in local communities are protected in the months ahead. In collaboration with the newly extended Furlough Scheme and the Self Employment Income Support Scheme, it will help protect jobs within the heritage and creative industries.

## ■ Culture Recovery Fund

**Liam Byrne:**

[\[113499\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, how much funding has been awarded under the Culture Recovery Fund, by region.

**Caroline Dineneage:**

While over £500m from the Culture Recovery Fund has been allocated, some capital elements are still being allocated, and many applications are still being processed.

However, across heritage and arts recovery grant awards made to date (11 Nov), the regional breakdown is as follows:

| REGION                   | NO. OF AWARDS | TOTAL AWARDED |
|--------------------------|---------------|---------------|
| North East               | 103           | £22,454,843   |
| North West               | 327           | £62,663,311   |
| Yorkshire and The Humber | 224           | £43,099,069   |
| East Midlands            | 187           | £29,701,256   |
| West Midlands            | 220           | £45,502,109   |
| East of England          | 206           | £34,531,071   |
| London                   | 752           | £155,917,286  |
| South East               | 345           | £62,615,121   |
| South West               | 296           | £50,529,933   |
| Out of England*          | 4             | £254,850      |
| Grand Total              | 2664          | £507,268,849  |

\*based on applicant postcode

■ **Facebook: Disinformation**

**Jo Stevens:**

[\[113575\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, how many pieces of disinformation the Counter Disinformation Unit has reported to Facebook since 1 March 2020; and how many of those disinformation posts have subsequently been removed by Facebook.

**Jo Stevens:**

[\[113576\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, how many pieces of disinformation the Counter Disinformation Unit has reported to Twitter since 1 March 2020; and how many of those disinformation posts have subsequently been removed by Twitter.

**Jo Stevens:**

[\[113577\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, how many pieces of disinformation the Counter Disinformation Unit has reported to TikTok since 1 March

2020; and how many of those disinformation posts have subsequently been removed by TikTok.

**Jo Stevens:** [\[113578\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, how many pieces of disinformation the Counter Disinformation Unit has reported to WhatsApp since 1 March 2020; and how many of those disinformation posts have subsequently been removed by WhatsApp.

**Jo Stevens:** [\[113579\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, how many pieces of disinformation the Counter Disinformation Unit has reported to SnapChat since 1 March 2020; and how many of those disinformation posts have subsequently been removed by SnapChat.

**Caroline Dinenage:**

The Government takes the issue of disinformation very seriously. During the Covid-19 pandemic, it has been vitally important that the public has accurate information and DCMS is leading work across Government to tackle disinformation.

The Counter Disinformation Unit brings together cross-Government monitoring and analysis capabilities. The Unit's primary function is to provide a comprehensive picture of the extent, scope and impact of disinformation and misinformation regarding Covid-19 and to work with partners to ensure appropriate action is taken. It would not be appropriate for the Unit to provide a running commentary on the amount of misinformation/disinformation seen to date.

Throughout the pandemic, we have been working closely with social media platforms to quickly identify and help them respond to potentially harmful content on their platforms, including removing harmful content in line with their terms and conditions, and promoting authoritative sources of information.

## ■ Gambling

**Dr Rupa Huq:** [\[113608\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what recent steps he has taken to tackle problem gambling.

**Nigel Huddleston:**

All gambling operators offering services in Britain are subject to strict regulation and must abide by rigorous requirements for the protection of children and vulnerable people. In the last year, the government and the Gambling Commission have acted to strengthen these protections further, including a ban on credit card gambling, making participation in the self-exclusion scheme GAMSTOP mandatory for online operators, and issuing new guidance for operators to address the potential for some customers to be at heightened risk during the Covid period. In addition, the Gambling Commission introduced tighter controls on VIP schemes which came into force at the end of October, and has recently launched a consultation on measures to ensure

operators have robust procedures in place to identify and intervene with those who may be at risk of gambling harm.

According to the 2016 combined Health Survey, the 2017 Health Survey for Scotland and the 2018 Health Survey for England, the problem gambling rate among adults has remained stable at around 0.6-0.8%. The NHS Long Term Plan made a commitment to expand the geographical coverage of NHS services for people with serious gambling problems through the opening of an additional 14 serious problem gambling clinics by 2023/24. In July 2019, government secured a commitment from five large operators for a tenfold increase in their contributions to the research, prevention and treatment of problem gambling over four years, rising from 0.1% to 1% of gross gambling yield. This includes a commitment to spend £100m on treatment over this period. The Department for Health and Social Care continues to work with the NHS and GambleAware to support the expansion and alignment of existing treatment services.

The government has committed to reviewing the Gambling Act 2005 to make sure it is fit for the digital age. Further details will be announced in due course.

## ■ Housing: Broadband

**Damian Green:**

[\[112972\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps he has taken to ensure a reasonable cost of wayleaves for installing full fibre in new and existing housing developments.

**Matt Warman:**

My department has introduced a suite of measures to deploy nationwide gigabit broadband as cheaply and as quickly as possible.

The Telecommunications Infrastructure (Leasehold Property) Bill once enacted will make it easier for network operators to install gigabit broadband in multi-dwelling buildings such as blocks of flats). Third Reading in the House of Lords is expected to take place shortly.

The Bill creates a faster, cheaper application process in the First-tier Tribunal that operators may use in situations where (i) a leaseholder has requested a connection to be installed, (ii) repeated requests for access have failed to illicit a response from the landowner and (iii) the operator requires access to common parts of the building (such as hallways, basements and stairwells) in order to connect the consumer.

It is expected that the Bill will bring costs of applying to the courts for access for the operator down to below £500 and shorten the process to around 6 weeks.

The Electronic Communication Code is the legal framework underpinning rights to install and maintain digital communications infrastructure on public and private land by operators.

Government has always been clear that good working relationships between Code operators and site providers are a key factor in the Electronic Communications Code



operating effectively. The Code is premised on the concept that reasonable attempts will be made to negotiate mutually acceptable agreements in the first instance, and that cases will only be referred to the courts where this proves impossible.

We are also bringing forward legislation to deliver gigabit broadband to the majority of new homes at minimal costs to developers.

Government is seeking to amend Building Regulations to require housing developers to provide gigabit broadband unless the costs to the developer exceeds £2000.

To support developers and to ensure as many new homes as possible receive gigabit broadband the Secretary of State has received commitments from the CEOs of Openreach, Virgin and Gigaclear to contribute to the costs of connecting new homes.

These commitments ensure that, taken with the amended Building Regulations, gigabit broadband will be deployed to 99% of new build premises.

#### ■ Local Press: Coronavirus

**Stephanie Peacock:**

[\[113620\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what recent discussions he has had with representatives of local and regional news outlets on matters affecting those outlets as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

**Mr John Whittingdale:**

The Government is clear that local and regional newspapers play an invaluable role in the fabric of our society, and it has been an absolute priority to ensure we do all we can to support news publishers at this time of financial instability. With this in mind, we continue to focus both on alleviating the existential threat posed by the pandemic and simultaneously progressing commitments made in our response to the Cairncross Review.

Since the beginning of the pandemic, we have held regular roundtable discussions and bi-lateral meetings with stakeholders from across the industry to better understand their developing needs and concerns, and to inform the support measures we have put in place. To date, these include designating journalists as 'key workers'; issuing guidance to local authorities on the importance of newspaper delivery; ensuring the use of 'keyword blocklisting' technology is not disproportionately limiting news publishers' online advertising revenues for Covid-19 related stories by ad-blocking coronavirus-related terms; implementing a significant public information campaign across the local and national press to ensure that authoritative, up-to-date information about the Government's response to Covid-19 is distributed through reliable channels; and fast-tracking the commencement of zero-rating of VAT on e-newspapers.



## ■ Loneliness

**Nadia Whittome:**

[\[114349\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of funding for charities and community projects which tackle loneliness.

**Mr John Whittingdale:**

In April, Government launched a £750 million charity funding package. This spearheaded a major effort to tackle loneliness, with over £23 million allocated to this activity. Activity includes a £5 million grant fund to support national organisations working to tackle loneliness and build social connections to help them continue and adapt their critical work. This has given grants of between £500,000 and £810,000 to 9 organisations. In addition, a further £44 million of the £750 million package was given to organisations supporting people with their mental health.

Government has also announced a £4 million microgrants fund, in partnership with The National Lottery Community Fund, to provide targeted funding to small grassroots organisations, to build relationships in communities to help reduce loneliness. This funding is due to be available shortly.

Government continues to work closely with the civil society sector to assess both the needs of vulnerable people and the sector itself, and how government can best support the continuation of its vital work.

## ■ Mobile Phones: Rural Areas

**Chi Onwurah:**

[\[114869\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, when he plans to publish the results of the Government's assessment of the effect of the covid-19 outbreak on the Shared Rural Network programme.

**Matt Warman:**

There has been no significant impact to the delivery of the Shared Rural Network programme as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Since signing the grant agreement in March, initial radio plans have been submitted to the regulator, Ofcom, and an open, fair and transparent competitive procurement process for the publicly funded elements of the programme has commenced.

## ■ Rugby: Coronavirus

**Munira Wilson:**

[\[113654\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether he plans to provide financial support for elite rugby sports clubs during the November 2020 covid-19 lockdown.

**Nigel Huddleston:**

The government recognises the impact that Covid-19 is having on the sporting sector and the valuable role of elite sport to the UK. Our multi-billion-pound package of

business support has enabled many of our sports clubs to survive. We have provided unprecedented support to businesses through tax reliefs, cash grants and employee wage support, which many sport clubs have benefited from. The government has also supported elite sports to return to "behind closed doors" competition, which enabled vital broadcast revenue to flow to the sector, retained competitive integrity and brought joy to millions of sports fans.

My department is working with HM Treasury on further support for the sector as a consequence of the 1 October decision to delay the readmittance of spectators to stadia, including rugby union. We are also working, through Project Moonshot and the Sports Technology and Innovation Group, to enable the return of fans to stadia as soon as it is safe to do so. Ministers and officials will continue to engage with the Rugby authorities as part of this process.

### ■ Social Media: War Crimes

**Anthony Mangnall:**

[\[112113\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, pursuant to the Answer of 30 September 2020 to Question 94546, and with reference to the report entitled Video Unavailable: Social Media Platforms Remove Evidence of War Crimes, published by Human Rights Watch in September 2020, what steps he is taking to ensure that online platforms preserve evidence of alleged war crimes when taking down extremist and hateful social media content.

**Caroline Dinenage:**

The Government is not working specifically on this issue, however it is committed to increasing online safety. As outlined in the Online Harms White Paper, this Government intends to introduce a duty of care on online companies to ensure they have appropriate systems and processes in place to deal with harmful content on their services, overseen by an independent regulator. The regulator will need to build strong working relationships with law enforcement and other bodies in order to ensure effective action against a range of illegal harms. Further details on online harms will be set out in the Full Government Response to the Online Harms White Paper, which will be published shortly.

### ■ Telecommunications: Council Housing

**Damian Green:**

[\[112971\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what guidance is available for local authorities to help them negotiate wayleaves for their housing stock with telecoms infrastructure providers.

**Matt Warman:**

On 27th August, I wrote, together with the Minister for Regional Growth and Local Government, to all tier-1 local authorities in the country on the subject of telecoms infrastructure deployment. This letter highlighted newly published Government

guidance on how local authorities can 1) enable access to public assets, such as housing stock, and 2) ensure appropriate valuation of assets for access agreements.

My Department's Barrier Busting Task Force has offered to meet each authority individually to discuss this guidance and issues particular to each area. Kent County Council took up this offer on the 13th October. Many authorities are taking a proactive approach across the UK, including Croydon, for example, which has signed master wayleaves to connect their social housing stock to gigabit broadband.

Further guidance on these matters can be found on the Government's [Digital Connectivity Portal](#).

## ■ Voluntary Organisations: Finance

**Helen Hayes:**

**[110188]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment has he made of the potential merits of establishing an innovation fund for charities to help the voluntary sector (a) develop services for children and (b) increase its use of digital technology.

**Mr John Whittingdale:**

While responsibility for developing services for children is held by the Department for Education, we recognise that it is essential for charities to be part of the digital revolution. The government is committed to bringing together digital and civil society to help tackle social challenges and develop services needed.

That is why DCMS provided £1.6m of set up funding for the Catalyst, a programme which is incubated by the Centre for Acceleration of Social Technology (CAST). The Catalyst brings together a network of charities, digital design agencies and major funders with the shared objective of establishing a digital support hub for the charity sector. The Catalyst programme represents the first time the charity sector has had a dedicated, high-profile coalition jointly funding and championing digital innovation in the charity sector and continues to support charities to embed digital in their strategy, services and culture.

Encouraging digital innovation has long been a priority in DCMS. For example, in 2018 DCMS launched a £400,000 Digital Inclusion Innovation Fund to help older and disabled people acquire digital skills. The aim of this fund was to help ensure that 'what works' on digital inclusion is identified, replicated and scaled. A full independent evaluation will be published soon to share learnings from this fund.

## EDUCATION

### ■ Assessments: Coronavirus

**Simon Jupp:**

**[112131]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans his Department has to amend the assessment criteria for SATs due to the covid-19 outbreak.

**Nick Gibb:**

The Department acknowledges current concerns raised in the context of the COVID-19 outbreak. It recognises that pupils have missed a critical period of their education due to school closures in the 2019/20 academic year and further disruption in the 2020/21 academic year. As a consequence, the Department is planning that primary assessments will take place in the 2020/21 academic year as a test of the national curriculum, with the standard unchanged. This will not only allow better targeted support to those who need it most but will also ensure that schools have the information they need to help inform ongoing teaching for the pupils affected by school closures.

**British Students Abroad: Coronavirus****Sir Desmond Swayne:**[\[113462\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will take steps to arrange for UK students studying at universities in France to be tested for covid-19 to enable them to return home for Christmas without the need for quarantine; and if he will make a statement.

**Michelle Donelan:**

All international arrivals and passengers travelling from a country not on the travel corridor list will need to self-isolate on their return for 14 days, and that includes UK nationals studying abroad: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-travel-corridors#countries-territories-and-regions-on-the-travel-corridor-list>.

On arrival, students should adhere to Public Health England advice. Students are not exempt from wider restrictions in place when in the UK and are required to complete a passenger locator form as all other international arrivals would. The government will review these measures regularly to ensure that they are in line with the latest scientific evidence and that they remain effective and necessary.

**Extracurricular Activities****James Wild:**[\[113659\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the proportion of secondary school pupils that attend before and after school activities (a) in order to support parents to (i) work, (ii) seek work and (iii) undertake education or training and (b) for the purposes of respite care for vulnerable children.

**James Wild:**[\[113660\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the effect on the number of hours of extra curricular activity that will be provided following the advice issued by his Department that such activities can only take place in order to support parents to work, seek work, or to undertake education or training, and for the purposes of respite care for vulnerable children.

**Vicky Ford:**

As outlined in the guidance for education and childcare settings on the new national restrictions from 5 November 2020, providers of out-of-school activities, including wraparound care, can continue to operate for the duration of the period of national restrictions. However, these providers should ensure that parents using them for face-to-face provision are only doing so where such is reasonably necessary, in order to: enable them to work or search for work; undertake training or education; or for the purposes of respite care. Additional information on this guidance can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/education-and-childcare-settings-new-national-restrictions-from-5-november-2020#ooss>.

Schools and colleges can, and should, also continue to offer before and after school or college clubs and activities for their pupils, for the same reasons listed above. This includes activities and clubs related to PE and sport, music, dance and drama.

The department does not hold a central register of all wraparound or extracurricular provision, and so does not routinely collect data on attendance at these settings. However, the department has been in close communication with various stakeholders, including several wraparound childcare providers and extra-curricular providers, since the start of the COVID-19 outbreak. We will continue this communication during the period of national restrictions, to understand the impact on attendance and number of hours children and young people are spending at these settings.

**■ Foster Care: Coronavirus****Charlotte Nichols:****[113246]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to protect foster carers from covid-19 when facilitating meetings between foster children and birth parents, who reside in areas where the number of covid-19 cases is very high.

**Vicky Ford:**

We expect that contact between children in care and their birth relatives will continue. It is essential for children and families to remain in touch at this difficult time, and for many children, the consequences of not seeing relatives would be traumatic. We expect the spirit of any court-ordered contact in relation to children in care to be maintained. However, there may be local or individual circumstances where face-to-face contact may not be possible, including where members of households are isolating or continuing to take precautions due to clinical vulnerability.

Contact arrangements should be assessed on a case by case basis taking a range of factors into account, including the government's current social distancing guidance, guidance for children's social care and the needs of the child. This guidance is can be viewed at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-meeting-with-others-safely-social-distancing/coronavirus-covid-19-meeting-with-others-safely-social-distancing> and: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-for->

[childrens-social-care-services/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-for-local-authorities-on-childrens-social-care](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-for-local-authorities-on-childrens-social-care-services/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-for-local-authorities-on-childrens-social-care).

To facilitate any contact that is deemed appropriate, the fostering service should provide personal protective equipment (PPE) to the foster carers. More information is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-for-childrens-social-care-services/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-for-local-authorities-on-childrens-social-care#fostering>.

## ■ Free School Meals: Coronavirus

**Jon Trickett:**

**[110044]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the financial support available to the 900,000 children eligible for Free School Meal vouchers living in areas of the UK under enhanced covid-19 lockdown restrictions throughout the school holidays.

**Vicky Ford:**

The provision of free school meals (FSM) to children from out-of-work families or those on low incomes is of the utmost importance to this government. The most recent statistical publication shows that there are around 1.4 million children eligible for and claiming a nutritious FSM, based on the January school census, saving families more than £400 per year. The 2020 publication is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/schools-pupils-and-their-characteristics-january-2020>. Take-up may currently be higher due to the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak and current economic circumstances.

We are grateful for the hard work that school staff undertake throughout the school year to deliver this provision locally for the families that are eligible for FSM. During the COVID-19 outbreak, we are especially appreciative of the actions that schools have taken to continue FSM provisions during such challenging circumstances. We want to make sure that as many eligible pupils as possible are claiming their FSM, and schools continue to accept applications from pupils who are newly eligible. To support this, the department provides an Eligibility Checking System to make the checking process as quick and straightforward as possible for schools and local authorities.

We have put additional guidance in place to ensure we support pupils eligible for FSM who are having to self-isolate during term-time, asking schools to work with their caterers to provide food parcels. Given the increased uncertainty of the COVID-19 outbreak we are taking steps to make sure that children and families get the extra support they need over the winter. Building on the significant financial support given throughout the COVID-19 outbreak, a new £170 million Covid Winter Grant Scheme will be run by councils in England. The funding will be ring-fenced, with at least 80% earmarked to support with food and bills, and will cover the period to the end of March.

We are also investing up to £220 million in the Holiday Activities and Food programme which will be expanded across England next year. Children eligible for FSM will have the option to join a holiday-time programme that provides healthy food and enriching activities during the summer, Christmas and Easter holidays, giving disadvantaged young people opportunities they might otherwise lose out on.

Additionally, we are increasing the value of Healthy Start Vouchers from £3.10 to £4.25 from next April. This scheme supports pregnant women or those with children under four who have a low income and are in receipt of benefits to buy fresh fruit and vegetables. This will help those on lower incomes to boost the long-term health of their children.

Finally, we have also pledged additional funding of £16 million for food distribution charities, conversations are ongoing as to how this is allocated. This is further to the £16 million distributed to food aid charities earlier in the COVID-19 outbreak.

## ■ Free School Meals: Coventry

**Colleen Fletcher:**

**[114206]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many and what proportion of primary school pupils were in receipt of free school meals in (a) Coventry and (b) Coventry North East constituency in each year since 2010.

**Vicky Ford:**

The number of primary school pupils that were in receipt of free school meals (FSM), in (a) Coventry and (b) Coventry North East constituency, each year since 2010 are given in the table attached. The figures are published in the 'Schools, pupils and their characteristics' publication available at: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/school-pupils-and-their-characteristics>.

### Attachments:

1. Table\_114206  
[Table\_114206\_FSM\_primary\_pupils\_Coventry\_LA\_Coventry\_NE\_Parliamentary\_Constituency.pdf]

## ■ Home Education

**Colleen Fletcher:**

**[112068]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many children are home-schooled in (a) Coventry North East constituency, (b) Coventry, (c) the West Midlands and (d) England.

**Nick Gibb:**

Parents are not under a duty to register if they are home educating their children and therefore there is not a robust basis on which the Department can reliably collect statistics on home education.

In relation to the COVID-19 outbreak, the Department is working closely with local authorities to encourage a return to full attendance in school and is monitoring the situation. Initial conversations with local authorities indicate that the majority have noticed an increase in enquiries from parents about home education. Where parents



are anxious about the safety of their children returning to school, local authorities and school leaders are reinforcing that it is in the best interests of pupils to return to school.

■ **Members: Correspondence**

**Yasmin Qureshi:**

[\[91867\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, when he plans to respond to the correspondence from the hon. Member for Bolton South East of 10 July 2020 and 18 September 2020 on concerns from primary school heads about the Government's covid-19 guidance..

**Nick Gibb:**

I can confirm that a response to the letters dated 10 July and 18 September 2020 regarding concerns from primary school heads about the Government's COVID-19 guidance has been sent to the hon. Member for Bolton South East.

■ **National Curriculum Tests: Coronavirus**

**Bill Esterson:**

[\[113549\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment he has made of the effect of the covid-19 outbreak on the viability of proceeding with SATs in the 2020-21 academic year.

**Nick Gibb:**

The Department recognises that pupils have missed a critical period of their education due to school closures in the 2019/20 academic year. The Department is planning on the basis that primary assessments will take place in the 2020/21 academic year, to allow an understanding of the remaining impact of COVID-19 and to target ongoing support to those who need it most.

The Department acknowledges the concerns raised and is continuing to assess flexible options for the delivery of the 2021 primary assessments in the context of COVID-19's impact on schools.

■ **National School Breakfast Programme: Greater London**

**Abena Oppong-Asare:**

[\[113261\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, which schools in (a) London and (b) Erith and Thamesmead constituency have received funding through the National School Breakfast Programme.

**Abena Oppong-Asare:**

[\[113262\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what data his Department holds on the estimated number of children who will potentially be without a free breakfast once the National School Breakfast Programme ends in March 2021.



**Vicky Ford:**

The department is investing up to £35 million into the National School Breakfast Programme (NSBP), using funds from Soft Drinks Industry Levy revenues. Overall, this money will kick-start or improve breakfast clubs in up to 2,450 schools in disadvantaged areas, making them sustainable in the long run. The programme has been extended by a further year until March 2021 and will support up to an additional 650 schools with up to £11.8 million being invested. We monitor management information from the programme on an ongoing basis and will review the number of children attending once the programme concludes. Future departmental spending decisions about the programme are subject to the spending review. Further details of this are yet to be determined.

