

**Daily Report****Monday, 1 March 2021**

This report shows written answers and statements provided on 1 March 2021 and the information is correct at the time of publication (07:17 P.M., 01 March 2021). For the latest information on written questions and answers, ministerial corrections, and written statements, please visit: <http://www.parliament.uk/writtenanswers/>

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Notes:

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

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

ANSWERS

BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

■ Additional Restrictions Grant

Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck:

[158071]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how much has been allocated to local authorities through the Additional Restrictions Grant; how much of that funding has (a) been spent and (b) remains unspent to date; and what the timeframe is for local authorities to be allocated that grant funding.

Paul Scully:

The Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG) is a discretionary scheme aimed at supporting businesses, including those that have not been mandated to close but have had their trade adversely affected by the nationalised restrictions. Local Authorities have been allocated a further £500m in discretionary funding via the ARG, in addition to £1.1bn already allocated in November 2020. Local Authorities can use the ARG to support businesses in their local area, as they see fit. We expect Local Authorities to use this additional resource quickly to support businesses in their area. Local Authorities are able to use the Additional Restrictions Grant until the end of the financial year 2021/2022.

This data relates to allocations and grant payments made by Local Authorities to businesses up to 17 January 2021:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-grant-funding-local-authority-payments-to-small-and-medium-businesses>.

■ Advanced Research and Invention Agency: Expenditure

Chi Onwurah:

[157102]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how much has been spent on the Advanced Research & Invention Agency since March 2020.

Amanda Solloway:

No money has been spent on the Advanced Research and Invention Agency (ARIA). The Government has committed to £800m for ARIA by 2024/25.

■ Bounce Back Loan Scheme

Edward Miliband:

[157031]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment his Department has made of the effect of the Pay As You Grow scheme on loss rates from the Bounce Back Loan Scheme.

Paul Scully:

The Pay As You Grow measures give Bounce Back Loan borrowers more time and greater flexibility to repay their loans.

Work is currently underway with data scientists, other Government departments and external consultants on a range of projects to develop our analysis on various datasets, in order to give us the best possible insight into the scheme.

The Department will report updated estimates of expected credit losses as part of its Annual Report and Accounts for 2020-21, to be published later this year.

■ Bounce Back Loan Scheme and Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme**Edward Miliband:**[\[157030\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what his Department's latest estimate is of the loss rate of the (a) Bounce Back Loan Scheme and (b) Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme.

Paul Scully:

The 2019-20 BEIS Annual Report and Accounts published on 30 September 2020 provided initial indicative loss ranges for both the Bounce Back Loan Scheme (BBLS) and the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CBILS).

For BBLS, losses were estimated as of 11 September 2020 to be in a range of 35-60%. For CBILS, losses were estimated to be in a range of 10-25%. These estimates include both credit and fraud losses.

The initial indicative loss ranges are based on historic losses observed in prior programmes which most closely resemble the current Covid-19 interventions. However, no two programmes or two economic downturns are completely alike.

Work is currently underway to refine these estimates as data available to us improves. The Department will report updated estimates as part of its Annual Report and Accounts for 2020-21, to be published later this year.

■ Business: Coventry**Colleen Fletcher:**[\[158075\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent discussions he has had with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on increasing support to businesses in (a) Coventry North East constituency and (b) Coventry affected by the covid-19 outbreak.

Paul Scully:

There are regular Ministerial discussions within government regarding the unprecedented business support offer that has been put in place to help tackle Covid-19 and save lives. My Rt. Hon. Friend Mr Chancellor of the Exchequer will set out any further support measures in his Budget statement.

■ Business: Government Assistance

Lucy Powell:

[\[158060\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether grants paid in England on the basis of the rateable value of closed premises can contribute towards the €3 million state aid threshold for uncovered fixed costs subject to businesses meeting the relevant eligibility criteria.

Paul Scully:

The guidance relating to grant support for businesses required by law to close states that these grants count towards applicable subsidy control limits, including that which limits support to €3 million per undertaking under Section 3.12 of the Temporary Framework.

■ Carbon Emissions

Helen Hayes:

[\[155256\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what discussions his Department is having with HM Treasury on funding for projects to reduce domestic carbon emissions ahead of the budget 2021.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

My Rt. Hon. Friend the Secretary of State regularly meets with my Rt. Hon. Friend Mr Chancellor of the Exchequer bilaterally and in Cabinet committees, including to discuss the Government's commitment to tackle climate change and working together to drive forward the net zero agenda.

The Government's Spending Review 2020 publication clearly shows that achieving net zero is a priority outcome across Whitehall; a total of £12 billion was allocated to several departments to support the Government's aim of achieving net zero by 2050.

■ Clean Steel Fund

Matthew Pennycook:

[\[158148\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, when he plans to implement the Clean Steel Fund.

Nadhim Zahawi:

In August 2019, the Government announced a £250 million Clean Steel Fund to support the UK steel sector to transition to lower carbon iron and steel production, through investment in new technologies and processes. The Fund will help the sector towards achieving our target of net zero emissions by 2050, by maximising longevity and resilience while harnessing clean growth opportunities.

Steel industry stakeholders provided positive responses to our Call for Evidence, including responses on possible timelines for the Fund. Feedback generally indicated that companies could be ready with projects for funding by 2023 or 2024. A summary of the responses was published in December 2020. Officials will work with industry to decide the most appropriate timeline for the scheme.

■ Coal: Mining

Patrick Grady:

[\[155144\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will publish a response to Early Day Motion 1335, COP26 and deep coal mining in the UK.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The UK is a global leader in the fight against climate change: since 1990 emissions from the electricity sector have decreased by 72%, while the economy has grown by two thirds. The UK was the first major economy in the world to set a legally binding target to achieve Net Zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050.

In line with our Net Zero target, the Government has committed to phasing out unabated coal-fired power generation by 2025, and is consulting on moving this date forward to 2024. The UK has already made great progress in decarbonising its energy system, with coal's share of electricity generation falling from 40% in 2012 to less than 3% in 2019. The UK Government has also shown strong leadership internationally on the shift from coal power generation to clean energy. We co-launched the Powering Past Coal Alliance with Canada, which has now grown to over 100 members and is leading the COP26 Energy Transition campaign to accelerate the global transition to clean energy. The Government have also announced that we will no longer provide any new direct government support for the fossil fuel energy sector overseas.

The planning application for the Whitehaven coal mine relates to metallurgical (coking) coal, rather than coal for electricity generation, and the Government recognises that some industrial processes, including steel production, are particularly difficult to decarbonise as there is currently no commercially viable alternative to coal in blast furnaces. Our priority is supporting innovation to help carbon-intensive industries to decarbonise further. We are taking steps to achieve this through initiatives such as the Industrial Energy Transformation Fund, the Industrial Clusters Mission and the Clean Steel Fund. In addition, ahead of COP26, we are working in partnership with other countries to accelerate the pace of industrial decarbonisation, which includes the steel sector. The UK is coordinating action on the research, development and demonstration of new low carbon technologies with other countries, as well as exploring policy options for creating international markets for low carbon industrial products.

Planning decisions are made at a local level and this application is a matter for Cumbria County Council.

■ Companies: Registration

Anna McMorris:

[\[157340\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to improve transparency and ensure due diligence is undertaken for new businesses registering with Companies House prior to the conclusion of ongoing Government consultations on corporate transparency and register reform.

Paul Scully:

Government proposals to improve the accountability of people owning and controlling companies were set out in our transparency and register reform consultation response published in September 2020.

Companies House has strong working relationships with a range of law enforcement agencies, including the Insolvency Service, HMRC, the National Crime Agency and others. Within its current powers to act and share information, Companies House is continually improving collaboration with UK Law Enforcement and trusted private sector partners.

■ Competition and Markets Authority: Pay**John McDonnell:**[\[154691\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what proportion of non-senior civil service BAME staff employed by the Competition and Markets Authority is eligible for a performance related pay bonus for the financial year 2019-20; and how that proportion directly compares to the proportion of non-BAME staff that are eligible for that bonus.

Paul Scully:

The proportion of BAME and non-BAME staff that were eligible to receive a performance related pay bonus for performance in the 2019 - 2020 financial year is as follows.

It should be noted that staff in receipt of 'Partially Exceeding' and 'Consistently Exceeding' performance ratings were considered eligible to receive a performance related pay bonus.

ETHNICITY	ELIGIBLE FOR BONUS
BAME	29.9%
Non-BAME	43.0%
Prefer not to say	12.5%
Not Reportable ¹	41.7%

¹ Not Reportable refers to staff that have not disclosed information for a given diversity characteristic.

■ Conditions of Employment**Imran Hussain:**[\[155100\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what plans his Department has to improve rights and protections for employees.

Paul Scully:

This Government is committed to making the UK the best place in the world to work. As laid out in our manifesto, we will bring forward measures to establish an employment framework which is fit for purpose and keeps pace with the needs of modern workplaces. These measures will make workplaces fairer by:

- providing better support for working families and introducing new support for people facing particularly challenging circumstances.
- encouraging flexible working while ensuring everyone benefits from the flexibility of our labour market.
- protecting the majority of businesses who strive to do the right thing by their workers from being undercut by the small minority who seek to avoid their responsibilities.

■ Consumer Goods: Electrical Safety**Ben Lake:**[\[155318\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what plans he has to bring forward legislative proposals to protect consumers from unsafe electrical goods being sold online.

Ben Lake:[\[155320\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what plans the Government has for protection of protect consumers from the sale of unsafe goods on social media marketplaces.

Paul Scully:

The Government is committed to ensuring that only safe electrical goods can be sold in the UK. All distributors have a duty to act with due care to ensure products they are selling are safe, this includes online retailers.

The Office for Product Safety and Standards (OPSS) proactively engages with major online marketplaces to ensure that they are playing their part in protecting UK consumers from unsafe products. The OPSS have recently taken action to ensure that a number of non-compliant products being sold by overseas 3rd party sellers have been removed from sale, including electrical appliances.

In order to ensure that the UK's Product Safety framework is flexible and fit for the future, the OPSS is conducting a review. The review will ensure we have a framework that delivers safety for consumers while supporting businesses to innovate and grow and will consider the impact on product safety of new business models, including e-commerce and social media marketplaces.

■ Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme

Edward Miliband:

[\[157032\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment his Department has made of the effect of allowing extensions on repayment periods from six to 10 years on loss rates from the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme.

Paul Scully:

The Government has enabled lenders to extend the repayment period for Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan (CBILS) facilities beyond 6 years (up to a maximum of 10 years) where this is needed in connection with the provision of forbearance. CBILS term extensions are offered at the discretion of lenders. This measure is designed to help businesses that would struggle to repay their CBILS facility on their existing terms, by reducing monthly repayments.

Work is currently underway with data scientists, other Government departments and external consultants on a range of projects to develop our analysis on various datasets, in order to give us the best possible insight into the scheme.

The Department will report updated estimates of expected credit losses as part of its Annual Report and Accounts for 2020-21, to be published later this year.

■ Coronavirus: Disability

Justin Madders:

[\[155127\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment his Department has made of the potential effect of covid-19 restrictions on people with hidden disabilities; and whether his Department has made an assessment of how the needs of those people are being met by retailers and other businesses.

Paul Scully:

The safer workplaces [guidance](#) provides some suggestions to help employers make their workplaces COVID-Secure for their employees, visitors, and customers. The Government took into account the needs of people with disabilities when developing the guidance.

The guidance does not replace existing employment, health and safety or equalities legislation. It provides information to employers on how best to meet these responsibilities in the context of COVID-19.

The Government welcomes efforts by retailers who have implemented a range of measures including dedicated hours and access for the elderly, disabled and priority access groups, and prioritising online deliveries for the most vulnerable.

■ Coronavirus: Vaccination

Preet Kaur Gill: [\[157240\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the implications of the cost differential of the AstraZeneca vaccine for the UK and Uganda in achieving the Prime Minister's aim of making sure everybody gets the vaccines that they need so that the whole world can come through this pandemic together.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The UK is taking a strong global leadership role in collaborating with other countries in the development and distribution of a successful vaccine and we are encouraging other high-income countries to do the same. The UK is one of the largest bilateral donors to the COVAX Advance Market Commitment (AMC), which will give lower and middle-income countries equitable access to vaccines that are developed. The UK has committed £548 million to the COVAX AMC.

Pricing of COVID-19 vaccines between pharmaceutical companies and other countries is a matter for those parties involved.

■ Coronavirus: Weddings

Julian Sturdy: [\[155023\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if the Government's roadmap for exiting the covid-19 lockdown will include a timeframe for weddings and the wedding industry to resume without restrictions.

Paul Scully:

As set out in Step 4 of the Government's 'COVID-19 Response - Spring 2021', which will be introduced no earlier than 21 June, the attendee limit for wedding celebrations will be removed, subject to the outcome of the scientific Events Research Programme.

■ Debt Relief Orders

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[157961\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of increasing the Debt Relief Order limit to £50,000.

Paul Scully:

The Government has recently consulted on proposals to increase the eligibility criteria for Debt Relief Orders to help more people deal with their financial difficulties and to provide a fresh start. The consultation includes increasing the total amount of debt allowable in a Debt Relief Order. The consultation proposes an increase from the current debt limit of £20,000 to £30,000 but also seeks views on whether a different limit should be implemented. The consultation closed on 26 February 2021 and the Government is currently reviewing the responses.

Mr Kevan Jones:

[\[157962\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of allowing additional pre-existing debts to be scheduled in Debt Relief Orders post-application in the event that the debt limit is not breached.

Paul Scully:

The Government's consultation on the monetary eligibility requirements for Debt Relief Orders closed on 26 February 2021. The ability to add pre-existing debts to a Debt Relief Order after an application has already been made is outside the scope of the current consultation. However, the Government keeps the legislative framework under review.

■ Discretionary Grants

Darren Henry:

[\[155432\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will provide flexibility to allow local authorities to redistribute grant funding underspent in one area of business support to other business support schemes.

Paul Scully:

The Government has put forward an unprecedented package of support for businesses in recognition of the disruption caused by Covid-19. This support includes extensive grant funding for businesses that have been required by law to close as a result of, or have been severely impacted by, localised and national restrictions. Local Authorities should pay businesses in line with the eligibility criteria and restriction period to which the funding is allocated to ensure local economies are supported during restrictions. Any unspent funding allocated to Local Authorities under a mandatory grants scheme cannot be redistributed to other business support schemes and will be recovered after a reconciliation process. It is not expected that discretionary schemes, such as the Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG), will have any unallocated funding, as we would expect Local Authorities to apportion this funding to businesses. We are working closely with Local Authorities to ensure funding gets out the door to businesses as quickly as possible.

■ Employment: Coronavirus

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[154899\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to provide security for workers that they will not be retaliated against by (a) employers and (b) providers of work on a non-employment basis as a result of actions to self-isolate due to the covid-19 outbreak.

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[154900\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many employers have had enforcement action taken against them for retaliating against (a)

employees and (b) other contracted workers for actions those workers have taken to self-isolate due to the covid-19 outbreak.

Paul Scully:

It is critically important that the following people stay at home and self-isolate immediately: anyone who has tested positive with COVID-19, anyone who has been contacted by NHS Test and Trace or their local authority, and anyone who has returned from abroad and is required to quarantine.

The Government has developed guidance on employment rights and self-isolation so that workers and employers are clear about their rights and obligations. The guidance is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/if-you-need-to-self-isolate-or-cannot-attend-work-due-to-coronavirus>.

In addition, anyone who is due to work anywhere other than where they are self-isolating (normally their home) must inform their employer that they are required to self-isolate. An individual can receive a Fixed Penalty Notice of £50 for not doing so.

It is an offence for an employer to knowingly allow a person who is required to self-isolate to work anywhere other than where they are self-isolating. If an employer is reasonably believed to be in breach of this requirement, they may be issued with a Fixed Penalty Notice, ranging from £1,000 to £10,000.

Local Authorities provide written and verbal advice to businesses to enable them to comply with their obligations. Enforcement action is taken against employers who do not follow this advice and who do not take reasonable steps to ensure that their workers who must be self-isolating are not working from outside their home.

■ **Employment: Pregnancy**

Alex Davies-Jones:

[\[158234\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, pursuant to the Government's response to the Pregnancy and maternity discrimination consultation published in July 2019, what progress the Government has made on establishing a taskforce on that matter.

Paul Scully:

The Government remains committed to bringing together a broad set of key stakeholders to look at what improvements can be made to address pregnancy and maternity discrimination in the workplace.

We are finalising plans and will be setting up the first meeting shortly.

■ **Energy Supply**

Caroline Lucas:

[\[154599\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will make it his policy to establish a right to local energy supply.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The right to local energy supply already exists under the Electricity Act 1989. One of Ofgem's key strategic priorities is increasing flexibility across the electricity system to support the delivery of net zero and ensuring that consumers benefit from these innovative changes.

Ofgem's Innovation Link helps innovators navigate the sector's arrangements and the Energy Regulation Sandbox enables trials and rollout of new products, services, business models and methodologies. There are a range of options available that Ofgem has developed to support alternative and local supply arrangements. This includes awarding supply licences that are restricted to a geographical area. Ofgem's Licence Lite regime is another arrangement that removes many of the burdens from a prospective supplier, reducing the cost and complexity of entering and operating in the market. Small scale generators can also apply for a license exemption in some cases to reduce the regulatory burdens of operating at a community level.

■ Government Assistance**Lucy Powell:**[\[158059\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what the basis is of the decision to apply EU state aid limits to grants in England issued after 1 January 2021.

Paul Scully:

The EU State Aid rules and limits no longer apply in the UK, except in respect of aid in scope of the Northern Ireland Protocol and Article 138 in relation to aid for EU programmes and activities within the Multiannual Financial Framework. Subsidies must instead meet the terms of the EU-UK Trade and Co-operation Agreement as well as the other Free Trade Agreements we have reached with the rest of the world and our WTO commitments.

Existing guidance for Covid-19 Business Support grants references pre-existing EU State Aid limits. A policy decision has been taken to retain the previous limits allowed under the EU State aid regime to ensure continuity for beneficiaries.

Lucy Powell:[\[158062\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether the UK will adopt or mirror the higher state aid thresholds announced by the EU on 28 January 2021 of €1.8 million for the Temporary Framework and €10 million for uncovered fixed costs.

Paul Scully:

The Government is currently consulting on its proposed approach for establishing a bespoke UK-wide subsidy control regime. The Government is keeping under close review the impact of subsidy control rules on the ability of businesses to access grants and will publish new guidance as and when circumstances require it.

■ Green Homes Grant Local Authority Delivery Scheme

Dr Alan Whitehead: [\[157943\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many applications from local authorities for the Green Homes Grant Local Authority Delivery (LAD) scheme were received for (a) Phase 1a and (b) Phase 1b.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

Phase 1A of the Green Homes Grant Local Authority Delivery scheme received 70 applications from Local Authorities. Phase 1B received 108 applications from Local Authorities.

Dr Alan Whitehead: [\[157944\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many applications from local authorities were rejected due to the Local Authority Delivery scheme for (a) Phase 1a and (b) Phase 1b being oversubscribed.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

Phase 1A of the Green House Grant Local Authority Delivery Scheme was not over-subscribed – although some applications were rejected which did not meet the eligibility criteria for the scheme or where the deliverability or value for money assessment did not meet the required standard.

Phase 1B was over-subscribed. We assessed all applications according to the same criteria and eligibility requirements. This resulted in 23 bids not being successful – 17 because they did not meet the eligibility criteria for the scheme.

Dr Alan Whitehead: [\[157945\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what proportion of Local Authority Delivery funding has been allocated to projects compared with that allocated for the Green Homes Grant voucher scheme.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The £2 billion pledged to the Green Homes Grant (GHG) is comprised of £500m of funding for the Local Authority Delivery (LAD) element and £1.5 billion of funding originally allocated to the Voucher Scheme for use in the 2020/21 financial year.

All £500m LAD funding is planned to be allocated to Local Authorities and Regional Energy Hubs, as appropriate, before the end of March 2021. This will be delivered in three phases:

- Phase 1A: over £74 million was allocated in October 2020 to fund energy efficiency projects in over 100 Local Authorities by June 2021.
- Phase 1B: around £126 million of grant offers were made to 81 Local Authorities in January 2021, for delivery of energy efficiency projects by September 2021.
- Phase 2: will see funding of £300m allocated to the five Local Energy Hubs this financial year, to deliver energy efficiency projects by December 2021.

The Voucher Scheme was designed to provide a short-term economic stimulus while tackling our contribution to climate change. However, the prevalence of Covid-19 since the scheme's launch in September last year has led to an understandable reluctance on the part of the public to welcome tradespeople into their homes. We will continue to work with the scheme's administrator to ensure voucher applications are processed as quickly as possible. As of 22 February 2021, 25,770 vouchers have been issued. £320 million of funding was announced for the Voucher Scheme for 2021/22 in the November 2020 Spending Review.

Dr Alan Whitehead:

[\[157946\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what proportion of Local Authority Delivery funding has been allocated to each region of the UK.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

Phase 1A of the Green Homes Grant Local Authority Delivery (LAD) scheme saw over £74million of funding being allocated to 55 Local Authorities in October 2020 across England.

Under Phase 1B, around £126million of grant offers were made to 81 Local Authorities in January 2021. Further details of these allocations will be announced in the coming weeks once Memorandums of Understanding with individual Local Authorities have been signed.

Phase 2 of LAD will see funding of £300m allocated to the five Local Energy Hubs this financial year who will work with Local Authorities in their region to deliver energy efficiency projects.

Further details of how the allocation of all this funding is spread geographically within England will be announced shortly, once all of the relevant legal processes and transactions have been completed as appropriate.

Dr Alan Whitehead:

[\[157947\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, when he plans to allocate the remaining £300 million from the Local Authority Delivery scheme to local energy hubs.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The remaining £300 million of funding for the Green Homes Grant Local Authority Delivery scheme will be transferred to the five local Energy Hubs before the end of March 2021.

■ Green Homes Grant Scheme

Dr Alan Whitehead:

[\[154681\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how much of the £500m local authority delivery element of Green Homes Grant voucher scheme has been used to date.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The Green Homes Grant Local Authority Delivery scheme will upgrade the energy efficiency of around 50,000 homes of low-income households across England. The scheme is being delivered in three phases:

- Phase 1A: over £74million was allocated to 55 Local Authorities in October 2020 to fund energy efficiency projects in over 100 Local Authorities by June 2021.
- Phase 1B: £126million of grant offers were made to 81 Local Authorities in January 2021, for delivery of energy efficiency projects by September 2021. Further details of these allocations will be announced in the coming weeks once Memorandums of Understanding with individual Local Authorities have been signed.
- Phase 2: will see funding of £300m allocated to the five Local Energy Hubs this financial year who will work with Local Authorities in their region to deliver energy efficiency projects by December 2021. Further information on how these funds are being allocated within each region will be confirmed in due course.

Helen Hayes:[\[155253\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, pursuant to the Answer of 2 February 2021 to Question 145087, what (a) alternative projects or (b) other Departments the underspend on the first tranche of the Green Homes Grant is planned to be allocated to.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

We are determined to deliver on the £9.2bn Manifesto commitment to improve the energy efficiency of homes, schools and hospitals.

In the Spending Review, my Rt. Hon. Friend Mr Chancellor of the Exchequer announced £320 million for the Green Home Grant Voucher Scheme in the next financial year, as part of funding to make homes and public buildings more energy efficient.

Support is also available for installation of energy efficiency measures, including insulation, through a number of government-funded schemes. In addition to the £640 million per year Energy Company Obligation (ECO), in financial year 2020-21, these include the £500 million Local Authority Delivery (LAD) Green Homes Grant Scheme and the £50 million Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund Demonstrator (SHDFD), with a further £60 million for this scheme for 2021-22 announced in the Spending Review.

The Government is planning to publish a Heat and Buildings Strategy in the coming months, which will set out the immediate actions we will take for reducing emissions from buildings.

Dr Alan Whitehead:[\[156994\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, pursuant to the Answer of 22 February 2021 to Question 151583 on the Green Homes Grant Scheme, what proportion of the £320 million allocated for that scheme for the 2021-22

financial year will be allocated to (a) the Green Homes Grant Scheme specifically and (b) the Local Authority Delivery element of the scheme.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

In the 2020 Spending Review, my Rt. Hon. Friend Mr Chancellor of the Exchequer announced £320 million of funding for the Green Homes Grant Voucher Scheme for 2021/22, as part of funding allocated to make homes and buildings more energy efficient and less carbon intensive.

■ **Heating**

John Spellar:

[\[154742\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what estimate his Department has made of the number of skilled heat pump installers in the UK.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

Industry figures suggest that there are currently (February 2021) over 1,000 Microgeneration Certificate Scheme (MCS) registered companies that install air, water, or ground-source heat pumps in the UK. We expect this number to increase considerably over the forthcoming years in response to growing market demand.

John Spellar:

[\[154743\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what estimate his Department has made of (a) the number of firms in the UK that produce heat pumps and (b) the output of those companies in number of units produced in 2019.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

In December 2020, the Department published analysis of the heat pump manufacturing supply chain (available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/heat-pump-manufacturing-supply-chain-research-project>). This research indicates that there are currently five companies manufacturing heat pumps in the UK. In 2019, these manufacturers produced over 10,000 heat pump units for the domestic market and there are a growing number of exports into Europe. The majority of these units are air source heat pumps, predominantly manufactured by Mitsubishi, and a smaller proportion are ground source heat pumps, predominantly manufactured by Kensa. The research also shows that there are significant opportunities for the UK supply chain to grow, as we increase deployment of heat pumps over the next decade.