More than 1,800 schools have benefitted from the programme from March 2018 - March 2020. Family Action have estimated 280,000 pupils have had access to a healthy nutritious breakfast in their report Food for Thought, published in July 2019, which can be found here: <https://www.family-action.org.uk/content/uploads/2019/07/NSBP-Impact-report-v11-LOWRES.pdf>.

A list of schools in London, Erith and Thamesmead taking part in the NSBP from March 2018 – March 2020 can be found in the attached table. More schools will have joined the programme since March 2020 as part of the extension to the contract.

**Attachments:**

1. 112261\_112262\_NSBP\_table  
[112261\_112262\_Schools\_in\_London\_taking\_part\_in\_the\_National\_School\_Breakfast\_Programme.xls]

**■ National Tutoring Programme****Kate Green:****[114158]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what the selection criteria will be for pupils receiving tutoring under the National Tutoring Programme.

**Nick Gibb:**

The National Tutoring Programme (NTP) will provide additional, targeted support to pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds who need the most help to catch-up. It is important that decisions about what support pupils receive are made locally by those who understand their needs.

For the 5-16 programme, the NTP Academic Mentors and Tuition Partners pillars are designed to support disadvantaged pupils as defined by Pupil Premium eligibility. Schools are encouraged to direct NTP support towards Pupil Premium pupils who have been hardest hit by disruption to their education. However, head teachers can exercise their professional judgement to include other disadvantaged and vulnerable children who they feel are most in need of support. In order to maximise the impact of tutoring and to support schools, the Education Endowment Foundation has provided a guide on how to get the best out of tutoring:

<https://nationaltutoring.org.uk/resources/best-tutoring-practice-for-schools>. This includes advice on selecting and grouping pupils for tutoring.

The NTP is also supporting an oral language programme for reception-aged children. The Department invited all state-funded schools with a reception class to register their interest in delivering the programme. Schools will be prioritised based on the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals, in recognition of the disproportionate impact that time out of early education, as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak, has had on disadvantaged and vulnerable groups. Delivery of this element will begin in January 2021.

Additionally, the 16 to 19 Tuition Fund will be used to deliver small group tuition where education has been disrupted. The Department has asked colleges to prioritise their disadvantaged students but recognise that there are different indicators of disadvantage. We have given colleges flexibility to target the students who are most in need of this support, but asked colleges to note the stipulations regarding eligibility set out in the published guidance: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/16-to-19-funding-16-to-19-tuition-fund>.

## ■ Overseas Students: EU Nationals

**Daniel Zeichner:**

**[91896]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether applicants to higher education whose families are settled in the UK through the EU Settlement Scheme (pre-settled and settled) will be eligible for (a) home fee status and (b) undergraduate, postgraduate, and advanced learner financial support from Student Finance England for courses starting in the academic year 2021-22.

**Michelle Donelan:**

Current EU principles of equal treatment will continue to apply for those covered by the citizens' rights provisions in the Withdrawal Agreement, the European Economic Area-European Free Trade Association (EEA-EFTA) Separation Agreement and the Swiss Citizens' Rights Agreement. This means that EEA and Swiss nationals, and their family members, who are covered by the relevant agreements, and who have been granted settled or pre-settled status under the EU Settlement Scheme, will be eligible for support on broadly the same basis as now, subject to meeting the residency requirements. Close family members living overseas will be able to join an EEA or Swiss citizen resident here after the end of the transition period, where the relationship existed on 31 December 2020 and continues to exist when the person wishes to come to the UK. Children born or adopted after December 2020 are also eligible if their parent is covered by one of the Withdrawal Agreements.

## ■ Pupil Exclusions

**Robert Halfon:**

**[114146]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to minimise the (a) incidences and (b) effect of pupil exclusion from school.

**Nick Gibb:**

It is important that all schools should be calm and disciplined environments within which pupils feel happy and able to fulfil their potential, free from low-level disruption.

The Department supports head teachers using exclusion where warranted. It is clear that there is no right number of exclusions, and permanent exclusion should only be used as a last resort. Exclusion from school should not mean exclusion from high quality education.

The Department is pursuing an ambitious programme of work on school behaviour and to rapidly improve the availability of good alternative provision. This will ensure that permanently excluded children, and children at risk of exclusion, receive high-quality education and support suited to their individual needs. This includes a £10 million investment in behaviour hubs, which will enable schools and multi-academy trusts with exemplary behaviour cultures and practices to work in partnership with those that want to improve their behaviour culture. The Department is also working with Ofsted to eliminate off-rolling.

**■ Pupils: Sanitary Protection****Damian Hinds:**[\[113060\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment he has made of take-up among schools and colleges of the period products programme; and what steps his Department is taking to publicise that programme.

**Vicky Ford:**

On 20 January 2020, the department launched a new scheme which makes free period products available for state-funded primary schools, secondary schools and colleges in England.

Our delivery partner, phs Group, reported in August that since the scheme launched, almost 40% of eligible organisations have placed orders for period products and we are continuing to monitor the scheme closely.

The scheme remained in operation during partial school and college closures, and we continue to work with phs Group to encourage engagement with the scheme.

**■ Remote Education: Coronavirus****Helen Hayes:**[\[113606\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 4 November 2020 to Question 109509, if he will publish the total number of devices allocated to schools in London which have been reallocated to other parts of the country by (a) London borough and (b) age group of school.

**Helen Hayes:**[\[113607\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will publish the total number of devices allocated to schools in England which have (a) been delivered to councils or (b) allocated

under the previous plans to councils and are now proposed to be allocated under the new plans.

**Nick Gibb:**

As part of over £195 million invested to support remote education and access to online social care, over 340,000 laptops and tablets are being made available this term to support disadvantaged children in Years 3 to 11 whose face-to-face education may be disrupted.

This supplements over 220,000 laptops and tablets, which have already been delivered during the summer term. This represents an injection of over 500,000 laptops and tablets by the end of the year.

Laptops and tablets are owned by schools, trusts or local authorities who can lend these to pupils who need them most in the event that they experience disruption to face-to-face education due to COVID-19.

The Department has updated the allocation process to more closely align allocations with the number of pupils schools typically have self-isolating. This approach ensures that as many children as possible are able to access a device at the point at which they need one this term.

Data about the number of laptops and tablets delivered and dispatched to local authorities or trusts as of 27 August 2020 is published here:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/912888/Devices\\_and\\_4G\\_wireless\\_routers\\_progress\\_data\\_as\\_of\\_27\\_August\\_2020.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/912888/Devices_and_4G_wireless_routers_progress_data_as_of_27_August_2020.pdf).

Information on the devices provided this term to schools, local authorities and academy trusts as of 23 October 2020 is published here:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/929064/Ad-hoc\\_stats\\_note\\_shipped\\_data\\_231020\\_FINAL.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/929064/Ad-hoc_stats_note_shipped_data_231020_FINAL.pdf).

■ **Remote Education: Merton**

**Siobhain McDonagh:** [109150]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many devices were available to schools in Merton to support remote education requirements as of (a) 20 October 2020 and (b) 24 October 2020.

**Siobhain McDonagh:** [109151]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many devices had been allocated to schools to support remote education requirements on (a) 20 October 2020 and (b) 24 October 2020.

**Siobhain McDonagh:** [109152]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many devices had been allocated to schools in Merton to support remote education requirements on (a) 20 October 2020 and (b) 24 October 2020.

**Siobhain McDonagh:**

**[112991]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 4 November to Question 109149, what was the total number of devices (a) distributed to schools on or before 20 October, (b) available to be allocated to schools on 20 October and (c) available to be allocated to schools on 24 October.

**Nick Gibb:**

As part of over £195 million invested to support remote education and access to online social care, over 340,000 laptops and tablets are being made available this term to support disadvantaged children in Years 3 to 11 whose face-to-face education may be disrupted.

This supplements over 220,000 laptops and tablets, which have already been delivered during the summer term. This represents an injection of over half a million laptops and tablets by the end of the year.

Each school has a number of devices allocated to them by the Department, based on the number of pupils eligible for free school meals and estimates of school-owned devices and privately-owned devices .

Allocations were originally equivalent to a school's potential need if it fully closed. Attendance data suggests most schools are not closing fully, but instead are supporting small groups of children that are not able to attend school because they are self-isolating. The Department has changed the number of devices allocated to each school to reflect this. In the context of significant global demand for laptops and tablets, this ensures that as many children as possible can benefit from a device at the point at which their face-to-face education is disrupted.

Where a school has a disruption that impacts a greater number of children without access to a device, they can contact the Department to request additional devices. This means the number of devices delivered to a school can be greater than their initial allocation. If a school is fully closing, their Regional Schools Commissioner will work with them to ensure they receive enough devices to meet the needs of all disadvantaged children in Years 3 to 11 who do not already have one.

Information on the devices provided this term to schools, local authorities and academy trusts as of 23 October 2020 is published here:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/929064/Ad-hoc\\_stats\\_note\\_shipped\\_data\\_231020\\_FINAL.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/929064/Ad-hoc_stats_note_shipped_data_231020_FINAL.pdf).

Devices provided as of 27 August 2020 is published here:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/912888/Devices\\_and\\_4G\\_wireless\\_routers\\_progress\\_data\\_as\\_of\\_27\\_August\\_2020.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/912888/Devices_and_4G_wireless_routers_progress_data_as_of_27_August_2020.pdf).

## ■ Special Educational Needs

**Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck:**

**[114200]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many children are registered as having SEND; how many children with SEND are enrolled in schools; what information his Department holds on attendance rates of children with SEND.

**Vicky Ford:**

The department collects and publishes data on the number of children and young people aged 0 to 25 who have an education, health and care (EHC) plan because of their special educational needs (SEN). This data is available at <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/data-tables/permalink/213f4e4b-e441-4996-b3f9-b614a0fd03bf>.

The department also publishes data on the number of children enrolled in schools who have SEN, which includes both children with an EHC plan and children receiving SEN support. This data is available at: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/data-tables/permalink/5bb4617e-2bd3-4b08-b665-1035fe9c3666>.

Additionally, the department collects data on the number of schools that have indicated that they have sent children home due to COVID-19 containment measures, and the department also holds attendance data for schools that have done this. Published information on this is available at the following link: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/attendance-in-education-and-early-years-settings-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak>. The latest data available, which is from 5 November 2020, shows that attendance was at 83.3% for pupils with an EHC plan in all state-funded schools.

Normally, in times not affected by the COVID-19 outbreak, the department collects data on the number of sessions missed by pupils and the broad reason for this. The department also publishes data on the absence rates of pupils, including a breakdown by SEN status and whether the absence was authorised by the school or not. This data is available at: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/data-tables/permalink/96c0510a-4687-47f7-820d-07e9314fa077>.

We know that for children and young people with SEN, attending their educational setting is crucial so that they can receive high-quality teaching and the specialist professional support that they need. It remains our priority to keep education settings open for vulnerable children and young people, including those who have an EHC plan.

## ■ Students: Coronavirus

**Zarah Sultana:**

**[107755]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the ability of students to return home for Christmas in very high local covid-19 alert areas.

**Michelle Donelan:**

The government is committed to ensuring that students who wish to return home for the winter break, are able to do so. It is essential that measures are put in place to ensure this can happen as safely as possible for students, staff and the communities that they return to.

On 11 November, the department published guidance for providers on the plans for the end of the autumn term, available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/higher-education-reopening-buildings-and-campuses/student-movement-and-plans-for-the-end-of-autumn-2020-term#specific-support-for-students>.

As outlined in the guidance, we expect higher education (HE) providers to support students to return home following the period of national restrictions, whilst mitigating the risk of transmission of the virus. We are asking that students return home once the national restrictions have been lifted, in a “student travel window” lasting from 3-9 December. This should be in line with specific arrangements put in place by their HE provider, which should include a staggered end to face-to-face provision, with learning being moved online by 9 December.

We are also working closely with universities and the Department for Health and Social Care to roll out mass testing for students and we will offer this to as many students as possible before they travel home, targeting this in areas of high prevalence of COVID-19. This will help to provide further confidence that students can leave safely if they test negative. If a student tests positive before their departure, they will need to remain in self-isolation, following the relevant guidance. Moving all learning online by 9 December allows enough time for students to complete the isolation period before returning home for Christmas.

**Zarah Sultana:****[110261]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of providing (a) financial support and (b) housing contract releases for (i) clinically vulnerable and (ii) other students during the November 2020 covid-19 lockdown.

**Michelle Donelan:**

The safety and wellbeing of staff and students in higher education (HE) and the wider community is always our priority. The government is doing all it can to minimise the risks of transmission in this unprecedented situation.

The government urges universities and private hall providers to be fair in their decisions about rent charges for this period. A number of universities and large companies waived rents for the summer term or released students early from their contracts.

Students who are tenants with individual private landlords can discuss this issue with them. We encourage landlords, letting agencies and tenants to adopt a pragmatic, common-sense approach to issues that may arise in the current circumstances.



If students face financial hardship and struggle to pay their rent, support is available. Guidance for tenants and landlords in the context of COVID-19 available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-and-renting-guidance-for-landlords-tenants-and-local-authorities>.

In the first instance, a student should speak to their landlord if they think they will have difficulty meeting a rental payment. In this unique context, tenants and landlords are encouraged to work together to put in place a rent payment scheme.

Many HE providers will have hardship funds to support students in times of need, including emergencies. The expectation is that, where any student requires additional support, providers will support them through their own hardship funds.

We have worked closely with the Office for Students to clarify that HE providers can draw upon existing funding to increase hardship funds and support disadvantaged students impacted by COVID-19. As a result, providers were able to use the funding, worth around £23 million per month for April to July this year and £256 million for the academic year 2020/21 starting from August towards student hardship funds.

## ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

### ■ Flowers: Import Duties

**Dan Jarvis:** [\[114196\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what plans he has to support fresh flower sellers in the event that tariffs are applied to the flower industry after the transition period.

**Victoria Prentis:**

The UK Government intends to achieve an FTA with the EU by December 2020. In that scenario, we would not expect the UK Global Tariff (UKGT) to apply to EU imports. The Political Declaration sets an aim for "a zero tariff and zero quota FTA" and we are working hard to achieve that. Reducing the cost pressures and processes associated with trade is in the interests of people and businesses across the UK.

The Government wants a free trade deal, based on friendly cooperation. The UK is a significant importer of goods, including flowers, from the EU, and ensuring frictionless trade and avoiding tariffs would be beneficial to both sides, given our shared commitment to high regulatory standards.

### ■ Hunting: Coronavirus

**Christian Matheson:** [\[112073\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what restrictions are placed on hunts meeting during the November 2020 lockdown restrictions.

**Rebecca Pow:**

The exemption for gathering beyond your household for outdoor sport and licensed physical activity will no longer apply, including on private land. All activities in public



outdoor space must therefore abide by broader gathering limits: to be on your own, with one other person, or your own household.

■ **Per- and Polyfluorinated Alkyl Substances: Packaging**

**Geraint Davies:**

[\[113464\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the effect of per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances in food packaging on the environment.

**Geraint Davies:**

[\[113465\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he plans to include in the UK chemical strategy a ban within 12 months on the non-essential use of per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances.

**Rebecca Pow:**

A number of per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) are already banned or highly restricted. The UK is a Party to the Stockholm Convention, which has already agreed restrictions on the use of certain PFAS. There are also restrictions in place under the REACH (Registration, Evaluation, Authorisation and Restriction of Chemicals) regulations.

At the end of the Transition Period the UK will put in place its own domestic chemicals regulatory framework. Existing restrictions under REACH will be brought into UK law. Our commitments under the Stockholm Convention will continue to apply. Future UK decisions to control the environmental and human health impacts of substances will be taken under our independent regime and will be based on rigorous assessment of the scientific evidence, including looking at approaches taken by chemical regimes across the world.

We are working to improve our understanding of the emissions and risks of PFAS in the UK, and how we manage these chemicals will be considered in our forthcoming Chemicals Strategy. The Food Standards Agency also regularly reviews new information on PFAS and will be considering the upcoming review by the Committee on Toxicity of Chemicals in Food, Consumer Products and the Environment of the European Food Safety Authority's latest scientific opinion on PFAS in food.

■ **Rivers: West Lancashire**

**Rosie Cooper:**

[\[111462\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of allocating additional funding to the Environment Agency to fund the desilting of land in West Lancashire constituency so that that land can be effectively drained to protect crops from loss and damage.

**Rebecca Pow:**

De-silting (also referred to as dredging) and clearing channels, are important parts of the Environment Agency's (EA) river maintenance regime. The EA will undertake

these activities where there is evidence that they will reduce flood risk to local properties cost effectively without increasing flooding downstream.

Typically over each of the past three years the Environment Agency has spent between £45 million and £55 million a year on channel maintenance, of which between £5 million and £11 million is for dredging.

Channel maintenance in West Lancashire, where the majority of watercourses are man-made for drainage, includes a range of activities to maintain conveyance such as desilting, weed cutting and removing blockages. Locally over the last three years in West Lancashire the EA has carried out £175,000 worth of desilting, as part of its recurring maintenance programme.

## FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

### ■ Bangladesh: Females

**Sarah Owen:**

[\[114335\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of reports by Human Rights Watch of women and girls in Bangladesh facing widespread violence and sexual assault without reliable protection or legal recourse.

**Nigel Adams:**

The UK is concerned about violence against women and girls in Bangladesh and strongly supports action to tackle this issue. Through the British High Commission in Dhaka, we work with partners to press for better implementation of legislation that protects and promotes the status of women and girls. UK programmes support access to security and justice and health services for survivors of violence, as well as women's and girls' education, health, and economic empowerment. We also work with men and boys to tackle social norms around gender-based violence and early marriage.

This month, the British High Commission in Dhaka will join the Government of Bangladesh and international and local partners for 16 Days of Activism to end gender based violence and impunity and to support survivors.

**Sarah Owen:**

[\[114336\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has made representations to his counterpart in the Government of Bangladesh in response to the October 2020 protests in that country against sexual assault and rape.

**Nigel Adams:**

The UK strongly supports action to tackle violence against women and girls in Bangladesh. This month, the British High Commission in Dhaka will join the Government of Bangladesh and international and local partners for 16 Days of Activism to end gender based violence and impunity and to support survivors.

Through the British High Commission in Dhaka, we continue to raise concerns about violence against women and girls with the Government of Bangladesh. We also work with international partners and civil society to press for better implementation of legislation that protects and promotes the status of women and girls, and in support of justice for survivors of gender based violence.

## ■ Christianity: Human Rights

**Abena Oppong-Asare:**

[\[113256\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department will take to safeguard the human rights of Christians overseas made vulnerable by the covid-19 pandemic.

**Nigel Adams:**

The UK remains deeply concerned by the severity and scale of violations and abuses of Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB) in many parts of the world. Defending the right to FoRB for all is a priority for the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office. We continue to assess the impact of COVID-19 on human rights globally, including members of all minority religious and belief communities. We are concerned by the secondary effects of the pandemic, including incidents of hate speech. We are also concerned by the rise in conspiracy theories that certain faiths or beliefs are to blame for the pandemic, and reports that some Christian communities have been denied access to aid and information. The UK will continue to refute these divisive and harmful claims.

The UK has called for states to ensure that any restrictions put in place to protect public health, including the right to FoRB, are necessary, proportionate and time-limited. The Minister of State for Human Rights, Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon, urged states to take steps to mitigate the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on the most vulnerable and disadvantaged members of society, including religious and belief minorities, during the UK's closing statement at the 44th session of the UN Human Rights Council in July.

## ■ Extradition

**Sarah Champion:**

[\[113116\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what criteria his Department uses to decide when and how to make representations to an overseas Government on the extradition of a UK citizen which it believes breaches international law or process.

**Nigel Adams:**

Extradition is a judicial matter, therefore concerns about the extradition process are, in most cases, most effectively and appropriately pursued by a local lawyer. The FCDO has no involvement in extraditions to or from the UK. We can consider intervening in third country extradition cases involving British nationals where we have human rights or fair trial concerns, in line with our public guidance on GOV.UK.

Our actions in each case depend on its individual circumstances, the extradition procedures in the country where the British national is facing extradition and the situation in the requesting country.

## ■ Human Rights: Females

**Abena Oppong-Asare:** [\[113265\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to promote the empowerment of girls and women around the world.

**Wendy Morton:**

Promoting gender equality is a key priority of the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) work. As I stated in my answer of 10 November to question 110267, the challenges of advancing girls' education, sexual and reproductive health and rights, women's political empowerment and participation, women's economic empowerment, and ending gender-based violence, including conflict related sexual violence, are more acute now, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The UK Government's commitment to the issue of empowerment for women and girls was reflected by the appointment of Baroness Sugg as the UK Special Envoy for Girls' Education in March 2020. She is committed to promoting every girl's right to attend and stay in school, and to receive 12 years of quality education by 2030, by working to accelerate progress towards getting marginalised girls into schools, staying there and staying safe.

The UK is proud to be a world leader on efforts to prevent Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG), and Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict (PSVI). We are co-lead of the new global Generation Equality Action Coalition on gender-based violence (established to mark the 25th Anniversary of the Beijing Platform for Action on Gender Equality). We have increased our efforts to reach girls and women with life-saving sexual and reproductive health services, including with an additional £10m for UN Population Fund's COVID-19 response. And FCDO continues to deliver on its National Action Plan (NAP) on Women Peace and Security - focusing on elevating and legitimising the work of women peacebuilders. We will continue to engage virtually with our international partners and promote the empowerment of women and girls in multilateral fora including in the UN

## ■ India: Amnesty International

**Jim Shannon:** [\[113096\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent representations he has made to his Indian counterpart on the Government of India's decision to freeze Amnesty International's bank accounts in that country.

**Nigel Adams:**

The Minister of State for South Asia and the Commonwealth, Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon, has raised our concerns with the Indian High Commissioner, most

recently on 1 October, and our Acting High Commissioner in New Delhi has raised this with the Indian Prime Minister's Office, most recently on 29 September. We have requested Amnesty's accounts be unfrozen while the investigation is ongoing. In our contacts with the Government of India, we have noted the important role of organisations like Amnesty in a democracy.

Officials from the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office remain in contact with Amnesty International on this matter. We will continue to raise our concerns with the Government of India, where we have them.

## ■ India: Repatriation

**Stephen Timms:**

[\[113470\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer on 27 April 2020 to Question 37391 on Repatriation: Coronavirus, how many UK nationals have returned to the UK from India on repatriation flights organised by the Government; and if he will make a statement.

**Nigel Adams:**

The Government ran 66 charter flights to bring home nearly 18,000 passengers from India, after sifting out multiple registrations made by some individuals and those who were not eligible. Since then we have supported commercial airlines to run regular return flights. The Government submitted a full response to the Foreign Affairs Committee's report into the FCDO's consular response to COVID-19 on 23 October.

## ■ Kashmir: Human Rights

**Layla Moran:**

[\[114306\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent diplomatic steps his Department has taken to tackle the human rights abuses in Indian-administered Kashmir reported by UN Special Rapporteurs on 4 August 2020.

**Nigel Adams:**

We are aware of the statement written by UN Special Rapporteurs on 4 August. The UK recognises that there are human rights concerns in India-administered Kashmir. We encourage all states to ensure domestic laws are in line with international standards. Any allegation of human rights violations or abuse is deeply concerning and must be investigated transparently, promptly and thoroughly. We raise our concerns, where we have them, with the Government of India, including at ministerial level.

## ■ Maternal Mortality: Overseas Aid

**Mrs Pauline Latham:**

[\[113066\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 5 October to Question 97554 on Maternal Mortality: Overseas Aid, what the internationally accepted methods for estimating maternal health spend are; and what assessment he has made of the comparability of those estimates and his

Department's data on periods up to 2018 made with the Methodology for Calculating Baselines and Commitments: G8 Member Spending on Maternal, Newborn and Child Health.

**Wendy Morton:**

The internationally accepted method for estimating Maternal Newborn and Child Health spend is the Methodology for Calculating Baselines and Commitments: G8 Member Spending on Maternal, Newborn and Child Health.

This methodology was used to estimate UK Government spend on maternal mortality in the answer to Question 97554 published on 5 October. The UK government has spent an average of approximately £1 billion per year on Maternal Newborn and Child Health between 2013/14 - 2017/18, on a range of bilateral and multilateral programmes.

■ **North Korea: Coronavirus**

**Fiona Bruce:**

[\[113533\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of (a) reports of conditions in quarantine camps and (b) the wider humanitarian situation in the Democratic Peoples Republic of Korea in the context of the covid-19 pandemic; and what humanitarian assistance the Government is providing in response to that matter.

**Nigel Adams:**

We are aware of the disturbing reports of so called 'quarantine camps' and take all allegations of human rights violations inside North Korea very seriously. We have made clear on many occasions our concern at North Korea's appalling human rights record, including in detention facilities. We raise these concerns with the DPRK authorities directly as well as in international fora. We made an assessment of the humanitarian situation in North Korea in September 2020. It concluded that North Korea's humanitarian need is likely increasing as a result of the country's border lockdown in response to Covid-19 and abnormally high cumulative rainfall in the monsoon period. The United Kingdom provides multilateral funds to the UN and other international organisations providing humanitarian assistance in North Korea, including the Global Humanitarian Response Plan (GHRP) in response to Covid-19. As a country of concern in the GHRP, North Korea is receiving funds from this global appeal. North Korea is also one of the countries eligible to receive Covid-19 vaccines through the COVAX initiative to which the United Kingdom has committed up to £500 million.

We keep the humanitarian situation in North Korea under constant review, including through ongoing discussions with international organisations operational in country. We continue to make clear to the North Korean Government that international support is available, and urge them to restore international access and monitoring for humanitarian assistance. The UK has also repeatedly called on North Korea to

prioritise the well-being of its people over the development of illegal weapons programmes, through our bilateral relationship and in multilateral fora.

### ■ **Pakistan: Forced Marriage**

**Jim Shannon:**

**[113094]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent representations he has made to his Pakistani counterpart on the welfare of (a) Maria Shahbaz and (b) Saneha Iqbal reportedly kidnapped and forcibly married and converted to Islam in Pakistan in 2020.

**Nigel Adams:**

The UK Government strongly condemns the forced marriage and forced conversion of women and girls from religious minorities in Pakistan. We are closely monitoring Maira Shahbaz and Saneha Kinza Iqbal's cases. We regularly raise our concerns about Freedom of Religion or Belief, women and girls' rights and gender equality with the Government of Pakistan at a senior level. On 19 October, The Minister for South Asia raised our human rights concerns including child, early and forced marriage and forced conversion of women and girls, with Pakistan's Minister for Human Rights, Dr Shireen Mazari.

UK's Strengthening Rule of Law in Pakistan programme aims to increase public confidence and trust in the Rule of Law. It focuses on delivering outputs that improve the justice system for victims, witnesses and offenders, including vulnerable women and girls.

### ■ **Pakistan: Religious Buildings**

**Jim Shannon:**

**[113095]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what representations he has made to his Pakistani counterpart on recommencement the Krishna Hindu temple in Islamabad.

**Nigel Adams:**

We are closely monitoring the situation regarding the construction of the Shri Krishna Mandir temple in Islamabad. The UK Government remains deeply concerned by reports of discrimination against religious minorities in Pakistan, including against the Hindu community. We regularly raise our concerns about Freedom of Religion or Belief and the protection of minority communities, including the Hindu community, with the Pakistani Government at a senior level. Most recently, the Minister for South Asia, raised these concerns with Pakistan's Minister for Human Rights, Dr Shireen Mazari, on 19 October.

### ■ **Passenger Ships: Coronavirus**

**Ms Nusrat Ghani:**

**[113589]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the joint statement by the UN World Tourism Organisation and the



International Maritime Organisation on the safe resumption of cruise ship operations following the COVID-19 pandemic published on 5th November 2020, what his timescale is for updating his Department's ocean cruise travel advice published on 9 July 2020.

**Nigel Adams:**

The FCDO advises against ocean cruising based on medical risk assessments by public health officials. We keep this advice under continuous review.

The FCDO remains fully committed to working closely with public health experts, the Department for Transport and key industry leaders to agree on the steps required to restart cruises safely.

**Jackie Doyle-Price:**

[\[91876\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, in light of the International Maritime Organisation Circular Letter No.4204/Add.33 on cruise resumption dated 5 November 2020, if he will update his Department's travel advice on ocean cruises during the covid-19 pandemic.

**Nigel Adams:**

The FCDO advises against ocean cruising based on medical risk assessments by public health officials. We keep this advice under continuous review.

The FCDO remains fully committed to working closely with public health experts, the Department for Transport and key industry leaders to agree on the steps required to restart cruises safely.

## HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

### ■ Contact Tracing: Computer Software

**Chi Onwurah:**

[\[102074\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what support the Government provides to those that cannot download the NHS Test and Trace app because it is not compatible with their smartphone operating system.

**Helen Whately:**

*[Holding answer 16 October 2020]:* The National Health Service COVID-19 app requires users to be owners of smartphones that can install Apple iOS 13.5 and above and Android Marshmallow and above. This is related to the hardware needed for this Bluetooth technology to work effectively and is the same in all countries with apps using the Google and Apple exposure notification Application Programming Interface for contact tracing.

People who do not have a compatible smartphone will still benefit from other people downloading the app. This is because people who use the app will help to break chains of transmission.

The app complements regular contact tracing. They work together to protect vulnerable groups, including those who are unable, or do not wish to, use digital tools.

**Sarah Owen:**

**[103631]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many downloads there were of the NHS covid-19 app on (a) 14 October 2020 and (b) the date the Secretary of State responds to this question.

**Helen Whately:**

*[Holding answer 19 October 2020]:* The National Health Service COVID-19 App has been widely available to download since 24 September and provides several tools to support testing and contact tracing in England and Wales including contact tracing, local area alerts and venue check-in. As of 14 October, the app had been downloaded over 17.67 million times in England and Wales. By 28 October this had risen to 19.22 million.

**Cat Smith:**

**[92800]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to help ensure equitable access to contact tracing for people who do not have a smartphone after the Covid-19 contact tracing app is launched on 24 September 2020.

**Helen Whately:**

*[Holding answer 24 September 2020]:* The National Health Service COVID-19 app requires users to be owners of smartphones that can install Apple iOS 13.5 and above and Android Marshmallow and above. This is related to the hardware needed for this Bluetooth technology to work effectively and is the same in all countries with apps using the Google and Apple exposure notification API for contact tracing.

People who do not have a compatible smartphone will still benefit from other people downloading the app. This is because people who use the app will help to break chains of transmission.

**Theresa Villiers:**

**[98899]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to enable people with older smartphones to download the NHS covid-19 app.

**Helen Whately:**

The National Health Service COVID-19 app requires users to be owners of smartphones that can install Apple iOS 13.5 and above and Android Marshmallow and above. This is related to the hardware needed for this Bluetooth technology to work effectively and is the same in all countries with apps using the Google and Apple exposure notification API for contact tracing.

People who do not have a compatible smartphone will still benefit from other people downloading the app. This is because people who use the app will help to break chains of transmission.

The app complements regular contact tracing. They work together to protect vulnerable groups, including those who are unable, or do not wish, to use digital tools.

**Tulip Siddiq:**

**[99064]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the proportion of people who will be unable to use the NHS covid-19 app because (a) they do not have a mobile phone and (b) their mobile phone does not have the technology to download or run the app.

**Helen Whately:**

The Office for National Statistics' data indicates that in 2019, 79% of people aged 18 and over in the United Kingdom had a smartphone. This means that for England and Wales around 9.95 million adults do not have a smartphone device and therefore cannot use the National Health Service COVID-19 app.

Estimates using the latest data from Apple and Google indicate that 87% of iOS smartphone users and 93% of Android smartphone users in the UK currently have access to a smartphone that is able to install a version of the operating system with the contact tracing technology the NHS COVID-19 app uses. This means over 33.5 million people in England and Wales are able to download and use the NHS COVID-19 app if they wish and around 3.83 million people in England and Wales do not have a smartphone with the software that is able to support the NHS COVID-19 app.

Over 19 million people have already downloaded the app. People who use the app are protecting those who cannot or do not want to use it.

**Tulip Siddiq:**

**[99065]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to improve the NHS covid-19 app to ensure that it works with (a) a wider range of mobile phones and (b) older operating systems.

**Helen Whately:**

The National Health Service COVID-19 app requires users to be owners of smartphones that can install Apple iOS 13.5 and above and Android Marshmallow and above. This is related to the hardware needed for this Bluetooth technology to work effectively and is the same in all countries with apps using the Google and Apple exposure notification API for contact tracing.

People who do not have a compatible smartphone will still benefit from other people downloading the app. This is because people who use the app will help to break chains of transmission.

The app complements regular contact tracing. They work together to protect vulnerable groups, including those who are unable, or do not wish to, use digital tools.

## ■ Coronavirus: Contact Tracing

**Rachael Maskell:**

**[110869]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when local authorities who were under tier 2 local lockdown covid-19 restrictions will receive allocated funding for contract tracing.

**Helen Whately:**

*[Holding answer 9 November 2020]:* Substantial support, at a rate of £3 per head, is available to local authorities at local COVID alert level high to support local test, trace and contain activities. These activities include targeted testing for specific groups, additional contact tracing, enhanced communications and the delivery of essential for those in self-isolation. These payments are currently in process, with some local authorities having already received these funds. Funding will be paid to upper tier local authorities, for onwards disbursement.

## ■ Coronavirus: Hospitals

**Mr Steve Baker:**

**[109327]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make it his policy to release timely and transparent trust-by-trust covid-19 admissions numbers for every NHS trust (a) in total and (b) as a proportion of overall capacity; and if he will make a statement.

**Edward Argar:**

The total number of COVID-19 admissions at a trust level is published on weekly and monthly basis at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/statistics/statistical-work-areas/covid-19-hospital-activity/>

Figures are not published daily on estimates of overall capacity for admissions as this is dynamic in response to local demand.

## ■ Coronavirus: Quarantine

**Mike Amesbury:**

**[99728]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate his Department has made of the number of people being advised by NHS test track and trace to self isolate for longer than the 14 day period contained in Government guidance; and under what circumstances would a longer period of self-isolation be required.

**Helen Whately:**

People who test positive must isolate until 10 days after their symptoms started or, if they did not have symptoms, the date of their test. Other members of their household must isolate until 14 days after this date. Close contacts from outside their household must self-isolate until 14 days after their most recent contact.

People who have tested positive are advised to continue self-isolating beyond the 10-day period if they have a high temperature or feeling hot and shivery; they have a runny nose or sneezing; they feel or are sick; or they have diarrhoea.

■ **Coronavirus: Screening**

**Alex Davies-Jones:** [\[92940\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many tests have been taken by residents of England at the coronavirus test centres in Rhondda Cynon Taf since 1 September 2020.

**Alex Davies-Jones:** [\[92941\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that the UK Government's coronavirus test booking website is not directing people to (a) Wales and (b) areas in Wales that are subject to local lockdown restrictions.

**Alex Davies-Jones:** [\[92942\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will publish the number of occasions where a resident in England seeking a coronavirus test was advised to travel to (a) Wales and (b) the Rhondda Cynon Taf borough to access a covid-19 test by the coronavirus testing website.

**Helen Whately:**

*[Holding answer 24 September 2020]:* The Department does not publish data in the format requested.

**Munira Wilson:** [\[94562\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many (a) staff and (b) patients have had a 90-minute covid-19 test at an NHS hospital trust in England since their introduction.

**Munira Wilson:** [\[94563\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many and what proportion of the 90-minute covid-19 tests used in NHS hospital trusts in England have provided a result within 90 minutes since those tests were introduced.

**Munira Wilson:** [\[94566\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many results of the 90-minute covid-19 test used in England NHS Trust (a) staff and (b) patients have come back (i) positive, (ii) negative and (iii) void/invalid.

**Munira Wilson:** [\[94567\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many of the 90-minute covid-19 tests used by NHS Trust (a) staff and (b) patients in England have yielded a (i) false negative or (ii) false positive result.

**Helen Whately:**

*[Holding answer 28 September 2020]:* The Department does not currently publish this data in the format requested.

■ **Coronavirus: Supermarkets**

**Fiona Bruce:**

[\[96040\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the potential spread of covid-19 through bags for life and other reusable plastic bags in supermarkets during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Helen Whately:**

*[Holding answer 1 October 2020]:* No specific assessment has been undertaken.

■ **Coronavirus: York**

**Rachael Maskell:**

[\[87589\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to reported levels of covid-19 infection rates in West Yorkshire, for what reason people who live in York are being sent to West Yorkshire for covid-19 tests.

**Helen Whately:**

At times of high demand, sites may become fully booked and in these instances the booking system will offer an appointment at the next nearest test centre, subject to availability. The Department has surpassed its commitment to increasing testing availability to 500,000 tests per day, by the end of October.

■ **Coronavirus: York Central**

**Rachael Maskell:**

[\[87588\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, for what reason York Central constituents are unable to access a covid-19 test at the local testing centre.

**Helen Whately:**

The Department has worked to build testing capacity in the city of York, operating a site at Poppleton Bar Park and Ride and the University of York in the constituency of York Outer, alongside other facilities such as mobile testing units and home testing across Yorkshire. COVID-19 test sites are opening regularly across the United Kingdom, with the Department surpassing its commitment of 500 sites operational by the end of October.

■ **Department of Health and Social Care: Serco**

**Richard Burgon:**

[\[108272\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many contracts his Department has with Serco; and what the lifetime value is of those contracts.

**Helen Whately:**

*[Holding answer 2 November 2020]:* The Department has two contracts with Serco. The first is for the provision of facilities management services to support the operation of COVID-19 testing sites around the United Kingdom. The contract was let in March 2020 for an initial term of six months to September for the sum of £57 million - this was the estimated maximum value approved by the Department for the facilities management services to be provided. A letter of intent has been agreed to continue providing the service whilst formal legal agreement on an extension term and its value is currently being discussed.

The second contract is for non-National Health Service call handling services to support the Test and Trace initiative. This contract was let for an initial period of three months for the sum of £108 million. The total contract has a maximum value of £410 million to cover the initial period and any and all extension periods undertaken up to a period of 12 months.

■ **Disease Control: Newcastle upon Tyne**

**Chi Onwurah:**

**[102801]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Prime Minister's oral contribution of 12 October 2020, official report, column 55, on covid-19 update, what proportion of transmissions in Newcastle he estimates have taken place in (a) hospitality venues and (b) households in each week for which data is available; on which data that estimate is based; and whether those venues and households are known to be in Newcastle.

**Ms Nadine Dorries:**

We publish weekly, the number of incidents in each setting with at least one laboratory confirmed case of COVID-19. We have no other published data for this setting. These data are more useful for monitoring trends over time than making comparisons across setting categories.

■ **Intensive Care: Hospital Beds**

**Mr David Davis:**

**[109164]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when the NHS plans to resume the (a) collection and (b) publication of data on critical care bed capacity across the NHS.

**Edward Argar:**

NHS England and NHS Improvement will publish weekly critical care bed availability and occupancy this winter, although the date for when this will start has not yet been confirmed.

Data for previous winters can be accessed at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/statistics/statistical-work-areas/uec-sitrep/>



## ■ Mental Health Services: Children and Young People

**Dr Rosena Allin-Khan:**

**[109533]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 16 October 2020 to Question 100446 on Mental Health Services: Children and Young People, if he will publish the details of the 32 Snapchat accounts; and over what time period £20,000 was spent on influencer content through Snapchat.

**Ms Nadine Dorries:**

*[Holding answer 4 November 2020]:* The Better Health-Every Mind Matters (BH-EMM) campaign Snapchat influencer campaign ran from 8 September to 31 October 2020. The £20,000 investment was deployed over eight weeks.

Public Health England is unable to publish details of the accounts used as this information is commercially confidential.

## ■ Mental Health Services: Finance

**Dr Rosena Allin-Khan:**

**[109531]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how much resilience funding has been made available for mental health services for winter 2020-21.

**Ms Nadine Dorries:**

Supporting people's mental health is a priority for this Government. For those who have a mental health condition or are particularly vulnerable to mental illness, we are committed to making sure the right help and support is in place.

We recognise the pressures on mental health services due to the COVID-19 pandemic. National Health Service mental health services have remained open for business throughout this time, including delivering support digitally and by phone. For those with severe needs or in crisis, NHS mental health providers have established all-age 24 hours a day, seven days a week mental health crisis lines.

Through the NHS Long Term Plan, we are investing an additional £2.3 billion a year by 2023/24 to deliver the most ambitious major expansion and transformation of mental health services ever across England. We have also invested over £10 million to support both national and local mental health charities to continue their vital work supporting people across the country.

## ■ NHS Test and Trace: Labour Turnover

**Munira Wilson:**

**[100551]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many staff (a) are employed by and (b) have left the employment of NHS Test and Trace by region in England for each month for which data is available.

**Helen Whately:**

*[Holding answer 12 October 2020]:* Given the speed at which NHS Test and Trace was set up we do not have data by region or month as during the formulative months

the organisation was reliant on secondees from across Government and movement was high. The current full time equivalent head count of NHS Test and Trace is 3,760.

## ■ Perinatal Mortality

**Mr Gregory Campbell:** [\[111432\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the reasons for reported increases in the number of still births since April 2020.

**Ms Nadine Dorries:**

*[Holding answer 9 November 2020]:* An assessment has not yet been made of the reasons for reported increases in the number of still births since April 2020.

A national review has been launched by the Healthcare Safety Investigation Branch (HSIB) to look at the reported increase in the number of still births. It is important that we wait for the full data from HSIB and other reviews of stillbirth cases during this time to draw any conclusions.

## HOME OFFICE

## ■ Computer Misuse Act 1990

**Ruth Edwards:** [\[111646\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what plans she has to review the effectiveness of the Computer Misuse Act 1990.

**James Brokenshire:**

The Home Office keeps the Computer Misuse Act (CMA) under regular re-view. The Home Office have been engaged in ongoing discussions with relevant partners in law enforcement, government and private sector to ensure that the legislation continues to remain effective.

## ■ Counter-terrorism

**Conor McGinn:** [\[113587\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what provision there is for mutual aid between counter terrorism policing and the National Crime Agency.

**James Brokenshire:**

*CT policing and the NCA have a well-established relationship and along with other operational partners, collaborate closely to tackle a range national security threats and safeguard the country. This cooperation includes sharing resources, intelligence, specialist capabilities and facilities as well as providing operational support or undertaking joint operations.*

## ■ Hezbollah

**Conor McGinn:**

**[113588]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 22 July 2019 to Question 277618 on Hezbollah, whether it remains her policy to not collect data on the number of Hezbollah members or supporters in the UK.

**James Brokenshire:**

The Government takes proscription offences seriously. However, investigations into the activities of proscribed organisations or individuals who may be members or supporters of proscribed organisations are an operational matter for the police and intelligence agencies. It would not be appropriate to publish data on intelligence related matters.

The Government publishes quarterly national statistics on the use of police powers under the Terrorism Act 2000 and subsequent relevant legislation in Great Britain. This includes information on arrests, charges and convictions for proscription offences. The most recent publication up to year ending June 2020, was published on 17 September on GOV.UK: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/operation-of-police-powers-under-the-terrorism-act-2000-quarterly-update-to-june-2020>.

## ■ Home Office: Artificial Intelligence

**Chris Stephens:**

**[112081]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what (a) artificial intelligence and (b) machine learning projects are being (i) undertaken and (ii) considered for her Department.

**James Brokenshire:**

As such, the information requested is not held centrally and could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

## ■ Immigration Controls: Migrant Workers

**Chris Elmore:**

**[113184]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what plans she has to update the Immigration Rules Appendix K: Shortage Occupation List before the end of the transition period.

**Chris Elmore:**

**[113185]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of including (a) coded welders, (b) steel fabricators, (c) mechanical fitters and (d) pipe fitters on the Immigration Rules Appendix K: Shortage Occupation List.

**Kevin Foster:**

In March, the Government commissioned the Migration Advisory Committee (MAC) to advise on the composition of the Shortage Occupation Lists (SOL) in light of the

expanded skills threshold of the new Skilled Worker route, which will come into effect on 1 December.

The MAC published its findings and recommendations on 29 September. The Government welcomes the MAC's comprehensive advice; however, we do not consider changes to the SOLs should be made at this time, before assessing how the UK labour market develops post-Covid 19 and in response to the introduction of the new Points-Based Immigration System on 1 January 2021.

As published on 22 October, the Immigration Rules for the new Points-Based Immigration System include an Appendix Shortage Occupation Lists. This replaces the existing lists under Appendix K. The contents are the same.

## ■ Immigration: Income

**Abena Oppong-Asare:** [113260]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the effect of the minimum income requirement on families with a non-European person whose earnings have been affected by the covid-19 outbreak.

**Kevin Foster:**

The Minimum Income Requirement is set at a level which prevents burdens on the taxpayer and promotes integration.

We recognise COVID-19 will have an economic impact on earnings including on those families where, because of a non-EEA family member, the minimum income requirement applies. We have therefore made relevant adjustments in order to support those affected.