■ **Labour Market: Unfair Practices**

Imran Hussain:

[\[155098\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, when his Department plans to publish the Labour Market Enforcement Strategy 2020 to 2021.

Paul Scully:

We are working with our colleagues at the Home Office to publish the Labour Market Enforcement Strategy 2020-21 in due course. It was important to take the time to

work with the former Director of Labour Market Enforcement and the enforcement bodies to ensure that the Strategy is making the right recommendations in the face of the new challenges presented by the coronavirus pandemic. The 2020/21 will be published as an agreed Strategy and so we will be taking forward all the recommendations in the final version.

■ Local Restrictions Support Grant

Grahame Morris:

[\[158015\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will ensure that businesses that are unable to operate due to covid-19 lockdown rules but have not been mandated to close are eligible for the Additional Restrictions Support Grant.

Paul Scully:

Businesses who are not mandated to close but have had their trade adversely affected by the Covid-19 restrictions may be eligible for the Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG). The Additional Restrictions Grant is a discretionary scheme with eligibility set by Local Authorities, who are responsible for the administration of the funding. Local Authorities may use this funding for grants for those business not mandated to close or for other related business support as they see fit.

Local Authorities have been allocated a total of £1.6 bn in Additional Restrictions Grant; £1.1 bn in November 2020 and a further £500m in January 2021.

■ Natural Gas: Hydrogen

Jonathan Edwards:

[\[157080\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of blending hydrogen with natural gas in the gas grid on (a) carbon emissions from domestic heating and (b) consumer prices.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

BEIS officials are working with industry to understand the potential for blending hydrogen with natural gas in the grid. This work includes investigating the range of carbon emissions that could be saved in different blending scenarios, depending on the scale of blending and source of hydrogen.

BEIS officials will be working closely with Ofgem and industry to explore the potential for a future billing methodology – that fairly considers hydrogen blends whilst protecting consumers. Any GB-wide changes will depend on hydrogen blending being proven safe and affordable.

We do not expect an impact on consumer bills when trialling hydrogen blending in the gas grid.

■ Nuclear Fuels

Mark Menzies:

[\[154645\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to ensure that UK nuclear fuel needs are filled by UK produced fuels.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The UK is a world leader in the nuclear fuel cycle. As we transition from the needs of the current nuclear fleet, we are carefully considering with operators, fuel producers and the R&D community how best to meet the needs of future nuclear power stations, including opportunities provided by small and advanced modular reactors.

■ Post Office: Subsidies

Lucy Powell:

[\[158063\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, pursuant to the Answer of 15 February 2021 to Question 149789 on Post Office: Subsidies, whether EU state aid rules do not apply to lockdown grants announced on 5 January 2021.

Paul Scully:

EU State aid rules no longer apply to subsidies granted from 1st January 2021 in the UK. The only exception is aid within scope of the Withdrawal Agreement, specifically Article 10 of the Northern Ireland Protocol which applies to measures affecting trade in goods and wholesale electricity markets between Northern Ireland and the EU, and Article 138 in relation to aid for EU programmes and activities within the Multiannual Financial Framework.

■ Post Offices: Social Security Benefits

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[154995\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment his Department has made of the potential effect on post offices of the decision to award the commercial contract for accepting welfare payments to other parts of the financial sector.

Paul Scully:

The contract for the Post Office card account or its successor scheme is a commercial matter for the Department for Work and Pensions.

Post Office Ltd. is committed to remaining the main channel to ensure individuals and businesses can conveniently access and deposit cash. The Post Office is working with HM Treasury, financial services regulators and the financial industry to make sure that the most vulnerable who still rely on cash, can continue to access basic banking services conveniently and for free.

The sustainability and future success of the post office network remain of the utmost importance to the Government. The £227 million funding the Government has committed through the 2019 Spending Review provides Post Office Ltd with funds to support post offices across the UK and invest in the future of the business.

Public Houses: Coronavirus**Lucy Powell:****[157122]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how much funding has been allocated to each local authority area for the £1,000 wet-led pubs grant for December 2020; and how much of that funding has been disbursed.

Paul Scully:

The Government has put forward an unprecedented package of support for businesses in recognition of the disruption caused by Covid-19. This support includes the Christmas Support Payment for wet-led pubs who missed out on much needed business during the busy festive period. Grants were made available to eligible pubs upon entry to Tier 2 or Tier 3 restrictions following the scheduled Tier review dates of 2 December and 16 December, and to those that entered Tier 4 between 2 and 29 December if they had not already qualified for the grant.

On 24 February, we published data relating to allocations and grant payments made by Local Authorities to businesses up to 17 January 2021. This includes the Christmas Support Payment:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-grant-funding-local-authority-payments-to-small-and-medium-businesses> .

Bob Seely:**[158197]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what plans his Department has made for the transition away from table service in wet-led pubs as covid-19 restrictions are eased.

Paul Scully:

On 22nd February, my Rt. Hon. Friend the Prime Minister published the Government's 'COVID-19 Response - Spring 2021'. The roadmap is a step-by-step plan to ease restrictions in England.

With regard to the reopening of the hospitality sector, Step 2 will take place no earlier than 12 April, when hospitality venues will be able to open for outdoor service, with no requirement for a substantial meal to be served alongside alcoholic drinks, and no curfew. The requirement to order, eat and drink while seated ('table service') will remain.

Remote Working: Coronavirus**Catherine West:****[154640]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what research his Department has carried out into employer compliance with the work from home requirement during the covid-19 outbreak.

Paul Scully:

In the most recent data from the ONS Opinions and Lifestyle Survey, covering the period 3-14 February, 48% of working adults stated that they had worked from home

because of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic in the last seven days. This figure is up from 46% the week previously.

As detailed in my Rt. Hon. Friend the Prime Minister's announcement on 22 February and the publication of the COVID-19 response roadmap, the Stay at Home requirement remains in place until 29 March. Until that point it is important that people stay at home wherever possible to minimise the risk of transmission.

People will no longer be legally required to Stay at Home from 29 March although the guidance will set out at that stage that people should continue to work from home where they can. Government will continue to reinforce these messages when engaging with businesses and representative organisations across a range of different sectors.

The Government has developed Safer Working Guidance with employers and trade unions, and employers are encouraged to discuss their COVID-19 risk assessment and mitigation measures with trade unions.

■ **Renewable Heat Incentive Scheme: Coronavirus**

Fay Jones:

[\[154569\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to support businesses that have faced disruptions as a result of the covid-19 outbreak to apply for the Domestic Renewable Heat Incentive before the deadline.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The Government has introduced a number of measures to support businesses that have been affected by the covid-19 pandemic. The Department also published guidance for tradesmen, so that they could continue to operate safely while carrying out installations in people's homes.

In March 2020, as part of the budget statement, the Government extended the lifetime of the Domestic Renewable Heat Incentive (DRHI) scheme by an additional 12 months, so it is now scheduled to close at the end of March 2022. The extension will provide support for businesses and the installer supply chain for an additional year.

The Department is also making a further amendment to the regulations to relax the requirement for installations to be accredited to the RHI within 12 months of the installation taking place. This will help both consumers and businesses who have been unable to complete building work due to the. The amendment should come into force on 1st April 2021.

■ **Retail Trade: Conditions of Employment**

Chi Onwurah:

[\[158043\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, pursuant to the Answer of 22 February 2021 to Question 153242 on Amazon: Conditions of

Employment, whether he has discussed workers' rights (a) in the retail sector and (b) at Amazon with (i) Amazon and (ii) the Retail Council.

Paul Scully:

Enforcement of employment rights remains as important as ever. The Government already spends £35 million a year on state enforcement of employment rights. This Government will always continue to stand behind workers and stamp out unscrupulous practices where they occur.

The industry-led RSC's work programme is set out on its website <https://retailsectorcouncil.co.uk/> along with the minutes of its meetings.

■ **Science: Finance**

Chi Onwurah: **[157104]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how much sciences investment was provided by the British Business Banks life sciences investment programme in 2020; and what the projected spend of that programme is in 2021.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The Government has committed to invest £200 million towards a dedicated Life Sciences Investment Programme, to enable the most exciting life sciences companies to scale and grow in the UK.

When the programme is launched by the British Business Bank it will leverage around £400 million of private sector investment, making around £600 million of financing available to the sector over the next 10 years.

■ **Subsidies: Public Consultation**

Lucy Powell: **[158061]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to his Department's consultation, Subsidy control: designing a new approach for the UK, published on 3 February 2021, whether interim arrangements for the UK's subsidy control regime will be published pending the outcome of that consultation.

Paul Scully:

The Department is consulting on a new approach to subsidy control that will best reflect the needs of the UK economy. Since 1 January 2021, the subsidy control regime with which public authorities need to comply is defined by our international commitments, including World Trade Organisation rules on subsidies, the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation agreement (TCA), Article 10 of the Northern Ireland Protocol, and other obligations resulting from other international trade agreements.

Details on these commitments, with a particular focus on granting authorities, was published by the Department on 31 December 2020 and is available online at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/complying-with-the-uks-international-obligations-on-subsidy-control-guidance-for-public-authorities>.

■ Summertime: Carbon Emissions

Andrew Bridgen:

[\[155033\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether his Department has made an estimate of the potential effect of adopting British Summer Time permanently on levels of carbon emissions.

Paul Scully:

The Government believes that the current daylight-saving arrangements represent the optimal use of the available daylight across the UK.

■ Transport: Carbon Emissions

Kerry McCarthy:

[\[157027\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will make it his policy to include international aviation and shipping emissions in the Sixth Carbon Budget, as recommended by the Climate Change Committee.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The UK plays a leading role in the development of measures driving emissions reduction in the international aviation and shipping sectors at the International Maritime Organization (IMO) and International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) while UK aviation and shipping emissions are covered by our domestic legislation. We are considering all of the CCC's recommendations, including on International Aviation and Shipping, carefully ahead of setting the sixth carbon budget.

■ UK Trade with EU: Certification Quality Marks

Daisy Cooper:

[\[155407\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what impact assessment he has conducted of the effects of no longer recognising the CE product mark for GB market access from 1 January 2022; and if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of extending the use of the CE product mark alongside the UKCA product mark indefinitely.

Paul Scully:

The introduction of the UKCA mark on 1 January 2021 and the end of the UK's recognition of the CE mark is a consequence of the UK leaving the EU.

In order to help businesses to transition, products with the CE marking will be accepted on the GB market until 1 January 2022 (and longer in some cases). An assessment of the impact of introducing an end date to recognition of the CE marking on the GB market was published as part of recent secondary legislation. This found the change was likely to impose costs of around £36m over a 10-year period. It estimated that between 10,000 and 17,000 UK manufacturers and up to 135,000 UK wholesalers and retailers might be affected.

There are no plans to extend the recognition of CE marking on the GB market, as this would mean recognising EU regulations, even where there is divergence.

■ Vaccination: Manufacturing Industries

Andrea Jenkyns:

[\[155224\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to increase the UK's long-term ability to manufacture vaccines.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The Government has invested over £300 million to secure and scale up the UK's manufacturing capabilities to be able to respond to the pandemic, including:

a) Facilities that have come online:

- £4.7 million for skills training through the Advanced Therapies Skills Training Network, which will be delivered through both virtual and physical centres;
- £8.75 million for the set-up of the rapid deployment facility at Oxford Biomedica in Oxfordshire;
- £65.5 million for the early manufacture of the University of Oxford / AstraZeneca vaccine; and
- Funding for fill and finish capability through a contract with Wockhardt in Wrexham, North Wales. The Government have recently extended Wockhardt's contract from 18 to 24 months, to ensure that we have uninterrupted fill and finish capability into 2022.

b) Facilities that will come online later this year, to help provide longer term UK capacity:

- £93 million to accelerate the completion and expanded role of the Vaccines Manufacturing Innovation Centre in Oxfordshire; and
- £127 million for the Cell and Gene Therapy Catapult in Braintree, Essex.

In addition to the above, we have also funded the expansion of the Valneva factory in Livingston, Scotland.

■ Visas: EU Countries

Gareth Thomas:

[\[154688\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will attempt to negotiate a reduction in the cost of business visas for working in (a) Spain, (b) France and (c) Germany, and if he will make a statement.

Paul Scully:

The costs of visas is an exclusive competence of EU Member States. They are not negotiated with other trade partners, and the UK respects the rights of other countries to set their visa-pricing policy.

■ Weddings: Coronavirus**Nick Smith:**[\[154936\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that wedding (a) venues and (b) suppliers are supported during the third covid-19 lockdown.

Paul Scully:

We have provided an unprecedented package of financial support since March 2020 to businesses, including those in the weddings sector. We keep this regularly under review, through discussions with HM Treasury.

Carolyn Harris:[\[155205\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that wedding (a) venues and (b) suppliers are supported during the third covid-19 lockdown.

Paul Scully:

I meet regularly with the industry-led Weddings Taskforce to understand the impact of COVID-19 on businesses and in both the venue and supply chain sector.

We have provided an unprecedented package of financial support since March 2020 to businesses, including those in the weddings sector. We keep this regularly under review, through discussions with HM Treasury.

Stephen Morgan:[\[155350\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment his Department has made of the potential effect of the covid-19 outbreak on job losses in the wedding industry in which 80 per cent of workers are women.

Paul Scully:

I meet regularly with the industry-led Weddings Taskforce, established to represent all parts of the UK Weddings sector, to understand the impact of COVID-19 on wedding businesses and jobs in the sector.

Nickie Aiken:[\[155383\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what fiscal steps his Department is taking to ensure that (a) wedding venues and (b) wedding suppliers are supported during the third covid-19 national lockdown.

Paul Scully:

We have provided an unprecedented package of financial support since March 2020 to businesses, including those in the weddings sector. We keep this regularly under review, through discussions with HM Treasury.

Nickie Aiken:[\[155384\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what estimate his Department has made of the number of job losses in the wedding industry sector in

the event that additional fiscal support from his Department is not made available to that sector in response to the third national covid-19 lockdown.

Paul Scully:

We have provided an unprecedented package of financial support since March 2020 to businesses, including those in the weddings sector. We keep this regularly under review, through discussions with HM Treasury.

Brendan Clarke-Smith:

[\[155390\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what discussions he has had with representatives of the wedding sector and its supply chain on a timeline for the re-opening of that sector as covid-19 restrictions are eased.

Paul Scully:

I meet regularly with the industry-led Weddings Taskforce, established to represent all parts of the UK Weddings sector including the supply chain, to understand the impact of COVID-19 on wedding businesses and jobs in the sector.

Discussions are continuing on how we can safely reopen the sector when restrictions are eased.

Darren Henry:

[\[155430\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of introducing a Government backed scheme to support wedding businesses in the absence of available insurance cover during the covid-19 outbreak.

Paul Scully:

We have provided an unprecedented package of financial support since March 2020 to businesses, including those in the weddings sector, which is kept under regular review.

Dan Jarvis:

[\[157120\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will publish a timescale for the resumption of wedding ceremonies with more than six attendees as covid-19 lockdown restrictions are eased; and if he will make a statement.

Paul Scully:

As set out in the Government's "COVID-19 Response – Spring 2021", attendee limits for wedding ceremonies are set out for each step of the roadmap.

■ **Whisky: Scotland**

David Mundell:

[\[154856\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the role of the Scotch Whisky industry in supporting (a) hospitality and (b) other businesses in the UK supply chain.

Paul Scully:

The Government has made available a substantial package of financial support over the last year for the hospitality sector. My Rt. Hon. Friend Mr Chancellor of the Exchequer will be making further announcements on the next phase of our economic support package in his Budget on 3rd March.

David Mundell:[\[154857\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of Scotch Whisky distillers producing hand sanitiser for (a) the emergency services and (b) communities.

Paul Scully:

This is a commercial matter for Scotch Whisky distillers. However, the Government would like to thank those distilleries which repurposed their facilities for the production of hand sanitiser for their tremendous contribution to the UK's response to Covid-19.

■ Wind Power**Martyn Day:**[\[155210\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, pursuant to the Answer of 2 February 2021 to Question 143010, on Wind Power, what support has been provided to Ofgem to facilitate onshore wind's capacity to contribute to the Government's net-zero emissions target.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

Renewable electricity generation, including onshore wind, will play a key role in achieving Net Zero. Onshore wind projects can bid into the fourth allocation round of the Contracts for Difference scheme, known as CfDs, which opens later this year. CfDs give greater certainty and stability of revenues to electricity generators by reducing their exposure to volatile wholesale prices, while protecting consumers from paying for higher costs when electricity prices are high. This will mean new onshore wind projects are developed, with the potential to provide clean energy into the network for years to come. Ofgem is responsible for ensuring the electricity network has sufficient capacity to allow for the growth in electricity generation and demand expected as we move to Net Zero, including provision for new and existing wind assets. While this is a matter for the independent energy regulator, Government supports Ofgem in its work to create a stable regulatory environment to ensure Net Zero investment at lowest cost.

■ Wind Power: Scotland**Alan Brown:**[\[155183\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of grid charges on the ability of offshore wind projects in the North of Scotland area to compete with offshore projects in the southern coast of the UK; and if he will he make a statement.

Alan Brown:

[\[155184\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of grid charges on the development of onshore wind projects in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

Network charges are one of many factors that developers will take into account in deciding whether and where to progress particular generation projects. Network charging is a matter for Ofgem as the independent energy regulator, and the charging arrangements it oversees are designed to be cost-reflective to promote efficient network use. For the electricity transmission network, charges include a locational component which recognises that consumers and generators in different locations impose different costs on the network. This means that generators in areas where there is more generation than demand, such as Scotland, pay higher transmission charges than those elsewhere because the electricity has to be transported longer distances to where it is consumed.

Through its Access and Forward-Looking Charging Review, Ofgem is currently developing reform proposals of possible relevance to the network charges incurred by some onshore wind projects in Scotland. It intends to consult on these proposals later this year.

■ Wool: Research

Liz Saville Roberts:

[\[154552\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to support research and development into wool-based products in Wales.

Amanda Solloway:

The Government's ambitions are for a world-leading system that unlocks innovation and growth throughout all parts of the economy across the UK. Research and development are central to igniting the UK's economic recovery, boosting productivity, creating new jobs and improving people's quality of life.

Last Summer, we published the R&D Roadmap which outlines our plan to ensure the UK is the best place in the world for scientists, researchers, and entrepreneurs to live and work. Through our R&D Places Strategy, we will ensure research and development benefits the economies in places across the UK, including Wales, as part of our wider commitment to levelling up.

In November 2020, the Spending Review set out the government's plan to cement the UK's status as a global leader in science and innovation by investing £14.6bn in R&D in 2021-22. We will increase public R&D investment to £22bn per year by 2024-25. This investment supports our commitments set out in the R&D Roadmap and helps consolidate our position as a science superpower.

We are continuing to work with devolved administrations and other Government departments on delivering the R&D Roadmap.

CABINET OFFICE**■ Government Departments: Freedom of Information****Hywel Williams:****[152416]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps his Department is taking to improve the Government's response rate to Freedom of Information requests.

Hywel Williams:**[152417]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what recent assessment his Department has made of the Government's compliance with the applicant blind principle of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

Chloe Smith:

I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to PQ [120952](#) on 30 November 2020.

In a three month period between July and September 2020, departments received around 8,000 freedom of information requests and responded to almost 90% of them within 20 working days or with a permitted extension. This reflects the Government's commitment to fulfill its freedom of information obligations despite the pressures of responding to COVID-19.

The FOI statistics for October to November 2020, and the annual statistics for 2020, will be published in April 2021, at <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/government-foi-statistics>

■ Immigration Controls: Coronavirus**Rachel Reeves:****[150777]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many lorries have been turned away at UK borders as a result of the driver failing to produce a negative covid-19 test since 1 January 2021.

Rachel Reeves:**[150778]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many lorries have been turned away at UK borders as a result of inadequate paperwork since 1 January 2021.

Rachel Reeves:**[150779]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to the oral contribution of the Prime Minister to the Liaison Committee on 13 January 2021, what teething problems are being experienced by UK exporters.

Penny Mordaunt:

I refer the Hon. Member both to the letter by the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster of 11 February, a copy of which I have asked to be placed in the House of Commons Library and to the response, published on gov.uk, to erroneous claims made by the Road Haulage Association available here -

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/response-to-points-raised-in-road-haulage-association-letter-to-the-chancellor-of-the-duchy-of-lancaster>

I also refer the Hon. Member to the answers given by the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster to questions on 11 February.

DEFENCE

■ A400M Aircraft and Hercules Aircraft

Sir Mike Penning: [157034]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what comparative assessment his Department has made of the different missions, capabilities and roles of the (a) C-130J and (b) A400M.

Sir Mike Penning: [157036]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what roles the C130J performs that the A400M would not be able to perform following its proposed upgrade.

Jeremy Quin:

I refer the right hon. Member to the answer I gave to Question 142765 on 28 January 2021 to the hon. Member for Tewkesbury Mr Laurence Robertson.

Attachments:

1. 142765 - A400M Aircraft [142765 - A400M Aircraft.docx]

Sir Mike Penning: [157035]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the (a) time frame (b) estimated cost is of upgrading the A400M to undertake the roles and duties of C-130J fleet.

Jeremy Quin:

Any decision on when the Ministry of Defence may take the C130J fleet out of service and possible implications for the A400M fleet, is under consideration as part of the ongoing Integrated Security and Defence Review.

■ Africa: Armed Forces

Stephen Doughty: [157128]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 22 February 2021 to Question 152536 on Africa: Armed Forces, which branches the personnel trained from (a) Nigeria and (b) Uganda came from in their respective armed forces.

James Heappey:

We have trained military personnel from the Nigerian Army, Nigerian Air Force, and Nigerian Navy, and from the Ugandan Army, Ugandan Air Force, and Ugandan Marines.

■ Air Force: Scotland

Dave Doogan:

[\[158214\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will list the Royal Air Force bases and establishments in Scotland which are in use.

Jeremy Quin:

The hon. Member can find a list of the Royal Air Force bases and establishments in Scotland in the attached document. This list does not include sites that are specifically for Cadet activities.

Attachments:

1. 158214 - RAF Bases in use in Scotland [158214.xlsx]

■ Aircraft Carriers: Early Warning Systems

Mr Kevan Jones:

[\[154817\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, when Crowsnest will be fitted to the Carrier Strike Group.

Jeremy Quin:

The Airborne Surveillance and Control capability, Crowsnest, has now entered front line service. It is planned that Merlin Mk 2 helicopters fitted with a baseline capability will support the Carrier Strike Group deployment.

■ Armed Forces: Coronavirus

Drew Hendry:

[\[157214\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of ensuring service personnel going on active deployment receive the covid-19 vaccination prior to being deployed to high covid-19 risk countries.

James Heappey:

Defence is committed to keeping our personnel, their families and communities safe at home and overseas, and all our personnel are being vaccinated in line with national priority guidelines. This means that Service personnel are being offered vaccination in step with the UK population.

Whilst not arguing that Defence personnel should be vaccinated ahead of turn, we do believe that they should not be disadvantaged by being out of the country on operational duty when their turn comes. We are in discussion with Department for Health and Social Care colleagues to ensure that does not happen.

■ Armed Forces: Sexual Offences

Carol Monaghan:

[\[157205\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the data recorded in the Joint Personnel Administration system, how many complaints have been made by female

armed forces recruits under the age of 18 of (a) sexually inappropriate behaviour and (b) sexual assault since 2015.

Johnny Mercer:

The Ministry of Defence has made it absolutely clear there is no place for unacceptable behaviour in the Armed Forces. We recognise the great courage it takes to come forward and report a sexual offence and Commanding Officers must always refer any allegation of rape and sexual assault, or any other offence which may have a sexual element, to the Service Police. All allegations are thoroughly investigated, and support provided to victims. Anyone found to fall short of the Services' high standards or to have committed an offence is dealt with appropriately, which may include imprisonment and dismissal from service.

Individual complaints about 'sexually inappropriate behaviour' would mostly commonly be recorded as sexual harassment on the Joint Personnel Administration (JPA) system. I can confirm that in the period since 1 January 2015, a search of information held on JPA shows that there have been no informal or formal Service Complaints alleging harassment, including sexual harassment, from female Service personnel aged under 18.

Information relating to the criminal offence of sexual assault is held on the Service Police's REDCAPS database rather than JPA. However, it will take time to conduct a manual search of the records held on REDCAPS to positively confirm the number of allegations made by female personnel aged under 18. I will write with that information in due course.

Carol Monaghan:

[157206]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what policies the Army Foundation College has to ensure that female armed forces recruits under the age of 18 in its care are safeguarded from sexually inappropriate imagery, language and contact.

Johnny Mercer:

The Army takes the safeguarding of its people extremely seriously and recognises the need to treat under 18s appropriately. The Army Foundation College (Harrogate) was assessed as 'Outstanding' by Ofsted during the last inspection in October 2017 in all three categories (Outcomes for recruits and trainees, Quality of Welfare & Duty of Care, and the Effectiveness of Leadership & Management).

The Army also elects to impose a higher level of employment checks on the instructors of all Basic Training establishments, to provide additional safeguarding measures.

The Army constantly seeks to improve training and awareness so that all Service personnel know how to report concerns and access support if needed.