Such adjustments are among a range of measures put in place by the Home Office to support those affected by the COVID-19 outbreak. These are set out for customers on GOV.UK and are available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-advice-for-uk-visa-applicants-and-temporary-uk-residents>.

These are unprecedented times. We continue to monitor the situation closely and may make further adjustments to requirements where necessary and appropriate.

## ■ Islamic State

**Rosie Cooper:** [114096]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what estimate her Department has made of the number of UK residents who are members of Daesh.

**Rosie Cooper:** [114097]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what estimate her Department has made of the number of UK residents who are members of Al Qaeda.

**James Brokenshire:**

Membership of a proscribed organisation is an offence under section 11 of the Terrorism Act 2000, and Al Qa'ida and Daesh have been proscribed in the UK since March 2001 and June 2014 respectively.

The Government takes proscription offences seriously. Investigations into the activities of proscribed organisations or individuals who may be members of proscribed organisations are an operational matter for the police and intelligence agencies. It would not be appropriate to publish data on intelligence related matters.

The Government publishes quarterly national statistics on the use of police powers under the Terrorism Act 2000 and subsequent relevant legislation in Great Britain. This includes information on arrests, charges and convictions for proscription offences. The most recent publication up to year ending June 2020, was published on 17 September on GOV.UK: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/operation-of-police-powers-under-the-terrorism-act-2000-quarterly-update-to-june-2020>.

**Jonathan Taylor****Dame Margaret Hodge:****[114044]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what role (a) her Department and (b) her Department's non-departmental public bodies have in the case of the UK whistleblower, Jonathan Taylor.

**Dame Margaret Hodge:****[114045]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department has sought the extradition of whistleblower, Jonathan Taylor to the UK from Croatia.

**Dame Margaret Hodge:****[114046]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, for what reasons her Department has not issued a European Arrest Warrant for the UK whistleblower, Jonathan Taylor.

**James Brokenshire:**

The Home Office has no role in Mr Taylor's case.

Whether to seek a person's extradition to the UK is a matter for the UK's independent police and prosecution services.

**Migrant Workers****Neil Coyle:****[113560]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department plans to take to ensure the independence and effectiveness of the proposed Migrants' Commissioner role.

**Kevin Foster:**

The Home Office is committed to listening to the voices of migrant communities. Transparency and independence will remain at the heart of the Home Office's approach to implementing the Windrush Lessons Learned Review recommendations.

As outlined in the Comprehensive Improvement Plan on 30 September 2020, the Home Office will be consulting with the Windrush Cross-Government Working Group to implement the Migrants' Commissioner role. The Windrush Cross Government Working Group brings together key stakeholders and community leaders with representatives from a number of government departments, to support the delivery of solutions for the Windrush generation.

**Tim Farron:**[\[114131\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what discussions her Department has had with external stakeholders on the role of the proposed Migrants' Commissioner.

**Priti Patel:**

As outlined in the Comprehensive Improvement Plan on 30 September 2020, the Home Office will be consulting with the Windrush Cross-Government Working Group on how to take forward the Migrants' Commissioner role.

The Working Group brings together key stakeholders and community leaders with representatives from a number of government departments, to support the delivery of solutions for the Windrush generation.

**■ Migrant Workers: Shipbuilding****Chris Elmore:**[\[113186\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what visa options are available to the ship building industry for the use of non-UK labour for the delivery of shipbuilding projects.

**Kevin Foster:**

The UK's new Points-Based Immigration System will come into effect from 1 January 2021; however, to provide certainty for UK-based employers and individual migrants, a number of new routes – including the new Skilled Worker route – will open on 1 December 2020.

Occupations such as boat and ship builders and repairers will be eligible for the Skilled Worker route subject to meeting the wider criteria, including the relevant salary threshold and English Language requirements.

**■ Proscribed Organisations****Conor McGinn:**[\[113585\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the status is of the Proscription Review Group; and when that Group last met.

**James Brokenshire:**

The Proscription Review Group (PRG), a cross-Government group supporting the Home Secretary in her decision making on proscription issues, remains active. The Government does not comment on intelligence matters and it would not be appropriate to comment on the timing of PRG meetings.

We keep the list of proscribed organisations under regular review. This year, in February and July respectively, we have proscribed the right-wing terrorist groups Sonnenkrieg Division and Feuerkrieg Division.

**Road Traffic Offences****Carla Lockhart:**[\[112159\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to expedite the approval process for new technologies aimed at enforcing road traffic speeds and other road traffic offences.

**Kit Malthouse:**

As part of the joint DfT and Home Office Roads Policing Review, the Home Office is reviewing the type approval system used to provide enforcement agencies with the equipment they need to prosecute speeding, drink or drug driving and other offences.

The aim is to modernise and streamline the current process whilst delivering new technologies quickly.

**HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT****[Subject Heading to be Assigned]****Karl McCartney:**[\[908798\]](#)

What steps his Department is taking to promote housebuilding.

**Robert Jenrick:**

One of the key priorities for my Department has been ensuring that house building continues and the housing market stays open.

This Government cares deeply about building more homes and we have gone to great lengths to ensure the industry is kept open, in turn sustaining hundreds of thousands of people in numerous roles.

That is why I have written to the housing industry, alongside the Home Builders Federation and Federation of Master Builders, to make it clear that housebuilding, and the supply chains that support it, should continue during the current lockdown.

That means estate and lettings agents, show homes and sales suites can remain open; and property viewings, home repairs and maintenance, mortgage valuations and surveys can all continue to take place.

At the same time this Government is unlocking hundreds of thousands of homes through our £12 billion investment in affordable homes – the biggest investment for a



decade; delivering much-needed new homes on brownfield land through our £400 million Brownfield Fund; and stimulating the market through our Stamp Duty cut.

**Yvonne Fovargue:** [\[908802\]](#)

What estimate he has made of the amount owed to local authorities in council tax arrears.

**Luke Hall:**

The cumulative total of council tax owed as at 31 March 2020 was £3.6 billion. This was an increase of £345 million on the previous year. In 2019-20, councils collected 96.8 per cent of the council tax due that year.

**Geraint Davies:** [\[908804\]](#)

What progress his Department has made on the forthcoming devolution and local recovery White Paper.

**Matt Western:** [\[908820\]](#)

What progress his Department has made on the forthcoming devolution and local recovery White Paper.

**Luke Hall:**

We intend to bring forward the English Devolution and Local Recovery White Paper in due course, which will set out Government's regional economic strategy to move us from recovery into levelling up and our vision for expanding devolution across England.

**Stephen Kinnock:** [\[908805\]](#)

When he plans to publish details of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

**Luke Hall:**

We will set out further details on the UK Shared Prosperity Fund following the Spending Review.

In the meantime, we will continue to work closely with interested parties whilst developing the fund.

We are working to ensure that there is a seamless transition from current EU structural funds to the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, as EU Structural Fund investment phases out over the coming years.

**Rachael Maskell:** [\[908806\]](#)

What discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on consulting local authority Directors of Public Health on improvements to the covid-19 test and trace services in their area.

**Christopher Pincher:**

NHS Test and Trace has worked closely with Directors of Public Health and local authorities since the beginning of the pandemic.

We have now launched Local Tracing Partnerships with 148 lower tier local authorities, with a further 150 in the process of being implemented, and we will

continue to improve and refine how we support and empower local authorities to maximise our efforts against the virus.

These local partnerships will boost the numbers of people reached.

**Sarah Champion:**

[908808]

What his policy is on the future of the Troubled Families programme.

**Kelly Tolhurst:**

A strong society needs strong families. The Troubled Families Programme has been successful in improving outcomes for vulnerable families and driving progress towards intensive, integrated support services.

That is why this government made a commitment in the Manifesto to continuing and improving the Troubled Families Programme.

We are currently considering options for the design of a future programme from April 2021 onwards. As you know, however, we cannot confirm any funding beyond the current spending review period.

**Munira Wilson:**

[908814]

What steps he is taking to ensure that (a) environmental impact assessments and (b) strategic environmental assessments are prioritised as part of the Government's planning reforms.

**Christopher Pincher:**

As set out in our Planning White Paper, we recognise the vital role environmental assessment plays in ensuring the environment is embedded in decision-making.

Leaving the EU gives us the opportunity to reframe these assessments to ensure they are delivering for the country – supporting decision-making and helping us meet the commitment of the 25 Year Environment Plan to be the first generation to leave the environment in a better state than we found it.

## ■ Affordable Housing and Social Rented Housing

**Scott Mann:**

[112093]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what information his Department holds on the number of homes defined as affordable for purchase; and how many social rented homes are planned to be built in rural areas in the South West each year under the new planning proposals.

**Christopher Pincher:**

The department publishes the number of new affordable homes for purchase completed (including acquisitions) and starts on site. The number of new completions and starts on site of shared ownership properties can be found in live tables 1007bC and 1007bS, respectively; while the number of new completions and starts on site of affordable home ownership properties can be found in live tables 1007cC and 1007cS. These tables can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/live-tables-on-affordable-housing-supply> . We do not set delivery targets for

social housing. The Government is investing £12.2 billion in affordable housing over 5 years from next year. This includes the new £11.5 billion Affordable Homes Programme, which will provide up to 180,000 new affordable homes, should economic conditions allow. In this new Programme, 10 per cent of delivery outside of London will be targeted at rural communities.

#### ■ **Building Safety Fund: Southampton Itchen**

**Royston Smith:** [112086]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many Building Safety Fund applications his Department has received from Southampton Itchen constituency to date.

**Royston Smith:** [112087]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many Building Safety Fund applications his Department has refused to date; and what the grounds were for those refusals.

**Royston Smith:** [112088]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many Building Safety Fund applications from Southampton Itchen constituency his Department has refused to date; and what the grounds were of those refusals.

**Christopher Pincher:**

The Department is continuing to work with building owners to progress applications for the Building Safety Fund and published registration statistics on 30 September, which can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/remediation-of-non-acm-buildings#building-safety-fund-registration-statistics>

#### ■ **Covid-19 Hardship Fund**

**Yvonne Fovargue:** [114152]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how much of the Hardship Fund allocated to local authorities was spent between March and October 2020; and what proportion of that fund was spent over that time period.

**Luke Hall:**

The £500 million Hardship Fund has been made available to councils in England to provide support to economically vulnerable people and households, including through reductions in council tax to recipients of working age local council tax support. The management of those allocations is a matter for local councils.

#### ■ **Estate Agents: Fees and Charges**

**Jo Stevens:** [114242]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what progress his Department has made on regulating estate agents' fees since his

Department's consultation on the home buying and selling process closed in December 2017.

**Christopher Pincher:**

The Government is clear that estate agent fees should be set by the market. However, where agents receive a referral fee these must be disclosed to consumers before they make any decision to purchase.

In February 2019, National Trading Standards Estate and Letting Agents Team (NTSELAT) published guidance for estate agents which makes it clear they must disclose referral fees. We have asked NSELAT to monitor this, and in February 2020 they reported that the majority of agents do disclose that they will receive a referral fee. NTSELAT will continue to monitor and report back any concerns.

■ **Fairgrounds: Non-domestic Rates**

**Sir Charles Walker:**

[\[113510\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if he will issue guidance to local authorities on making available Government-backed business rates relief to showground and funfair businesses; and if he will make a statement.

**Luke Hall:**

In response to COVID-19 the Government has provided a 100 per cent business rates holiday for eligible retail, hospitality and leisure properties in England, for 2020-21, worth over £10 billion. My Department published guidance to help local authorities implement the scheme. The guidance states that eligible properties are those wholly or mainly used as shops, restaurants, cafes, drinking establishments, cinemas and live music venues; those used by visiting members of the public for assembly and leisure; or hotels, guest and boarding premises and self-catering accommodation. It is for local authorities to decide, having regard to the guidance, whether showground and funfair properties fall within these categories.

■ **Flats: Insulation**

**Apsana Begum:**

[\[113243\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to his Department's guidance, Advice for Building Owners of Multi-storey, Multi-occupied Residential Buildings, published in January 2020, what discussions he has had with mortgage lenders on the valuation of properties with potential fire safety issues.

**Christopher Pincher:**

The January 2020 Advice for Building Owners of Multi-storey, Multi-occupied Residential Buildings, was written for building owners to ensure the safety of their buildings. It was not designed to be used for valuation purposes. The EWS1 process was designed by RICS to address lender concerns about cladding in high-rise residential buildings, but industry has applied it more widely than it was intended. Government does not support a blanket use of EWS1. The Building Safety Minister

has met with mortgage lenders seeking their support to a more proportionate approach to valuation of multi storey, multi occupied residential buildings.

## ■ High Rise Flats and Public Buildings: Insulation

**Royston Smith:** [\[113151\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what proportion of identified high-rise residential and publicly owned buildings with unsafe cladding are in the process of being fully remediated.

**Royston Smith:** [\[113152\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what proportion of identified high-rise residential and publicly owned buildings with unsafe cladding have been fully remediated.

**Christopher Pincher:**

The Department publishes data on progress with remediation of high-rise residential and publicly owned buildings in England with Aluminium Composite Material (ACM) cladding systems unlikely to meet building regulations. The latest data is available [here](#) . Information on registrations to the Building Safety Fund, which is funding the removal and replacement of unsafe non-ACM cladding systems on high rise residential buildings, is available [here](#) .

**Royston Smith:** [\[113153\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what proportion of identified high-rise residential and publicly owned buildings with unsafe cladding had their Building Safety Fund application pending approval on the last day of each month since August 2020.

**Christopher Pincher:**

The Department is continuing to work with building owners to progress applications for the Building Safety Fund and published registration statistics on 30 September, which can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/remediation-of-non-acm-buildings#building-safety-fund-registration-statistics>

## ■ Housing: Construction

**Siobhain McDonagh:** [\[111991\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what plans he has to establish a timeline for the introduction of space standards on new homes delivered under permitted development rights.

**Christopher Pincher:**

We laid regulations before Parliament on 11 November which will introduce a requirement that all homes delivered through permitted development rights meet, at a minimum, the nationally described space standards. This requirement will come into effect on 6 April 2021, and will apply to applications for prior approval submitted on or after that date.

**Siobhain McDonagh:**

[91843]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment his Department has made of the potential effect of the proposed expansion of the small sites exemption policy on the supply of social and affordable housing in England.

**Siobhain McDonagh:**

[91844]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment his Department has made of the potential effect of the proposed expansion of the small sites exemption policy on the supply of social and affordable housing in London.

**Siobhain McDonagh:**

[91845]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment his Department has made of the potential effect of the proposed expansion of the small sites exemption policy on the ability of SME developers to take on new projects.

**Siobhain McDonagh:**

[91846]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what estimate he has made of the number of additional homes that will be delivered by the proposed expansion of the small sites exemption policy.

**Siobhain McDonagh:**

[91847]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what estimate he has made of the number of new housing developments that will be available under the proposed expansion of the small sites exemption policy.

**Christopher Pincher:**

To aid small and medium-sized builders through economic recovery, we have consulted on a proposal to increase the current threshold at which affordable housing contributions can be collected on new developments. This proposal would ensure that sites that may not have been developed due to viability issues would go ahead creating the homes our country needs.

Details of the impact of this proposal are set out in the *Changes to the current planning system* consultation, which closed on 1 October:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/changes-to-the-current-planning-system>

It is important that we consider the consultation feedback thoroughly. We will respond to the consultation in due course.

## ■ Housing: Insulation

**Darren Jones:**

[\[91914\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what recent steps he has taken to support leaseholders in replacing cladding on their properties when they are unable to secure financing from their mortgage providers.

**Christopher Pincher:**

The Department has made £1.6 billion available to support the remediation of unsafe cladding, and a large proportion of this will protect leaseholders from these costs and will deal with some of the highest risk and highest cost safety defects on high-rise buildings.

To support the valuation process for high-rise residential buildings with cladding, the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors designed the EWS1 process. The EWS1 process is not a regulatory requirement and the Department does not support a blanket approach to EWS1. The Department is working with mortgage lenders to support a more pragmatic approach in their valuation of homes within multi occupancy, multi storey residential buildings. We are encouraging lenders to accept a broader range of evidence to assure themselves of a building's safety.

## ■ Local Government: Property Searches

**Sir Greg Knight:**

[\[114076\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if he will review the length of time being taken by local authorities to process Local Authority Land Registry Searches; if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of imposing a maximum time limit for that processing; and if he will make a statement.

**Christopher Pincher:**

HM Land Registry is working with local authorities to transform the fragmented Local Land Charges services into a single national digital register across England and Wales as quickly as possible. The service offers instant online access helping users make quicker property related decisions. We have also set local authorities a target of ten working days to return local searches and nearly 88 per cent of authorities met this target this summer. We will continue to keep this performance under review.

## ■ Local Plans

**Stephanie Peacock:**

[\[112099\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment the Government has made of the response rate of members of the public to planning consultations at Local Plan stages rather than site-specific planning applications.

**Christopher Pincher:**

*[Holding answer 10 November 2020]:* Comprehensive data on the response rate to local authority public consultations on local plans is not available, so no formal



assessment has been made. However, our engagement with the sector suggests that consultations can be dominated by the few willing and able to navigate the process, whilst previous studies suggest that only a small proportion of the public tend to engage in local plan consultations. The Government believes that the best time to consider the strategic use of land is at the local plan stage, and settling these questions at the outset will bring more certainty that development will come forward in areas best identified for growth.

Our proposals in *Planning for the Future* will lead to better community engagement when local plans are being prepared, allowing members of the public to exert real influence over developments. New citizen engagement tools will make it easier to understand proposals and to express views

## ■ **Parking (Code of Practice) Act 2019**

**Andrew Lewer:**

[\[113211\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what his timeframe is for the next stages of the public consultation for the Parking (Code of Conduct) Act 2019; and if he will he make a statement.

**Luke Hall:**

We are working to improve the regulation of the private parking industry. This year we launched consultations on our proposals for the new Parking Code of Practice and Enforcement Framework, designed to crack down on rogue car parking firms. The consultations closed on 12 October. We are now considering the feedback and will publish our response in due course.

## ■ **Planning Permission**

**Layla Moran:**

[\[113208\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what recent assessment he has made of the potential effect of the proposals of the Planning for the Future White Paper published in August 2020 on the time between granting planning permission and completing builds.

**Christopher Pincher:**

Sir Oliver Letwin's 2018 Review of Build Out concluded that the primary reason for the rate of housing completions following the grant of planning permission was market absorption and the best way of increasing build out rates was greater diversification of housing on large sites. The White Paper has put forward proposals to support build out through planning, including revising national policy to encourage masterplans and design codes for substantial development sites to see a variety of development types by different builders come forward at once. We will be exploring further options to support faster build out as part of the wider package of reforms.

**■ UK Shared Prosperity Fund: Northern Ireland****Carla Lockhart:** [\[112163\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what recent discussions he has had with the Northern Ireland Executive on the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

**Luke Hall:**

The Government is committed to working with the Devolved Administrations to ensure the Fund works for places across the UK. Government officials meet regularly with their counterparts, including the Northern Ireland Executive, to discuss the Fund. Government officials have also held 25 engagement events across the UK, including in Belfast. These were attended by over five hundred representatives from a breadth of sectors.

**INTERNATIONAL TRADE****■ Data Protection: Japan****Damian Collins:** [\[114147\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what the effect is of the provisions in Article 8.84 of the UK-Japan Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement, prohibiting restrictions on cross-border data flows including personal data, on data protection in the UK.

**Damian Collins:** [\[114148\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what effect Article 8.84 of the UK-Japan Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement, enabling the free flow of data, has on the UK's forthcoming adequacy decision for Japan to allow onward flows of data from Japan to their trade partners; and whether that decision will include the free flow of data from Japan to the US.

**Damian Collins:** [\[114149\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what effect the UK-Japan Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement has on transfers of data to (a) the US and (b) other countries within the Asia Pacific Economic Co-operation Cross Border Privacy Rules System.

**Damian Collins:** [\[114150\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, with reference to the footnote to Article 8.80 (5) of the UK-Japan Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement, what effect the acceptance of the Asia Pacific Economic Co-operation Cross Border Privacy Rules System under the UK-Japan Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement will have on adequacy arrangements with the EU.

**Greg Hands:**

The United Kingdom is committed to maintaining high standards of protection for personal data, including when it is transferred across borders. Data provisions in Free Trade Agreements including the UK-Japan Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) are separate but complementary to the United Kingdom's adequacy process and international data protection frameworks.

Through CEPA, we have agreed to avoid unjustified restrictions on the free flow of data between the United Kingdom and Japan, and committed to maintaining a legal framework that provides for the protection of personal information. CEPA only addresses data flows between the United Kingdom and Japan and does not address onward transfers to other jurisdictions. The United Kingdom has not endorsed the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation Cross Border Privacy Rules System (APEC CBPR).

Separately, the United Kingdom has preserved the effect of the EU's adequacy decision for Japan on a transitional basis. This does not permit the onward transfer of EU data using APEC CBPR.

**■ Defence and Security: EU Countries****Daisy Cooper:**[\[113643\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what plans she has to enable UK companies to bid for defence and security contracts with (a) EU member states and (b) companies based in EU member states after the transition period.

**Graham Stuart:**

The Government is waiting for the EU-UK future trading relationship negotiations to conclude before setting out plans regarding the facilitation of defence and security contracts with EU member states or companies indigenous to those jurisdictions.

Meanwhile, defence and security exporters will continue to be supported by UK Defence and Security Exports within DIT, as they are now.

**■ Food: Trade Agreements****Hywel Williams:**[\[113002\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, if she will (a) make an assessment of the potential effect on the price of food in the UK of a new trade agreement and (b) lay that assessment before Parliament before signing an agreement.

**Mr Ranil Jayawardena:**

The potential benefits of our new Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) include better jobs, higher wages, more choice and lower prices for people across the United Kingdom.

HM Government has published scoping assessments for FTAs with the US, Australia, New Zealand, and Japan. We will publish impact assessments following the outcome of negotiations too, which will include an assessment of the potential benefits for British consumers.

The Hon. Gentleman will recall that an impact assessment for the United Kingdom-Japan Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) has already been published.

■ **Origin Marking: Japan**

**Emily Thornberry:**

[\[111453\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, who will oversee the examination and opposition procedure for the UK's proposed geographical indications under the provisions of the UK-Japan Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement.

**Greg Hands:**

The Japanese authorities overseeing the examination and opposition procedure for the UK's proposed geographical indications (GIs) are, for agricultural, forestry and fishery products and foodstuff, the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF); and, for liquor products, the National Tax Agency (NTA). The UK Government will work closely with Japan at each stage of the process to provide information to support successful passage of the UK GIs through the Japanese system.

■ **Trade Agreements: Devolved Matters**

**Beth Winter:**

[\[114346\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what steps her Department is taking to ensure that the interests of the devolved administrations are adequately represented in UK trade negotiations.

**Greg Hands:**

The UK Government is responsible for negotiating international trade agreements on behalf of all the nations in the UK. We work closely with the devolved administrations to inform and develop policy that best reflects this, particularly for areas covering devolved competence such as sanitary and phytosanitary standards and regulatory practice.

Department for International Trade Ministers and officials hold regular discussions with their devolved administration counterparts, to keep them informed of, and seek their views on, developments to the free trade agreement programme.

■ **Trade Agreements: Ghana and Kenya**

**Gareth Thomas:**

[\[109144\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, pursuant to the Answer of 19 October 2020 to Question 102656 on Trade Agreements: Ghana and Kenya, when she plans to publish full details of the (a) eligibility criteria and (b) tariffs available to nations to trade through the (a) UK Generalised Scheme of Preferences and (b) Enhanced Framework of the UK Generalised Scheme of Preferences; and if she will make a statement.

**Greg Hands:**

At the end of the Transition Period, we will launch our own Generalised Scheme of Preferences (GSP), which will replicate the three levels of market access provided by the EU Generalised Scheme of preferences.

The regulations that bring the UK GSP into effect will be laid in Parliament before the end of the year. Guidance is available on gov.uk that explains the UK Generalised Scheme of Preferences' eligibility criteria and tariffs, including for the Enhanced Framework.

**■ Trade: Developing Countries****Rushanara Ali:**[\[91886\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, with reference to reports that some UK companies have not honoured contracts with suppliers in developing countries during the covid-19 pandemic, what steps her Department is taking to promote the UK as a reliable market globally.

**Graham Stuart:**

It is more important than ever for UK businesses to take responsibility for conditions in their supply chains and honour their obligations. We are working across government, including with the Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy, the Home Office and the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office to encourage retail businesses to uphold commercial commitments with international suppliers and support workers.

**■ Tradeshow Access Programme****Bill Esterson:**[\[113548\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what funding has been delivered as part of the Tradeshow Access Programme to date in financial year 2020-21.

**Graham Stuart:**

The Department for International Trade (DIT) entered this financial year with a full calendar of agreed events to be supported by the Tradeshow Access Programme with a budget of £6.5 million.

Regrettably, most of the events have since been cancelled due to the impact of COVID-19.

**JUSTICE****■ Protection of Badgers Act: Prosecutions****Daniel Zeichner:**[\[111554\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many people were (a) proceeded against and (b) convicted of an offence under the Protection of Badgers Act 1992 in each police force area in (i) 2018 and (ii) 2019.

**Daniel Zeichner:****[111555]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many people were (a) proceeded against and (b) convicted of an offence under the Wild Mammals (Protection) Act 1996 in each police force area in (i) 2018 and (ii) 2019.

**Chris Philp:**

Throughout England and Wales, in 2018, there were 13 prosecutions and 8 convictions for offences under the Protection of Badgers Act 1992. In 2019, there were 18 prosecutions and 14 convictions for offences under this Act. Throughout England and Wales, in 2018, there was 1 prosecution and 1 conviction for offences under the Wild Animals (Protection) Act 1996. In 2019, there were 3 prosecutions and 3 convictions under this Act.

The Ministry of Justice has published data on the number of people prosecuted and convicted in England and Wales, by police force area, up to the year ending December 2019 for offences under both the Protection of Badgers Act 1992 and the Wild Animals (Protection) Act 1996, available at the link below:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/888344/HO-code-tool-principal-offence-2019.xlsx](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/888344/HO-code-tool-principal-offence-2019.xlsx)

Filter 'Offence Code' by:

- 10822 (for Protection of Badgers Act 1992)
- 10825 (for Wild Animals (Protection) Act 1996)

Using the Pivot Table Fields, drag the 'Police Force Area' variable into the 'Rows' field and remove the 'Values' variable. Then, drag the 'Prosecuted' and 'Convicted' variables into the 'Values' field. They will become 'Sum of Prosecuted' and 'Sum of Convicted'.

The resulting table will then display the figures for those prosecuted and convicted for the above offences over the 2013-2019 period, in each Police Force Area.

Alternatively, simply filter by 'Police Force Area' to provide figures on each, individually.

## LEADER OF THE HOUSE

### ■ Members: Coronavirus

**Caroline Lucas:****[113529]**

To ask the Leader of the House, whether he has made an assessment of the effect on the transmission of covid-19 of providing additional ways for hon. Members to work from home during the November 2020 covid-19 lockdown restrictions; if he will take steps to allow hon. Member to (a) contribute remotely to debates in Westminster Hall and (b) vote remotely in divisions during that period; whether he has asked Public Health England for advice on the effect on the transmission of covid-19 of hon. Members travelling to and

from their constituencies to Westminster during that period; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr Jacob Rees-Mogg:**

It is the Government's view that we best serve our constituents when we are here in Westminster, carrying out our essential functions. At a time when the nation is dealing with the widespread impacts of coronavirus, this work could not be more important. The House authorities have worked hard to put in place robust and effective measures to ensure that the House of Commons is a covid-secure workplace and all Members should follow the government's guidance when travelling to Parliament.

In October, the House took the decision to extend the current arrangements for virtual participation to March 2021 and ensured that people who cannot be here for a range of reasons can vote by proxy and participate in interrogative proceedings. This was agreed without debate and without division. The hon. Member asks specifically about Westminster Hall and remote voting. Technical limitations meant it was only possible to resume business in Westminster Hall last month. However, the Government's understanding is that, owing to House capacity constraints, it is not currently possible to extend Westminster Hall debates to Members participating virtually. On remote voting, in the context of a physical return of Parliament, not returning to physical voting would be a significant anomaly and I welcome the House's agreement to the new voting system, which is an effective way of managing safe physical voting.

The Government is sympathetic to those Members who are currently unable to participate in some aspects of our proceedings. However, the Government has done everything it can to mitigate that, including a wide scale roll out of proxy voting and providing for remote participation in scrutiny proceedings, including select committees. In addition, I am working with the House authorities to see how we can support additional virtual participation in the Commons for those who are clinically extremely vulnerable.

## NORTHERN IRELAND

### ■ Abortion: Northern Ireland

**Sarah Champion:**

[\[91890\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, with respect to the cessation of abortion services in the Northern Trust in Northern Ireland, what assessment has been made of the infection risks to the pregnant women forced to travel to the British mainland to access abortion care.

**Mr Robin Walker:**

The Abortion (Northern Ireland) (No.2) Regulations 2020 that the Government made have been in place since March 2020. Some services commenced on the ground in Northern Ireland through existing sexual and reproductive health services across most Health and Social Care Trusts from this time.



The Regulations deliver rights that are equivalent in practice to the rest of the UK so that women and girls in Northern Ireland can enjoy similar rights in accessing abortion services locally going forward.

Informing Choices Northern Ireland has been acting as the Central Access Point in order to provide a local pathway to this abortion care, and the Central Booking Service in England can also continue to be contacted for support and advice on options available to access abortion services at present.

No assessment has been made of the infection risks to the pregnant women travelling to Great Britain from Northern Ireland, to access fully funded abortion services. However, as is the case with the rest of the UK, the protection of women and girls in Northern Ireland and the promotion of their health and safety remains paramount.

#### ■ **Consumers: Northern Ireland**

**Carla Lockhart:**

[\[112158\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, with reference to the comments of the Chief Executive of Sainsburys, relating to food entering Northern Ireland after 1st January 2021, if he will provide assurances to consumers in Northern Ireland that the supply of goods and consumer choice in Northern Ireland will not be reduced after 1st January 2021.

**Mr Robin Walker:**

The UK and the EU have committed to an intensified process of engagement to resolve all outstanding issues with the implementation of the Northern Ireland Protocol, which includes securing the flexibilities we need for trade from Great Britain to Northern Ireland. This is particularly important for supermarkets, where we have been clear specific solutions are required.

We will continue to work closely with the Northern Ireland Executive as discussions continue with the EU through the Joint Committee process.

## TRANSPORT

#### ■ **Bicycles: Repairs and Maintenance**

**Kerry McCarthy:**

[\[113509\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether the next tranche of repair vouchers under the Fix Your Bike scheme are planned to be released before the expiration of the existing covid-19 restrictions.

**Chris Heaton-Harris:**

The second tranche of Fix Your Bike cycle repair vouchers was released on Monday 16 November. Bike shops are classified as essential businesses and allowed to remain open because many key workers and others rely on their bikes to make essential journeys. For those for whom the repair is less urgent, the vouchers have a

60-day expiry period, so that people can book their bike in for a service after the current covid-19 restrictions are lifted.

■ **Confederation of Passenger Transport: Bus Services**

**Mary Glindon:**

[\[114170\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when he next plans to meet with representatives of the Confederation of Passenger Transport to discuss the issues facing the coach sector.

**Rachel Maclean:**

Ministers and officials from the Department of Transport regularly meet with representatives from the Confederation of Passenger Transport to discuss issues facing the coach sector.

■ **Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency: Standards**

**Sir Greg Knight:**

[\[114075\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many complaints about the DVLA his Department has received in the latest 12 months for which figures are available; and what plans he has to improve customer satisfaction with that agency.

**Rachel Maclean:**

The Department of Transport received 1604 items of correspondence relating to DVLA from October 2019 to October 2020. It is not possible to provide specific figures on how many of these were complaints or other enquiries about individual constituents' cases.

DVLA's customer satisfaction figure for 2018/19 was 92.83%. The latest customer satisfaction figure for 2019/20 is 94.02%. Figures are not yet available for this financial year.

■ **Driving Tests: Coronavirus**

**Drew Hendry:**

[\[114261\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions his Department has had with the DVLA on ensuring people are not able to book tests that would require travelling from an area with a high level of covid-19 restrictions into an area under lower restrictions.

**Rachel Maclean:**

To help stop the spread of coronavirus, the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency is following guidance and advice issued by the devolved administrations when taking the decision to suspend driving tests. It is working with Transport Scotland following the Scottish five-level system, the Welsh Parliament, and the Cabinet Office to ensure local and national restrictions are adhered to.

As was the case in March, people in England should stay at home to reduce day-to-day contact with other people, and reduce the spread of the infection. The DVSA has

asked candidates, approved driving instructors and approved training bodies to respect and adhere to local and national restrictions when taking lessons and tests, and carrying out any form of training.

## ■ Electric Vehicles: Charging Points

**Adam Afriye:**

[\[114124\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what progress his Department has made on a comprehensive private and public network of electric vehicle charging points across England and Wales.

**Rachel Maclean:**

We have put in place generous grant funding schemes to support chargepoint infrastructure on residential streets and across the wider roads network. The Government and industry have supported the installation of over 18,000 publicly available charging devices across the whole of the UK. This includes over 3,200 rapid devices – one of the largest networks in Europe.

There are over 370 rapid and ultra-rapid chargepoints across 97% of motorway service areas in England. Today, a driver is never more than 25 miles away from a rapid chargepoint anywhere along England's motorways and major A roads. By 2023, we aim to have at least six high powered, open access chargepoints at motorway service areas in England, with some larger sites having ten to twelve. By 2035, we expect the number to increase to around 6,000 high powered chargers across the network. To help achieve these ambitions, the Government announced the Rapid Charging Fund in March 2020, as part of a £500 million commitment to electric vehicle (EV) charging infrastructure in England. The Office for Low Emission Vehicles (OLEV) had a devolved authority (DA) roundtable in November 2019 with officials from all DAs, where we discussed progress and shared lessons, including around rapid chargepoint rollout. The OLEV are working with Welsh officials to organise a workshop in Wales, where local authorities can hear about and discuss best practice to supporting zero emission vehicle uptake in their areas.

The first £70 million investment through the £400 million public-private Chargepoint Infrastructure Investment Fund will create 3,000 new rapid chargepoints, more than doubling the number of rapid chargepoints across the UK by 2024.

**Adam Afriye:**

[\[114125\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the potential for private and public electric vehicle charging points to be hacked by cyber criminals or hostile foreign governments.

**Rachel Maclean:**

The Department for Transport works closely with the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy and the National Cyber Security Centre to ensure that effectively mitigating cyber security risks is a core part of electric vehicle (EV) chargepoint policy. The Government has commissioned work assessing the cyber security risk associated with the emerging energy system, including electric vehicle

chargepoints. The output from this work will inform policy, including the development of relevant standards or regulatory approaches to mitigate cyber security risks.

In 2019, the Government consulted on regulations under the Automated Electric Vehicles Act (AEVA) for private, smart EV chargepoints. We proposed that these regulations will require compliance with device-level standards, to help ensure devices are cyber secure. These regulations are due to be laid next year. The Government will also shortly be consulting on using other powers under the AEVA to improve the consumer experience of public chargepoints, including opening chargepoint data. Cyber security will be considered as part of any future regulatory framework.

**Adam Afriye:**

[\[114126\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what estimate he has made of the number of electric vehicle charging points that will have been installed by the end of 2021.

**Rachel Maclean:**

No such estimate has been made. The Department believes that the market is often better placed to encourage the private sector to invest in and operate a self-sustaining public network supported by the right policy framework. The Automated and Electric Vehicles Act (AEVA) provides the Government with a range of powers to improve the charging experience for current and future users, including compelling fuel retailers to install chargepoints.

## ■ High Speed Two Railway Line: Government Assistance

**Dame Cheryl Gillan:**

[\[113461\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what the value is of the (a) rent-free working space and (b) commercial and technical support being given by the Government through the High Speed Two project to (i) Digital Rail, (ii) Hypervine, (iii) Rail Diary, (iv) Grid Smarter Cities and (v) Open Space.

**Andrew Stephenson:**

The HS2 accelerator is a programme to support innovation in UK-registered Small Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) working on HS2. HS2 Ltd does this through its lead innovation partner, the Connected Places Catapult (CPC), an independent research organisation set up as a not-for-profit entity, part funded by UK Research and Innovation (UKRI).

SMEs are selected for the HS2 Accelerator programme after applying to an open competition call that sets out some of the specific innovation challenges experienced by HS2. It is advertised nationally through multiple channels in line with industry standards for accelerator programmes.

Selected organisations participate in the Accelerator on a voluntary basis and receive no direct financial benefit. Desk space and meeting rooms are made available by CPC in Birmingham when needed for training, business development advice and meetings with HS2 Ltd. It is not possible to calculate the monetary value associated

with the future ad-hoc use of this resource. This resource is not in lieu of any existing arrangements the SMEs may have in place. The value of HS2 Ltd's contract with CPC is £390k, and we are working with 10 UK SME companies.

■ **High Speed Two Railway Line: Manchester Gorton**

**Afzal Khan:**

[\[114316\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if the Minister of State at the Department for Transport will meet with local stakeholders in Manchester Gorton to discuss the proposed Birchfields Road Vent Shaft for Phase 2b (Western Leg) of HS2.

**Andrew Stephenson:**

The Government published its response to the 2019 Design Refinement Consultation of HS2 Phase 2b Western Leg on the 7<sup>th</sup> October, in which I set out my decision on the location of the vent shaft. Notwithstanding this, if your constituents do wish to continue to engage regarding the vent shaft they can still do so directly with HS2 Ltd.

■ **Large Goods Vehicles: Kent**

**Hilary Benn:**

[\[114061\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether lorries travelling into Kent from the rest of the UK but not travelling to EU countries will from 1 January 2021 have to register with the DVSA in order to demonstrate an exemption for a Kent Access Permit.

**Rachel Maclean:**

As set out in HM Government's Border Operating Model first published on 13 July 2020, HGV drivers making domestic journeys that start, travel through, or end in Kent, will not need to obtain a Kent Access Permit. It is recommended that all drivers who are transporting goods domestically carry paperwork detailing their journey so any possible delays can be minimised

**Hilary Benn:**

[\[114062\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when he plans to publish guidance for lorries travelling into Kent from the rest of the UK but not travelling to a country in the UK on how they can demonstrate from 1 January 2021 that they do not need to be in possession of a Kent Access Permit in order to enter the county of Kent.

**Rachel Maclean:**

As set out in HM Government's Border Operating Model first published on 13 July 2020, HGV drivers making domestic journeys that start, travel through, or end in Kent, will not need to obtain a Kent Access Permit. It is recommended that all drivers who are transporting goods domestically carry paperwork detailing their journey so any possible delays can be minimised

**Hilary Benn:**

[\[114063\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what estimate he has made of the proportion of EU-registered lorries that have entered the UK in a seven day period to make

deliveries that will require a Kent Access Permit because they are carrying return loads destined for the EU.

**Andrew Stephenson:**

All EU registered HGVs returning in a 7 day period will need a Kent Access Permit if using the short straits crossings, even if they are carrying an empty trailer. We are working closely with EU based hauliers and their industry associations to ensure they understand this requirement and have access to the information they need to take exports to the EU from 1 January.

**Hilary Benn:**

[\[114064\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether EU-registered lorries that have entered the UK to make deliveries will require a Kent Access Permit for their return journey if they are empty.

**Rachel Maclean:**

Subject to passage of the necessary Statutory Instruments, an empty HGV using the Short Straits crossings on its return to the EU will require a Kent Access Permit.

■ **Members: Correspondence**

**Afzal Khan:**

[\[114315\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when the Minister of State at the Department for Transport plans to respond to the letter of 12 October 2020 from the hon. Member for Manchester Gorton on HS2 Phase 2b (Western Leg) Birchfields Road Vent Shaft.

**Andrew Stephenson:**

A response to your letter of 12 October was sent on 12 November.

■ **Public Transport: Dementia**

**Gill Furniss:**

[\[114276\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he has plans to extend the eligibility for the English National Concessionary Travel Scheme to people under the age of 65 diagnosed with early-onset dementia.

**Rachel Maclean:**

The English National Concessionary Travel Scheme (ENCTS) is primarily aimed at improving mobility. There are seven categories of disability under which a person may be considered eligible for the concession. The categories do not focus on any specifically identified medical condition but on its effect and how it may impair a person's mobility. Under the existing categories, people with a wide range of disabling conditions will therefore already be considered eligible.

■ **Railway Stations: Repairs and Maintenance**

**Afzal Khan:**

[\[113633\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, which railway stations in London have been refurbished or rebuilt since 2010; and at what cost to the public purse.

**Chris Heaton-Harris:**

Since 2010, we have spent c£1.93bn on rebuilding London Bridge, Farringdon, City Thameslink and Blackfriars stations, as part of the Thameslink Programme. Ten new stations are being built (or significantly expanded) as part of the Crossrail Programme, in addition to a number of other stations that are being enhanced. The cost of Crossrail station improvement works to the taxpayer will be finalised when works are complete. In addition, c£144m has been spent on other station improvements in London through the National Station Improvement Programme, the Access for all Programme and the New Stations Fund. Other station renewals and enhancements have also been delivered – this is not a definitive list of all spend since 2010.

■ **Railways: Bridges****Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:****[113626]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many railway bridge crashes have taken place in each of the last ten years.

**Chris Heaton-Harris:**

The Office of Rail and Road publish the number of bridge strikes on the mainline and London Underground in Great Britain (table 5240 here:

<https://dataportal.orr.gov.uk/statistics/health-and-safety/rail-safety/table-5240-road-rail-interface-bridge-strikes/>).

The number of railway bridge strikes each year on the whole network (mainline and London Underground) since 2010/2011 is:

| YEAR    | TOTAL RAILWAY BRIDGE STRIKES (MAINLINE AND LONDON UNDERGROUND) |
|---------|--|
| 2010/11 | 1,740  |
| 2011/12 | 1,658  |
| 2012/13 | 1,625  |
| 2013/14 | 1,664  |
| 2014/15 | 1,698  |
| 2015/16 | 1,621  |
| 2016/17 | 1,675  |
| 2017/18 | 1,927  |
| 2018/19 | 1,976  |
| 2019/20 | 1,743  |



**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:** [114297]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent assessment he has made of the risk to passengers of railway bridge crashes.

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:** [114298]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many railway bridges have undergone repairs as a result of a road vehicle crashing into the bridge in the last 12 months.

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:** [114299]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what the cost to the public purse has been of vehicle crashes into railway bridges in the last 12 months.

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:** [114300]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent steps he has taken to reduce the risk of vehicles crashing into railway bridges.

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:** [114301]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the effect of vehicles crashing into railway bridges on passenger delays over the last five years.

**Chris Heaton-Harris:**

Network Rail is responsible for managing and maintaining its bridge stock; the Department does not hold information on the number of repairs undergone on rail bridges due to vehicle collisions in the last 12 months, or the cost to the public purse. As the owner of mainline rail infrastructure in Great Britain, Network Rail collect information on vehicle collisions with rail bridges. The below report, published on Network Rail's website, summarises some of the impacts of rail bridge collisions:

<https://www.networkrail.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Bridge-Strikes-Risks-Consequences-and-Costs-2020-accessible.pdf>.

The Department for Transport has invested £3 million to help create a digital road map developed by Ordnance Survey, and includes information on height and weight restrictions that can be used in SatNavs or other devices to improve the quality and accuracy of routing advice.

In addition, the DfT works with bridge owners, including Network Rail, to raise driver awareness and offer advice on avoiding low bridges. It has published a suite of documents under 'Prevention of bridge strikes: a good practice guide' on GOV.UK, with specific guidance for both operations and managerial staff, plus professional drivers, and professional drivers of passenger vehicles:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/prevention-of-bridge-strikes-good-practice-guide>. The Government has also published comprehensive advice on signing rail bridges in Chapter 4 of the Traffic Signs Manual:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/traffic-signs-manual>.

Foreign language guides have also been produced for drivers from other countries unfamiliar with our roads. These guides are endorsed by the European Transport Safety Council.

### ■ School Streets Initiative

**Chris Grayling:** [91850]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether it is his policy to extend the school streets initiative outside London.

**Rachel Maclean:**

All local authorities in England are already able to install School Streets, as they consist of standard traffic management measures readily available to them.

The Active Travel Fund, announced on 9 May, is providing £225 million to local authorities to help them make changes to their road layouts to encourage active travel. Alongside this, the Department published additional Network Management Duty guidance providing advice on what changes the Government expected local authorities to make. School Streets are one of the measures listed.

‘Gear Change: A bold vision for cycling and walking’, published on 28 July, also includes a commitment to create more School Streets, to help deliver the ambition that half of all journeys in urban areas should be walked or cycled.

### ■ Shipping: Carbon Emissions

**Alex Cunningham:** [114163]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 11 November 2020 to Question 111511 on Merchant Shipping: Carbon Emissions, how much the Government is investing to support the transition to zero emission vessels in the UK shipping industry; and if he will include full details of that investment in the Transport Decarbonisation Plan.