Throughout their careers, Service personnel receive a range of training specifically about the subject of consent; underpinned by the fact that they remain subject to civilian laws on sexually inappropriate imagery, language and contact, as protected by the Equality Act 2010.

■ Army: Scotland

Dave Doogan:

[\[158213\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will list the Army bases and establishments in Scotland which are in use.

Jeremy Quin:

The hon. Member can find a list of the Army bases and establishments in Scotland listed in the tables below. This list does not include sites that are specifically for Cadet activities.

List of Army Bases and Establishments in Scotland, as at 26 February 2021.

REGULAR ARMY BASES AND ESTABLISHMENTS IN SCOTLAND

Kentigern House, Glasgow

Craigiehall (vacated but still Army owned)

Dreghorn Barracks, Edinburgh

Fort George

Forthside, Stirling

Glencorse Barracks, Penicuik

Inchdrewer House, Edinburgh

Kinloss Barracks

Leuchars Station

Redford Cavalry Barracks, Edinburgh

Redford Infantry Barracks, Edinburgh

Victoria Barracks, Ballater (used for Summer season only)

Joint Service Mountain Training Centre, Ballachulish

RESERVE ARMY BASES AND ESTABLISHMENTS IN SCOTLAND

Area / Estate

**Establishment / Army Reserve
Centre (ARC)**

Borders Volunteer Estate

Galashiels ARC

Central Scotland Volunteer Estate

Grangemouth
ARC

Meadowforth ARC

RESERVE ARMY BASES AND ESTABLISHMENTS IN SCOTLAND

Whiteston Rifle Range

Dumfries & Galloway Volunteer Estate Dumfries ARC

Fife Volunteer Estate

Bothwell
House ARC

Bruce House ARC

Cupar ARC

Glenrothes ARC

Kirkcaldy ARC

St Andrews ARC

Grampian Volunteer Estate

Aberdeen
UOTC

Elgin ARC

Gordon Bks ARC

Keith ARC

Keith ARC Rifle Range

Peterhead ARC

Highlands & Islands Volunteer Estate Dingwall TA
Bungalow

Fort Charlotte ARC

Gordonville Rd ARC

Halkirk Indoor Range

Kirkwall ARC

Stornoway ARC

Wick ARC ACF Garage

Lothian Volunteer Estate

Alnwickhill
Road ARC

Bathgate ARC

Beveridge Square ARC

RESERVE ARMY BASES AND ESTABLISHMENTS IN SCOTLAND

Claverhouse ARC

Colinton Rd ARC

East Claremont St ARC

Lanark Rd ARC

Mcdonald Rd ARC

Southern Highlands Volunteer Estate Cumbernauld
ARC

Dumbarton ARC

Dunoon ARC

Strathclyde Volunteer Estate Barnsford
Bridge ARC

Chalmers Road ARC

Clydesmill Drive ARC

Corsehill Mount Road ARC

Crow Road ARC

Dechmont Rifle Range

Govan ARC

Glasgow and Strathclyde UOTC

Hatton House ARC

Hawkhead Road ARC

Houldsworth St ARC

Jardine St ARC

Motherwell ARC

Seaforth Road ARC

Walcheren Bks ARC

Whitemoss ARC

Tayside Volunteer Estate Arbroath
ARC

RESERVE ARMY BASES AND ESTABLISHMENTS IN SCOTLAND

Forfar ARC

Invergowrie ARC

Newman Hse ARC

Oliver Bks ARC

Park Wynd ARC

Queens Barracks ARC

Red Lion Garage ARC

RFCA HQ Seathwood

Strathmore Avenue ARC

■ European Fighter Aircraft: Procurement

Mr Kevan Jones:

[156274]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 11 February 2021 to Question 153143 on Joint Strike Fighter Aircraft: Procurement, if he will publish those criteria.

Jeremy Quin:

With regard to the F-35 Lift System, Rolls Royce considered their UK supply base in estimating the proportion of the Lift System manufactured in the UK. This contributes to the overall UK content of the F-35 Air System. This assessment reflects that the UK Defence Industry is defined as embracing all suppliers, including both UK and foreign owned companies, that create value, employment, technology or intellectual assets in the UK.

■ Fleet Solid Support Ships

Stephen Morgan:

[156538]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 30 November 2020 to Question 120779 on Fleet Solid Support Ships, what recent assessment he has made of whether that target will be met.

Jeremy Quin:

It remains our intention to commence the Fleet Solid Support ship competition during spring 2021.

■ Hercules Aircraft

Sir Mike Penning:

[\[157033\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the potential effect on capability of the early retirement of the C-130J; and if he will make a statement.

Jeremy Quin:

Any decision on the out of service date for the C130J Fleet is subject to the Integrated Review (IR). The intention of the IR is to modernise our Armed Forces to ensure they have the capabilities they need to counter both current threats and those of the future. Any decision on future capabilities will be driven by those principles.

■ HMS Prince of Wales: Repairs and Maintenance

Stephen Morgan:

[\[155352\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 14 December 2020 to Question 126964, on HMS Prince of Wales: Repairs and Maintenance, when those repairs will be completed.

Jeremy Quin:

I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to him by my hon. friend the Minister for the Armed Forces on 17 December 2020 to Question 129101. Repairs to HMS Prince of Wales will be completed prior to her return to sea in May 2021.

Attachments:

1. HMS Prince of Wales; Repairs and Maintenance [129101 - HMS Prince of Wales - Repairs and Maintenance.docx]

■ International Military Services

Tulip Siddiq:

[\[155265\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will publish a list of the outstanding supply commitments International Military Services Ltd had at the time of its operational close down in 2010.

Mr Ben Wallace:

IMS Ltd had no outstanding supply commitments when it ceased trading in 2010.

Tulip Siddiq:

[\[155266\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many employees of his Department are contracted to work at International Military Services Ltd.

Mr Ben Wallace:

No Ministry of Defence employees are contracted to work at IMS Ltd.

Tulip Siddiq:

[\[155269\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what plans he has to bring the records of International Military Services Ltd onto an International Military Services Ltd site in the UK so that those records may be safely accessed by staff of his Department.

Mr Ben Wallace:

IMS Ltd's office, which is in the UK, is currently closed in line with Government COVID19-related guidance. IMS Ltd's records will be accessible for review when circumstances allow.

Tulip Siddiq:[\[155270\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what his rationale was for changing all of the Directors of International Military Services Ltd simultaneously in September 2020; and what steps his Department is taking to ensure that there is adequate knowledge transfer from the outgoing Directors to the new management team at International Military Services Ltd.

Mr Ben Wallace:

The resignation of the IMS Ltd Board of Directors in September 2020, and their replacement with Ministry of Defence (MOD) officials was an appropriate next step following the designation of IMS Ltd as a governmental Arms-Length Body in 2019. The change was preceded by discussion between MOD officials and the departing Directors, and a small staff has been retained at the company to facilitate the transition.

■ International Military Services: Arbitration**Tulip Siddiq:**[\[155271\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what information he holds on the date of the next court hearing on IMS arbitration.

Mr Ben Wallace:

The next court hearing in the dispute between IMS Ltd and Iran's Ministry of Defence is scheduled for 20-22 April.

■ Iran: International Military Services**Tulip Siddiq:**[\[156487\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the July 2010 IMS Management Board minutes, for what reasons the IMS Ltd. debt to Iran was not settled in July 2010.

Mr Ben Wallace:

The debt was not settled because no agreement was reached at the time on a settlement figure, or a mechanism for payment.

■ Military Aircraft: Training**Hywel Williams:**[\[157020\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what ratio of land to sea training is planned for the T6 Texan once the certification issues have been resolved.

Jeremy Quin:

The set requirement of night flying on the Texan Ab-Initio Course to gain night flying qualification roughly equates to 95 per cent day flying and 5 per cent night flying. However, there has never been a military requirement in setting any form of ratio of land to sea training. The primary responsibility is to operate efficiently and safely within available airspace to deliver military training course aims.

For the Texan fleet, the Valley Aerial Tactics Area (VATA) and the RAF Valley/Mona Air Traffic Zones remain the most appropriate airspace to deliver many of these training aims. RAF Valley undertakes to distribute training activity as fairly as possible for all aircraft types based at the station, but the local airspace is surrounded by civil airways over much of the Irish Sea. Although a far greater proportion of Texan training is conducted over-water than a year ago, for all communities under the VATA airspace, a level of flying locally remains inevitable.

Hywel Williams:[\[157021\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the ratio is of day to night flying of the T6 Texan II based at RAF Valley.

Jeremy Quin:

The set requirement of night flying on the Texan Ab-Initio Course to gain night flying qualification roughly equates to 95 per cent day flying and five per cent night flying. However, there has never been a military requirement in setting any form of ratio of land to sea training. The primary responsibility is to operate efficiently and safely within available airspace to deliver military training course aims.

For the Texan fleet, the Valley Aerial Tactics Area (VATA) and the RAF Valley/Mona Air Traffic Zones remain the most appropriate airspace to deliver many of these training aims. RAF Valley undertakes to distribute training activity as fairly as possible for all aircraft types based at the station, but the local airspace is surrounded by civil airways over much of the Irish Sea. Although a far greater proportion of Texan training is conducted over-water than a year ago, for all communities under the VATA airspace, a level of flying locally remains inevitable.

Hywel Williams:[\[157022\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the Affinity/Ascent contract of 25 years, when during that contract he plans to review the choice of aircraft specified for the UK Military Flight Training System; and if he will make a statement.

Jeremy Quin:

There are no current plans to review the choice of aircraft during the contract period.

■ Navy: Scotland**Dave Doogan:**[\[158215\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will list the Royal Navy shore-based establishments in Scotland which are in use.

Jeremy Quin:

The Royal Navy shore-based establishments currently in use are listed below:

ESTABLISHMENT	NOTES
HM Naval Base Clyde	Includes HMS NEPTUNE and Royal Naval Armament Depot Coulport
RM Condor, Arbroath	
HMS Dalriada, Glasgow	Royal Naval Reserve (RNR)
HMS Scotia	RNR based within MOD Caledonia (Rosyth)
RMR Scotland	Based within MOD Caledonia
Garelochhead Oil Fuel Depot (OFD)	Administered by Oil and Pipelines Agency (OPA)
Campbeltown OFD	Administered by OPA
Loch Striven OFD	Administered by OPA
Loch Ewe OFD	Administered by OPA

■ **Type 23 Frigates**

Mr Kevan Jones:

[\[154819\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the forecasted out of service dates are for the Type 23 Frigate, by ship.

Jeremy Quin:

On current plans, the last Type 23 frigate will transition out of service in 2035.

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

■ **Broadband: Wales**

Ben Lake:

[\[153339\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, how much funding he plans to allocate to Wales under the UK Rural Gigabit Connectivity Programme.

Matt Warman:

The UK Rural Gigabit Connectivity (RGC) programme launched in May 2019, with voucher and public sector site elements.

Through RGC, the UK government has continued the roll-out of gigabit capable full-fibre in Wales, with nearly £3.7m committed:

a) 351 connected (£646k) and 932 pipeline (£1.79m) rural vouchers

b) £1.25m to for 103 public sites in 11 Local Authority areas - Welsh Government will oversee the project that covers public sites in Anglesey, Carmarthenshire, Ceredigion, Conwy, Denbighshire, Flintshire, Gwynedd, Neath Port Talbot, Pembrokeshire, Powys, and Swansea.

In addition to rural vouchers, in Wales there was the previous gigabit voucher scheme with 562 connected (£1.24m) and 66 pipeline (£147k).

In addition to the RGC public site project, in Wales there are a number of other Local Full Fibre Network Challenge Fund projects that are connecting public sites with nearly £24.5m committed:

- across North Wales with the six local authorities for 350 public sites
- in Pembrokeshire for 70 public sites
- along the South Wales Strategic Road Network
- across the Cardiff Capital Region with the ten local authorities for 174 public sites

■ **Coronavirus: Vaccination**

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[154840\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport with reference to the vaccination for covid-19 of older people, whether he has made an assessment of the safety of reopening bingo clubs.

Mr John Whittingdale:

The Prime Minister announced on Monday 22 February that indoor entertainment venues, which will include bingo clubs, will open at Step 3 of the roadmap, not before 17 May. The design of the roadmap has been informed by the latest scientific evidence and seeks a balance between our key social and economic priorities, while preserving the health and safety of the country. Further details will be announced in due course.

■ **Culture: UK Trade with EU**

Ms Harriet Harman:

[\[156237\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether his Department has made an assessment of the economic effect of additional non-tariff barriers to trade for small and medium-sized enterprises in the cultural sector seeking to export to EU customers since 1 January 2021.

Caroline Dinenage:

The Government recognises the importance of the creative and cultural sectors, and is fully committed to assist them to navigate the new rules under the Trade and Cooperation Agreement.

The Agreement ensures there will be zero tariffs or quotas on trade between the UK and the EU, where goods meet the relevant rules of origin, and includes provisions to

facilitate trade and address non-tariff barriers for UK exports to the EU and vice versa.

The Government appreciates that leaving the European Union and the Customs Union means changes and new processes, and companies having to adapt to new rules of origin procedures.

Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs has launched a Brexit Support Fund, which is a grant scheme of £22.75m to support SMEs, with up to £2k per business to access training or professional advice on border processes they haven't used previously. This could include for example customs, rules of origin and VAT.

We will continue engagement with the sectors to ensure we fully understand the circumstances of companies in the cultural and creative sector, and support them in trading with the EU and the rest of the world.

■ Events Industry: Coronavirus

Kevin Brennan:

[\[154799\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if he will publish a strategy to re-open the live events sector as covid-19 lockdown restrictions are eased.

Caroline Dinenage:

The 'COVID-19 Response - Spring 2021' announced by the Prime Minister on the 22 February provides a roadmap out of the current lockdown in England, including for live events.

The design of the roadmap has been informed by the latest scientific evidence and seeks a balance between our key social and economic priorities, whilst preserving the health and safety of the country. The Government aims to allow spectators to attend some large events, including live music events, from Step 3 (17 May at the earliest), subject to a cap on attendance and local authority approval.

Events where social distancing is unlikely to be possible, for example music festivals where audiences are standing rather than seated, will not be permitted to go ahead until step 4, subject to the findings from the Events Research Programme. This Programme will explore how large events can return with reduced social distancing requirements.

Whilst dates remain conditional, we know that the sector has been calling for "no earlier than" dates and the roadmap provides these at 5 week intervals between each step. This is to allow the government and health experts time to assess the impact of the previous step and provide a week's notice before changes occur.

■ Fairgrounds: Coronavirus

Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck:

[\[158070\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, when the covid-19 roadmap guidance will be updated to cover fairgrounds and travelling fairgrounds; and whether that guidance will include discretionary guidance for local authorities.

Nigel Huddleston:

We will re-enable outdoor events such as funfairs and fairgrounds in Step 2 of the roadmap, as referenced [here](#), subject to local authority approval where required. Step 2 will take place at least 5 weeks after Step 1 and no earlier than 12 April, subject to an assessment of the data.

Whilst outdoor events are not currently able to proceed due to the national restrictions, my Department looks forward to working across Government and with Local Authorities, Public Health England and the sector itself to get funfairs running safely and successfully once they are permitted.

■ Festival UK* 2022: Finance**Dr Rupa Huq:****[158146]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, how much spending has been allocated to the Festival UK* 2022 in (a) 2021-22 and (b) 2022-23; and from which departmental budget that spending will be taken.

Caroline Dinenage:

For 2021-22, £29.1 million has been allocated to Festival UK 2022 for delivery in England, with a further £58.6 million allocated for 2022-23. This funding will be taken from the DCMS budget. These spending forecasts do not include the Barnett allocations to the devolved nations, which is administered by HM Treasury.

■ Festivals and Special Occasions: Insurance**Jamie Stone:****[158157]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what discussions he has had with organisations responsible for running festivals this year on insurance issues.

Caroline Dinenage:

We are committed to continue working with the festival sector to understand the difficulties they face and help them access support through these challenging times and through recovery. We are aware of the concerns which have been raised by the festival sector about the challenge of securing indemnity cover for live events. My officials have been working closely with festival industry stakeholders to understand the challenges and to keep the situation under review. I also chair the Events and Entertainment Working Group where I discuss these issues directly with the festival industry.

Protecting public health is of vital importance to myself and the government. We are exploring all barriers to reopening, which include potential challenges around indemnity cover. Understandably, the bar for considering Government intervention is set extremely high, especially given the considerable extension to the furlough scheme and local business support.

Given the high costs involved in setting up a scheme we also need to make sure it is the most effective and appropriate use of funds at a time when we are looking at how best to support the sector in facing the wider challenges around recovery and

renewal. As such, HM Treasury does not believe that now is the right time for an insurance intervention.

At the Budget the Chancellor will set out the next phase in our economic support package to reflect the steps set out in the Prime Minister's roadmap to easing restrictions published last month, tailoring support for individuals and businesses to reflect the changing public health restrictions.

■ Freedom of Information: Complaints

Dehenna Davison:

[\[154627\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what the average length of delay in initiating the investigation of complaints submitted to the Information Commissioner under section 50(1) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 is; and what steps he is taking to tackle that delay.

Mr John Whittingdale:

The Freedom of Information Act (FOI) is regulated and enforced independently of Government by the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO).

The ICO is dealing with rapidly growing numbers of complaints; currently it receives around 100 new complaints a week. The ICO responds to all FOI complaints with an email acknowledging receipt, which sets out current expected timescales for a response. All complaints are triaged: investigations into relatively simple cases usually commence within 30 days of receipt, while more complex cases may take up to 7 months to be allocated to an ICO officer for investigation.

The ICO is taking steps to increase its resources in this area so that these cases are dealt with as quickly as possible, whilst ensuring a high quality of response.

■ Gambling Act 2005: Prosecutions

Ben Bradley:

[\[155365\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, with reference to review of the Gambling Act 2005, what powers are currently available to the Gambling Commission to investigate and prosecute offences under section 28 of the Gambling Act 2005.

Mr John Whittingdale:

Section 28 of the Gambling Act 2005 states that the Gambling Commission may investigate whether an offence has been committed under the Act and may institute criminal proceedings for an offence in England and Wales. In Scotland, the power to institute criminal proceedings rests solely with the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service (COPFS). These provisions are tied to specific powers outlined in other subsections of the Act and may be exercised whether in response to information received by the Commission or otherwise.

As a general rule, the Commission will not normally pursue a criminal investigation into a licensed operator, as in most cases the matter under investigation is likely to be

dealt with by the exercise of the Commission's regulatory powers. However, there might be circumstances where the commencement of a criminal investigation is merited. Where the Commission's investigations uncover evidence that a serious criminal offence may have been committed, which falls outside the Commission's jurisdiction, the Commission may pass the information it possesses to the police, or another body, for consideration by them.

■ Gaming: Internet

Fleur Anderson:

[157316]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what discussions he has had with (a) gaming companies, (b) e-sports companies and (c) gaming ancillary chat platforms on (i) online harms and (ii) those companies' plans to improve (A) user safety and (B) child protection in line with the Interim Codes of Practice on online safety, published on 15 December 2020; and if he will make a statement.

Fleur Anderson:

[157317]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what discussions he has had with (a) social media, (b) gaming and (c) e-sports companies on cross-platform online harms risks; and what plans he has to tackle those risks in the proposed online safety Bill.

Caroline Dinenage:

We have published the interim codes alongside the full government response to the Online Harms White Paper to provide companies with our expectations of what they should be doing to address Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse and terrorist content. The interim codes are voluntary and will enable companies to take swift action in tackling the most serious of online harms before the regulator is established.

We engaged extensively with industry stakeholders, civil society organisations and non-government organisations in the development of the interim codes.

Ministers and officials have regular meetings and discussions with a wide range of stakeholders on a variety of issues, including cross-platform online harms risks.

Details of Ministerial meetings are published quarterly on the [Gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk) website. The Online Safety Bill, which will be ready this year, will require all in scope companies to put in place systems and processes to keep their users safe.

■ Gyms: Coronavirus

Dr Dan Poulter:

[154954]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if he will (a) publish a timeline for re-opening gyms and (b) confirm the status of gyms as essential businesses that provide health benefits to their members.

Nigel Huddleston:

Sports and physical activity providers and facilities are at the heart of our communities, and play a crucial role in supporting adults and children to be active.

On Monday 22 February, the Prime Minister announced a roadmap out of the current lockdown in England. The approach focuses on data, not dates. Each step has a “no earlier than” date, 5 weeks later than the previous step, to allow time to assess the impact of the previous step and provide a week’s notice before changes occur.

Step 2 will take place no earlier than 12 April and as part of this indoor sport facilities including gyms for individual use will reopen. Group exercise will be allowed as part of Step 3 of the roadmap which will take place no earlier than 17 May. This will be subject to social contact limits.

■ Health: Gyms

Dr Dan Poulter:

[154956]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of gyms in improving the health and fitness of their members and providing greater resilience amongst the population to infectious diseases.

Nigel Huddleston:

The Chief Medical Officer is clear that being physically active is important to long-term health and crucial for keeping people healthy. Sports and physical activity, including the use of gyms, have been shown to treat, manage and prevent a range of conditions including heart disease, cancers, diabetes, stress, depression or anxiety. It can also bring communities together and tackle issues such as loneliness. That’s why we have continued to make sure that people can exercise throughout the national and the local tiered restrictions.

Sport England’s Active Lives Adult and Children surveys provide information not only on activity levels but also on social outcomes such as physical and mental wellbeing too. The latest reports can be found [here](#).

Furthermore, last month Sport England published its new strategy Uniting the Movement which sets out their 10 year vision to transform lives and communities through sport and physical activity. The strategy seeks to tackle the inequalities we have seen in sport and physical activity and provide opportunities to people and communities that have traditionally been left behind, helping to remove barriers to activity.

On Monday 22 February, the Prime Minister announced a roadmap out of the current lockdown in England. Step 2 will take place no earlier than 12 April and as part of this indoor leisure (including gyms) for individual use will reopen. Step 3 will take place no earlier than 17 May and as part of this exercise classes can resume. This will be subject to social contact limits.

■ Horse Riding: Coronavirus

Sarah Olney:

[157235]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, with reference to the Covid19 Response, Spring 2021, published in February 2021, CP 398, whether the Government classifies outdoor riding schools as an outdoor sports facility; and whether

outdoor riding schools will be allowed to reopen on 29 March 2021 as covid-19 restrictions are eased.

Nigel Huddleston:

Sports and physical activity providers and facilities are at the heart of our communities, and play a crucial role in supporting adults and children to be active.

On Monday 22 February, the Prime Minister announced a roadmap out of the current lockdown in England. As part of step 1, from 29 March outdoor sports facilities can reopen, broadening the options for outdoor exercise and recreation. These facilities, such as riding schools, can be used by people in line with the wider social contact limits.

■ **Internet: Children**

Martyn Day:

[\[155215\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if he will take steps to ensure that forthcoming legislative proposals on preventing children's exposure to pornographic content online apply equally to all pornographic websites accessible by children.

Caroline Dinenage:

In negotiations with the EU, the UK proposed expanding a list of activities for Short Term Business Visitors to cover musicians, artists and their accompanying staff. This would have enabled musicians, artists and support staff to tour and perform in the EU without needing work-permits. I deeply regret that the EU rejected our proposals. There is scope to return to this issue in the future should the EU change its mind.

UK performers and artists are of course still able to tour and perform in the EU, and vice versa. However, they will be required to check domestic immigration rules for each Member State in which they intend to tour. This is because, while some Member States may allow paid performances without a visa or work permit, others will require musicians, artists and other creative professionals to obtain a visa or work permit, in the same way that they are required for other international artists.

The Government is looking at how we can work with our partners in EU Member States to find ways to make life easier for the creative industries touring in the EU.

We understand the concerns of the sector regarding the new arrangements and we are committed to supporting them as they get to grips with the changes to systems and processes. The DCMS-led working group on creative and cultural touring, which involves sector representatives and other key government departments, is looking at the issues and options to help the sectors resume touring with ease as soon as it is safe to do so.

■ Internet: Fraud**John Spellar:**[\[154672\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether he plans to include financial promotions in the Online Safety Bill.

Caroline Dinenage:

The new online safety legislation will focus on ensuring that people are protected from harmful content and behaviour online, with a particular emphasis on protecting children.

The legislation will not focus on harmful financial promotions, as this issue will be most effectively tackled by other mechanisms.

■ Local Press: Planning Permission**Stella Creasy:**[\[157094\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government on the importance of advertising planning notices in local newspapers to (a) the elderly and vulnerable, (b) other local residents and (b) local media organisations.

Mr John Whittingdale:

Local planning authorities are required to publicise certain types of planning applications in local newspapers as set out in Article 15 of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015.

We are mindful of the potential impact that any changes to the requirements might have on transparency and local democracy, as well as the potential effect on local newspaper revenue. Indeed the independent Cairncross Review into the future of journalism found that statutory notices, including planning notices, provide an important strand of revenue for many local publishers and that their withdrawal would do serious damage to parts of the sector. We also recognise the importance of local newspapers to communities and the continued need to reach out to people who cannot digitally access information.

Proposals to reform publicity requirements are being considered through the “Planning for the Future” White Paper which aims to make it simpler, quicker and more accessible for local people to engage with the planning system using digital tools. MHCLG is considering consultation responses and will publish a response in due course, and the impact on transparency and local democracy, as well as on local newspaper revenue will be considered before any decisions are taken.

■ Musicians: Visas and Work Permits**Ms Harriet Harman:**[\[156235\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment he has made of the effect of additional visa and work permit restrictions on the (i) number and (ii) proportion of UK music performers who perform in Europe.

Ms Harriet Harman:

[\[156236\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether his Department has made an assessment of the effect on the development of UK artists of touring in the EU.

Ms Harriet Harman:

[\[156239\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether he plans to make an assessment of the potential merits of additional export support to the UK music industry as a result of new restrictions on musicians seeking to tour the EU.

Ms Harriet Harman:

[\[156241\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether his Department has made an estimate of the gross charges the UK music industry will incur for (a) visas, (b) work permits and (c) carnets in the 2022 calendar year connected to touring EU member states.

Caroline Dinéage:

The Government recognises the world-leading position of the UK music sector and the rich breadth of musical talent across the UK. According to UK Music's 2020 report, the sector contributed £5.8bn GVA to the UK economy in 2019 and generated £2.9bn in export revenue.

Leaving the EU has meant changes to how practitioners operate in the EU. UK cultural professionals, including musicians, seeking to perform within the EU are required to check domestic immigration and visitor rules for individual Member States.

The Government is committed to supporting the sector to maintain its world-leading position, and to help it recover from the impact of the Covid pandemic. We recognise that the new provisions in the Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA) will require the sector to adapt to new requirements and ways of working with the EU now we are no longer a Member State.

We are now working urgently across government and in collaboration with the music and wider creative industries to understand our sector's concerns. This includes the DCMS-led working group which brings together other government departments and sector leads to understand the impacts and consider options so that touring in Europe can resume with ease as soon as it is safe to do so.

■ Regional Planning and Development

Kerry McCarthy:

[\[157025\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether his Department plans to publish a response to the Levelling up our communities: proposals for a new social covenant report by the hon. Member for Devizes, published in September 2020.

Mr John Whittingdale:

This is an independent piece of work requested by the Prime Minister of the Member for Devizes (Danny Kruger). Mr Kruger and his office led the consultation process and he met with a wide range of stakeholders to inform his recommendations, including the Minister for Civil Society. The department is currently reviewing the recommendations and the Secretary of State will provide an update on the Government's work in this area in due course.

■ **Sports: Coronavirus****Andrew Rosindell:**[\[154834\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of allowing under 18 sports clubs to resume at the same time as schools are allowed to reopen as covid-19 restrictions are eased.

Nigel Huddleston:

Sports and physical activity providers and facilities are at the heart of our communities, and play a crucial role in supporting adults and children to be active. That's why we have continued to make sure that people can exercise throughout the national restrictions and why we have ensured that grassroots and children's sport is front of the queue when easing those restrictions.

On Monday 22 February, the Prime Minister announced a roadmap out of the current lockdown in England. The government has introduced a step approach to the return of outdoor and indoor sport areas across England. This is a cautious and gradual approach, led by data, not dates.

From 8 March, sport can take place in school for all children, or as part of wraparound activities if children are attending in order to enable their parents to work, seek work, attend education, seek medical care, or attend a support group.

Any organised outdoor sport (for children or adults) can restart on 29 March, and indoor sport for under 18s outside of school can restart from Step 2 which will take place no earlier than 12 April. This will be subject to social contact limits.

■ **Tourism: Coronavirus****Neil Coyle:**[\[158073\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what additional support his Department plans to offer to UK tourism businesses as covid-19 lockdown restrictions ease.

Neil Coyle:[\[158074\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment his Department has made of how long international tourism will take to return to previous levels as covid-19 lockdown restrictions ease.

Nigel Huddleston:

Since the start of the first lockdown, we've provided a range of targeted measures to see the UK tourism sector through COVID-19. On top of the Government's wider economic support package, we've provided business rates relief and grants for many in the sector, as well as a substantial cut in VAT for tourism and hospitality activities until the end of March. The Chancellor will deliver the Budget on 3 March, in which he will set out the next phase of our plan to tackle the pandemic and build back better.

We recognise that heightened travel restrictions are significantly impacting international tourism and we are closely monitoring the situation. We will continue to engage with stakeholders via the Tourism Industry Council to assess how we can most effectively support the sector's recovery.

■ UK Safer Internet Centre: Finance**Ruth Jones:**[\[157279\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what recent assessment he has made of the (a) availability and (b) adequacy of funding for the UK Safer Internet Centre.

Caroline Dinanage:

The UK Safer Internet Centre plays an important role in improving online safety in the UK, particularly for children. Officials engage regularly with the Centre on its funding position following the UK's exit from the EU.

The Centre has applied for further funding from the European Commission's Connecting Europe Facility programme for the calendar year of 2021, for which the government provided a letter of support. We understand the Centre has been successful in its bid for funding but we await formal confirmation from the Centre regarding its outcome.

EDUCATION**■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]****Kirsten Oswald:**[\[912682\]](#)

What assessment he has made of the effect of the end of the transition period on (a) further and (b) higher education.

Michelle Donelan:

The department has considered all aspects of how exiting the EU might affect further and higher education. This included consideration of participation in EU-funded programmes, future arrangements for migration and for access to student finance support. We have been committed to ensuring the country is prepared for every eventuality.

My officials also regularly engage with sector stakeholders on a range of issues, including EU exit and the transition period.

Andrew Bridgen:

[\[912684\]](#)

If he will ensure covid-19 catch-up funding for 16 to 19 year olds is not limited to students with low prior attainment in GCSE English and maths.

Gillian Keegan:

Catch up funding for 16- to 19-year-olds is provided through the 16-19 Tuition Fund. This is focused on supporting those young people who are at significant disadvantage and whose learning has been impacted most severely by the COVID-19 outbreak.

We have targeted this funding among 16–19 -year-old students for those with low prior attainment because:

- We know that these young people are disproportionately likely to be from disadvantaged backgrounds.
- Students who leave full-time education with low attainment are far more likely to become Not in Education, Employment or Training and far less likely to progress to higher level courses, including HE and apprenticeships. We also know that they earn significantly less over their lifetimes.
- Students with low prior attainment are more likely to have fallen behind in lockdown, as they will have found it harder to 'self-study' at home and are more likely to disengage.

Those without GCSE English and/or maths at the expected standard at age 16 is the agreed measure used for disadvantage in 16-19 education and an established part of the 16-19 funding formula.

Funding is available to spend on those students without a grade 5 or above in English and/or maths GCSE. However, providers are required to prioritise support for students who have not achieved a grade 4 in English and/or maths. If providers have funding available within their allocations, they can consider whether any young people with a grade 4 also needs catch up support.

As further evidence emerges, we will consider if refinements to eligibility for future funding are needed to maximise its value and impact in providing catch-up support for 16-19 students.

Dr Jamie Wallis:

[\[912686\]](#)

What steps his Department plans to take to implement the Government's levelling up agenda.

Gillian Keegan:

We are implementing an exciting and ambitious reform programme to level up the further education sector, ensuring it becomes a powerhouse that supplies the skills employers need, and equips young people and adults to have productive and fulfilling careers.

On 21 January 2021 we published the Skills for Jobs white paper focused on giving people the skills they need, in a way that suits them, so they can get great jobs in

sectors the economy needs and boost this country's productivity. Area based planning is a key focus; Local Skills Improvement Plans will be introduced to help providers to better serve the needs of their local area.

We are also ensuring people have opportunities to upskill and reskill at different points in their life by delivering my right hon. Friend, the Prime Minister's Lifetime Skills Guarantee. This includes introducing a Lifelong Loan Entitlement from 2025, funding people for their first level 3 (A level equivalent) course, and short, flexible ways to train through employer-led bootcamps. These measures will be a key enabler in levelling-up for those who do not have university level education.

We have put in place a number of programmes and policies to address the long-term impact of the COVID-19 outbreak, such as the COVID-19 catch-up premium and the Skills Recovery Package, which is focused on supporting young people. This includes incentives for employers to take on new apprentices, tripling the number of traineeships, and a new high-value course offer for school leavers.

Stephen Hammond:

[\[912687\]](#)

What steps his Department is taking to maintain levels of funding for universities and higher education institutes based in London.

Michelle Donelan:

The London Weighting element of the Strategic Priorities Grant accounts for a small proportion of London-based providers' income. Providers in London received around £64 million London Weighting in academic year 2020-21, which was less than 1% of their estimated total income.

The Strategic Priorities Grant, formerly referred to as the Teaching Grant, plays an important role in supporting providers and students to develop the skills and knowledge needed locally, regionally and nationally to support the economy.

The grant is funding supplied by the government on an annual basis to support higher education (HE) providers' ongoing teaching and related activities. In the financial year 2020-21, the Department for Education provided £1,253 million in recurrent Teaching Grant funding. In financial year 2021-22, the department will maintain this level of funding and is providing £1,253 million in recurrent Strategic Priorities Grant funding.

We have asked the Office for Students (OfS) to reform the grant for the 2021-22 financial year to ensure that more of taxpayers' money is spent on supporting HE provision which aligns with national priorities, such as healthcare, science, technology, engineering and mathematics and subjects meeting specific labour market needs.

We have also asked the OfS for a £10 million increase to the specialist provider allocation, to support these institutions which are particularly reliant on Strategic Priorities Grant funding, many of whom are London-based. We want to ensure that our small and specialist providers, including some of our top music and arts providers, receive additional support, and that grant funding is used to effectively support students.

Even with the removal of the London Weighting, the reforms mean that around 1 in 6 London providers are estimated to see an increase in their Strategic Priorities Grant funding. These are HE providers offering courses aligned with the government's strategic priorities.

The OfS will consult on these changes, before final allocations for the 2021-22 financial year are confirmed, and carefully consider the impact of any changes on providers.

■ Apprentices

Dan Jarvis:

[157116]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans he has to increase the number of students taking on apprenticeships.

Gillian Keegan:

Apprenticeships provide people with the opportunity to earn and learn the skills needed to start an exciting career in a wide range of industries, everything from artificial intelligence, archaeology, data science, business management, and banking. We want more people to benefit from high-quality apprenticeships.

On 21 January 2021 we published the Skills for Jobs White Paper focused on giving people the skills they need, in a way that suits them, so they can get great jobs in sectors the economy needs and boost this country's productivity. Our reforms will build on our successful apprenticeship reforms, where a focus on employer needs and standards transformed apprenticeships into a prestigious choice. A key aim of the White Paper is to continue to improve and grow apprenticeships, so more employers and individuals can benefit from them.

To encourage more students to consider apprenticeships, we are promoting apprenticeships in schools through our Apprenticeship Support & Knowledge programme. This free service provides schools and teachers with resources and interventions to help better educate young people about apprenticeships. In addition, a provider access law, introduced in January 2018 and commonly known as the 'Baker Clause', requires all maintained schools and academies to publish a policy statement setting out opportunities for providers of technical education and apprenticeships to visit schools to talk to all year 8-13 pupils, and to make sure the statement is followed. In the Skills for Jobs white paper, the department announced the introduction of a 3-point-plan to enforce the Baker Clause. This includes creating clear minimum legal requirements, specifying who is to be given access to which pupils and when. This is an important step towards real choice for every pupil.

We are also working with the Department for Work and Pensions to enable Kickstart placements to turn into apprenticeships where that is the right thing for the employer and the young person. We have made a special provision to allow employers taking on Kickstarters as apprentices to be eligible for the incentive payment, supporting a pathway between the schemes.

We are supporting the largest ever expansion of traineeships, providing an additional 30,000 places in the 2020-21 academic year, to ensure that more young people have access to high-quality training to develop skills, experience, and confidence to obtain an apprenticeship. We are developing traineeships in construction and rail to support young people to transition into apprenticeships in these sectors. We have introduced £1,000 incentive payments for employers who offer traineeship work placement opportunities between 1 September 2020 and 31 July 2021.

■ Apprentices: Assessments

Robert Halfon:

[\[154657\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the effect on apprentices who have been unable to sit their functional skills tests in Maths and English due to covid-19 restrictions since Ofqual ended teacher assessments on 31 July 2020.

Robert Halfon:

[\[154971\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the potential effect on apprentices of not being able to sit functional skills tests in Maths and English since Ofqual ended teacher assessments for those apprentices on 31 July 2020 due to covid-19 restrictions.

Gillian Keegan:

We are committed to supporting apprentices to safely continue with, and complete, their programmes during the COVID-19 outbreak.

We know that some providers and apprentices have not been able to make appropriate arrangements so that the apprentice can safely take their Functional Skills assessment. We have worked with providers and employers to understand the impact of delays to assessments, and why some apprentices may not be able to progress to their end-point assessment because of this.

Provisional figures show that in the first quarter of the 2020/21 academic year, 30,100 apprentices achieved their apprenticeships (frameworks and standards). Latest data shows that 15,900 apprentices who are yet to achieve their Functional Skills Qualification (FSQ) are past the planned end date of their apprenticeship. A delay in achieving their FSQ is one reason why an apprentice may be past their planned end date, but there are many other potential reasons, including apprentices being put on furlough or taking a break in their learning due to disruption caused by the COVID-19 outbreak. For those apprentices who were expected to have completed their apprenticeship but have not done so yet, we do not have data on the reason for the delay.

Together with Ofqual, we have consulted on alternative assessment arrangements for all vocational and technical qualifications, including FSQs for apprentices. Active apprentices that are deemed ready to take their FSQ test should continue to be supported to access a regular FSQ assessment. This may be at their place of work, where it is safe and appropriate to do so, or through flexibilities offered by the

awarding organisation, such as remote assessment and invigilation. Where this is not possible, we have confirmed that apprentices may be able to access a teacher assessed grade or take their end-point assessment before achieving their functional skills later, or both.

Robert Halfon:

[\[154659\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to his Department's joint consultation with Ofqual, Alternative arrangements for the award of VTQs and other general qualifications in 2021, what discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on the potential merits of apprentices taking their functional skills tests in maths and English assessed by teachers under proposed alternative arrangements rather than wait until April 2021.

Robert Halfon:

[\[154972\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will publish the outcome of (a) capability and (b) capacity assessments of awarding bodies undertaken by his Department to assess whether those bodies can offer mass volume remote testing of apprentices' functional skills in maths and English between now and April 2021.

Robert Halfon:

[\[154973\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the recommendations of his Department's joint consultation with Ofqual, Alternative arrangements for the award of VTQs and other general qualifications in 2021, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of implementing the recommendation that apprentices should have their functional skills in maths and English assessed by teachers under proposed alternative arrangements rather than wait until April 2021.

Gillian Keegan:

The majority of respondents agreed to the proposal outlined in the consultation and the decision is that all efforts should be made to allow Functional Skills learners, including apprentices, to take an assessment in line with public health measures or remotely where possible. Where assessments cannot take place on public health grounds or remotely, teacher assessed grades will be made available. There is currently no regulatory provision to award Functional Skills qualifications through teacher assessed grades until Ofqual introduce their regulatory framework, but the expectation is that all efforts should be made to deliver assessments in the first instance. The department sought clearance from Cabinet in developing the policy approach to awarding all Vocational and Technical Qualifications in light of the consultation.

Since September 2020, Ofqual has been working with the department to support awarding organisations to deliver Functional Skills assessments to apprentices, including the development and roll-out of remote solutions. We understand from Ofqual that of the eight awarding organisations that offer on-demand reformed Functional Skills qualifications, six have fully rolled out remote invigilation. Those awarding organisations that currently deliver remote invigilation have not reported

any capacity or capability issues; however, they are not currently operating at full capacity due to low demand. Even where awarding organisations offer remote invigilation, learners will only be able to sit assessments if they have access to the relevant IT equipment and software. The two remaining awarding organisations are currently piloting remote solutions on a small-scale and have made remote invigilation available on request. Ofqual continues to monitor delivery of remote assessment and has recently published information on the types of assessment offered by all Functional Skills awarding organisations:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/awarding-of-functional-skills-in-2021>.

■ Apprentices: Small Businesses

Dan Jarvis:

[157117]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the (a) potential merits of increasing the number of SME businesses involved in apprenticeship schemes and (b) potential effect on the economy of such an increase.

Gillian Keegan:

The government recognises the enormous value that small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) contribute to the UK economy. We will make sure that training for apprentices in smaller employers is properly funded, to drive up the number of apprenticeship opportunities available in SMEs across the country. In 2021-22 financial year funding available for investment in apprenticeships in England is £2.5 billion – double what was spent in 2010-11. This includes funding for employers that do not pay the levy, who will continue to be able to access funding for 95% of apprenticeship training and assessment costs.

To help employers of all sizes offer new apprenticeships, they are now able to claim £2,000 for every new apprentice they hire under the age of 25, and £1,500 for new apprentices aged 25 and over between 1 August 2020 and 31 March 2021 as part of the government's Plan for Jobs.

We are improving the system so that levy paying employers can more easily transfer their funds to support apprenticeships in other employers, particularly in SMEs where there is significant potential for job creation. From August 2021, employers who pay the levy will be able to transfer levy funds in bulk to other employers, including SMEs, with a new pledge function, supported by a new online service to match levy payers with SMEs. This will enable levy paying employers to support apprenticeship starts in their supply chains and help meet local or sectorial skills needs.

From 1 April 2021 all SMEs arranging new apprenticeship starts will do so through the apprenticeship service, giving them more control over their apprenticeship choices and the ability to reserve funds before choosing the provider that best meets their needs.

We continue to work with smaller employers to give them the confidence and support to take on new apprentices.

■ Education: Coventry**Colleen Fletcher:****[157151]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to tackle educational disadvantage in (a) Coventry North East constituency and (b) Coventry.

Vicky Ford:

Disadvantaged pupils have always been at the heart of our education policy. Since 2011 we have been providing extra funding - £2.4 billion this year alone - through the pupil premium for school leaders to boost the progress and attainment of their disadvantaged pupils. This year, schools in Coventry North East are sharing additional funding of £6.7 million from the pupil premium; the figure for Coventry city is £18.1 million.

To ensure schools have the tools to make effective use of the funding we established the £137 million Education Endowment Foundation. It carries out extensive research to produce guidance reports for schools setting out how they can use the additional funding to best improve their disadvantaged pupils' outcomes. This guidance is available here: <https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/evidence-summaries/pupil-premium-guide/>.

Alongside this, our £1 billion catch-up package for the current academic year includes a £350 million National Tutoring Programme for disadvantaged pupils. This is increasing access to high-quality tuition for the most disadvantaged young people, helping to accelerate their academic progress and tackling the attainment gap between them and their peers.

Since the start of the COVID-19 outbreak we have distributed over one million laptops to disadvantaged pupils so they can continue their studies remotely. On 24 February 2021, the government announced a £700 million Education Recovery package, focusing on an expansion of one-to-one and small group tutoring programmes, as well as supporting the development of disadvantaged children in early years settings, and summer provision for those pupils who need it the most. This includes a one-off Recovery Premium for the next academic year that will be allocated to schools based on the same methodology as the pupil premium. In this way, schools with more disadvantaged pupils will receive larger allocations.

■ Educational Visits: Coronavirus**Anna McMorris:****[157262]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if his Department will issue guidance to schools on the planning and booking of domestic residential trips to take place after the 21 June 2021 subject to the lifting of covid-19 restrictions.

Anna McMorris:**[157263]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to help ensure that access is provided to schools to obtain (a) interim insurance cover for

educational visits beyond December 2021 and (b) insurance cover for educational visits affected by covid-19 outbreak related cancellations beyond December 2021.

Nick Gibb:

The Department will issue advice to schools and colleges on the planning and booking of residential trips when it is safe to do so and in line with the Government's roadmap to recovery which is set out here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-response-spring-2021/covid-19-response-spring-2021>.

The Department has no plans to provide schools with interim insurance or insurance cover for the cancellation of educational visits affected by the COVID-19 outbreak.

■ **Eleven Plus**

Daisy Cooper:

[155405]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if his Department will bring the 11-plus in line with other exams by linking test results to the National Pupil Database.

Nick Gibb:

Selection tests are part of the admission arrangements of individual grammar and partially selective schools, and it is for the admission authorities of those schools to decide the content of the test, in line with the School Admissions Code. Different tests are therefore used by different schools or within different local authority areas. Selection tests are administered locally, and the Department does not routinely collect information on individual test results. The Department does not intend to undertake such a data collection exercise at this time.

There are protections within the system to ensure admission arrangements are fair, including consultation duties and rights of objection to the independent school's adjudicator.

■ **Females: Education**

Jim Shannon:

[154605]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps the Government is taking to support women to access education to help their return to the labour market.

Gillian Keegan:

As we address the challenges presented by the COVID-19 outbreak and prepare to seize the opportunities offered up by leaving the EU, it is vital that we support adults, irrespective of gender, to attain the skills that will be needed in the economy of the future. We recently published the white paper, Skills for Jobs: Lifelong Learning for Opportunity and Growth, focusing on giving people the skills they need so they can get great jobs in sectors the economy needs and boost this country's productivity.

Starting this year, the government is investing £2.5 billion, rising to £3 billion when including Barnett funding for devolved administrations, in the National Skills Fund (NSF). This is a significant investment and has the potential to deliver new

opportunities to generations of adults who may have been previously left behind, or who need to reskill and retrain. My right hon. Friend, the Chancellor of the Exchequer also announced £375 million for the NSF at the Spending Review in November 2020, further information is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/topical-events/spending-review-2020>. This includes £95 million funding for a new Level 3 adult offer and £43 million for Skills Bootcamps. Investment in skills through the NSF is vital, ensuring adults have the opportunity to progress into higher wage employment and to support those who need to retrain at different points throughout their lives.

From April 2021, we will be supporting any adult aged 24 and over who wants to achieve their first full Level 3 qualification – equivalent to two A-levels, or an advanced technical certificate or diploma – to access nearly 400 fully funded courses. Alongside the Level 3 adult offer, Skills Bootcamps offer free, flexible courses of up to 16 weeks, giving people the opportunity to build up sector-specific skills and fast-track to an interview with a local employer. We are seeing a demand for digital and technical Skills Bootcamps across many sectors and industries, including healthcare, where take up is higher amongst women than men. We have also introduced bootcamps that specifically aim to support women to access training in a range of digital and technical qualifications, including subjects known to be traditionally “male-dominated”. For example, the Software Engineering Academy for women in the West Midlands is designed to prepare women for careers in software engineering.

Through our lifelong loan entitlement, we will also make it easier for adults and young people to study more flexibly. This will allow them to space out their studies across their lifetimes, transfer credits between colleges and universities, and enable more part-time study.

We are also investing £1.34 billion in the 2020/21 academic year through the adult education budget (AEB), which will provide education and skills training for adults. The AEB fully funds or co-funds skills provision for eligible adults aged 19 and above from pre-entry to Level 3, helping them gain the skills they need for work, an apprenticeship or further learning.

Last year we introduced the Skills Toolkit, an online platform providing free courses to help individuals build the skills that are most sought after by employers. We have recently expanded the platform so that people can now choose from over 70 courses, covering digital, adult numeracy, employability, and work readiness skills, which have been identified as the skills employers need the most. These courses will help people stay in work or take up new jobs and opportunities.

In July last year, the Plan for Jobs was announced by my right hon. Friend, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, which includes incentives for employers to take on new apprentices, including those over 25, and an additional £17 million to increase the number of sector-based work academy programme placements in the 2020/21 academic year.

■ GCE A-level and GCSE: Coronavirus

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[154839\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of reducing the content of (a) GCSE and (b) A level exams in summer 2022 due to school closures during the covid-19 outbreak.

Nick Gibb:

The Government remains clear that exams are the fairest method to assess pupils. We know that pupils and teachers will be working hard in preparation for GCSE and A level exams in 2022, and we will make sure that the interests of pupils are at the centre of our considerations.

It is important that pupils in this cohort are able to get a grade safely and fairly and we will continue to monitor the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak on all pupils to ensure that those due to take exams in 2022 are supported to move to the next stage of their lives fairly. We will make further announcements in due course.

■ History: Curriculum

Sir Mark Hendrick:

[\[154779\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that Black British history is incorporated into the national curriculum of schools in England.

Nick Gibb:

The National Curriculum is a framework setting out the content of what the Department expects schools to cover in each subject. The curriculum does not set out how curriculum subjects, or topics within the subjects, should be taught. The Department believes teachers should be able to use their own knowledge and expertise to determine how they teach their pupils, and to make choices about what they teach.

As part of the National Curriculum for history, pupils should be taught about different societies, and how different groups have contributed to the development of Britain, and this can include the voices and experience of Black people. The flexibility within the history curriculum means that there is the opportunity for teachers to teach about Black history across the spectrum of themes and eras set out in the curriculum.

The Department has discussed Black history with a number of organisations and we welcome the profile given to the importance of teaching Black history by bodies such as the Runnymede Trust, The Black Curriculum, Fill in the Blanks, and many other groups and individuals over the years. The Department will continue to explore what more we can do to support the teaching of Black history.

Members: Correspondence**John Spellar:** [\[153118\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, when he plans to respond to the letter from the hon. Member for Warley dated 17 November regarding Mr Asghar.

Nick Gibb:

I can confirm that a response has been sent to the letter dated 17 November 2020, from the right hon. Member for Warley.

John Penrose: [\[154915\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, when he plans to reply to the correspondence of 10 December 2020 and of 15 January 2021 from the right hon. Member for Weston-super-Mare on behalf of his constituent about covid-19 in special schools with medically vulnerable children.