**Rachel Maclean:**

To date, the Department for Transport has funded a £1.5m competition for innovation in clean maritime and provided £193,897 in grant support, through the Department’s Transport Technology Research Innovation Grant Programme, to early stage research projects related to clean maritime. Details of the grant winners are available, respectively, on the MarRI-UK website<sup>[1]</sup> and on GOV.UK<sup>[2]</sup>.

<sup>[1]</sup><https://www.marri-uk.org/funding-opportunities/clean-maritime-call/clean-maritime-call-winners>

<sup>[2]</sup>[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/879162/transport-technology-research-innovation-grants-t-trig-funding-winners.csv/preview](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/879162/transport-technology-research-innovation-grants-t-trig-funding-winners.csv/preview)

**Alex Cunningham:**

**[114164]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the Clean Maritime Plan, published 11 July 2019, whether his Department has made an estimate of the potential amount of (a) public and (b) private investment required to achieve the pathway to zero carbon emissions in the domestic maritime industry.

**Robert Courts:**

The Department has undertaken extensive research considering the level of investment required for the UK's domestic maritime sector to achieve net zero by 2050. This research comprises a range of scenarios assessing different policy options, including both costs and benefits, and has been published on GOV.UK: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/clean-maritime-plan-maritime-2050-environment-route-map>

**Alex Cunningham:**

**[114165]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether his Department has made a recent assessment of the effect of the objectives of the Clean Maritime Plan, published in July 2019, on maritime employment levels in each year to 2035.

**Robert Courts:**

Alongside the Clean Maritime Plan, the Department published an assessment of the potential economic opportunities from low and zero emission shipping. While this does not estimate the number of potential new jobs that could be created through the decarbonisation of the maritime sector, it identifies a large potential global market for the elements of alternative maritime fuel production technologies in which the UK has a particular competitive advantage (for example, upfront design), which could result in economic benefits to the UK of around £360–£510 million per year by the middle of the century.

More recently, Maritime UK has published its views that investment in maritime decarbonisation could in future create more than 15 thousand jobs as well as tens of thousands of jobs when considering the wider supply chain<sup>[1]</sup>. Industry research estimates that in 2017 the UK maritime sector as a whole directly supported more than 220 thousand jobs for UK employees<sup>[2]</sup>.

<sup>[1]</sup> <https://www.maritimeuk.org/spending-review/bid/>

<sup>[2]</sup> [https://www.maritimeuk.org/documents/429/Maritime\\_UK\\_-\\_state\\_of\\_the\\_maritime\\_nation\\_report\\_2019\\_D17mVSQ.pdf](https://www.maritimeuk.org/documents/429/Maritime_UK_-_state_of_the_maritime_nation_report_2019_D17mVSQ.pdf)

**Alex Cunningham:**

**[114166]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what plans he has to use the Renewable Transport Fuel Obligation to encourage the uptake of low carbon fuels in the shipping industry.

**Rachel Maclean:**

As set out in our Clean Maritime Plan, we are considering whether and how the Renewable Transport Fuel Obligation (RTFO) could be used to encourage the uptake

of low carbon fuels in maritime. We plan to consult soon on this policy as part of a wider consultation on potential changes to the RTFO scheme.

■ **Southern: Annual Reports**

**Ms Karen Buck:** **[113480]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he has required Southern Railway to provide monthly management accounts and cashflow forecasts to be reviewed by his Department in response to the Office for National Statistics's decision to classify train operating companies into the public sector.

**Chris Heaton-Harris:**

The Department continues to request periodic management accounts and cashflow forecasts from all Train Operating Companies as per the underlying Franchise Agreements.

■ **Southern: Finance**

**Ms Karen Buck:** **[113481]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what formula was used to calculate the emergency funding given to Southern Railway to cover the period from (a) 1 April 2020 to 30 September 2020 and (b) 1 October 2020 to 31 March 2021.

**Chris Heaton-Harris:**

Schedule 8.A of the Emergency Measures Agreement, outlines the calculation of Franchise Payments from 01 April 2020 – 21 September 2020. In addition, Schedule 8.1A of the Emergency Recovery Measures Agreement outlines the Franchise Payments from 22 September 2020 onwards.

The Emergency Measures Agreement for Govia Thameslink Railway is publicly available, and the Emergency Recovery Measures Agreement will be publicly available in due course.

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/917486/govia-thameslink-emergency-measures-agreement.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/917486/govia-thameslink-emergency-measures-agreement.pdf).

**Ms Karen Buck:** **[113482]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the emergency funding provided to the railways, whether the Government plans to take steps to assess whether actual cumulative passenger revenue cash receipts by Southern Railway are in line with the expected cumulative scenario underpinning the original settlement for the second half of 2020-21.

**Chris Heaton-Harris:**

The Department continues to monitor actual levels of passenger revenue through the submission of periodic management accounts from Govia Thameslink Railway, and the calculation of Franchise Payments is driven by the level of actual revenue received by the franchisee.

## ■ Southern: Public Appointments

**Ms Karen Buck:**

[\[113479\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he plans to appoint special representatives to attend all Southern Railway board meetings as a result of the decision by the Office for National Statistics to classify train operating companies into the public sector.

**Chris Heaton-Harris:**

The Secretary of State does not plan to appoint special representatives to attend Southern Railway board meetings.

The classification of train operating companies by the Office for National Statistics does not have any direct implications in areas such as ownership, legal status, or management structure.

The Department continues to monitor the delivery of the Govia Thameslink Railway (GTR) Franchise Agreement, which encompasses the Southern Railway brand.

## ■ Train Operating Companies: Coronavirus

**Dan Jarvis:**

[\[114193\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions he has had with train operating companies on refunding rail tickets purchased before the November 2020 covid-19 lockdown was imposed.

**Chris Heaton-Harris:**

Off-Peak, Anytime and season tickets are already refundable in accordance with the National Rail Conditions of Travel.

In October we agreed with the rail industry that, where a passenger with an Advance ticket is prevented from travelling due to COVID-19 restrictions, change of journey administration fees will be waived and, if they purchased their ticket directly from a train operator, they will be able to apply for a Rail Travel Voucher. Independent rail retailers can use their discretion to offer a credit note if they have the ability to do so, or a fee-free change of journey.

## ■ Trains: Innovation

**Ms Karen Buck:**

[\[113478\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he has commissioned a Government-led expert review of the potential implementation of driverless trains in areas outside London.

**Chris Heaton-Harris:**

In September, The Secretary of State asked the RSSB (formerly the Rail Safety Standards Board) to conduct a short study to examine the facts and evidence surrounding the potential application of GoA3 automated train operation (ATO) on the rail network in Great Britain. The study will, amongst other things, consider the

technical and practical implications of implementing GoA3 ATO on the mainline rail network, where GoA3 ATO trains currently operate internationally, and whether they have been successful. RSSB's report is expected to be published in the New Year.

■ **Transport for Greater Manchester and Transport for London: Finance**

**Andrew Gwynne:**

[\[114087\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how much funding (a) Transport for London and (b) Transport for Greater Manchester has received from the Government for (i) capital projects and (ii) general operations in each of the last 10 years.

**Rachel Maclean:**

The Department for Transport (DfT) has paid £883,925,106 (£884M) directly to Transport for London over the last 10 years. We have not made any direct payments to Transport for Greater Manchester. DfT makes payments to the Greater Manchester Combined Authority who then pay Transport for Greater Manchester for their required transport needs.

■ **Transport: Carbon Emissions**

**Alex Cunningham:**

[\[114162\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 11 November 2020 to Question 111511, when he plans to publish the Transport Decarbonisation Plan; and what assessment he has made of the potential effect of that Plan on the planned review of the Clean Maritime Plan in 2022.

**Rachel Maclean:**

We expect to publish the Transport Decarbonisation Plan in Spring 2021. When reviewing the Clean Maritime Plan in 2022, the Government will consider the actions set out in the Transport Decarbonisation Plan and the progress made towards maritime decarbonisation.

**Beth Winter:**

[\[114345\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on the inclusion of (a) international aviation and (b) shipping emissions in the Sixth Carbon Budget.

**Rachel Maclean:**

Ministers have regular discussions about our ambitions for the Sixth Carbon Budget and net zero target.

International aviation and shipping emissions are a global issue that require a global solution. Aviation and shipping have a crucial role to play in reaching net zero emissions globally, which is why the UK is leading the way to develop measures at the International Maritime Organization (IMO) and International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO).

This globally-coordinated, sector-based approach reflects the highly mobile nature of carbon emissions from these sectors and the risk that carbon emissions are simply

moved to other jurisdictions in response to individual states taking unilateral action. We have not ruled out including international aviation and shipping emissions in legislation at a later date, subject to progress at the IMO and ICAO.

## ■ Transport: Infrastructure

**Dan Jarvis:**

[\[113552\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the potential effect on (a) UK transport infrastructure and (b) the logistics sector of the UK and EU not agreeing a deal on their future relationship by the end of the transition period.

**Rachel Maclean:**

The Government is undertaking a range of preparations, led by the Border and Protocol Delivery Group in the Cabinet Office, to mitigate risks relating to new border arrangements; arrangements that will apply whether or not a trade agreement is agreed with the EU.

## ■ Transport: Technology

**Dame Cheryl Gillan:**

[\[113459\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of implementing a hyperloop transport system through the High Speed Two project.

**Dame Cheryl Gillan:**

[\[113460\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of the (a) maglev and (b) hyperloop transport systems; and if he will make a statement.

**Andrew Stephenson:**

Hyperloop is at an early stage of development and significant technological challenges have to be overcome before an operational system can be constructed and carry passengers.

In 2017 the Department for Transport's Science Advisory Council (SAC) published a position statement on Hyperloop which noted that "because of the scale of the technical challenges involved, an operational Hyperloop system is likely to be at least a couple of decades away." Officials in the Department continue to monitor Hyperloop research very closely. They do not believe that there have been any developments in the last three years that might cast doubt on the SAC's 2017 assessment.

The Department for Transport conducted a detailed investigation last year into the feasibility of constructing a high-speed Maglev link in the UK. Its conclusion was that whilst Maglev is a promising technology, there are still several obstacles which, at present, put it at a disadvantage compared to high speed rail.



**■ Travel: Coronavirus****Dan Jarvis:****[114192]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what criteria were used to define a permitted reason for the purposes of an overnight stay in the UK during the November 2020 covid-19 lockdown; and if he will make a statement.

**Robert Courts:**

The criteria used to define a permitted reason for the purposes of an overnight stay in the UK during the November 2020 Covid-19 lockdown are set out in the Cabinet Office guidance. This can be found via the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/new-national-restrictions-from-5-november>

**TREASURY****■ Aviation: Coronavirus****Seema Malhotra:****[113558]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the effect on unemployment of the covid-19 outbreak in areas with a high proportion of aviation-related jobs.

**Kemi Badenoch:**

The Government recognises the challenging circumstances facing the aviation industry as a result of Covid-19 and firms experiencing difficulties can draw upon the unprecedented package of measures announced by the Chancellor, including schemes to raise capital and flexibilities with tax bills. The aerospace sector and its aviation customers are being supported with over £9 billion support through the Bank of England's Covid Corporate Financing Facility, grants for research and development, loan guarantees and support for aerospace exports.

The Chancellor also announced on 5 November that the CJRS will be extended until March, with employees receiving 80% of their usual salary for hours not worked, up to a maximum of £2,500 per month. This will continue to protect jobs and businesses across the UK in light of recent developments in the path of the virus, and the new temporary restrictions announced by the Prime Minister.

The Government also recognises that every region and community will be feeling the impact of this crisis and remains committed to helping the unemployed return to work and supporting those most vulnerable to job losses. We will continue to work closely with local areas to make sure that individuals and businesses are directed to the right support during this difficult period, and will continue to consider how best to target interventions at the places where they are most needed.

**■ Beer: Excise Duties****Tim Farron:**[\[113528\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the Written Statement of on 21 July 2020, HCWS400, on Finance Bill 2020-21: Draft Legislation and Tax Documents, on what date he plans to open the technical consultation on Small Brewers Relief.

**Kemi Badenoch:**

The technical consultation on Small Brewers Relief is due to be published later this year.

**Grahame Morris:**[\[113535\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the contribution of the Exchequer Secretary to the Treasury of 9 November 2020, Official Report, column 707, which breweries in Easington constituency will benefit from changes to Small Brewers Relief.

**Kemi Badenoch:**

Due to taxpayer confidentiality, it is not possible to analyse the impact of tax changes at the level of individual breweries. However, all breweries will benefit from the improved economics of the scheme stemming from our reforms, which will allow brewers to grow without facing arbitrary barriers.

**Grahame Morris:**[\[113536\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what discussions he has had with breweries that produce less than 5000 hectolitres of beer on changes to Small Brewers Relief.

**Grahame Morris:**[\[113537\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the contribution of the Exchequer Secretary to the Treasury of 9 November 2020, Official Report, column 708, what assessment he has made of the financial effect on brewers producing between 2100 and 5000 hectolitres of changes to Small Brewers Relief.

**Grahame Morris:**[\[113538\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what discussions his predecessor had with (a) breweries and (b) other organisations on reviewing changes to Small Brewers Relief prior to making his announcement at the 2018 Budget that that scheme would be reviewed.

**Grahame Morris:**[\[113539\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the oral contribution of the Exchequer Secretary to the Treasury of 9 November 2020, Official Report, column 708, how much and what proportion of Small Brewers Relief in 2019 was spent on breweries operating between 2100 and 5000 hectolitres.

**Kemi Badenoch:**

Further information will be published alongside the technical consultation later this year.

The Government listened to a wide range of brewers prior to the Chancellor's 2018 announcement, including those represented by the Society of Independent Brewers (SIBA), the Small Brewers Duty Reform Coalition (SBDRC) and the British Beer and Pub Association (BBPA).

■ **Business: Coronavirus**

**Alex Sobel:** [\[91922\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if his Department will take steps to ensure that businesses sign contractual commitments to help deliver the Government's target of net zero emissions by 2050 when disbursing loans to support businesses during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Kemi Badenoch:**

The Government's unprecedented package of support in response to Covid-19 has been targeted at the businesses and individuals who most need assistance, while ensuring that the measures are simple, certain and introduced in a timely manner to protect livelihoods.

Alongside the focus on supporting the economy, the Government continues to take its environmental responsibilities very seriously. Companies receiving support as a Last Resort Business Intervention will need to agree to appropriate conditions, including those on climate where we expect companies to commit to ambitious conditions on Net Zero targets. The first company to receive any such support committed to ambitious conditions around climate change and Net Zero targets.

**Alex Sobel:** [\[91923\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of providing an additional financial support package for (a) the events and exhibitions industry and (b) other industries which are unable to operate until covid-19 restrictions are lifted.

**Alex Sobel:** [\[91924\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what support his Department plans to provide to the events industry to support that sector's economic recovery when covid-19 restrictions are lifted.

**Kemi Badenoch:**

The Government recognises the extreme disruption the necessary actions to combat Covid-19 are having on the events and exhibitions industry, as well as other industries facing Covid-19 restrictions.

During this difficult time the Treasury is working intensively with employers, delivery partners, industry groups and other government departments such as the Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport to understand the long-term effects of Covid-19 on key areas of the economy.

Some of the closed sectors have already benefitted from the wide range of support, launched by the Government, to safeguard the economy during the pandemic. This

includes the deferral of VAT payments, a year-long business rates holiday for eligible businesses, a wide range of Government-backed and guaranteed loan schemes, the Self-Employed Income Support Scheme and the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme.

We have also provided local authorities with £1.1bn to enable them to support businesses over the coming months, as they form a key part of local economies.

In response to the England-wide restrictions announced by the Prime Minister on the 31 October, we have announced a new set of national support measures. This includes an extension to the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme to March 2021, more generous support for the self-employed, extended application windows for government-backed loans and cash grants of up to £3,000 for businesses forced to close.

While we will not be able to protect every single job or save every single business, nor stand in the way of the economy adapting and people finding new jobs, or starting new businesses, we will continue to monitor the impact of Government support with regard to supporting businesses, individuals, and sectors as we respond to this pandemic.

#### ■ **Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme**

**Theresa Villiers:**

[\[113511\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will extend the coronavirus job retention scheme to people who would have qualified for that scheme if their employer had made an application to it.

**Theresa Villiers:**

[\[113513\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of a backdated furlough scheme for people who were denied furlough by their employer.

**Jesse Norman:**

In light of the changing path of the virus, the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme has been extended until the end of March 2021 for all parts of the UK. People employed and on payroll on 30 October will be eligible, and neither the employer nor the employee needs to have previously claimed or have been claimed for under CJRS to make a claim under the extended CJRS, if other eligibility criteria are met. If employees were employed as of 23 September 2020 and were made redundant or stopped working for their employer prior to 30 October 2020, they can also qualify for the scheme if their employer re-employs them. This will ensure that there is no gap in support.

The furloughing of staff through the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme is a voluntary arrangement entered at the employers' discretion and agreed by employees. That means it is not for the Government to decide whether an individual firm should put its

staff on furlough or take its staff off furlough. That is a decision for the employer, in consultation with the employee.

Where firms make the decision that they cannot retain all of their staff over the longer run, the Government is ensuring that those looking for work are supported. A package of measures in the Plan for Jobs will help people find work by significantly increasing help offered through Jobcentres and providing individualised advice through the National Careers Service. The Government has also launched the Kickstart Scheme, a £2 billion fund to create hundreds of thousands of new, fully subsidised jobs for young people.

Temporary welfare measures announced in March will also benefit new and existing claimants. These include the £20 per week increase to the Universal Credit standard allowance and Working Tax Credit basic element, and a nearly £1 billion increase in support for renters through increases to the Local Housing Allowance rates for Universal Credit and Housing Benefit claimants.

**Theresa Villiers:**

[\[113512\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he has made an estimate of the number of people who were denied furlough by their employers.

**Jesse Norman:**

An estimate of the number of people who were denied furlough by their employer is not available. Decisions on whether to offer to furlough individuals are a matter for employers, and that process does not involve HMRC.

**Andrew Gwynne:**

[\[113514\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate his Department has made of the number of redundancies that may have been avoided if the announcement on the extension of the coronavirus job retention scheme had been made earlier.

**Steve Barclay:**

The Government had always made clear that economic support would continue past the end of October and had announced the Job Support Scheme to do just that. Extending the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme to the end of March 2021 instead responds to the latest economic conditions.

We have set out that employees that were employed and on an employers' payroll on 23 September 2020 (the day before the Job Support Scheme announcement) who were made redundant or stopped working afterwards can be re-employed and claimed for under the CJRS extension.

**Kate Osborne:**

[\[113657\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether employees with a permanent part-year contract are eligible for the coronavirus job retention scheme.

**Jesse Norman:**

To be eligible for the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, employees can be on any type of employment contract. This includes full-time, part-time, agency, flexible or

zero-hour contracts as long as the furloughed employee was employed on 30 October 2020, and the employer made a PAYE RTI submission to HMRC between 20 March 2020 and 30 October 2020, notifying a payment of earnings for that employee.

## ■ **Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme: Public Sector**

**Barbara Keeley:**

**[113527]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make it his policy to expand the coronavirus job retention scheme to allow (a) schools and (b) other publicly funded organisations to access that scheme for staff who are clinically extremely vulnerable and who cannot attend work during the November 2020 covid-19 lockdown and are unable to work from home.

**Steve Barclay:**

Those working for fully funded public sector organisations, including those that are clinically extremely vulnerable, should be paid as normal out of existing budgets.

Arrangements should be made to facilitate working from home wherever possible, and reprioritisation and redeployment should be considered to minimise issues with service delivery.

Where a clinically extremely vulnerable individual works for a public sector organisation that is not fully funded by public grants, and working from home is not possible, furloughing may be appropriate. This remains at the employer's discretion and Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme claims should remain proportionate to the impact on revenue disruption.

Schools have continued to receive their core funding in full throughout the Covid-19 pandemic. Guidance on financial support for education, early years and children's social care can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-financial-support-for-education-early-years-and-childrens-social-care/coronavirus-covid-19-financial-support-for-education-early-years-and-childrens-social-care#sector-specific-guidance>

## ■ **Coronavirus: Disease Control**

**Alison McGovern:**

**[113691]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what economic models his Department used to brief (a) officials in the Cabinet Office and (b) members of the SAGE committee.

**John Glen:**

Throughout the pandemic, economic analysis has been a key part of the advice that ministers use to inform decisions taken in this fast-moving health environment.

The Treasury continues to provide economic analysis to ministers on an ongoing basis as part of policy making and design. The Treasury does not produce formal forecasts for the UK economy. Economic and fiscal forecasting is the responsibility of the independent OBR. They will publish their next forecast on 25 November.

Economic analysis undertaken by the Treasury draws on a wide range of sources, including analysis from external sources such as the OBR, Bank of England and other independent bodies.

## ■ Directors: Coronavirus

**Bill Esterson:** [\[113545\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make an assessment of the potential scope for fraud in claims by directors of limited companies in respect of future financial support provided in response to the covid-19 outbreak.

**Jesse Norman:**

The Government has prioritised delivering support to as many people as possible, as quickly as possible, while guarding against the risk of fraud or abuse. This meant making difficult decisions, and the Government has acknowledged that it has not been able to support everyone as they would want.

The practical issues that prevented the Government from being able to include company owner-managers in the original Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS), namely not being able to verify the source of their dividend income without introducing unacceptable fraud risk, still remain.

Similarly, it would not be appropriate for the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS), designed to replace the immediate costs of employment, to be used to replace a distribution of net profits that have yet to be determined.

Opening up the CJRS or SEISS scheme to cover dividends, for which no up-to-date accurate data source is available, would either have required allowing “pay now check later” claims, which HMRC could not realistically have policed, or added one-to-one manual review steps which would have drastically slowed down payments and required unfeasible amounts of resources to process.

Company owner-managers may still be eligible for other support available including CJRS (in respect of their salary but not their dividends), Bounce Back loans, tax deferrals, rental support, increased levels of Universal Credit, mortgage holidays, and other business support grants.

## ■ Employment: Coronavirus

**Bill Esterson:** [\[113547\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will publish an equality impact assessment on the difference in financial support available to (a) workers paid through PAYE who qualified for furlough, (b) workers paid through PAYE who did not qualify for furlough, (c) self-employed workers who qualified for the self employed income support scheme, (d) self-employed workers who did not qualify for the self employed income support scheme and (e) limited company directors who paid themselves in dividends but not through PAYE.