Nick Gibb:

I can confirm that a response has been sent to the letters dated 10 December, reference JP56880 and 15 January, reference JP5688010, from the hon. Member for Weston-super-Mare.

National Skills Fund**Chi Onwurah:** [\[157105\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many adults received training directly funded by the National Skills Fund in 2020; and how many people are projected to receive that training in 2021.

Gillian Keegan:

From April 2021, the government is investing £2.5 billion (£3 billion when including Barnett funding for devolved administrations) in the National Skills Fund. In November 2020, my right hon. Friend, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, announced £95 million funding for a new level 3 adult offer and £43 million for Skills Bootcamps at the Spending Review, for the financial year 2021/2022. The National Skills Fund is a significant investment and has the potential to deliver new opportunities to generations of adults who may have been previously left behind.

The level 3 adult offer will support any adult aged 24 and over, who wants to achieve their first full level 3 qualification, equivalent to 2 A-levels, an advanced technical certificate or diploma, to access around 400 fully funded courses. This new national offer will benefit tens of thousands of adults in the first year. We are engaging with providers and further education stakeholders to support readiness to deliver from April 2021. We are working with the sector to understand barriers and how we can help to mitigate or remove these. We will monitor take-up from adults closely.

Complementing the level 3 adult offer, Skills Bootcamps offer free, flexible courses of up to 16 weeks, giving people the opportunity to build up sector-specific skills and fast-track to an interview with a local employer. Skills Bootcamps have the potential to transform the skills landscape for adults and employers.

The first wave of Skills Bootcamps, which has been rolled out in 6 areas, is not funded through the National Skills Fund. We have seen high demand for Skills Bootcamps courses and by end of March 2021, we will have had approximately 2,700 participants.

From April 2021, we are investing a further £43 million through the National Skills Fund to extend Skills Bootcamps across England.

The government plans to consult on the National Skills Fund in spring 2021 to ensure that the fund delivers a step change in adult learning, preparing adults for the economy of the future.

■ NHS Foundation Trusts: Apprentices

Daniel Zeichner: [\[155071\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what amount of expired Apprenticeship Levy funding has been reclaimed from each NHS foundation trust in the East of England.

Daniel Zeichner: [\[155072\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what amount of expired Apprenticeship Levy funding has been reclaimed from levy paying NHS organisations in England in 2019-20.

Gillian Keegan:

As the NHS is made up of a large number of diverse employers, it is not possible to identify the amount of expired apprenticeship levy funds for the NHS in England as a whole. This information is therefore not held centrally.

Moreover, due to taxpayer confidentiality, we are unable to publish the amount that individual employers, including individual NHS Trusts, have contributed through the apprenticeship levy or the amount of funds that have been spent or have expired.

The funds in apprenticeship service accounts are available for levy-paying employers to use for 24 months before they begin to expire on a rolling, month-by-month basis.

Employers can choose which apprenticeships they offer, how many apprenticeships they offer and when they offer the apprenticeships. We do not anticipate that all employers who pay the levy will need or want to use all the funds available to them, but they are able to do so if they wish. Funds raised by the levy are used to support the whole apprenticeship system. This means that employers' unused funds are not lost but are used to support apprenticeships in smaller employers and to cover the ongoing costs of apprentices already in training.

As we set out in the Spending Review, we will again be making available £2.5 billion for investment in apprenticeships in the 2021-22 financial year, which is double that spent in the 2010-11 financial year.

We are working closely with the Department of Health and Social Care, employers and stakeholders to make sure the NHS is fully supported to recruit the apprentices it needs to deliver high-quality care. There are 74 high-quality apprenticeship standards

in the health and science sector, including a complete nursing apprentice pathway from entry-level through to postgraduate level.

■ Paramedical Staff: Training

Daisy Cooper:

[155403]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care on support for paramedic students with health conditions to ensure they can complete their studies during the covid-19 outbreak.

Michelle Donelan:

The Government is keen to minimise disruption and has put in place specific measures for allied health profession students, like paramedicine, that includes ensuring that students on placement have access to broadly equitable support as for NHS staff, such as being classed as essential workers for the purpose of testing and access to travel, school and childcare places, and having access to appropriate Personal Protective Equipment for placement duties.

Health Education England (HEE) is working with system partners to ensure any impact on training and placements is minimised; including supporting universities to rearrange interrupted clinical placements and finding alternatives such as using simulation where that is appropriate.

We know that the health and wellbeing needs of students must be prioritised and NHS England & Improvement and HEE have been working closely with universities and placement providers to ensure students have the support they need, including access to NHS mental health support.

Ministers and officials from the Department for Education and the Department of Health and Social Care have regular discussions on these issues.

■ Pre-school Education: Finance

Colleen Fletcher:

[157150]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to support the financial stability of early years and childcare providers in (a) Coventry North East constituency, (b) Coventry, (c) the West Midlands and (d) England.

Vicky Ford:

During the COVID-19 outbreak, we have provided unprecedented support to the early years sector by continuing to fund the free childcare entitlements, making grants and loans available and ensuring early years providers can access the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) for their non-government funded income, and childminders the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS). We continue to ensure that providers can access the support available.

As long as the staff meet the other criteria for the scheme, schools and early years providers are able to furlough their staff if they have experienced a drop in either their income from parents or government. Eligible nurseries can also benefit from a

business rates holiday and can access the business loans as set out by my right hon. Friend, the Chancellor of the Exchequer. This is inclusive of Coventry North East constituency, Coventry, the West Midlands, and England. We have not taken different approaches in different areas.

On 17 December, the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced that both the CJRS and SEISS would be extended to April 2021. We also updated the CJRS guidance for early years so that all providers who have seen a drop in their overall income are able to furlough any staff (who were on payroll on or before 30 October) and who aren't required for delivering the government's funded entitlements. The guidance is available here: <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>.

Where early years providers are struggling financially, they may be eligible to access support from the Additional Restrictions Grant, if not eligible for the Local Restrictions Support Grant schemes. Details on both grants are available here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/check-if-youre-eligible-for-the-coronavirus-additional-restrictions-grant> and <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/check-if-youre-eligible-for-the-coronavirus-local-restrictions-support-grant-for-open-businesses>.

We continue to work with the early years sector to understand how they can best be supported to ensure that sufficient safe, appropriate, and affordable childcare is available for those who need it now, and for all families who need it in the longer term.

■ Pupil Premium

Thangam Debbonaire:

[154585]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 22 January 2021 to Question 137960 on pupil premium allocation, how many pupils in (a) mainstream and (b) special educational needs schools (i) were eligible for the Pupil Premium as of 1 October 2020 and (ii) became eligible for Free School Meals between 2 October 2020 and 21 January 2021.

Nick Gibb:

The January 2021 census will be used to determine pupil premium eligibility for alternative provision and pupil referral units for the financial year 2021-22. Pupil premium eligibility for mainstream and special schools will be based on the October 2020 census. The Department will confirm pupil premium allocations for the financial year 2021-22 in June 2021.

Data on the number of pupils who have become eligible for free school meals since 2 October 2020 is currently being collected in the spring school census and is not yet available.

The Department publishes information on pupil premium allocations and the number of pupils eligible annually. The most recent publicly available figures can be found via

this link: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/pupil-premium-allocations-and-conditions-of-grant-2020-to-2021>.

■ Pupils: Coronavirus

Robert Halfon:

[154974]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department plans to take with the new Education Recovery Commissioner to tackle non-academic factors to support children's attainment.

Nick Gibb:

The Government is committed to helping children and young people make up for lost teaching time as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak.

In June 2020, the Department announced an initial package of support worth £1 billion, including £650 million to support schools to make up for lost teaching time and £350 million for the National Tutoring Programme. In January 2021, my right hon. Friend, the Prime Minister, committed to work with parents, teachers and pupils to develop a long term plan to help pupils make up for lost teaching time over the course of this Parliament, alongside a commitment to fund more in tutoring, support to schools and summer activities.

Sir Kevan Collins has been appointed to advise on this broader plan. As outlined in the terms of reference, this will be informed by evidence so that schools can more effectively target resources and support at pupils and areas in greatest need. Academic and non-academic factors in supporting attainment will form a part of this work.

The terms of reference for the Education Recovery Commissioner is published here: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/960070/Terms_of_reference.pdf#:~:text=Education%20Recovery%20Commissioner%3A%20role%20specification%20and%20terms%20of,approach%20for%20education%20recovery%2C%20with%20a%20particular%20focus.

■ Remote Education: ICT

Sam Tarry:

[154660]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many devices provided to schools via the Get help with technology programme have been returned to the manufacturer for repair.

Sam Tarry:

[154662]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many devices sent to schools under the Get help with technology during coronavirus programme were out of warranty.

Sam Tarry:

[\[155455\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what the average cost is of a (a) Windows laptop, (b) Windows tablet and (c) Chromebook provided to schools via the Get help with technology programme.

Sam Tarry:

[\[155456\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the cost to schools of repairs for faulty devices provided via the Get help with technology programme.

Nick Gibb:

The Government is investing over £400 million to support access to remote education and online social care services, including securing 1.3 million laptops and tablets for disadvantaged children and young people.

As of Monday 15 February, over one million laptops and tablets have been delivered to schools, academy trusts, local authorities (LA) and further education colleges.

The Department has signed contracts with Computacenter and XMA to supply a variety of device types according to the needs of schools and end-users. Unit costs of specific devices distributed by the programme are not published as these are commercially sensitive.

Every laptop and tablet that the Department provides meets a set of minimum specifications designed to enable children to learn remotely. Devices were issued with a 1-year warranty from the manufacturer. All devices are still within warranty until at least June 2021.

The laptops and tablets are the property of the school, LA or academy trust, and they should assume responsibility for their ongoing maintenance and support as part of this. If a device develops a fault that is not caused by a user, a free replacement can be requested via our enhanced support service. Schools, academy trusts and LAs can raise requests for replacement devices on the Computacenter Support Portal. This service is designed to minimise the time the user is without a working device. Since June 2020, the Department has completed 2425 replacements.

■ **Sixth Form Bolton: Coronavirus**

Yasmin Qureshi:

[\[157061\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 22 February 2021 on Students: Coronavirus, whether Bolton Sixth Form college will receive increased bursary funding.

Gillian Keegan:

We are very grateful for all the work 16-19 providers are doing to support students through the COVID-19 outbreak. We are also keenly aware of the pressures being faced by those providers and the financial difficulties that some students have.

We have made available additional funding for colleges that have seen growth in the number of students attending this year, including Bolton Sixth Form College, which received an extra £19,000 for the 16-19 Bursary Fund and an extra £8,000 for free meals – these funds can be used together to help students in need.

Last year we enabled providers to apply for additional Bursary Fund to help them meet the cost of devices and connectivity. In December we also announced that 16-19 providers with students in receipt of free meals can apply for an allocation of equipment from our Get Help With Technology scheme. As of 17 February 2021, nearly 57,000 devices have been delivered or dispatched to further education providers. Bolton Sixth Form College ordered, and has received, 262 devices.

We continue to keep the Bursary Fund situation under review, with a view to considering what more we can do to support students and providers through this difficult time.

■ Students: Coronavirus

Sir Alan Campbell:

[154787]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he make a further assessment of the potential merits of reimbursing university students for (a) tuition fees and (b) accommodation throughout the covid-19 lockdowns.

Michelle Donelan:

This has been a very difficult time for students, and the government is working with the sector to make sure all reasonable efforts are being made to enable students to continue their studies. I want to thank all higher education (HE) staff for their tireless work to ensure that young people do not have to put their lives or their academic journeys on hold.

I welcome the huge amount of resource universities have given to ensuring online teaching is of the high quality expected by the government and the Office for Students (OfS). The government's clear and stated expectation is that universities should maintain the quality and quantity of tuition and seek to ensure that all students, regardless of their background, have the resources to study remotely. This is more important than ever at the moment, with the vast majority of students studying solely online.

Universities are autonomous and responsible for setting their own fees within maximum fee limits set by regulations. The OfS, as regulator of HE providers in England, has made it clear that HE providers must continue to comply with registration conditions relating to quality and academic standards, which set out requirements to ensure that courses are high quality, that students are supported and achieve good outcomes and that standards are protected, regardless of whether a provider is delivering its courses through face-to-face teaching, remote online learning or a combination of both.

We continue to regularly engage the sector in discussion on this issue. I wrote to the OfS on 13 January outlining the government's expectations of the HE sector following

the new national lockdown. Following this, the OfS wrote to provider Accountable Officers, setting out the actions they are taking in connection with providers' compliance to existing regulatory requirements. We expect providers to ensure that continuing and prospective students receive the clear, accurate and timely information needed to make informed decisions.

Whether or not an individual student is entitled to a refund will depend on the specific contractual arrangements between the provider and student. If students have concerns, there is a process in place. They should first raise their concerns with their university. If their concerns remain unresolved, students at providers in England or Wales can ask the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) for Higher Education to consider their complaint.

The OfS does not get involved in individual student complaints, that is for the relevant HE provider and possibly the OIA. Students can, however, notify the OfS of issues that may be of regulatory interest to it. These are called 'notifications'. The OfS uses this information as part of its regulatory monitoring activity and keep HE providers under review to ensure that they comply with the ongoing conditions of registration. OfS has produced a guide for students to support them in this process.

With regards to accommodation, universities and private accommodation providers are autonomous and are responsible for setting their own rent agreements. The government plays no direct role in the provision of student residential accommodation.

We recognise that in these exceptional circumstances some students may face financial hardship. The Department for Education has worked with the OfS to clarify that providers are able to use existing funds, worth around £256 million for academic year 2020/21, towards hardship support. We are also making available an additional £50 million of hardship funding this financial year. In total we have made £70 million of additional funding available for student hardship, given the £20 million made available to higher education providers in December 2020. The government urges universities and private accommodation providers to be fair in their decisions about rent charges for this period. We welcome the news that a number of universities and large companies have already offered rent rebates for students that have been asked to stay away from their accommodation.

The OIA website is available via the following link: <https://www.oiahe.org.uk/>.

The Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) has published guidance on consumer contracts, cancellation and refunds affected by the COVID-19 outbreak. This sets out the CMA's view on how the law operates to help consumers understand their rights and help businesses treat their customers fairly. This is available via the following link: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/cma-to-investigate-concerns-about-cancellation-policies-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-pandemic/the-coronavirus-covid-19-pandemic-consumer-contracts-cancellation-and-refunds>.

The OfS has also published guidance on student consumer protection during the COVID-19 outbreak, which is available via the following link:

<https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/for-students/student-and-consumer-protection-during-coronavirus/>.

The OfS has also produced a guide to help students raise concerns, which is available via the following link:

<https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/office-for-students-notifications/>.

Colleen Fletcher:

[158079]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what (a) financial and (b) other support his Department has provided to students affected by the covid-19 lockdown.

Michelle Donelan:

The government is aware of the disproportionate impact this crisis will have on some students. Officials are working with the sector to continue to monitor the situation.

We have worked closely with the Office for Students (OfS) to help clarify that providers can draw upon existing funding to increase hardship funds and support disadvantaged students impacted by COVID-19. Providers are able to use the funding, worth around £256 million for academic year 2020/21, towards student hardship funds, including the purchase of IT equipment, and mental health support. We are also making available an additional £50 million of hardship funding this financial year. In total we have made £70 million of funding available for student hardship given the £20 million made available to higher education (HE) providers in December 2020.

Providers will have flexibility in how they distribute the funding to students, in a way that will best prioritise those in greatest need. We will continue to monitor the situation to look at what impact this funding is having.

We have worked with the OfS to provide Student Space, which has been funded with up to £3 million by the OfS. Student Space is a mental health and wellbeing platform that aims to bridge any gaps in support for students arising from this unprecedented situation and is designed to work alongside existing services. I have been clear that ensuring students have access to quality mental health support is my top priority, which is why I asked the OfS to look at extending the platform. I am delighted they have been able to extend the platform to support students for the whole 2020/21 academic year, because no student should be left behind at this challenging time. This resource provides dedicated one-to-one phone, text and web chat facilities, as well as a collaborative online platform providing vital mental health and wellbeing resources.

Furthermore, we have asked the OfS to allocate £15 million towards student mental health in 2021/22 through proposed reforms to Strategic Priorities Grant funding.

On 13 January, I wrote to the OfS, the regulator for HE providers in England. I outlined government expectations of the HE sector. Universities should maintain the quality and quantity of tuition and seek to ensure that all students, regardless of their background, have the resources to study remotely.

The government will continue to work closely with the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, professional bodies and the Office for Students to ensure students continue to leave university with qualifications that have real value, reflect their hard work and allow people to progress.

■ Teachers: Leave

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[154997\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what progress his Department has made on establishing pilot schemes for teacher sabbaticals.

Nick Gibb:

The Department has a longstanding programme of work in place through the Recruitment and Retention Strategy to ensure that teaching remains an attractive profession, where people feel supported to stay and develop their careers. This includes encouraging schools to develop a supportive culture for staff and to work flexibly.

As part of this, the Department explored a pilot on sabbaticals during the 2018-19 academic year. In light of the COVID-19 outbreak, it has been vital that we prioritise the immediate support teachers need at this time, such as work to support staff mental health through the Education Support charity and our Wellbeing for Education Return initiative.

We are also maintaining a focus on innovative approaches, including establishing eight Flexible Working Ambassador Schools to champion flexible working practices from Spring 2021. These schools will share their experiences, resources and expertise to create change in their local networks. We will continue to work with the teaching sector to review approaches such as sabbaticals.

■ Turing Scheme

Wendy Chamberlain:

[\[158220\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 22 February 2021 to Question 152653 on the Turing Scheme, what estimate he has made of student demand for the Turing Scheme in the 2021-22 academic year.

Michelle Donelan:

Funding distributed under the Turing scheme will be demand-led, based on the bids that UK universities, colleges, training providers and schools will make to the scheme, and upon the demand for international mobilities for the academic year 2021-22 they have from their students.

The Turing Scheme provides funding for approximately 20,000 higher education students, 10,000 further education and vocational training students and 5,000 school pupils, a similar number as under Erasmus+. These numbers are subject to the above-mentioned demand.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS**■ Animal Experiments****Patrick Grady:****[154642]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to (a) reduce and (b) replace the use of toxicology testing on animals.

Rebecca Pow:

The UK is committed to maintaining a rigorous regulatory system which ensures that animal research and testing is carried out only where no practicable alternatives exist and under controls which keep suffering to a minimum. The Government ensures all research proposals are compliant with the principles of Replacement, Reduction and Refinement (the 3Rs). The UK has been at the forefront of opposing animal tests where alternative approaches could be used, known as the "last-resort principle". The last-resort principle will be enshrined as a protected provision in our landmark Environment Bill.

Defra, together with the Environment Agency and the Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science, are actively engaged in research and development work centred around the 3Rs principles. This work sits within the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD) chemical testing guidelines programme. Our regulators and scientists, alongside colleagues at Public Health England and The National Centre for the 3Rs, are working collaboratively with partner countries to develop new test methods and approaches with the potential to reduce or replace animal tests for chemical assessment, whilst maintaining a high degree of safety.

■ Animal Experiments: Chemicals**Fleur Anderson:****[155420]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to Articles 7.2 and 7.4 of Annex TBT-3 Chemicals of the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement which allows both parties to exchange only non-confidential information, what specific steps he is taking to ensure that companies will not have to repeat animal testing of chemical substances for UK REACH that has already been carried out for EU REACH.

Fleur Anderson:**[155421]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to Articles 7.2 and 7.4 of Annex TBT-3 Chemicals of the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement which allows both parties to exchange only non-confidential information, what specific steps he is taking to ensure that duplicate tests are not performed by different companies to satisfy the separate UK and EU chemical safety regimes.

Fleur Anderson:

[\[155422\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, for what reason the provision included in Title V, Section 5 of the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement, on safety testing of plant protection or biocidal products, that states that each Party shall establish rules to avoid duplicative testing on vertebrate animals, does not also apply to other categories of products.

Fleur Anderson:

[\[155423\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when and how the rules to avoid duplicate testing on vertebrate animals required by Title V, Section 5 on safety testing of plant protection or biocidal products of the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement will be established.

Rebecca Pow:

Under the terms of the Chemicals Annex of the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement, exchanges of non-confidential information between the UK and the EU will need the agreement of both parties. This could potentially include study summaries relating to animal testing, but that would need to be agreed with the EU and will depend on the status of the studies. We will continue to work with the EU on how the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement will be put into operation going forward

UK REACH retains both the fundamental approach and key principles of REACH with its aims of ensuring a high level of protection of human health and the environment and enhancing competitiveness and innovation. This includes the “last resort” principle on animal testing.

This means that under UK REACH, we will recognise the validity of any animal tests on products that have already been undertaken and so avoid the need for further testing. The grandfathering of all existing GB-held EU REACH registrations into the UK system will further avoid the need to duplicate animal testing associated with re-registration

We are determined that there should be no need for any additional animal testing for a chemical that has already been registered, unless it is subject to further evaluation that shows the registration dossier is inadequate or there are still concerns about the hazards and risks of the chemical, especially to human health.

The Biocidal Products Regulation and the Plant Protection Product Regulation both contain mandatory data sharing provisions to avoid duplicative animal testing which are maintained in retained EU law and apply in Great Britain.

■ **Animal Welfare: Dogs**

Ian Mearns:

[\[154983\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether his Department has plans to bring forward legislative proposals on preventing dogs from

being released from a leash or leader in public spaces and neighbourhoods, beyond the powers already in place for decisions to be made at local authority level.

Victoria Prentis:

Under the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991 it is an offence to allow a dog to be dangerously out of control in any place. For the purposes of the 1991 Act, this includes any occasion on which there are grounds for reasonable apprehension that a dog will injure someone, whether or not it actually does so.

Defra's statutory Code of Practice for the Welfare of Dogs asks owners to ensure that they prevent their dogs from chasing or attacking any other animals, including livestock and horses; for example, through use of a lead or avoidance of such situations.

The Government takes the issue of livestock worrying very seriously, recognising the distress this can cause farmers and animals, as well as the financial implications. We are currently engaging closely with key stakeholders to improve our understanding of the scale of the issue and the views of both livestock keepers and dog owners.

■ **Animal Welfare: Finance**

Alex Cunningham:

[\[157100\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the effect of the covid-19 outbreak on the financial sustainability of animal rescue organisations.

Alex Cunningham:

[\[157101\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what plans the Government has to support animal rescue organisations affected financially by the covid-19 pandemic; and whether he plans to allocate further funding to help protect the welfare of animals in their care.

Daisy Cooper:

[\[157308\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what support has been made available to animal rescue and rehoming charities during the covid-19 outbreak.

Victoria Prentis:

Animal rescue organisations do excellent work, often on a voluntary basis, protecting animals against cruelty and ensuring that unwanted and abandoned animals in the UK are offered the opportunity of a forever home. I am acutely aware that the coronavirus pandemic, and specifically the measures put in place to control the spread of the virus, continue to affect individuals, businesses and charities caring for animals. Protecting the welfare of animals remains a priority for Defra throughout the coronavirus pandemic.

The sector has kept us regularly updated of the developing situation, sharing their surveys particularly with respect to the rescue and rehoming of companion animals, and sharing information on cruelty investigations. It has been encouraging to see the

sector working collaboratively and successfully to support itself and to safeguard the welfare of equines in their care in the face of financial hardship and uncertainty.

The latest figures from a survey by the Association of Dogs and Cats Homes (ADCH) show that although the animal rescue sector has seen a drop in income during the pandemic the financial sustainability in the sector appears to be improving. This suggests that rescues have adapted to the new situation either through fundraising in different ways or taking advantage of grants made available by the ADCH and other sources. More rescues are now taking in dogs and cats and more are rehoming. In Quarter 4 of 2020 there was a 24% Year on Year reduction of cat intake and a 32% reduction in dogs entering rescues. 68% of rescues have reported more people wish to foster dogs or cats and 58% wish to rehome a dog or cat.

National equine welfare charities have also kept us closely informed of the status of the Covid-19 Equine Rescues Emergency Fund established by the Pet Plan Charitable Trust together with World Horse Welfare and the National Equine Welfare Council. The current picture of equine welfare is better than feared, but we continue to keep things under review.

We have worked closely with sector groups to update guidance to animal rescue and rehoming organisations, and other animal charities and businesses. This has enabled them to undertake core operations as far as possible, whilst maintaining compliance with the social distancing rules and need for hygiene precautions to help prevent the spread of coronavirus. Throughout this period, we have ensured that rescue and rehoming organisations are permitted to stay open, that staff and volunteers can continue to work and tend to the animals in their care, and that rehoming, fostering and adoption services can continue in accordance with Covid-19 secure guidance.

We take the concerns of the sector very seriously and are keeping a close watch on in-take levels and trends in animal relinquishments. Defra remains committed to continued engagement with the sector to understand the longer-term impacts of the coronavirus pandemic, monitor the animal welfare implications of this and offer appropriate advice.

■ **Aquariums: Coronavirus**

Emma Hardy:

[158183]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether aquariums are included among the indoor attractions that will be able to open in Step 3 of the roadmap for reopening announced on 22 February 2021.

Victoria Prentis:

The Government announced on 22 February 2021 that outdoor attractions including the outdoor parts of zoos and aquariums will be able to reopen from, at the earliest, 12 April 2021. The remaining indoor parts of zoos and aquariums will be able to reopen from, at the earliest, 17 May 2021.

■ Biodiversity: Local Government

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[155004\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what estimate his Department has made of the number of local authorities who have drafted and implemented Biodiversity Action Plans.

Rebecca Pow:

Whilst local Biodiversity Action Plans can be a useful means of coordinating and communicating action on biodiversity, there is no formal requirement on local authorities to produce one and the Government does not keep records of the number they produce.

In 2020, the Government introduced new measures in the Environment Bill to establish Local Nature Recovery Strategies and provide a framework for the Nature Recovery Network. Local Nature Recovery Strategies are a new system of spatial strategies for nature, covering the whole of England. They are designed as tools to drive more coordinated, practical and focused action to help nature. All public authorities will be required to have regard to relevant strategies as part of a stronger duty on public authorities to conserve and enhance biodiversity.

■ Birds of Prey: Imports

Andrea Leadsom:

[\[157098\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether businesses may import birds of prey under (a) The Import of and Trade in Animals and Animal Products (Miscellaneous Amendments) (EU Exit) Regulations 2020 and (b) The Official Controls (Animals, Feed and Food, Plant Health etc.) (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2020 until the end of March 2021.

Victoria Prentis:

Businesses may import birds of prey into Great Britain under The Import of, and Trade in, Animals and Animal Products (Miscellaneous Amendments) (EU Exit) Regulations 2020 (Statutory Instrument 2020/1462).

The Official Controls (Animals, Feed and Food, Plant Health etc.) (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2020 (Statutory Instrument 2020/1481) regulates official controls that are carried out on third country imports subject to sanitary and phytosanitary requirements, including birds of prey.

These regulations came into force on 1 January 2021.

■ Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs: Staff

Luke Pollard:

[\[158198\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, by how many full-time equivalent employees his departmental payroll has reduced since the conclusion of the EU Exit trade deal.

Victoria Prentis:

The departmental full-time equivalent in Defra has increased by 91.55 since the conclusion of the Trade and Cooperation Agreement, during the period 31 December 2020 to 31 January 2021. The reason for the increase is that the department is still dealing with the outcomes of the EU exit trade negotiations, UK borders, the Northern Ireland Protocol and the Covid-19 pandemic.

■ Dogs: Animal Breeding and Smuggling**Sir Greg Knight:****[157959]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of existing legislation designed to (a) end unacceptable puppy farming practices and (b) stop puppy smuggling; if he will consider bringing forward further measures if this is deemed necessary; and if he will make a statement.

Victoria Prentis:

The Government takes the issues of puppy farming, puppy smuggling and other illegal importations of pets, including rescue animals, very seriously. These are abhorrent trades which cause suffering to animals and put the health of pets and people in the UK at risk.

In 2018, the laws on dog breeding and selling were updated and improved. Now, under The Animal Welfare (Licensing of Activities Involving Animals) (England) Regulations 2018 (the 2018 Regulations), anyone who is breeding dogs and advertising a business of selling dogs and/or who breeds three or more litters in a twelve month period needs a licence from their local authority. All licensees must adhere to strict minimum animal welfare standards. Local authorities are responsible for enforcing the 2018 Regulations and have powers to grant, refuse or revoke a licence.

Commercial third-party sales of puppies and kittens were banned in England from 6 April 2020. The ban was introduced as amendment to the 2018 Regulations. This prevents pet shops, pet dealers and other commercial outlets from selling these animals in England unless they themselves have bred them and is an integral step towards disrupting the low welfare trade that supports unscrupulous puppy farming.

Anyone who has concerns about the welfare of a dog being sold should report the matter to the relevant local authority which has powers to investigate such matters.

Under the 2018 Regulations the Secretary of State must carry out a review of the regulatory provision contained in these Regulations, and publish a report setting out the conclusions of the review. The first report must be published before 1 October 2023. Meanwhile we remain committed to working with the sector, enforcement agencies and other interested parties to improve the traceability of puppy sales in England and potential solutions to address this.

At present, there has been no substantive change to the pet travel requirements for pets entering Great Britain (GB) from the EU. However, now the transition period has ended, we have the opportunity to manage our own pet travel and commercial

importation rules. We are actively listening to the concerns of stakeholders and the Government is considering options to strengthen our efforts to tackle puppy smuggling. These options will take into consideration the results from our latest disease risk assessments for GB, the recommendations of stakeholders such as the British Veterinary Association and Dogs Trust, and recent Parliamentary work from the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Select Committee.

I would encourage anyone who has suspicions or evidence of illegal activity relating to the importation of animals to contact the APHA Intelligence Unit or by contacting their local authority's Trading Standards officer.

■ Environment Protection: Crime

Dr Matthew Offord:

[155003]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what his Department's policy is on tackling environmental crime at Sites of Special Scientific Interest.

Rebecca Pow:

Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) are afforded protection through section 28 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. Natural England has published guidance on the enforcement of environmental crime, including at SSSIs which is available on GOV.UK.

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/389649/enforcement-guidance.pdf

■ Environmental Stewardship Scheme

Mr Robert Goodwill:

[154881]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will support a Minor and Temporary Adjustment to Higher Level Stewardship Schemes to permit the continuation of the £2 million heather vegetation management experiment partly funded by his Department.

Mr Robert Goodwill:

[154883]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what representations he has received from Natural England on the (a) granting of licences for scientific research on deep peat to inform his Department's policy and land management decisions in the future and (b) continuation of long-term research on Moorhouse National Nature Reserve.

Rebecca Pow:

The request for a Minor and Temporary Adjustment to Higher Level Stewardship Schemes is a matter for the Rural Payments Agency in consultation with Natural England, who will take into consideration any wider circumstances surrounding that adjustment where it is made known to them.

In relation to the Moorhouse National Nature Reserve, there have been no representations to perform any future burning. There is no specific ban on burning for scientific purposes, but any such burning would need to be undertaken in accordance with the legislation.

■ Export Health Certificates

Mark Menzies:

[\[154977\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that products of animal or plant origin receive the correct certification in a timely manner from (a) vets, or (b) The Animal and Plant Health Authority to prevent unnecessary delays in exporting.

Victoria Prentis:

Export Health Certificates (EHC) for products of animal origin are authorised by Official Veterinarians (OVs) acting on behalf of the Competent Authority; the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA). Certificates are generated through the Export Health Certificates online service, managed by APHA. Phytosanitary certificates for plants and plant products are authorised by APHA inspectors.

Prior to the end of the transition period, APHA stress tested its services in order to prepare for an increase in demand of animal and plants products. As a result, mitigations, including the recruitment of additional Plant Health and Seeds Inspectors, were put in place to ensure there was sufficient capacity to accommodate an expected increase in phytosanitary certification. In addition, APHA officials facilitated an increase in EHC certification through targeted training of OVs and the creation of a Certifying Support Officer function to support OVs.

APHA regular monitors all its activities related to transition and looks to improve its services provided to exporters and other stakeholders continually.

■ Fires

Mr Robert Goodwill:

[\[154880\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether fire and rescue services are exempt from bans on controlled burning where it facilitates wildfire training.

Rebecca Pow:

Fire and rescue services will not have a general exemption from the requirements of the regulations. We consider that our most protected sites are not the place for wildfire training, and that other more suitable locations exist. We will engage with the Chief Fire Officers Association to understand whether this will impact on their ability to retain their expertise.

■ Food: Advertising**Craig Whittaker:** [\[154632\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care on the potential effect of the proposed promotion restrictions on foods high in fat, salt or sugar (HFSS) on reformulation work being undertaken by food and drink manufacturers.

Victoria Prentis:

Regular discussions take place between officials and Ministers at Defra and the Department of Health and Social Care on the obesity strategy, including the impact of restrictions for promoting products high in fat, sugar and salt on reformulation efforts. We welcome the achievements food and drink manufacturers have made in reformulating products, and want to support industry to go even further to help meet our shared ambition of tackling obesity.

■ Incinerators: Air Pollution**Jane Hunt:** [\[154641\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 11 December 2020 to Question 124345 on Incinerators: Air Pollution, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of requiring environmental permits for incinerators in England to set specific limits for (a) PM10 and (b) PM2.5 emissions rather than for total particulate matter.

Jane Hunt: [\[154644\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 11 December 2020 to Question 124345 on Incinerators: Air Pollution, what assessment he has made of the feasibility of requiring the Environment Agency to take into account existing levels of particulate matter in the surrounding area when setting total particulate matter limits in environmental permits for incinerators in England.

Jane Hunt: [\[154646\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of live emissions data monitoring being made a requirement in all environmental permits for incinerators in England.

Rebecca Pow:

In England, all large incinerators, also known as energy from waste (EfW) plants, are regulated by the Environment Agency (EA) and must comply with strict emission limits set by the Industrial Emissions Directive (as amended under the EU Withdrawal Act 2018). Permits are not issued if the proposed plant will have unacceptable impacts on human health or the environment.

Emission limits within permits are set for total particulate matter (TPM), which includes both PM10 and PM2.5. New permit applications are assessed to ensure that impacts from both types of particulate matter will be acceptable by assuming worst-case scenarios, whereby TPM is made up entirely of either PM10 or PM2.5. This

allows the EA to determine the potential impact from each of these pollutants were they to make up the entirety of the TPM emitted. This is a precautionary approach as in practice TPM will be a mixture of sizes, and so the true impact will be less. The EA has not carried out a formal assessment with regards to setting limits for emissions of PM10 and PM2.5 individually because the TPM approach delivers effective control of both PM10 and PM2.5 emissions.

The EA takes into account the existing concentration of particulate matter in the areas surrounding EfW plants when setting TPM emission limits. The EA assesses new EfW plant permit applications using air quality modelling to predict the worst-case scenario for the concentration of particulates arising from the plant for both PM10 and PM2.5. This concentration is then added to the existing (background) concentration to determine the total predicted environmental concentration, which is then compared against the relevant air quality standard. If impacts from the EfW plant could cause an air quality standard to be exceeded, then a lower limit for total particulate matter could be specified in the permit, or the permit may be refused.

Finally, on the potential merits of live emissions data monitoring for EfW plants; all EfW plants in England are already required to continuously monitor emissions of oxides of nitrogen, total particulate matter, carbon monoxide, total organic carbon, sulphur dioxide and hydrogen chloride. Some are also required to continuously monitor ammonia.

Operators are required to report the results from monitoring to the EA every 3 months, and to submit annual reports of their emissions to the EA's Pollution Inventory. The EA also carries out regular inspections and audits to ensure plants comply with their permits.

■ Iron and Steel

Bill Esterson:

[158026]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to promote the use of UK-made steel in projects funded by his Department.

Victoria Prentis:

The Departmental main user of steel products is the Environment Agency. Regular reports are submitted to the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy who publish the six-year FCRM Capital programme of construction projects each year which may include steel content.

There is an expectation that supplier partners will use the Contracts Finder website to advertise any sub-contracting opportunities outside their established supply chain.

All Government departments and arms-length bodies are required to consider socio-economic and environmental factors when procuring steel, not just cost alone.

Sustainability, quality and price criteria are used when selecting suitable suppliers. Our new Social Value Model (published in September last year) requires central

Government departments to expressly evaluate environmental, social and economic benefits as part of the procurement process (for qualifying procurements).

In addition, the Government is currently consulting on an ambitious package of major procurement reform. The Government's aim is to create a simpler and more flexible regime that works much better for British businesses, including steel business, while still complying with our international obligations. The proposals made will help ensure that public procurement at all levels actively helps achieve national strategic priorities, generating economic growth, helping our communities recover from the COVID-19 pandemic and tackling climate change. The consultation closes on 10 March.

■ Iron and Steel: Government Assistance

Bill Esterson:

[158027]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the environmental benefits of using UK-made steel in projects funded by his Department.

Victoria Prentis:

Within the Environment Agency's Collaborative Delivery Framework, the following is specified:

- All suppliers must have Environmental Management Systems and hold ISO 14001.
- Steel piles will be specified and sourced in line with Minimum Technical Requirements.
- Steel used shall have a high recycled content. As a minimum this should be 70%, but higher recycled content rates are expected.
- Contractors must demonstrate that life cycle sustainability impacts have been considered and minimised in the purchase of steel. Credible evidence must be obtained which demonstrates sustainability and traceability through the supply chain.

All Government departments and arms-length bodies are required to consider socio-economic and environmental factors when procuring steel, not just cost alone.

Our new Social Value Model (published in September last year) requires central government departments to expressly evaluate environmental, social and economic benefits as part of the procurement process (for qualifying procurements).

In addition, the Government is currently consulting on an ambitious package of major procurement reform. The Government's aim is to create a simpler and more flexible regime that works much better for British businesses, including steel business, while still complying with our international obligations. The proposals made will help ensure that public procurement at all levels actively helps achieve national strategic priorities, generating economic growth, helping our communities recover from the COVID-19 pandemic and tackling climate change. The consultation closes on 10 March.

■ Iron and Steel: Procurement

Bill Esterson:

[\[158028\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the environmental benefits of utilising more of the scrap steel produced in the UK each year.

Rebecca Pow:

Some ten million tonnes of scrap metal is processed into secondary raw material in the UK each year. A proportion of this is collected through the Waste Electronic and Electrical Equipment (WEEE) Regulations and End of Life Vehicles Regulations schemes. As scrap metals have a commercial value, the market determines where this material will go.

The Government has commissioned research to understand the economic, environmental and social opportunities of scrap metal, particularly steel. The results of this research will be published shortly.

Additionally, in August 2019, the Government announced a £250 million Clean Steel Fund to support the UK steel sector to transition to lower carbon iron and steel production, through investment in new technologies and processes. The Fund will help the sector towards achieving our target of net zero emissions by 2050, by maximising longevity and resilience while harnessing clean growth opportunities. Dependent on company business plans, this could include supporting the sector to replace carbon intensive blast furnace production with electric arc furnaces that would utilise UK scrap.

■ Moorland: Fires

Mr Robert Goodwill:

[\[154877\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the reasons for wildfires (a) on Bodmin Moor, (b) on Dartmoor, (c) on Benbecula and (d) in Northern Ireland in February 2021; and which other areas of high fuel load he has identified as being at risk of those fires.

Mr Robert Goodwill:

[\[154878\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to mitigate the risk of wildfires on peat soils and priority habitats where the vegetation fuel load and soil conditions may combine to increase that risk.

Rebecca Pow:

Wildfire is a devolved matter and therefore, the information provided relates to England only.

It is the responsibility of the relevant Fire and Rescue Service to investigate the reasons for any particular wildfire, with these findings being collated by the Home Office. Where appropriate the findings of the relevant Fire and Rescue Service will be shared with Defra so that lessons can be learned, as appropriate.

The Met Office developed the Fire Severity [Index](#), which is an assessment of how severe a fire could become if one were to start. It enables landowners and land managers to take action where the severity is identified as high risk.

We recognise that the primary cause of wildfire is people. We are encouraging sustainable land management practices that mitigate wildfire risk by reducing fuel loads and returning the land to a naturally wildfire resilient state. This includes encouraging landowners and land managers to adopt or create good quality wildfire management plans to reduce wildfire risk and prepare for any eventualities of wildfire. We are also exploring with Natural England and the Forestry Commission the possible development of suitable training around wildfire for landowners and land managers.

The Government will be setting out further measures to restore, protect and manage England's peatlands this year, as part of a package of measures to protect England's landscapes and nature-based solutions.

■ National Parks

Barry Gardiner:

[\[156997\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of the proposed National Landscapes Service on the management of National Parks.

Rebecca Pow:

The independent Landscapes Review, led by Julian Glover, set out a compelling vision for more beautiful, more biodiverse and more accessible National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs).

We welcome this ambition, as the Government is committed to ensuring our protected landscapes flourish as havens for nature and are places that everyone can visit and enjoy.

The Landscapes Review included recommendations for long-term structural changes, such as creating a new National Landscape Service and changing National Park and AONB statutory purposes, that would require legislation were they to be taken forward.

We are working closely with National Park Authorities, AONB organisations and wider stakeholders to consider the potential effects of the Landscape Review's recommendations and to develop a well-informed response to the review, which we will publish in due course.

■ Peat Bogs: Environment Protection

Mr Robert Goodwill:

[\[154882\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of peatland (a) restoration and (b) management for helping to (i) abate greenhouse gas emissions, (ii) manage fuel loads and (iii) deliver

conservation outcomes on deep peat; and what steps he is taking to ensure that learning from (A) scientific research on and (B) practitioner management of peat informs the restoration and protection of blanket bog.

Rebecca Pow:

Restored peatland achieves a variety of natural capital objectives, including carbon sequestration, water regulation and quality, optimising biodiversity, preserving archaeology, and minimising wildfire hazards. We are committed to restoring and sustainably managing England's peatlands. The Chancellor announced in March that as part of the Nature for Climate Fund, 35,000ha of peatland restoration would be achieved over the next five years. This represents a significant step forward in our restoration efforts and will require us to work closely with a wide range of stakeholders, including landowners and land management representative organisations.

We continue to monitor all aspects of scientific research on the impacts of burning on blanket bog habitat. The balance of evidence remains that burning on blanket bog is detrimental as it moves the bog away from its original wet state and risks vulnerable peat bogs becoming converted to drier, heathland habitat. That is why we are taking action to prevent further damage by bringing forward legislation that will limit burning of vegetation on protected deep peat.

The Government will be setting out further measures to restore, protect and manage England's peatlands this year as part of a package of measures to protect England's landscapes and nature-based solutions.

■ **Peat Bogs: Fires**

Mr Robert Goodwill:

[\[154879\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will take steps to ensure that proposed licences for vegetation management by controlled burning on blanket bog will be made available at the same time as legislative proposals to enable wildfire risk to be managed are brought forward.

Rebecca Pow:

The proposed licensing regime for managed burning on protected blanket bog will include the ability to obtain a licence to burn for the purposes of wildfire mitigation where no other practicable management technique is available. We are currently drafting guidance that will be published in advance of the start of the burning season in 2021.

■ **Pets: Theft**

Alexander Stafford:

[\[155492\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what plans his Department has to help increase awareness of pet theft among (a) pet owners, (b) veterinarians and (c) the police.

Victoria Prentis:

The Government takes the issue of pet theft very seriously and I urge all owners of pets to be aware that their pet could be targeted by thieves. This includes when owners of dogs are out exercising their dogs or when pets may be out of sight. Helpful advice about how to reduce the risk of having your pet stolen is available online, including on animal welfare organisations sites and insurance sites. It is best practice for vets to check ownership details of pets brought to their practices for the first time in order to satisfy themselves that the pet has not been listed as stolen. My department is in contact with the police about crime prevention advice and the enforcement of the law around pet theft.

■ Plants: UK Trade with EU**Rachel Reeves:****[R] [158023]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to support the UK ornamental horticulture industry to harvest under the new UK-EU trading arrangements.

Victoria Prentis:

The Government recognises the importance of the ornamental horticultural sector to local economies. We have the climate, landscape, and entrepreneurial growers in this country allowing us to grow top-quality fresh flowers, ensuring consumers are able to access the widest range of beautiful UK grown flowers for most of the year.

We will always champion the ornamental sector, looking for ways they can stay competitive with measures to increase productivity and invest in new technology. Defra is collaborating with the Ornamental Horticulture Roundtable Group, and in particular the Horticulture Trades Association, on a Growth Strategy for the sector to help ensure the ornamental horticulture sector continues to thrive. This is industry led and underlined by research identifying key areas of opportunity for growth in the sector.

The Government is aware that a reliable source of labour is a key part of bringing in the harvest for the ornamental sector. Defra is working closely with industry to understand labour demand and supply and help our world-leading growers access the labour they need.

In 2021 and beyond, horticultural businesses will continue to be able to rely on EU nationals living in the UK with settled or pre-settled status. More than 4.5 million EU citizens and their families have been granted settled or pre-settled status under the EU Settlement Scheme and the application deadline to apply to the EU Settlement Scheme is 30 June 2021.

■ **Plastics: Biodegradability**

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

[154792]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps the Government is taking to increase the use of biodegradable plastic which can naturally biodegrade.

Rebecca Pow:

While biodegradable materials may be seen as a solution to reduce the impact of waste, they can also be more environmentally damaging than non-biodegradable materials if disposed of incorrectly. The Government is also concerned that, in the absence of robust standards, claims about the biodegradability of plastic-based products cannot be verified.

In order to consider impacts carefully, Defra and the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy published a call for evidence to help us consider the development of standards or certification criteria for bio-based, biodegradable, and compostable plastics, and to better understand their effects on the environment and our current waste system. We are currently analysing responses to the call for evidence with a view to publication of a government response shortly.

■ **Recycling**

Dr Alan Whitehead:

[156995]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if his Department will make an assessment of the potential effect on consumer vehicular emissions of his proposals on a deposit return scheme in comparison to existing kerbside collections.

Rebecca Pow:

The Government's proposals to introduce a deposit return scheme for drinks containers recognise the need to ensure convenience and wide availability of return points for consumers, ensuring they can easily fit the scheme into their everyday lives. With this in mind, our current analysis has been designed with sufficient return points in place to reflect the policy proposal that deposits can be redeemed in settings that fit different consumer daily routines, thus avoiding the need for consumers to make additional journeys purely for the sake of returning their drinks containers. On this basis, there is no intention to carry out further assessment of consumer vehicular emissions at this time.

Dr Alan Whitehead:

[156996]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if his Department will make an assessment of the effect on people on lower incomes of his proposed deposit return scheme compared to using existing kerbside collections.

Rebecca Pow:

The Government is committed to introducing a deposit return scheme which is based on the principles of accessibility and convenience for all members of society. While all deposits placed on in-scope drinks containers will be redeemable, we do recognise

the potential for an increased burden this could place on some consumers, particularly in lower income groups, to collect and return their containers to redeem their deposits. To ensure this activity and behaviour change is accurately accounted for in our analysis, the Government intends to carry out further research this year on the effect a deposit return scheme might have on specific groups in society, including those on lower incomes.

■ **Reservoirs: Brent**

Dr Matthew Offord: [\[155000\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what the scheduled programme is for the Environment Agency to clear the rubbish traps on the rivers Brent and Silkstream where they enter the Welsh Harp reservoir.

Dr Matthew Offord: [\[155001\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when the Welsh Harp was last dredged by the Environment Agency.

Dr Matthew Offord: [\[155002\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the chemical composition of the silt on the bed of the Welsh Harp.

Rebecca Pow:

The Welsh Harp or Brent reservoir is owned by the Canal and River Trust. As the Environment Agency does not own the asset, it is not responsible for dredging the reservoir or testing the chemical composition of the silt. Riparian landowners are responsible for maintaining the river channel, banks, and associated vegetation in order to control flood risk. This includes the removal of general rubbish.

The Environment Agency is, in partnership with the council, responsible for maintaining two trash screens that lie at the entrance to the Brent Reservoir: the Priestley Way trash screen that sits on the River Brent and the Edgeware auto-trash screen that sits on the River Silkstream. Both of these trash screens are cleared of debris on a weekly basis due to the large amount of debris that comes down the two rivers and collects at these locations.

The Priestley Way trash screen is due some repair and maintenance work. This will include removal of overgrown vegetation, replacement of worn/damaged parts, and removal of current debris. Whilst these repairs need to be completed to keep the asset in good working condition, they do not currently prevent the asset from operating as it should. The Environment Agency hopes to complete this work by the end of February.

■ Scotland: Whisky

David Mundell:

[\[154859\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the Scotch Whisky industry's role in supporting agriculture in the UK.

Victoria Prentis:

No specific assessment has been made of the role of the Scotch whisky industry in supporting agriculture in the UK. The majority of the industry's barley and wheat requirements are sourced in Scotland and the industry maintains a strong relationship with the cereals supply chain.

■ Sustainable Farming Incentive

Daniel Zeichner:

[\[154671\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what progress he has made on ensuring that organic farming standards are recognised and included in the Sustainable Farming Incentive scheme.

Victoria Prentis:

The Sustainable Farming Incentive is intended to be open and accessible to all farmers, and to fairly compensate farmers for environmental goods generated across all land types and farm management systems, including organic farms. This year we will be piloting the Sustainable Farming Incentive, and as part of that we will be working with hundreds of farmers on issues such as ensuring that it works for all farming systems.

■ Tagging: Cats and Dogs

Alexander Stafford:

[\[155491\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of requiring veterinarians to scan the microchips of cats and dogs upon first presentation to them.

Victoria Prentis:

We are always keen to consider improvements to the system and a post-implementation review of the law that regulates compulsory microchipping of dogs – *The Microchipping of Dogs (England) Regulations 2015* - will be carried out this year. A public consultation on compulsory microchipping and scanning of cats and dogs closed on 17 February. Among the questions being posed, the Government asked whether veterinarians should be required to scan cats and dogs upon first presentation. The Government will respond to this consultation once responses have been considered.

It is best practice for vets to check ownership details of pets brought to their practices for the first time in order to satisfy themselves that the pet has not been listed as stolen.

Alexander Stafford:

[\[155493\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of creating a single database of microchipped cats and dogs to help tackle increases in pet thefts.

Victoria Prentis:

We are always keen to consider improvements to the system and a post-implementation review of the law that regulates compulsory microchipping of dogs – *The Microchipping of Dogs (England) Regulations 2015* - will be carried out this year. This will include a review of how the current database system is working in practice.

The Government takes the issue of pet theft very seriously and is concerned by suggestions that occurrences are on the rise. The department is in contact with the police about crime prevention advice and the enforcement of the law around pet theft.