**Jesse Norman:**

When designing the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme and the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme policies and subsequent reforms the Government undertook an analysis of how the policies were likely to affect individuals sharing protected characteristics in line with its Public Sector Equality Duties. This is in line with the internal procedural requirements and support in place for ensuring that equalities considerations inform decisions taken by ministers.

The completion and publication of formal Equality Impact Assessment documents is not a legal or procedural requirement. Equality impacts are appropriately assessed and flagged to ministers. HMT has rigorous processes in place to ensure that it complies with its legal requirements under the Equality Act 2010.

**■ Exports: VAT****Andrea Leadsom:**[\[114155\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of the end of the VAT Retail Export scheme for overseas customers on (a) Bicester Village and (b) other businesses who rely on regular and mobile international customers visiting the UK.

**Andrea Leadsom:**[\[114156\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the analysis published in September 2020 by the Centre for Economics and Business Research on the decision to end the VAT Retail Export scheme.

**Andrea Leadsom:**[\[114157\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of the removal of the VAT Retail Export Scheme on the number of overseas visitors to the UK.

**Jesse Norman:**

Ahead of the end of the transition period, the Government has announced the VAT and excise duty treatment of goods purchased by individuals for personal use and carried in their luggage arriving from or going overseas (passengers). The following rules will apply from 1 January 2021:

- Passengers travelling from Great Britain to any destination outside the United Kingdom (UK) will be able to purchase duty-free excise goods once they have passed security controls at ports, airports, and international rail stations.
- Personal allowances will apply to passengers entering Great Britain from a destination outside of the UK, with alcohol allowances significantly increased.
- The VAT Retail Export Scheme (RES) in Great Britain will not be extended to EU residents and will be withdrawn for all passengers.

- The concessionary treatment on tax-free sales for non-excise goods will be removed across the UK.

The Government published a consultation which ran from 11 March to 20 May. During this time the Government held a number of virtual meetings with stakeholders to hear their views and received 73 responses to the consultation. The Government is also continuing to meet and discuss with stakeholders following the announcement of these policies.

The detailed rationale for these changes is included in the written ministerial statement and summary of responses to the recent consultation: <https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-statements/detail/2020-09-11/hcws448> and <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/a-consultation-on-duty-free-and-tax-free-goods-carried-by-passengers>. A technical note has also been issued to stakeholders to expand on this document and to respond to issues raised by stakeholders.

HMRC estimate that VAT RES refunds cost about £0.5 billion in VAT in 2019 for about 1.2 million non-EU visitors. In 2019 the ONS estimate there were substantially more EU visitors (24.8 million) than non-EU passengers (16.0 million) to the UK. This implies an extension to EU residents would significantly increase the cost by up to an estimated £0.9 billion. This would result in a large amount of deadweight loss by subsidising spending from EU visitors which already happens without a refund mechanism in place, potentially taking the total cost up to about £1.4 billion per annum.

The final costing will be subject to scrutiny by the independent Office for Budget Responsibility and will be set out at the next forecast on 25 November.

## ■ Government Securities: Index Linking

**Anneliese Dodds:**

**[113632]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether the Government has made an assessment of the potential merits of continuing with an RPI-like measure until such time as index-linked Government bonds based on RPI have matured.

**John Glen:**

The Retail Prices Index (RPI) is a measure of inflation with a number of shortcomings. To address these shortcomings, the UK Statistics Authority (UKSA) has made a proposal to reform RPI by bringing the methods and data sources of the Consumer Prices Index including owner occupiers' housing costs (CPIH) into RPI. Owing to the use of RPI in specific index-linked gilts, prior to 2030 the Chancellor's consent to this proposal is required before it can be implemented.

At the Budget in March, the government and UKSA launched a consultation to consider whether UKSA's proposal should be implemented at a date other than 2030, and, if so, when between 2025 and 2030. The consultation closed for responses on 21 August. As part of the consultation, the government invited views on matters

including how the holders of the government's issues of index-linked gilts, all of which use RPI as their reference rate, will be affected by the implementation of reform.

The consultation can be found at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/a-consultation-on-the-reform-to-retail-prices-index-rpi-methodology>.

As announced on 9 November, the government and UKSA will respond to the consultation alongside the Spending Review on 25 November.

The 9 November announcement can be found at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/a-letter-from-rishi-sunak-to-sir-david-norgrove-on-the-date-of-the-government-and-uk-statistics-authoritys-response-to-their-joint-consultation-on-re>.

## ■ Housing: Low Incomes

**Dr Rupa Huq:**

**[113609]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the effect on people on lower incomes of the (a) reduction in stamp duty and (b) increase in house prices in response to the covid-19 outbreak.

**Jesse Norman:**

Property transactions fell by as much as 50 per cent during the COVID-19 lockdown, and this downturn in the market meant that the future was uncertain for many people whose jobs relied on custom from the property industry. The temporary increase in the Stamp Duty Land Tax nil rate band was designed to immediately support the market, and jobs which rely on the sector.

## ■ Infrastructure and Public Expenditure: Carbon Emissions

**Helen Hayes:**

**[114267]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will create a net zero test for all infrastructure policy and spending decisions.

**Kemi Badenoch:**

The Government has a robust process for assessing the impact of spending decisions on achieving our environmental goals.

To ensure Government policy considers our environmental goals, we consult our world-leading Green Book, which mandates the consideration of climate and environmental impacts in spending.

Using the Green Book, which is under ongoing review, all interventions should be appraised against the Government's strategic objectives. This means how it interacts or conflicts with other policies, and how it is limited by constraints including legal commitments. Such as the Government's legal net zero carbon emissions target.

Building on this, an updated 2020 Green Book and the findings from its review will be published alongside the SR.

## ■ Infrastructure and Transport: North of England

**Dan Jarvis:**

[\[114194\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what plans he has to provide additional financial support to new infrastructure and transport links in the North of England to support the UK economy in the event that the transition period ends without an agreement on future relations with the EU.

**Kemi Badenoch:**

*We want a relationship with the EU which is based on friendly cooperation between sovereign equals, and centered on free trade. We will have a relationship with our European friends inspired by our shared history and values. At the end of this year the process of transition will be completed and we will have recovered our economic and political independence.*

*In the context, we continue to be focused on levelling up the country, and infrastructure investment in the North of England is a vital part of delivering on this ambition. That's why Budget 2020 committed £4.2 billion for long-term intra-city transport settlements across eight elected Mayors outside London, building on the existing Transforming Cities Fund representing an unprecedented investment in local public transport. At the same time, we announced over £27bn for strategic roads over the next five years 2020-25 – a record investment – including funding for major Northern schemes such as dualling the A66 across the Pennines and upgrading the M60 Simister Island in Greater Manchester.*

*Further details on investment plans will be set out through the Spending Review on 25 November.*

## ■ Infrastructure: Carbon Emissions

**Helen Hayes:**

[\[114269\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, when he plans to publish the Infrastructure Strategy; and how he plans to ensure that infrastructure that is selected for investment aligns with the Government's net zero emissions targets.

**Kemi Badenoch:**

Recognising the need to invest sustainably, we will set out our long-term economic infrastructure ambitions, including on decarbonisation and levelling up the nation in our upcoming National Infrastructure strategy which we expect to publish in the Autumn.

Ensuring infrastructure helps drive progress on Net Zero will be a key objective of the National Infrastructure Strategy, alongside levelling up across the country and driving growth across all parts of the UK.

The Strategy will set out the government's long-term ambitions for economic infrastructure. It will also be responding to the National Infrastructure Commission's 2018 assessment of the UK's infrastructure needs.

## ■ Infrastructure: Recycling

**Helen Hayes:**

[\[114268\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will give a remit to infrastructure agencies to consider the (a) circular economy and (b) natural infrastructure.

**Kemi Badenoch:**

The UK's national prosperity and wellbeing depends upon the sustainable use of our natural capital and the protection and enhancement of the environment.

Recognising the need to invest sustainably, our upcoming National Infrastructure Strategy will set out our long-term economic infrastructure ambitions, including on decarbonisation, waste and resource-use efficiency, and levelling up the nation.

## ■ Insurance: Older People

**Bell Ribeiro-Addy:**

[\[113229\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps the Government plans to ensure that insurance companies do not routinely decline cover to people aged 70 years and over.

**John Glen:**

Since 2012, the Government has engaged in a voluntary signposting agreement with the Association of British Insurers (ABI) and the British Insurance Brokers Association (BIBA) for motor and travel insurance. This was set up to certify that where an insurer or insurance broker cannot offer cover due to upper age limits on their policies, it will refer the customer to another insurer who can provide cover, or an appropriate signposting service.

This agreement is periodically reviewed, first in 2015 and most recently in 2019.

All insurers are also required to treat customers fairly under the Financial Conduct Authority's (FCA) rules.

## ■ Kickstart Scheme

**Seema Malhotra:**

[\[113557\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions on the progress of the Kickstart scheme.

**Steve Barclay:**

Ministers and officials in Her Majesty's Treasury continue to work closely with colleagues in the Department for Work and Pensions on the development and progress of the Kickstart scheme.

As of 11 November, the scheme has received 4,359 applications from employers and gateway organisations across Great Britain and 19,672 job placements have been created for young people at risk of long-term unemployment. The roles cover a range of different sectors, including construction, arts and entertainment, health social work, manufacturing, retail, transport and the public and voluntary sector.

The first Kickstart participants have started in their roles and we expect hundreds of thousands more jobs to be created over the next year.

## ■ Money: Coronavirus

**Nadia Whittome:** [\[114351\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment his Department has made of the difficulties faced by people who primarily use cash during the covid 19 outbreak.

**John Glen:**

The Government remains closely engaged with the financial regulators, including through the Treasury-chaired Joint Authorities Cash Strategy Group, to monitor and assess risks around cash relating to COVID-19.

The Government recognises that widespread access to cash remains extremely important to the day-to-day lives of many individuals across the UK. That is why the Chancellor announced at the March 2020 Budget that the Government will bring forward legislation to protect access to cash and ensure that the UK's cash infrastructure is sustainable in the long term. The Government published a Call for Evidence on 15 October to inform the development of this legislation.

## ■ Mortgages

**Gill Furniss:** [\[114277\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps he is taking to support mortgage prisoners.

**John Glen:**

The Government remains committed to supporting these borrowers and has worked with the FCA to implement rule changes to its mortgage lending rules, removing the regulatory barrier that prevented some customers, who otherwise may have been able to switch, from accessing new products. The new rules should allow customers to switch to an active lender as long as they meet the lenders' risk appetite and meet certain criteria, such as not looking to borrow more. Lenders have now started contacting borrowers who have been struggling to switch with options specifically designed for them, and I hope to see even more options from active lenders over the coming months.

Some customers may not be eligible to access new mortgage products in line with the adapted affordability assessment. This is why the FCA recently confirmed additional options to support borrowers, including making intragroup switching easier and extending interest-only payments, recognising the impact of Covid-19 on borrowers. These modified rules came into force on 23 October 2020.

Moreover, on 14 September, the Money and Pensions Service (MaPS) launched online information and a dedicated phone service (accessible via MaPS' main contact number) as a key source of information and advice for borrowers with inactive lenders, including signposting to specific brokers that will be able to help.

The Government continues to work with the mortgage lending sector to ensure support is available for consumers.

The FCA also recently noted that firms should be reviewing their variable rates to ensure they adhere to regulations regarding the fair treatment of consumers. The full statement can be found here: <https://www.fca.org.uk/news/statements/statement-mortgage-prisoners>

## ■ Northern Rock

**Seema Malhotra:**

**[113556]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of permitting a standard variable rate of over 4 per cent on former Northern Rock mortgages now managed by unregulated lenders, following confirmation by the Bank of England that interest rates will remain at 0.1 per cent; and what recent discussions he has had with the Financial Conduct Authority in relation to their oversight of unregulated lenders.

**John Glen:**

The setting of SVRs is a generally a matter for lenders, in which the government plays no role. In government sales of NRAM mortgages, however, purchasers have been restricted in the changes they can make to the SVR for at least 12 months after the transfer of ownership. The purchasers in most recent UKAR asset sales have been required to set the SVR by reference to the SVRs charged by a basket of 15 active lenders, for the lifetime of customers' loans.

Recent data from Moneyfacts found the average standard variable rate (SVR) across the entire mortgage market to be 4.44%. The rates former NRAM customers pay are therefore consistent with market standard rates.

In all sales of UKAR assets, the servicer of customers' loans has remained FCA-regulated. In all but the first sale, the legal title holder of customers' loans has also remained FCA-regulated.

The Government is open to considering an extension to the regulatory perimeter where the benefits to consumers and markets can be demonstrated. It is important to note, though, that a change in perimeter will not help customers to switch to a cheaper deal, or materially lower the rates of their mortgage.

Thousands of borrowers will now find it easier to switch to an active lender or continue interest only payments thanks to recent rule changes by the FCA, and we continue to work with the FCA to look for practical new solutions to help borrowers.

## ■ Pension Funds: Government Securities

**Anneliese Dodds:**

**[113629]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment the Government has made of the effect of switching from RPI to CPIH in 2025 on pension funds' holdings of index-linked government bonds.



**John Glen:**

The Retail Prices Index (RPI) is a measure of inflation with a number of shortcomings. To address these shortcomings, the UK Statistics Authority (UKSA) has made a proposal to reform RPI by bringing the methods and data sources of the Consumer Prices Index including owner occupiers' housing costs (CPIH) into RPI. Owing to the use of RPI in specific index-linked gilts, prior to 2030 the Chancellor's consent to this proposal is required before it can be implemented.

At the Budget in March, the government and UKSA launched a consultation to consider whether UKSA's proposal should be implemented at a date other than 2030, and, if so, when between 2025 and 2030. The consultation closed for responses on 21 August. As part of the consultation, the government invited views on matters including how the holders of the government's issues of index-linked gilts, all of which use RPI as their reference rate, will be affected by the implementation of reform.

The consultation can be found at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/a-consultation-on-the-reform-to-retail-prices-index-rpi-methodology>.

As announced on 9 November, the government and UKSA will respond to the consultation alongside the Spending Review on 25 November.

The 9 November announcement can be found at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/a-letter-from-rishi-sunak-to-sir-david-norgrove-on-the-date-of-the-government-and-uk-statistics-authoritys-response-to-their-joint-consultation-on-re>.

**Anneliese Dodds:****[113630]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment the Government has made of the effect of switching from RPI to CPIH in 2030 on pension funds' holdings of index-linked government bonds.

**John Glen:**

The Retail Prices Index (RPI) is a measure of inflation with a number of shortcomings. To address these shortcomings, the UK Statistics Authority (UKSA) has made a proposal to reform RPI by bringing the methods and data sources of the Consumer Prices Index including owner occupiers' housing costs (CPIH) into RPI. Owing to the use of RPI in specific index-linked gilts, prior to 2030 the Chancellor's consent to this proposal is required before it can be implemented.

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**Anneliese Dodds:**

**[113631]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate the Government has made of the potential cost of compensating pension funds for losses arising from index-linked government bonds as the result of switching from RPI to CPIH.

**John Glen:**

The Retail Prices Index (RPI) is a measure of inflation with a number of shortcomings. To address these shortcomings, the UK Statistics Authority (UKSA) has made a proposal to reform RPI by bringing the methods and data sources of the Consumer Prices Index including owner occupiers' housing costs (CPIH) into RPI. Owing to the use of RPI in specific index-linked gilts, prior to 2030 the Chancellor's consent to this proposal is required before it can be implemented.

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## ■ Public Service Broadcasting: Self-employed

**Yasmin Qureshi:**

**[91866]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 28 September 2020 to Question 91828, whether he has made an estimate of the number and proportion of PAYE freelancers who are currently contracted by public service broadcasters who have

not been granted furlough by their employer; and whether he is providing financial assistance to those PAYE freelancers.

**Jesse Norman:**

The information requested is not readily available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

#### ■ Revenue and Customs: Telephone Services

**Drew Hendry:**

[\[114259\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of introducing of a call back system when individuals have spent a significant period of time waiting on hold with HMRC's helplines.

**Jesse Norman:**

HMRC aim to answer calls as quickly as possible. Where queuing is unavoidable, HMRC point taxpayers to their online services. HMRC have looked at the option of introducing a call back system but doing so increases waiting times to unacceptable levels resulting overall in worse customer service for the taxpayer.

#### ■ Sanitary Protection: VAT

**Sarah Olney:**

[\[113617\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 2 November 2020 to Question 108277, what recent discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs on the potential merits of applying a zero rate of VAT to period pants for the purposes reducing the use of single-use plastics.

**Jesse Norman:**

Pursuant to the Answers of 2 November and 12 November 2020 to Questions 108277 and 113192, the scope of the new zero rate is defined by the existing five per cent reduced rate applied to women's sanitary products. This covers the supply of any sanitary protection product that is designed and marketed solely for the absorption or collection of menstrual flow or lochia, whether disposable or re-useable.

The current relief specifically excludes articles of clothing, such as "period pants". Such exclusions are designed to ensure that the relief is properly targeted, since difficulties in policing the scope of the relief create the potential for litigation, erosion of the tax base and a reduction in revenue.

#### ■ Self-employed: Coronavirus

**Andrew Gwynne:**

[\[113515\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what financial support the Government plans to provide to people who have become self-employed since March 2020.

**Jesse Norman:**

The practical issues that prevented the Government from being able to include the newly self-employed in 2019-20 in the original Self-Employment Income Support

Scheme (SEISS), namely that HMRC will not have access to their self-assessment returns in order to be able to verify their eligibility, still remain. The latest year for which HMRC have tax returns for all self-employed individuals is 2018/19. 2019/20 returns are not due until the end of January 2021.

Unlike for employees, self-employed income is not reported monthly, but at the end of each tax year on the individual's Income Tax Self Assessment return. This means that the most reliable and up-to-date record of self-employed income is from the 2018-19 tax returns.

The SEISS continues to be just one element of a comprehensive package of support for individuals and businesses. This package includes Bounce Back loans, tax deferrals, rental support and other business support grants. The Government has also temporarily increased the Universal Credit standard allowance for 2020-21 by £20 per week and relaxed the Minimum Income Floor meaning that where self-employed claimants' earnings have significantly reduced, their Universal Credit award will have increased to reflect their lower earnings.

#### ■ Self-employment Income Support Scheme

**Dan Jarvis:**

[\[114195\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what plans he has to extend the eligibility of the Self Employed Income Support Scheme to people who first submitted tax returns in 2019-20.

**Jesse Norman:**

The practical issues that prevented the Government from being able to include the newly self-employed in 2019-20 in the original Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS), namely that HMRC will not have access to their self-assessment returns in order to be able to verify their eligibility, still remain. The latest year for which HMRC have tax returns for all self-employed individuals is 2018/19. 2019/20 returns are not due until the end of January 2021.

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**Layla Moran:**

**[114307]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make it his policy to expand the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme to include self-employed people who are currently ineligible to receive financial support from that scheme.

**Jesse Norman:**

The Government has acknowledged that it has not been able to support everyone as they would want. The Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS) has been a generous support to many and the Government has tried to target it at those who most need it.

The SEISS continues to be just one element of a comprehensive package of support for the self-employed. Those ineligible for the SEISS Grant Extension may still be eligible for other elements of the package of financial support available. The Universal Credit standard allowance has been temporarily increased for 2020-21 and the Minimum Income Floor relaxed for the duration of the crisis, meaning that where self-employed claimants' earnings have significantly fallen, their Universal Credit award will have increased to reflect their lower earnings. In addition to this, they may also have access to Bounce Back loans, tax deferrals, rental support, mortgage holidays, self-isolation support payments and other business support grants.

■ **Self-employment Income Support Scheme: Fraud**

**Dr Matthew Offord:**

**[91874]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent assessment his Department has made of the level of fraud in the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme grant.

**Jesse Norman:**

HM Revenue & Customs' current estimate of error and fraud in the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme is between about 1% and 2% of total expenditure.

This estimate will be refined as more operational and scheme-level data become available over time.

■ **Stamp Duty Land Tax: Coronavirus**

**Carla Lockhart:**

**[112160]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent assessment he has made of the effect of the stamp duty holiday on the housing market in Northern Ireland, and if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of extending that stamp duty holiday beyond March 2021.

**Jesse Norman:**

SDLT transactions in Northern Ireland have reached similar levels to this time last year and, in August, average house prices had risen over the year by 3%.

The temporary increase in the Stamp Duty Land Tax nil rate band was designed to create immediate momentum within the property market, where property transactions fell by as much as 50 per cent during the first COVID-19 lockdown. The downturn in

the market meant that the future was uncertain for many people whose jobs relied on custom from the property industry. There are already early signs that demand and transactions have increased, and are continuing to rise, since the increase to the SDLT nil rate band was announced in July.

As the relief was designed to provide an immediate stimulus to the property market, the Government does not plan to extend this relief and will continue to monitor the property market.

## ■ Taxation: Self-assessment

**Nadia Whittome:**

[\[114350\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent assessment he has made of the adequacy of support available for people who are not digitally literate and have difficulties submitting their tax return online.

**Jesse Norman:**

HMRC offer offline extra support, for example, through telephone, paper, and face-to-face via their Extra Support Team (face-to-face support has been temporarily suspended due to COVID-19), as well as extra support via their online services. They have also set up a dedicated helpline for anyone experiencing difficulties with seeking access to the COVID-19 support schemes. HMRC work with voluntary and community sector organisations to help taxpayers who need support for a range of reasons from digital exclusion, language, self-confidence, physical or mental health reasons, or difficulties with engaging with HMRC, for example, with compliance or debt issues.

## ■ Travel: Coronavirus

**Sarah Olney:**

[\[113616\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what plans he has to provide financial support to businesses in the travel industry at the end of the coronavirus job retention scheme.

**Kemi Badenoch:**

The Government recognises the extreme disruption the necessary actions to combat Covid-19 are having on sectors like the travel industry. That is why the Chancellor recently extended the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme by five months to the end of March 2021.

During this difficult time the Treasury is working intensively with employers, delivery partners, industry groups and other government departments to understand the long-term effects of Covid-19 across all key areas of the economy.

We will continue to monitor the impact of government support on public services, businesses, individuals and sectors, including the travel industry, as we respond to this pandemic.

**Treasury: Press Releases**

**Alison Thewliss:** [\[114243\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, which media outlets were given embargoed sight of his Statement on the Future of Financial Services, of 9 November 2020; and at what time it was released to them.

**Alison Thewliss:** [\[114244\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, which media were given embargoed sight of his statement of 5 November 2020; and at what time that statement was released to those media.

**Alison Thewliss:** [\[114245\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, which media were given embargoed sight of his statement of 22 October 2020; and at what time that statement was released to those media.

**Alison Thewliss:** [\[114246\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, which media outlets were given embargoed sight of his Statement on the economy of 24 September 2020; and at what time it was released to them.

**Kemi Badenoch:**

*Checked against delivery versions of Chancellor statements are given to the media once they have been made in the House of Commons.*

**Wholesale Trade: Coronavirus**

**Henry Smith:** [\[91868\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy on extending business rates relief to wholesale distributors.

**Bob Blackman:** [\[91871\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the ability of wholesalers to remain financially viable without business rates relief in the context of the second covid-19 lockdown.

**Jesse Norman:**

The Government has provided Local Authorities with £1.1 billion across England via the Additional Restrictions Grant, for businesses which are not legally closed, but which are severely affected by local or national restrictions.

Local Authorities have discretion on how to use this funding to support businesses in their areas, but the Government encourages them to set up discretionary grant schemes to support businesses such as wholesalers which can remain open, but which are nonetheless severely affected by the enhanced COVID-19 restrictions.



All business rates reliefs in England will be considered through the business rates review.

In line with the practice of successive administrations, details of ministerial discussions are not normally disclosed.

**Henry Smith:**

**[91869]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what plans he has to financially support wholesale distributors in localities where local authorities do not include them in eligibility for five per cent discretionary grant funding announced as part of the Plan for Jobs.

**Kemi Badenoch:**

During this difficult time for the country, I absolutely recognise the extreme disruption to people's lives, jobs, and businesses due to the necessary actions to tackle COVID-19. This includes those in the wholesale sector who play a critical role in supporting our food supply chain.

The Government recognises that businesses which are legally required to close due to national or local restrictions will need additional support. This is why we have announced the Local Restrictions Support Grant (Closed) scheme, which will provide businesses in England which are legally required to close with grants of up to £3,000 per four-week closure period, depending on their rateable value.

For businesses which are not legally closed, but which are nonetheless severely impacted by local or national restrictions, we have provided Local Authorities with a further £1.1 billion across England via the Additional Restrictions Grant.

Local Authorities have discretion on how to use this funding to support businesses in their areas, but we encourage them to set up discretionary grant schemes to support businesses such as wholesalers which can remain open, but which are nonetheless severely affected by the enhanced COVID-19 restrictions.

Businesses across the country, including wholesale distributors, should also be able to benefit from others measures in the Government's unprecedented package of support for businesses, including:

- The extension to 31 March of the CJRS, through which employees will receive up to 80% of their usual salary for hours not worked up to a maximum of £2,500 per month;
- Support for the self-employed via the SEISS, which will provide the self-employed with grants worth up to 80% of trading profits, covering November to January;
- The extension of the application deadline for loan guarantee schemes to the end of January 2021;
- An adjustment to the Bounce Back Loan Scheme rules to allow those businesses who have borrowed less than their maximum (i.e. less than 25% of their turnover) to top-up their existing loan; and
- Help for businesses in repaying loans from Government-backed schemes through the Pay as you Grow scheme and allowing lenders to extend the terms of CBILS loans to up to 10 years.

## WOMEN AND EQUALITIES

### ■ Disability: Discrimination

**Nicola Richards:**

[\[113274\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, what progress her Department has made in tackling discrimination against people with hidden disabilities in (a) West Bromwich East and (b) England to ensure that they feel valued in (i) the job market and (ii) society.

**Kemi Badenoch:**

We are clear that the Equality Act 2010 makes it unlawful for an employer or potential employer to discriminate against a disabled person because of their disability. Specifically, the Act requires employers to make reasonable adjustments in relation to the disabled employee's job or application for a job.

The Government has put in place a range of provisions to help disabled people find and stay in work across the country. Our programmes include Access to Work, Disability Confident, specialised employment support including the Work and Health Programme and the Intensive Personalised Employment Support Programme.

In addition, the Government is ensuring that disabled people, including people with hidden disabilities have access to public services, such as access to the Blue Badge scheme for parking, Changing Places toilet facilities, and accessible communications. The Government, via the Cabinet Office Disability Unit, is supporting the British Standards Institution, in its development of a public information symbol to support disabled people with non-visible disabilities.

We will publish a National Strategy for Disabled People to ensure that all disabled people can play a full role in society. The Strategy will focus on the issues that disabled people say affect them the most in all aspects and phases of life.

### ■ Equal Pay

**Robert Halfon:**

[\[109300\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, what assessment she has made of the effect of the gender pay gap on levels of (a) financial domestic abuse and (b) child poverty.

**Kemi Badenoch:**

The UK's gender pay gap is now at a record low of 15.5%, but the Government recognises that closing the gender pay gap alone will not eliminate social issues such as financial domestic abuse and child poverty. Targeted support and interventions are essential.

In December 2015, we introduced the new domestic abuse offence of controlling or coercive behaviour in order to tackle purposeful patterns of behaviour over time to exert power, control, and coercion over another person, which includes financial and economic abuse. We are including economic abuse in the new statutory definition of domestic abuse to acknowledge the impact that economic abuse can have on a

victim's life. This will raise awareness and enable frontline professionals and the criminal justice system to better recognise and tackle it.

Our ambition is to level up across the country and to continue to tackle child poverty through our reformed welfare system that works with the labour market to encourage people to move into and progress in work wherever possible. The latest data from 2018/19 showed that only 3% of children in households where both parents work full-time were in absolute poverty (before housing costs) compared to 47% where one or more parent was in part-time work.

Our £30bn Plan for Jobs will support economic recovery through new schemes including Kickstart and Job Entry Targeted Support. We are also doubling the number of work coaches who, through our Jobcentre network, will provide more people with the tailored support they need to move back into work and towards financial independence.

## WORK AND PENSIONS

### ■ **Coronavirus: Disease Control**

**Catherine McKinnell:**

[\[114167\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to her Oral Statement of 9 November 2020, Official Report, column 636, how much funding is planned to be allocated to each local authority in the North East from (a) the Covid Winter Grant Scheme and (b) the Holiday Activities and Food programme.

**Will Quince:**

Local authorities have been informed of their individual allocation of funding for the Covid Winter Grant Scheme and these will be published shortly on Gov.uk. The Holiday Activities and Food programme will be expanded across England next year and the Department for Education will work closely with local authorities to prepare for delivery of the programme to begin at Easter.

### ■ **Department for Work and Pensions: Telephone Services**

**Drew Hendry:**

[\[114260\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment her Department has made of the potential merits of introducing a call back system when individuals have spent a significant period of time waiting on hold with her Department's helplines.

**Mims Davies:**

DWP has considered the merits of a call-back service for customers. We concluded that it would not support the current operating models of the department. DWP moved all telephony services for customers to a free phone operation nearly three years ago and therefore any delay in answering calls will not be at the expense of customers.

## ■ Disability: Pay

**Emma Hardy:**

**[91918]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she is taking to tackle the disability pay gap.

**Justin Tomlinson:**

Pay gaps are caused by a range of factors. To address them, we must ensure that everybody has equal access to opportunities.

We support disabled people to enter employment and stay in work through a range of initiatives such as the Work and Health Programme, Access to Work and Employment Advice in Improving Access to Psychological Therapies services. One of the key transformational elements of Universal Credit is that it provides us with the opportunity to support people who are in work to progress and increase their earnings.

In November 2018, we published a voluntary reporting framework on disability, mental ill health and wellbeing. This is aimed at large employers (with over 250 employees) and it is recommended that they publicly report on the pay and progression of disabled people at regular intervals. The framework can also be used to support smaller employers who are keen to drive greater transparency in their organisation or industry.

The Government will publish a National Strategy for Disabled People which will take into account the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on disabled people. The strategy will focus on the issues that disabled people say affect them the most in all aspects of life, including employment.

More broadly, while our current focus, rightly, is on helping to get people into work, our longer-term ambition, based on clear evidence about the importance of work in tackling poverty, remains to build an economy that gives everyone the opportunity to progress out of low pay.

Baroness Ruby McGregor-Smith is leading a time-limited Commission looking at how DWP, wider Government and employers can best support people to progress out of low pay, especially for those groups more likely to be in persistent low pay, such as disabled workers. The Commission has recently launched a call for evidence to help inform their report, which will be published in the new year:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/call-for-evidence-and-good-practice-on-in-work-progression>.

## ■ Employment: Chronic Illnesses

**Emma Hardy:**

**[91919]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps the Government is taking to help ensure that people with (a) hidden and (b) fluctuating conditions can (i) find and (ii) stay in work.

**Justin Tomlinson:**

The Government continues to provide disability employment support through initiatives such as Access to Work (AtW), Disability Confident, the Work and Health Programme, Intensive Personalised Employment Support, and other forms of support that disabled people need to retain, adapt and move into employment. In recognition of the changing working environments since the COVID-19 outbreak and to provide greater flexibility, AtW has flexed and adapted support. Disabled people with fluctuating conditions can have support to work from home when their condition fluctuates and they do not feel well enough to go to work. In addition, assistive technology support is available or technology can be moved from the workplace to the home to enable home working.

**Background**

The Government is committed to supporting all disabled people affected by the COVID-19 outbreak. We continue to monitor the impact of COVID-19 on disabled people using existing and new data sources.

We are ensuring that disabled people continue to have access to disability benefits, food, medicines, essentials, accessible communications, updated guidance, including workplace and transport related guidance, as well as financial and other support during the COVID-19 outbreak, e.g. AtW has continued to provide funding for people with a disability or health condition whether they are working in the workplace or are working from home.

In recognition of the changing working environments since the COVID-19 outbreak, AtW has flexed and adapted support, by making greater use of assistive technology and facilitated moving technology from the workplace to the home to enable home working.

**■ Employment: Training****Fleur Anderson:**[\[114342\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she is taking to ensure that people seeking employment are able to access in-person work-related training under (a) the November 2020 and (b) future covid-19 restrictions.

**Mims Davies:**

Jobcentres have remained open to provide a face to face service to those who need it, in a Covid-19 secure environment. In addition to that we have supported claimants via telephone/digital channels to ensure they receive the appropriate help and support which could involve a referral to appropriate training.

In relation to contracted employment support, the safety of contracted employment provider staff and customers has been paramount during the Covid-19 period. DWP has worked with its contracted providers to continually adapt the support offered to ensure it best meets our customers' needs, keeping them safe and operating in line with current social distancing measures.

Where face to face interactions have not been possible, we have worked with providers to look at alternative service delivery options including digital options and providing a telephony service to ensure support has continued.

### ■ Kickstart Scheme: Ethnic Groups

**Cat Smith:** [\[114936\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what proportion of jobs created as part of the Kickstart scheme have been allocated to Black, Asian and minority ethnic young people to date.

**Cat Smith:** [\[114937\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what proportion of jobs created as part of the Kickstart scheme have been allocated to young people with disabilities to date.

**Mims Davies:**

Data gathering is in its early phase and as such we are not able to reliably break Kickstart participant data down by ethnicity, disability or other disadvantaged group.

### ■ Members: Correspondence

**Anne McLaughlin:** [\[114250\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, when she plans to reply to the letter of 26 October 2020 from the hon. Member for Glasgow North East.

**Guy Opperman:**

The Department aims to respond to correspondence from hon. Members within 20 working-days of receipt. A response is currently being worked on and should be with the hon. Member shortly.

### ■ Pension Credit

**Jane Hunt:** [\[91935\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department is taking to ensure pensioners who are eligible for pension credit are notified of their eligibility.

**Guy Opperman:**

1.5 million pensioners currently receive Pension Credit. However, the Government wants to make sure that all pensioners eligible can claim the Pension Credit to which they are rightly entitled. In February 2020 we launched a nationwide campaign to raise awareness of Pension Credit and help dispel some of the misconceptions that people might have about Pension Credit eligibility.

The DWP targets activity on engaging with people who may be eligible to benefits at pivotal stages, such as when they claim State Pension or report a change in their circumstances.

## ■ Pension Credit: Erith and Thamesmead

**Abena Oppong-Asare:**

[113254]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many and what proportion of eligible people have claimed pension credit in Erith and Thamesmead constituency.

**Guy Opperman:**

As at May 2020, 2,501 households claimed Pension Credit in Erith and Thamesmead.

Information requested on the proportion of eligible people who claim Pension Credit figure is only available at the Great Britain level:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/income-related-benefits-estimates-of-take-up-financial-year-2018-to-2019>

This information is published and available at: <https://stat-xplore.dwp.gov.uk>

Guidance for using Stat-Xplore is available at: <https://stat-xplore.dwp.gov.uk/webapi/online-help/Getting-Started.html>

## ■ Personal Independence Payment: Appeals

**Emma Hardy:**

[91917]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of factors behind for the rates of success for personal independence payment claimants at the mandatory reconsideration stage; and what steps is taking to increase this rate.

**Justin Tomlinson:**

We are focussed on making the right decision for our customers. Last year we implemented a new approach to handling Mandatory Reconsiderations. This approach empowers Decision Makers to contact customers, where appropriate, to see if there is information that would enable us to change the decision. As you have noted it is had a positive effect on outcomes. We will continue with this approach, whilst both enhancing our internal processes and engaging with stakeholders to explore how they can support us to further improve the effectiveness of the MR process.

## ■ Personal Independence Payment: Medical Examinations

**Stephen Timms:**

[113467]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what method her Department has used to conduct personal independence payment medical assessments since face-to-face assessments were paused in response to the covid-19 outbreak.

**Justin Tomlinson:**

As previously advised to the Rt Hon Stephen Timms on the 10 September 2020, during the Covid-19 period, all assessments are currently being progressed on the basis of the paper based evidence alone or that evidence together with a telephone assessment to ensure decisions on Personal Independence Payment can be made without delay.



The health and safety of our claimants and our staff are our key priority. Face to face assessments for health and disability benefits remain suspended at present; this is being kept under review in line with the latest public health guidance.

### ■ Social Security Benefits: Coronavirus

**Stephen Timms:**

[\[113466\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether she plans to increase the rate of (a) jobseekers' allowance and (b) employment and support allowance in line with the increase in universal credit; and if she will make a statement.

**Will Quince:**

The Government introduced a package of temporary welfare measures worth around £9.3 billion this year to help with the financial consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic. This included the £20 weekly increase to the Universal Credit Standard Allowance rates as a temporary measure for the 20/21 tax year. There are no plans to extend this to legacy benefits.

The Government will update Parliament accordingly on any future decisions on benefit spending.

### ■ Social Security Benefits: Disqualification

**Chris Stephens:**

[\[113590\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether benefit sanctions will continue to be applied by her Department during the period of the new national covid-19 lockdown from 5 November 2020; and if she will make a statement.

**Mims Davies:**

In March 2020 we switched off conditionality requirements so that we could concentrate on processing the unprecedented number of new and existing claims.

From the 1st of July, we reintroduced Claimant Commitments as we were able to again tailor reasonable requirements asking claimants to prepare and look for work where it was safe to do so in line with social distancing rules. These commitments will be amended as necessary to account for any new lockdown guidance.

### ■ Unemployment: Young People

**Colleen Fletcher:**

[\[114207\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she is taking to reduce youth unemployment in (a) Coventry North East constituency, (b) Coventry and (c) the West Midlands.

**Mims Davies:**

DWP offers significant support to unemployed people across Great Britain to access employment opportunities through our network of Jobcentres. Our Work Coaches provide support on finding a job, help with retraining or skills advice, CV, job applications and access to the new vacancies, as well as signposting to our new

Jobhelp website. We adopt a blended approach of channels to connect with customers, to reflect current restrictions and comply with COVID safety.

The Department is working closely with other government departments, external organisations and local partners to support people into work.

The Kickstart Scheme was recently launched to help young people aged 16-24 find six-month work places in Coventry. We have developed a Youth Hub locally to provide outreach support, which can be accessed by young people in Coventry at Coventry Jobshop in the City Centre. We have also partnered with employers in the area to deliver Mentoring Circles and Sector Work Academy Programmes.

#### ■ Universal Credit: Self-employed

**Dan Jarvis:**

[\[113554\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the potential economic effect on self-employed workers claiming universal credit of the reintroduction of the minimum income floor.

**Dan Jarvis:**

[\[113555\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what estimate she has made of the number of universal credit claimants who would be affected by the reintroduction of the minimum income floor in (a) the Barnsley Central constituency, (b) the Sheffield city region and (c) Yorkshire and the Humber. .

**Mims Davies:**

After careful consideration of the ongoing public health situation and the national working environment, the current easement of the suspension of the Minimum Income Floor in Universal Credit that was due to expire on 12th November 2020 has been extended to the end of April 2021.

## MINISTERIAL CORRECTIONS

### TRANSPORT

#### ■ Taxis: Coronavirus

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**

**[82312]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the financial support available to taxi drivers who have been affected financially by the covid-19 outbreak.

**An error has been identified in the written answer given on 3 September 2020. The correct answer should have been:**

**Rachel Maclean:**

The Government has acted to support those that are self-employed and have been affected by the COVID-19 outbreak across all sectors of the economy. The overwhelming majority of taxi and private hire vehicle drivers are self-employed and can therefore apply for a grant through the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS). Over the two rounds of the scheme a total of up to ~~£14,250~~ **£14,070** has been made available to those eligible.

Taxi and PHV drivers may also be eligible for Universal Credit, from 6 April the standard allowance available under the Universal Credit system was increased from £317.82 to £409.89 a month. In addition, the Universal Credit calculation was amended, no longer using an assumed level of earnings (Minimum Income Floor) but actual earnings.

## WRITTEN STATEMENTS

### EDUCATION

#### ■ Higher Education Update

**The Secretary of State for Education (Gavin Williamson):**

**[\[HCWS580\]](#)**

Today I want to update both Houses on policy developments for reform within the university admissions system.

On Friday 13 November, I announced the Department's intention to explore a Post Qualification Admissions (PQA) system for higher education, where students would receive and accept offers after they have received their Level 3 (A-Level or equivalent) grades.

The government's manifesto committed us to "improve the application and offer system" and in a way that is "underpinned by a commitment to fairness, quality of learning and teaching, and access". Evidence shows that the current admissions system falls short of this commitment, which is why we are now exploring how a new system could work. We want to ensure the system works for disadvantaged students and facilitates the levelling up that we all want to see, so that everyone with the qualifications and ability to benefit from higher education can do so, no matter what their background.

If we were starting from scratch today, no one would design the higher education admissions system we have now – a system which, with its reliance on predicted grades, systematically favours the most advantaged. Whilst the higher education provider base has expanded significantly in recent decades, with the emergence of new providers and courses, the admissions system has remained largely unchanged since the 1960s. The current system lacks transparency, and it works against the interests of some students, notably high achieving disadvantaged students. In recent years we have also seen the emergence of undesirable admissions practices, such as the mass use of unconditional offers.

We know, due to the pandemic, that students have experienced considerable disruption to their education this year. We believe that the unique set of circumstances students faced could have been better dealt with by a fairer higher education admissions system.

A broad range of interested parties across the education system, and from across the political spectrum – including the Sutton Trust, Policy Exchange, and the University and College Union – have been calling for a Post Qualification Admissions system to support social mobility and to remove the complexity and undesirable practices of the current system. According to a recent poll by the Sutton Trust, two-thirds of this year's university entrants (66%) are in favour of removing predicted grades from university admissions and making decisions based on actual results. Universities UK has also confirmed its desire to work with government to explore moving to such a system.

The government will therefore consult universities, colleges, schools, students, and other interested parties to develop a potential model of reform over the coming months. We will

work across the sectors to design a more efficient and transparent system that helps all students, especially those who are disadvantaged, access the course and institution that best suits their aspirations and capabilities. This is a set of reforms we would look to deliver during the course of this parliament, but it will not affect students over the current academic year.

## FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

### ■ Falkland Islands Demining

**Minister for European Neighbourhood and the Americas (Wendy Morton):**

[\[HCWS578\]](#)

On the 14 November the Falkland Islands were declared mine-free under the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (the Ottawa Convention); a major step forward for the Islanders as they look forward to a peaceful future. This project has taken more than 38 years after several thousand land mines were laid during the Falklands Conflict. The Government pays tribute to the members of the British Armed Forces who contributed to mapping, fencing and clearing of the mine fields between 1982 and 2009, as well as the civilian de-miners who between 2009 and 2020 have destroyed over 10,000 mines and other unexploded ordnance in a project funded by the United Kingdom Government. The project has released 23 million square meters of land, allowing public access to large areas of ground which had been out of bounds for almost four decades, including beauty spots close to Stanley. This means that the people of the Falkland Islands will no longer have to teach their children about the dangers of minefields.

In 1997 the United Kingdom, alongside 121 other nations, signed the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, which prohibits the use, stockpiling, production and transfer of anti-personnel mines and commits signatories to removing such mines from territories over which they have jurisdiction or control. The completion of the demining project in the Falkland Islands marks the United Kingdom's fulfilment of its legal obligation under this Convention. Finishing three years ahead of the deadline of 31 March 2024, this achievement underlines the United Kingdom's commitment to and leadership of global humanitarian mine action.

## TREASURY

### ■ Treasury announcement on levelling up the economy

**The Chief Secretary to the Treasury (Steve Barclay):**

[\[HCWS579\]](#)

On 16 November, the government launched the bidding process for the allocation of Freeports in England by publishing a bidding prospectus. The bidding period will close on 5 February 2021.

Leaving the EU creates new opportunities for the UK to strengthen the Union and become a hub for international trade and investment. Revitalising our port regions

through an ambitious Freeport policy is a key component of realising this vision and unlocking the deep potential of all nations and regions of the UK.

The creation of Freeports will be a cornerstone of the government's plan to level up opportunity across the country. Freeports will increase trade, create employment and attract investment in order to form innovative business clusters that benefit local areas. This in turn will help rejuvenate left-behind communities across the UK, by attracting new businesses, spreading jobs, investment and opportunity.

The bidding prospectus sets out how ports, businesses, local government and other local partners can come together to bid for Freeport status.

At the centre of our new Freeports policy is an ambitious new customs model which will improve upon both the UK's existing customs facilitations and the Freeports the UK previously had. Our Freeports model also introduces a package of tax incentives for businesses to invest in Freeports, and seed funding to develop key infrastructure to help level up some of our most deprived communities. We are introducing new measures to speed up planning processes to accelerate development in and around Freeports and new initiatives to encourage innovators to test new ideas to drive additional economic growth and create jobs.

Freeports will be selected according to a fair, transparent and competitive bidding process, and will be expected to collaborate closely with key partners across the public and private sectors.

We want all the nations of the UK to share in the benefits of Freeports. As such, we are working constructively and collaboratively with the devolved administrations to seek to establish at least one Freeport in each nation of the UK as soon as possible.

The “ *Freeports bidding prospectus* ” CP315 has been laid in Parliament. Copies are available in the Vote Office and Printed Paper Office, and also at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/freeports-bidding-prospectus>