■ **Veterinary Medicine: Coronavirus**

Ruth Cadbury:

[\[155092\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department taking to support veterinary workers during the covid-19 outbreak.

Ruth Cadbury:

[\[155093\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to ensure that veterinary workers can continue to provide 24 hour emergency services during the covid-19 outbreak.

Ruth Cadbury:

[\[155094\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what support his Department is providing to veterinary (a) workers and (b) businesses following the removal of veterinary workers from the list of critical workers during the third covid-19 lockdown.

Victoria Prentis:

Veterinary practices have been able to remain open and continue operating during the Covid-19 outbreak and are able to provide a range of services as those practices see fit. The Government has been working with the veterinary profession to develop guidance and protocols so that veterinary practice staff and customers alike can remain safe.

Veterinary surgeons working in food supply are classed as critical workers in England for the purposes of securing childcare in schools. This includes veterinary surgeons working in abattoirs and meat processing plants, at border control posts, and attending to livestock production.

The Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons, the statutory regulator of the profession, under their code of professional conduct requires all veterinary surgeons to have provisions in place to allow customers to access 24-hour care. Even if a veterinary

practice does not provide 24-hour care itself it must ensure a customer can be directed to a local practice that does provide such a service.

■ Watersure

Zarah Sultana:

[157314]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of including (a) people in receipt of attendance allowance and (b) additional benefit recipients in the qualification criteria for the WaterSure Scheme, as outlined in the Water Industry (Charges) (Vulnerable Groups) Regulations 1999.

Rebecca Pow:

To be eligible for WaterSure, customers must be in receipt of means tested benefits, which provides an appropriate measure for assessing income, and have either three or more children under 19 or a medical condition requiring the extra use of water.

Attendance Allowance is not included as an eligible benefit as it is a non means-tested benefit. Without an income-related criterion, those who are able to afford their water bill may receive financial support funded by other lower income households.

Since the introduction of WaterSure, the legislation has been updated to add and remove benefits, making sure that WaterSure continues to support those most in need of assistance. The Government does not intend to change the eligibility criteria for WaterSure at this time.

Water companies also offer social tariffs, payment breaks, payment matching, debt advice and referral arrangements, and some have independent charitable trusts that make awards to help customers in times of need. The eligibility criteria for social tariffs is not set by the Government, allowing water companies to address the local and regional needs of their customers.

We have asked the independent Consumer Council for Water to undertake a review of existing financial support schemes to ensure consumers who struggle with their water bills can get the support they need. The review will be published this spring.

■ Whisky: Scotland

David Mundell:

[154858]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with representatives of the Scotch Whisky industry in advance of COP26.

Victoria Prentis:

Defra works closely with the Scotch Whisky Association who have recently launched a new Sustainability Strategy, with an aim to achieve Net Zero emissions in their operations by 2040. We welcome this industry-led initiative, which will help secure a sustainable future for Scotch whisky and make a significant contribution to tackling

climate change, building a green future in line with the UK's core themes at UNFCCC COP26 due to be held in Glasgow later this year.

■ **Wood-burning Stoves: Air Pollution**

Ian Mearns:

[\[154986\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether his Department plans to (a) increase (a) regulation and (b) powers of enforcement to restrict and reduce the use of wood burning stoves in private properties where the emissions are shown to contribute to poor air quality.

Rebecca Pow:

Domestic solid fuel burning is a major contributor to fine particulate matter emissions and, in line with our Clean Air Strategy, we recently introduced new legislation to restrict the sale of the most polluting solid fuels used in domestic burning. The aim of this legislation is to drive a transition to cleaner fuels: from wet wood to dry wood (which can reduce emissions by 50%), and from traditional house coal to smokeless coal and low sulphur manufactured solid fuels. We will also be ensuring that only the cleanest stoves are available for sale by 2022.

In addition, the Environment Bill contains measures to help further reduce emissions from domestic burning by creating a simpler mechanism for local authorities seeking to reduce smoke emissions within their areas.

My department will continue to review emissions from these sources and will monitor the impact of the new legislation, considering in due course any additional legislative measures that may be needed to reduce emission levels further.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

■ **Belarus: Human Rights**

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[156281\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with his EU counterparts on (a) the recent jailing of journalists in Belarus and (b) other reported human rights abuses in that country.

Wendy Morton:

The Government is deeply concerned by the continuing attacks on media freedom in Belarus and has repeatedly called on the Belarusian authorities to release journalists who have been arbitrarily detained and hold to account those responsible for attacks on journalists and for other human rights violations. The situation in Belarus features regularly in Ministerial and official level discussions with our partners in the EU. Most recently, on 16 February, the Foreign Secretary discussed Belarus with Lithuanian Foreign Minister Landsbergis. On 17 February, the Foreign Secretary issued a joint statement with his Canadian counterpart in response to detentions and targeted raids by the Belarusian authorities against human rights and media organisations. On 22

February, the Foreign Secretary also drew attention to the human rights crisis in Belarus in his address to the UN Human Rights Council. Our Ambassador to Minsk frequently discusses these issues with her EU counterparts and on 17 February issued a joint local statement with EU, US and Swiss partners against the most recent wave of repression against civil society.

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[156282\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of (a) Magnitsky-style or (b) other sanctions against supporters of the Belarussian regime in response to the recent jailing of journalists in Belarus and other reported human rights abuses in that country.

Wendy Morton:

On 29 September, with Canada, the UK implemented sanctions on Alexander Lukashenko, his son and six other members of the Belarusian senior leadership under the Global Human Rights sanctions regime for serious human rights abuses linked to the presidential election in August. We welcomed the EU's decision to impose sanctions on other linked officials, and have transferred these listings into the UK sanctions regime. We remain concerned by the situation in Belarus and are considering future designations carefully, guided by the evidence and objectives of the sanctions regime. It is not appropriate to speculate publicly on future designations.

■ **British Nationals Overseas: Coronavirus**

Drew Hendry:

[\[158113\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has taken steps to support British nationals overseas in accessing covid-19 vaccines.

Nigel Adams:

We are closely following other countries' plans to roll out vaccines. We are providing information through Travel Advice pages and 'Living In' guides on gov.uk to inform British Nationals of healthcare options available to them and how they can receive a vaccine locally. The UK is playing a leading international role to ensure global access to COVID-19 vaccines. For example, we have contributed £548m to the COVAX Advance Market Commitment to ensure that the 92 most vulnerable economies have access to COVID-19 vaccines, and I [Minister Adams] am delighted that this is starting to deliver, with delivery this week to Ghana of COVID-19 vaccines.

■ **China: Genocide**

Caroline Lucas:

[\[154940\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he has taken to ascertain the (a) views of Uighur and other Xinjiang minority representatives (i) within and (ii) outside China on whether a formal genocide

determination would be in their interest and (b) extent to which members of the Xinjiang ethnic minority diaspora in the UK are subject to harassment (A) directly and (B) indirectly by the Chinese authorities.

Nigel Adams:

The FCDO engages with a wide range of NGOs and interested groups on the situation in Xinjiang. We are aware of reports of members of the Uyghur diaspora - including in the UK - being harassed by the Chinese authorities in an effort to intimidate them into silence, force them to return to China, or co-opt them into providing information on other Uyghurs. The Government regards such activity as unacceptable. The FCDO continues to monitor the situation closely and we urge anyone affected in the UK to contact the police.

Caroline Lucas:

[\[154943\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with his counterpart in the US Administration in respect of whether the treatment of the Uighurs in Xinjiang, China amounts to genocide; and if he will make a statement.

Nigel Adams:

The UK Government remains gravely concerned about the human rights situation in Xinjiang. The UK plays a leading role in holding China to account for its human rights violations in the region, working closely with international partners, including the US. We regularly discuss our concerns and related questions of policy with the US. In a call on 27 January 2021, the Foreign Secretary and US Secretary of State Antony Blinken discussed cooperation to hold China to its international commitments. It is the long-standing policy of the British Government that any judgment as to whether genocide has occurred is a matter for a competent court.

■ **China: Human Rights**

Caroline Lucas:

[\[154941\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the credibility of allegations that have been made in respect of the (a) detention of hundreds of thousands of Uighurs and other minority groups in closed camps, (b) systematic use of rape and torture in those camps, (c) demolition of mosques and suppression of Islamic symbols, beliefs and practices belonging to those groups, (d) forced separation of children and families in those groups for education in state institutions, (e) forced sterilisation of women in those groups and (f) systematic suppression of reproductive rights among members of those groups as a means of population control targeted at specific ethnic groups.

Nigel Adams:

There is a large, diverse and growing body of evidence that underpins allegations of the extra-judicial detention of over a million Uyghur Muslims and other minorities in "political re-education camps"; the systematic restrictions on Uyghur culture and the practice of Islam; and invasive surveillance targeting minorities. This evidence

includes first hand testimony from victims who have fled the region; satellite imagery showing the scale of the internment camps; and extensive and credible third party reports from NGOs such as Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International.

The UK Government is also deeply concerned by reports of the separation of children from their families, and distressing testimonies of the sexual assault and forced sterilisation of Uyghur women in Xinjiang detention centres. These testimonies are further, compelling additions to the evidence of gross human rights violations being perpetrated against Uyghur Muslims and other minorities in Xinjiang.

■ China: Sanctions

Caroline Lucas:

[\[154942\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will publish the criteria the Government is using to determine whether Magnitsky sanctions should be applied to designated Chinese individuals that are potentially connected to the repression of the Uighur in Xinjiang, China.

Nigel Adams:

The Government remains gravely concerned about the human rights situation in Xinjiang. On 12 January the Foreign Secretary announced robust, targeted measures to help ensure that British organisations, whether public or private sector, are not complicit in, nor profiting from, the human rights violations in Xinjiang. We also continue to play a leading role in holding China to account for its human rights violations in the region, working closely with international partners, including at the UN.

The FCDO are carefully considering further designations under the Global Human Rights sanctions regime, introduced in July 2020. We will keep all evidence and potential listings under close review.

■ Developing Countries: Education

Dr Luke Evans:

[\[156590\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to highlight education as part of the global policy agenda of the UK's presidency of the G7.

Wendy Morton:

Girls' education is a key priority for the UK's G7 Presidency. We will encourage G7 Leaders to endorse two global outcome targets: 40 million more girls in education by 2025, and an improvement of one-third in girls' reading by age 10. We will also be working with G7 partners to raise collective ambition, and ensure a successful replenishment of the Global Partnership for Education (GPE), which supports governments in taking vital steps to strengthen national education systems.

■ Developing Countries: Health Services

Stuart Anderson:

[\[157294\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, when his Department plans to publish the proposed health systems strengthening position paper.

Wendy Morton:

We expect to publish a health systems strengthening position paper this year. This approach will form a central part of the government's wider effort towards ending the preventable deaths of mothers, newborns and children, and strengthening global health security. It will take account of the lessons learnt from the response to COVID-19, and the need to build resilient health systems for the future.

■ Developing Countries: Remote Education

Preet Kaur Gill:

[\[157239\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 4 February 2021 to Question 145839 on Developing Countries: Remote Education, whether the adoption of bilateral education programmes in each of the 18 countries involved the re-purposing of existing resources or additional funding.

Wendy Morton:

Our bilateral education programmes in 18 countries used existing resources in order to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, and the needs of children. This included a focus, first and foremost, on child protection as well as delivering low-tech or no-tech remote learning resources, to keep children engaged with their education during school closures. FCDO Education Advisers also supported eligible governments in securing additional financing towards their national COVID-19 response, particularly through the Global Partnership for Education's \$500 million response funding window, of which the UK is the largest bilateral donor.

In addition, the UK has provided new funding for education at the global level. This included £5.3 million to UNHCR to fund the salaries of over 5,500 teachers in refugee camps in 10 countries, and a further £5 million to the Education Cannot Wait fund to support emergency education in conflict-affected contexts. We have also provided £20 million to UNICEF to protect vulnerable children.

■ Fossil Fuels: Overseas Trade

Preet Kaur Gill:

[\[157242\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with the President of COP26 on the continued use of public money to fund fossil fuel projects overseas.

James Duddridge:

The Prime Minister announced on 12 December 2020 that the UK Government would end all financial support for fossil fuels projects overseas. The Foreign Secretary has

not had any formal discussions with the COP President-Designate on this matter since the PM's announcement.

■ **Guantanamo Bay**

Sarah Olney:

[\[158154\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with the US administration on the closure of Guantanamo Bay since the election of President Biden.

Wendy Morton:

The UK Government's long-standing position remains that the detention facility at Guantanamo Bay should close. We will continue to engage with the US Government on this issue, as we do on a range of national security issues, and in the context of our joint determination to tackle international terrorism and combat violent extremism.

■ **Human Rights**

Liz Saville Roberts:

[\[155276\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with his (a) international counterparts and (b) Cabinet colleagues on developing a strategy to support and protect human rights defenders.

Nigel Adams:

The UK strongly supports human rights defenders (HRDs) worldwide to enable them to carry out their work safely and without fear. Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon is the Minister responsible for Human Rights at the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office. In 2019, Lord Ahmad launched the document 'UK support for Human Rights Defenders' which was drawn up with significant and important input from relevant stakeholders, including Amnesty International, and sets out how HMG engages with HRDs, and how we work with them to further human rights globally. Lord Ahmad is listening closely to Amnesty and other NGOs on their request for an HMG strategy on HRDs. In the context of the establishment of the new Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, and of the Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy, we will be considering what more the UK can do to support HRDs going forward.

■ **India: Agriculture**

Dr Rupa Huq:

[\[155263\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he has taken to assess the effect of recent agricultural protests in India on the (a) Conceptual Framework on Agriculture and (b) UK-India Infrastructure Technical Co-operation Facility.

Nigel Adams:

The British High Commission in New Delhi monitors developments in India, including recent reforms in agricultural law. We work with our partners in India to build capacity

and share expertise to promote prosperity. Through the FCDO's Conceptual Framework on Agriculture, we support small-scale farmers to grow sustainably by improving market access and finance. With regards to the UK-India Infrastructure Technical Co-Operation Facility, there have been no projects relating to agriculture or agri-infrastructure under this programme. We will continue to follow the wider situation closely, respecting that agricultural reforms are a matter for India.

■ India: Human Rights

Marco Longhi:

[\[155427\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions his Department has had with the Indian Government on promoting the (a) safety of protesters and (b) right of press freedom in that country.

Nigel Adams:

The Foreign Secretary discussed protests about agricultural reforms with his Indian counterpart during his visit to India in December. It is our view that the right to gather lawfully and demonstrate a point of view is common to all democracies. Governments also have the power to enforce law and order if a protest crosses the line into illegality. We consider an independent media essential to any robust democracy. Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon, Minister of State for South Asia and Minister responsible for Human Rights, discussed the UK's commitment to promoting media freedom, through the Media Freedom Coalition, with India's Minister of State for External Affairs in July.

■ Indian Ocean Tuna Commission

Alan Brown:

[\[155190\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, for what reasons the UK has deposited a new Instrument of Acceptance dated 14 December 2020 under Article XVII of the Agreement for the Establishment of the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC) to the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation; and whether the UK is still able to rely on Article IV (1)(a)(i) (coastal States) as a basis for its continued membership of the IOTC.

James Duddridge:

The Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC) Agreement applied in and to the United Kingdom by virtue of its membership of the European Union. With the end of the Transition Period (as part of the Agreement on the withdrawal of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland from the European Union and the European Atomic Energy Community), the UK deposited a new Instrument of Acceptance for membership of the IOTC with the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO). As stated in the Instrument of Acceptance deposited with the FAO on 14 December 2020 the United Kingdom meets the conditions for membership of the IOTC as set out in paragraph (1)(a) of Article IV of the Agreement for the Establishment of the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC).

■ Indonesia: LGBT People

Nickie Aiken:

[\[155388\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with his Indonesian counterpart on the imposition of strict sharia law in the province of Aceh, with particular reference to the recent flogging of gay men in that province; what steps he is taking to help protect global gay rights; and if he will make a statement.

Nigel Adams:

The UK is opposed to the use of judicial corporal punishment and all forms of discrimination. We are committed to protecting the rights and freedoms of LGBT people around the world. We work through our embassies and high commissions and through international organisations, including the UN, European Institutions, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and the Commonwealth, to promote tolerance and non-discrimination against LGBT people and to address discriminatory laws, in particular those that criminalise same sex conduct. We regularly press legislators and the Indonesian Government not to discriminate against minority groups, including the LGBT community. We urge Indonesia to adhere to its founding principles by ensuring that its laws, both at national and local level, are non-discriminatory and celebrate the diversity and tolerance of its people.

■ International Criminal Court

Mr Jonathan Lord:

[\[155025\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the International Criminal Court.

Nigel Adams:

The UK has always been, and remains, a strong supporter of an effective International Criminal Court (ICC). We believe that positive reform is required for the ICC to fulfil its mandate as intended under the Rome Statute and we are working with the Court and other States Parties to achieve this

The UK welcomed the establishment of the Independent Expert Review as part of an inclusive State Party driven process for identifying and implementing measures to strengthen the Court and improve its performance. The Independent Experts published their final report in September 2020; it is essential that States Parties engage with the recommendations in the report and take forward the work to ensure the necessary changes are implemented to strengthen the Court. We look forward to continuing to work with States Parties, the Court and civil society to make sure this happens

The election of two highly qualified UK nationals, Judge Joanna Korner QC and Karim Khan QC to the roles of Judge and Prosecutor to the ICC respectively, will further serve reform of the Court.

Marco Longhi:

[\[155424\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the International Criminal Court.

Nigel Adams:

The UK has always been, and remains, a strong supporter of an effective International Criminal Court (ICC). We want to see reform of the ICC so it can fulfil its mandate as intended under the Rome Statute and we are working with the Court and other States Parties to achieve this

The UK welcomed the establishment of the Independent Expert Review as part of an inclusive State Party driven process for identifying and implementing measures to strengthen the Court and improve its performance. The Independent Experts published their final report in September 2020; now we need to see those recommendations implemented.

The election of two highly qualified UK nationals, Judge Joanna Korner QC and Karim Khan QC to the roles of Judge and Prosecutor to the ICC respectively, will further serve reform of the Court

■ International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination

Dawn Butler:

[\[157968\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what plans the Government has to mark United Nations International Day for the elimination of racial discrimination in 2021.

Dawn Butler:

[\[157969\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what plans the Government has to mark the remainder of the United Nations International Decade for People of African Descent 2015-2024.

Nigel Adams:

The United Kingdom is committed to combatting all forms of racism, both at home and abroad. The United Kingdom ratified the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination in 1969, and we believe that one of the most effective ways to tackle injustices and advocate respect among different religious and racial groups is to encourage states to uphold their human rights obligations, particularly through international institutions such as the United Nations. We have participated in and joined consensus on the key 21st century UN events and instruments on racism. We have not yet made any specific plans for marking the UN International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination in 2021.

■ International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea

Stephen Doughty:

[\[157127\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether (a) he and (b) officials in his Department have (i) met virtually, by phone or in

person and (ii) exchanged correspondence with any of the parties, or legal counsel to the parties, of the arbitration proceedings at the International Tribunal on the Law of the Sea, in each of the last 24 months.

Nigel Adams:

Neither the Foreign Secretary nor any FCDO officials have met with or exchanged correspondence with legal counsel to the parties in relation to the arbitration proceedings at the International Tribunal on the Law of the Sea (ITLOS), in each of the last 24 months. FCDO officials and Ministers have regularly engaged with their Mauritian and Maldivian counterparts in diplomatic activity.

■ **Iran: Terrorism**

Ian Mearns:

[\[154981\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment his Department has made of the role of Iran's Ministry of Intelligence and the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps in the bomb plot against an opposition gathering in Paris in June 2018, reported during the recent trial of an Iranian diplomat in Belgium.

Ian Mearns:

[\[154982\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of (a) downgrading the UK's diplomatic relations with Iran and (b) closing the Iranian Embassy in the UK until the UK has received assurances from Iran that they will not engage in acts of state terrorism.

James Cleverly:

Hostile activity such as the bomb plot against a conference in Paris in 2018 is unacceptable and must have consequences. The UK, along with our European partners, has directly condemned such attacks and in 2019 the EU adopted sanctions against those responsible. Following the end of the Transition Period, these sanctions are now enforced under the UK autonomous Counter-Terrorism sanctions regime. The IRGC also remains sanctioned in its entirety by the UK. We strongly condemn the targeting of civilians and welcome that those responsible have been held to account.

We continue to work closely with our European partners on security and counter-terrorism issues. We expect diplomatic and consular missions in the UK to respect our laws and regulations in line with their obligations under the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations, the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations and UK law.

■ **Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps**

Mr Jonathan Lord:

[\[155026\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the role of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps in Iran's regional activities.

James Cleverly:

We have been clear about our concerns over Iran and the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) continued destabilising activity throughout the region, which includes political, financial and military support to a number of militant and proscribed groups, including Hizballah in Lebanon and Syria, militias in Iraq and the Houthis in Yemen. The IRGC is sanctioned in its entirety by the UK.

■ **Israel: Palestinians****Janet Daby:**[\[155379\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to tackle the demolition of Palestinian homes by the Israeli authorities.

James Cleverly:

The UK regularly raises demolitions with the Government of Israel. I called on Israel to stop demolitions on 5 February 2021 and raised my concerns about demolitions of Palestinian homes and structures with the Israeli Ambassador on 29 October 2020. UK officials from the British Consulate in Jerusalem have made regular visits to areas at risk of demolition and eviction to reiterate UK support for those communities. The UK is clear that in all but the most exceptional of circumstances, demolitions are contrary to International Humanitarian Law. The practice causes unnecessary suffering to Palestinians and is harmful to the peace process.

Seema Malhotra:[\[158055\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what representations he has made to his Israeli counterpart on the demolition of Palestinian homes.

James Cleverly:

Our Ambassador in Tel Aviv raised ongoing demolitions with the Israeli Authorities, in a meeting alongside like-minded partners on 25 February. I called on Israel to stop demolitions on 5 February 2021 and raised my concerns about demolitions of Palestinian homes and structures with the Israeli Ambassador on 29 October 2020. UK officials from the British Consulate in Jerusalem have made regular visits to areas at risk of demolition and eviction to reiterate UK support for those communities. The UK is clear that in all but the most exceptional of circumstances, demolitions are contrary to International Humanitarian Law. The practice causes unnecessary suffering to Palestinians and is harmful to the peace process.

■ **Israel: Sovereignty****Theresa Villiers:**[\[154847\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether the Government continues to accept the legal validity of the San Remo declaration of April 1920 on provision of a home for the Jewish people in Palestine.

James Cleverly:

San Remo marked a chapter in the history of Britain's Mandate over Palestine. The Foreign Secretary recorded a message for the San Remo Centenary Resolution celebration in April 2020, which reiterated that the occasion provided an opportunity to reflect on decades of cooperation between Britain and the Jewish people.

The United Kingdom considers that United Nations resolutions, including UNGA 181, UNSCRs 242 and 338, and UNSCR 2334 provide the relevant legal framework today.

We are proud of our bilateral relations with Israel, which continue to go from strength to strength in the twenty-first century. We also recognise - as the Prime Minister has said - that the Balfour Declaration, incorporated into the San Remo Declaration, contains unfinished business. The UK continues to believe that the two-state solution remains the only viable way to resolve the conflict and realise the rights of the Palestinian people.

■ Israel: West Bank**Hilary Benn:**[\[154768\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if we will ask the Israeli Government for compensation or restitution for the destruction of UK-funded humanitarian aid structures in the occupied West Bank.

James Cleverly:

Whilst we have not discussed the issue of compensation with the Israeli Authorities, the UK regularly raises demolitions with the Government of Israel. I called on Israel to stop demolitions on 5 February 2021 and raised my concerns about demolitions of Palestinian and humanitarian structures with the Israeli Ambassador on 29 October 2020. UK officials from the British Consulate in Jerusalem have made regular visits to areas at risk of demolition and eviction to reiterate UK support for those communities. The UK is clear that in all but the most exceptional of circumstances, demolitions are contrary to International Humanitarian Law. The practice causes unnecessary suffering to Palestinians and is harmful to the peace process.

■ Israeli Settlements**Patrick Grady:**[\[157201\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with his counterparts in the new US Administration on the issue of Israeli annexation of Palestinian land.

James Cleverly:

The UK works closely with the US on matters relating to the Middle East Peace Process. We strongly opposed any move to annex all or part of the West Bank. Such a move would be contrary to international law and deeply damaging to prospects for lasting peace between Israel and the Palestinians. The UK welcomed the suspension of annexation as part of the normalisation agreement between the Government of

Israel and the United Arab Emirates, and subsequent resumption of cooperation between the Government of Israel and the Palestinian Authority.

The Biden Administration has also outlined their opposition to unilateral acts, including annexation, settlement construction and demolitions. We are now focused on building on these positive steps to encourage greater cooperation between the parties and further confidence-building measures. We look forward to working with the US, alongside regional partners, and the Israeli and Palestinian leaderships, to pursue that goal.

■ **Mozambique: Solar Power and Wind Power**

Dan Carden:

[\[158187\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what the total value is of CDC Group's current investments in (a) solar and (b) wind energy in Mozambique.

James Duddridge:

CDC has one indirect renewable energy investment in Mozambique with Enventure Africa S.A, which is made through DI Frontier Fund 2. Investment values for individual companies are commercially sensitive and are therefore unable to be disclosed. CDC has invested over \$1 billion of climate finance into developing countries in Africa and South Asia since 2017.

■ **Myanmar: British Nationals Abroad**

Marco Longhi:

[\[155426\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to repatriate UK citizen's unable to leave Myanmar.

Nigel Adams:

The British Embassy is following the situation carefully and we will continue to update the travel advice. British Nationals in Myanmar are advised to stay home and stay safe and check the Travel Advice, which contains information on how to contact the British Embassy or Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office. Consular officials are working hard to respond to the concerns of British Nationals. If British Nationals have concerns for their safety in the current situation they should consider leaving Myanmar by commercial means. Travel advice is currently advising against all but essential travel to Myanmar based upon recent events.

British Nationals in Myanmar are advised to stay at home, and those that are concerned for their safety are advised to leave by commercial means, which are available. The travel advice contains phone numbers for those who are in Myanmar to ring should they need assessment. These phones will be answered by Embassy staff.

■ Myanmar: Rohingya

Judith Cummins:

[\[155095\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with his Bangladeshi counterpart on the suspension of plans to repatriate Rohingya refugees in the context of the military coup in Myanmar.

Nigel Adams:

The UK remains clear that any Rohingya returns to Rakhine state must be voluntary, safe, dignified, and in line with UNHCR principles. At present, conditions in Myanmar preclude this possibility. The situation in Rakhine State is unpredictable following the military coup and we are monitoring the situation closely, including for the increased risk of atrocities. Until conditions improve, we will continue to support the Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh and the surrounding host communities.

The Minister of State for South Asia, Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon, most recently raised these issues with Bangladesh State Minister Shahriah Alam on 18th February 2021.

■ Nawaf al-Osaimi

Hilary Benn:

[\[154769\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to reports that Nawaf al-Osaimi is facing imminent execution in Saudi Arabia for a crime committed as a teenager, if he will ask the Government of Saudi Arabia (a) not to execute Nawaf al-Osaimi and (b) to conduct a full investigation into the (i) juvenility of that person at the time of the crime and (ii) compliance of his capital trial with fair trial guarantees.

James Cleverly:

The UK strongly opposes the death penalty in all countries and in all circumstances, as a matter of principle. This is especially the case for juveniles. This is in line with the provisions of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Arab Charter on Human Rights. We reiterated our opposition to the death penalty in Saudi Arabia in a joint statement at the UN Human Rights Council on 15 September.

We regularly raise our concerns about the use of the death penalty, including individual cases with the Saudi Arabian authorities and we will continue to do so. In August, our Chargé d'affaires in Riyadh raised the issue of the death penalty with Minister of State Al Jubeir. I raised the death penalty with Dr Awwad al Awwad, President of Saudi Arabia's Human Rights Commission during his virtual visit in July

■ Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development: Public appointments

Caroline Lucas:

[\[154939\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the OECD's statement that climate change requires urgent, strong and co-operative action based on mutual trust and understanding, if he will make it his policy for the Government to not endorse Mattias Cormann as OECD Secretary General due to his

opposition to (a) Australia's carbon price, (b) Clean Energy Finance Corporation and (c) Australian Renewable Energy Agency.

James Duddridge:

We believe that the OECD has a vital role to play in helping Members and the wider international community to address climate change. We have made clear to all candidates that we expect them to have an ambitious climate agenda which extends throughout the Organisation's work. Members have scrutinised each candidate at length during interviews and bilateral meetings, and underlined the central importance of proactive and energetic climate leadership from the next Secretary-General. Four candidates remain and, with a couple of stages to go, the UK will continue to emphasise this message.

■ **Overseas Aid**

Ian Murray:

[\[158010\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how much and what proportion of the 2021 Official Development Assistance budget had been allocated as part of long-term spending commitments before the start of 2021.

Nigel Adams:

The Foreign Secretary has set out seven core priorities for the UK's aid budget in the overarching pursuit of poverty reduction: climate and biodiversity; Covid and global health security; girls' education; science and research; defending open societies and resolving conflict; humanitarian assistance; and promoting trade and economic growth. We are working through our internal business planning process which will allocate the ODA budget across these priorities and geographies. No decisions have yet been made on budget allocations for 2021/22.

■ **Overseas Aid: Trachoma**

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[156345\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of funding under the aid budget initiatives to tackle the cause of trachoma.

Wendy Morton:

Trachoma is one of the world's leading causes of infectious blindness. UK funding is supporting programmes that are providing treatment and care to people affected by treatable NTDs and reached over 160 million people between 2017 and 2019. The Global Trachoma mapping project, funded by the UK Government, examined 2.6 million people for trachoma and informed national strategies for tackling the disease. Resilient health systems are at the core of global efforts to prevent and treat diseases. Our funding contributes to strengthening health systems needed for the long-term control and elimination of diseases, by training health workers and helping governments to plan and implement NTD programmes.

■ **Palestinians: Coronavirus**

Seema Malhotra:

[\[158056\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with the Israeli Government on the covid-19 vaccination rates of Palestinians living under Israeli occupation.

James Cleverly:

We welcome the steps that the parties have taken so far to coordinate responses to the COVID-19 pandemic and encourage further dialogue in this regard. The UK Ambassador in Tel Aviv raised vaccines with the Israeli Authorities on 24 February, encouraging the Government of Israel to continue to facilitate the transfer of vaccines to the Palestinian Authority when required. The British Embassy in Tel Aviv and the British Consulate-General in Jerusalem are in regular contact with the Israeli and Palestinian authorities respectively, and will continue to raise timely and appropriate access to COVID-19 vaccines.

■ **Palestinians: Textbooks**

Mr Jonathan Lord:

[\[155027\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent progress has been made on the international review of the content of Palestinian Authority school textbooks.

James Cleverly:

We understand the EU are now moving towards the final reporting stage of the study. To ensure that the final report is thorough, the study has been extended to include a sample of textbooks the Palestinian Authority introduced for school year 2020-21. We have regular discussions with our European Partners on the review and we continue to encourage them to finalise the report as soon as possible.

■ **Rwanda: Human Rights**

Paul Blomfield:

[\[156360\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the human rights situation in Rwanda.

James Duddridge:

Rwanda has made huge strides over the past two decades with regards to a positive record on gender equality in its cabinet and parliament, and improvements in healthcare, development and prosperity. However, the UK remains concerned by Rwanda's overall human rights record and regularly raises specific cases of concern with the Rwandan Government. The UK firmly believes that a strong opposition and vibrant civil society is vital for a healthy and well-functioning democracy. Civil society and opposition parties must be able to operate freely, holding the Government of Rwanda to account and contributing to the debate on how Rwanda should be governed.

As a member of the Commonwealth, and future Chair-in-Office, we urge Rwanda to uphold and champion Commonwealth values of democracy, rule of law, and respect for human rights. This was reiterated in the UK's statement on human rights in Rwanda at the 37th Session of the Universal Periodic Review on 25 January. We are clear that Rwanda must mirror its social and economic progress with gains in civil and political rights for its people.

■ **Sayed Hasan Ameen**

Layla Moran: [\[158190\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what plans he has to make representations to the Bahraini Government before the hearing of Sayed Hasan Ameen takes place to secure his immediate release and to avoid his detention being renewed.

Layla Moran: [\[158191\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what plans his Department has to make representations to the Bahraini Government on the release of (a) Mohammed Jafar, (b) Fares Husain, (c) Sayed Hasan Ameen from prison.

James Cleverly:

We are aware of the detention of Mohammed Jafar, Fares Husain and Sayed Hasan Ameen. We understand the three, all aged 17, were arrested for arson, endangering the lives and property of others; and preparing and possessing Molotov cocktails and using them to endanger lives and property. Their cases are currently pending legal proceedings. We will continue to monitor and raise their cases if/when appropriate.

We welcome the recent ratification by HM The King of the 'Justice Law for Children and their protection from ill-treatment' and will monitor its implementation. We continue to encourage the Government of Bahrain to follow due process in all cases and meet its international and domestic human rights commitments, including in the case of juveniles. Those with concerns about treatment in detention should contact the relevant authorities as well as the appropriate Bahraini human rights oversight body.

■ **UN Non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons Treaty Review Conference**

Patrick Grady: [\[157202\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what plans the Government has to send Observers to the first First Conference of States Parties to the UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons planned to be held by January 2022.

James Cleverly:

The United Kingdom will not send Observers to the First Conference of States Parties to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW). The Government has been clear it will not sign the TPNW. We do not believe this Treaty will bring us closer to a world without nuclear weapons. The Government believes that the best way to

achieve our collective goal of a world without nuclear weapons is through gradual multilateral disarmament negotiated using a step-by-step approach, under the framework of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

■ West Bank: Demolition

Patrick Grady:

[\[157199\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, when he last raised the issue of the demolition of Palestinian homes with his Israeli counterparts.

James Cleverly:

Our Ambassador in Tel Aviv raised ongoing demolitions with the Israeli Authorities, in a meeting alongside like-minded partners on 25 February. I called on Israel to stop demolitions on 5 February 2021 and raised my concerns about demolitions of Palestinian homes and structures with the Israeli Ambassador on 29 October 2020. UK officials from the British Consulate in Jerusalem have made regular visits to areas at risk of demolition and eviction to reiterate UK support for those communities. The UK is clear that in all but the most exceptional of circumstances, demolitions are contrary to International Humanitarian Law. The practice causes unnecessary suffering to Palestinians and is harmful to the peace process.

■ Western Sahara: Human Rights

Alan Brown:

[\[155185\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 12 February 2021 to Question 149268 on Mohamed Lamin Haddi, when he last spoke to his Moroccan counterpart on the continuing human rights abuses in Western Sahara.

Alan Brown:

[\[155186\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, when the UN Security Council last discussed the human rights situation in Western Sahara.

James Cleverly:

Support for human rights is a priority around the world and we continue to raise such issues with the Moroccan Government accordingly.

The UN Security Council was briefed on the situation in Western Sahara in December 2020.

Kim Johnson:

[\[155453\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will ask the UN Secretary General (a) how many allegations of human rights abuses have been made to the Moroccan National Human Rights Council in Western Sahara, (b) whether those allegations have been investigated and (c) what the results of those investigations are.

James Cleverly:

Support for human rights is a priority around the world. We continue to stress the importance of improving the human rights situation in Western Sahara and the Tindouf camps and to encourage the parties to work with the international community to develop and implement independent and credible measures to ensure full respect for human rights, bearing in mind their relevant obligations under international law. UN Security Council Resolution 2548 welcomes the steps and initiatives taken by Morocco, and the role played by the National Council on Human Rights Commissions operating in Dakhla and Laayoune, and Morocco's interaction with Special Procedures of the United Nations Human Rights Council.

Further information about the work of the Moroccan National Human Rights Council is available at www.cndh.org.ma/an/about-cndh/about-us.

■ Western Sahara: Politics and Government**Kim Johnson:****[155452]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 27 January 2021 to Question 144869, on Western Sahara: Politics and Government, and the Answer of 29 January 2021 to Question 141623, on Western Sahara: Sovereignty, what the status of Morocco is in Western Sahara.

James Cleverly:

As stated in response to Question 144869, the UN position on the status of Western Sahara is set out on its website at www.un.org/dppa/decolonization/en/nsqt/western-sahara.

The UK regards the status of Western Sahara as undetermined.

Grahame Morris:**[158016]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, when he last made representations to (a) his Moroccan counterpart and (b) the Moroccan Ambassador on the continuing hostilities between Morocco and the Polisario Front resulting from the Moroccan breach of the 1991 ceasefire agreement in Western Sahara.

James Cleverly:

We are closely monitoring the situation in Western Sahara and note reports of breaches on both sides. We are in regular contact with the parties, including Morocco. We continue to urge the parties to avoid further escalation, return to the ceasefire agreement, and re-engage with the UN-led political process.

Grahame Morris:**[158017]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will raise in the UN Security Council the ongoing instability in the Mahgreb following the renewed hostilities in the Western Sahara.

James Cleverly:

We are closely monitoring the situation in Western Sahara and have regular discussions with the UN, both in New York and in the region, as well as with Council

members. The UN Security Council was briefed on Western Sahara in December. We continue to urge the parties to avoid further escalation, return to the ceasefire agreement, and re-engage with the UN-led political process. We strongly support the UN Secretary General's efforts to appoint a Personal Envoy as soon as possible.

■ **Yemen: Armed Conflict**

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[154998\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the accuracy of reports of children being shot by snipers in Yemen.

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[154999\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of whether war crimes are being committed in Yemen.

James Cleverly:

The UK is aware of these reports and takes alleged violations of International Humanitarian Law (IHL) extremely seriously. It has been the Government's long-standing policy that any determination of war crimes should only be made by a competent court, rather than by a government or non-judicial body. The UK calls on all the parties to the conflict to cease and investigate such attacks on civilians, respect human rights and comply with their obligations under IHL.

■ **Yemen: Humanitarian Aid**

Ian Murray:

[\[158012\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what plans his Department has to announce a contribution to the UN's Virtual High-Level Pledging Event for the Humanitarian Situation in Yemen.

James Cleverly:

On 1 March, I announced the UK's commitment to Yemen for the upcoming financial year at the UN Virtual High level Pledging Conference.

We will be using our intervention to highlight that the current unprecedented restrictions on humanitarian access in Yemen must be lifted, to ensure essential aid reaches those who need it and to call for all parties to bring an end to the conflict.

Ian Murray:

[\[158013\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that the UN's Virtual High-Level Pledging Event for the Humanitarian Situation in Yemen promotes improved humanitarian access.

James Cleverly:

On 1 March, I have announced the UK's commitment to Yemen for the upcoming financial year at the UN Virtual High level Pledging Conference.

We will be using our intervention to highlight that the current unprecedented restrictions on humanitarian access in Yemen must be lifted, to ensure essential aid reaches those who need it and to call for all parties to bring an end to the conflict.

■ **Yemen: Overseas Aid**

Ian Murray:

[\[158011\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how much Official Development Assistance (ODA) funding his Department and its predecessors allocated to the humanitarian response in Yemen in (a) 2019 and (b) 2020; and how much ODA funding his Department plans to allocate to that matter in 2021.

James Cleverly:

Last financial year (19/20), the UK contributed £240 million on the humanitarian response in Yemen. Our total commitment for this financial year (20/21) is £214 million. This takes our total commitment to over £1 billion since the conflict began in 2015.

Our funding is providing support to at least 500,000 vulnerable people each month to help them buy food and household essentials, enrolling 25,000 children on malnutrition programmes and providing 1 million people with improved water supply and basic sanitation across Yemen.

I will announce the UK allocation for Yemen for the upcoming financial year (21/22) at the Yemen Pledging Conference on 1 March.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ **Cancer: Health Services**

Sir Mark Hendrick:

[\[154778\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the effect of the covid-19 outbreak on cancer (a) surgeries, (b) treatments and (c) diagnosis.

Jo Churchill:

While the Department has not made a formal assessment, NHS England's Cancer Recovery Plan sets out the aims and actions needed to recover from the impact of COVID-19.

Latest official cancer waiting times data for December 2020 shows activity against the 62-day general practitioner urgent referral to first treatment for cancer was 6.7% higher than last December. The most recent data shows that recent activity is higher than the same time last year. The National Health Service continues to prioritise cancer diagnosis, treatments and surgeries throughout the pandemic to ensure that, wherever possible, cancer treatment can continue safely.

Dr Philippa Whitford:

[\[155079\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what proportion of the additional £260 million allocated to Health Education England in the November 2020 Spending Review will be allocated to the cancer workforce.

Jo Churchill:

Full details on funding allocations towards National Health Service workforce budgets, including relating to the cancer workforce, in 2021-22 are subject to a detailed financial planning exercise and will be finalised in due course.

■ **Cancer: Surgery**

Sir Mark Hendrick:

[\[154776\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans his Department has to reschedule cancer operations that have been cancelled during the covid-19 crisis outbreak.

Jo Churchill:

One of the key priorities outlined in the third phase of the National Health Service response to COVID-19 is to reduce the number of patients who have waited longer than 62 days from urgent referral to starting cancer treatment.

Action to reduce long waits includes expanding the capacity of COVID-19 secure cancer hubs, prioritising people for surgery centrally on the basis of clinical need and drawing on the independent sector to increase capacity.

■ **Care Homes: Coronavirus**

Julian Sturdy:

[\[155021\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure the needs of people with dementia are included in plans to ease the covid-19 lockdown; and what priority is being given to the reinstatement of care home visits as part of those plans.

Helen Whately:

New visiting arrangements will start on 8 March. From then, we will support care homes to allow every resident to nominate one named person who can have regular indoor visits. More detail on these changes will be published in updated visiting guidance. We will continue to look carefully at the latest data and set out plans for the next phase of visits for people in residential care.

We commissioned research through the National Institute for Health Research on how to manage or mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on people with dementia and their carers living in the community. We have supported day care services in implementing good Infection Prevention and Control by providing personal protective equipment and testing. We recognise the need for support groups to continue and as such formally organised groups of up to 15 can continue to meet.

■ Care Homes: Government Assistance

Helen Hayes: [\[155257\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to continue the (a) Infection Control Fund, (b) Workforce Capacity Fund and (c) Rapid Testing Fund for care providers beyond 31 March 2021.

Helen Whately:

The Government is reviewing the need for further funding and decisions will be made in due course.

■ Carers: Coronavirus

Mr Clive Betts: [\[145736\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has in place to identify people who are defined as adult carers and therefore qualify for priority covid-19 vaccination; and whether individuals who think they qualify should notify their GP.

Lee Anderson: [\[148918\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will publish further details on when unpaid and informal carers will receive the covid-19 vaccine.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 3 February 2021]: We recognise the vital role that unpaid carers play and the Government is developing bespoke guidance for this group, set out in a Standard Operating Protocol (SOP) which has been developed in close cooperation with carers organisations and local authorities. This guidance will be published in due course. The SOP will provide guidance on the process to support the identification and vaccination of adult unpaid carers as part of the COVID-19 vaccination programme. It is intended to support local authorities, the vaccination programme, carers organisations and unpaid carers themselves to understand the actions they should take to ensure equitable access to and uptake of vaccination by eligible unpaid carers as per the advice of the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation.

■ Chief Medical Officer: Mental Health

Dr Rosena Allin-Khan: [\[157229\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of introducing an equivalent Chief Medical Officer role for mental health.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

As Chief Medical Officer, Professor Whitty's interest covers both mental and physical health, therefore we have no plans at present to introduce an equivalent Chief Medical Officer role for mental health.

■ Community Discharge Fund

Alex Cunningham:

[157099]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what criteria his Department will use to assess the effectiveness of the Community Discharge Fund.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 1 March 2021]: We will review the allocation methodology for the second year of the Grant and expect to consult with local government on how best to apportion funds in future so the funds have maximum impact in facilitating timely discharges of people with a learning disability and/or autism into the community.

The Department may undertake a formal evaluation of the effectiveness of the Community Discharge Grant. Any evaluation will focus on how effective funding has been to meet the purpose of the grant, which is to support discharges and would engage with local authorities and Transforming Care Partnerships.

■ Confectionery: Marketing

Dr Lisa Cameron:

[155103]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department plans to exempt healthy snacks from restrictions proposed by his Department on the promotion of confectionery products.

Jo Churchill:

In December 2020 we published our response to the 2019 consultation on restricting promotions of products that are high fat, salt or sugar (HFSS) by location and price. The response confirmed the categories in scope of the restrictions and that the 2004/05 Nutrient Profiling Model will be used to define whether a product in these categories is HFSS.

The Nutrient Profiling Model uses a simple scoring system where points allocated for 'C' nutrients (fruit, vegetables and nut content, fibre and protein) are subtracted from 'A' nutrients (energy, saturated fat, total sugar and sodium). Foods scoring four or more points, and drinks scoring one or more points, are classified as 'less healthy' and will be subject to the restrictions.

■ Coronavirus: Disease Control

Yvette Cooper:

[157015]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the common risks of exposures of people who contracted covid-19 by setting in each local authority area in each week during the January 2021 covid-19 lockdown.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

Data on the number of COVID-19 cases with common exposure settings are included in the weekly national flu and COVID-19 surveillance graphs, which is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/national-flu-and-covid-19-surveillance-reports>

These common settings are indicative and do not necessarily mean that transmission definitively occurred in the setting.

Data is not available at local authority level.

Chi Onwurah:

[157103]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what (a) best practice and (b) ethical guidelines were followed in the development of the QCovid risk assessment algorithm; and what engagement was undertaken with end-users in that development process.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 1 March 2021]: Oxford University, who led the consortium to develop the QCovid model, involved patients in presenting the research questions and in developing plans for design and implementation of the national derivation and validation cohort study and in interpreting and disseminating the results.

The Department has worked with National Health Service leaders, the Royal Colleges and the British Medical Association to develop and test the approach and to understand how to safely embed the model in ways that best support patients and clinicians. The Moral and Ethical Advisory Group and Government Equalities Office were also regularly consulted. In addition, the Department worked with the Winton Centre for Risk and Evidence Communication who surveyed patients and clinicians to shape how the results could be presented.

The research underpinning the model was peer-reviewed and published in the BMJ on 20 October 2020. It has been independently validated by the Office for National Statistics, who found it to perform in the 'excellent' range and accurately identifies patients at high risk from COVID-19. Both the model and its implementation in the NHS have been approved by the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency. The ethical approval for the QResearch database used in the research is the East Midlands-Derby Research Ethics Committee.

■ **Coronavirus: Licensed Premises**

Daisy Cooper:

[110252]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will publish the evidence supporting the restriction of takeaway alcohol sales from pubs and licensed premises during the November 2020 covid-19 lockdown.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 5 November 2020]: The Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies considered the risks of transmission through different routes and environments in a paper which is available at the following link:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/933225/S0824_SARS-CoV-2_Transmission_routes_and_environments.pdf

The virus spreads readily in any environment where members of different households and/or support bubbles spend time together. Allowing alcohol purchases away from hospitality venues increases the risk that people will consume the alcohol nearby or congregate in public spaces. The advice has been clear that alcohol consumption is likely to hinder social distancing in any social interaction therefore, restricting sales during the November 2020 national restrictions mitigated the risk of transmission.

■ Coronavirus: New York

Caroline Lucas:

[144656]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has held discussions with representatives of the US Administration leading on the response to the covid-19 pandemic in New York City on the effect of the financial support packages made available in New York City on levels of compliance of people with self-isolation rules to reduce the transmission of covid-19 in that city; and if he will make a statement.

Helen Whately:

Whilst there have been no specific discussions, we continue to conduct a wide range of international research on how other countries are supporting their citizens to ensure they are able to self-isolate.

■ Coronavirus: Protective Clothing

Philip Davies:

[157042]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the effectiveness of face masks in controlling the transmission of covid-19.

Jane Stevenson:

[157295]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the effect of face coverings on the level of transmission of covid-19; and if he will make a statement.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 1 March 2021]: In June 2020, Public Health England (PHE) completed a rapid review of the evidence related to face coverings in the community and COVID-19 and concluded that “the beneficial effects of wearing masks may be increased when combined with other non-pharmaceutical interventions, such as hand washing and social distancing.” A second review, published in January 2021, found evidence consistent with the findings of the first review, that the use of face coverings in the community helped reduce the spread of COVID-19. Therefore, PHE continue to advocate the same measures of wearing face coverings in specified community settings, alongside social distancing and good hand hygiene. We keep our face covering policy under review, guided by the advice of our scientific and medical experts.

Dr Philippa Whitford:

[158081]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has for a review of healthcare personal protective equipment guidelines in response to the greater infectiousness of the B117 covid-19 variant.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 1 March 2021]: Following the identification of new COVID-19 variants, the United Kingdom Infection Prevention Control Cell conducted a comprehensive review of available evidence to inform any necessary changes to the guidance for health workers in England including recommended levels of personal protective equipment (PPE). Based on the evidence, they concluded that current guidance and PPE recommendations remain appropriate. Emerging evidence and data on variant strains will be continually monitored and reviewed and the guidance amended accordingly if needed.

■ **Coronavirus: Quarantine**

Dan Jarvis:

[158050]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to notify people once they have been removed from the Shielded Patient List.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 1 March 2021]: Guidance has been in place since the beginning of the pandemic advising clinicians that they must directly inform people when they are assessed to no longer be clinically extremely vulnerable and therefore removed from the Shielded Patient List. A template letter has been made available for use by clinicians to do this, which is routinely updated to ensure it reflects the latest guidance for the general population.

Clinicians have also been routinely reminded of this expectation by NHS England and NHS Improvement in communications issued during the course of the pandemic.

■ **Coronavirus: Screening**

Barbara Keeley:

[124708]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what evidence he has received on the potential effect on the transmission of covid-19 of lateral flow tests being incorrectly administered by members of the public.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 8 December 2020]: Evidence suggests that those with no clinical background or training should be able to secure an effective sample. International peer-reviewed evidence suggests that self-swabbing is just as effective at securing a valid sample as clinician-administered testing. Each kit comes with comprehensive instructions on how to administer the swab.

■ Coronavirus: Vaccination

Luke Pollard:

[\[127647\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether the vaccine priority group Frontline health and social care workers includes unpaid carers.

Helen Whately:

The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation identifies unpaid carers who are eligible for a carer's allowance, or those who are the sole or primary carer of an elderly or disabled person who is at increased risk of COVID-19 mortality and therefore clinically vulnerable as a priority in vaccination group six.

Catherine West:

[\[137266\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions his Department has had with representatives of clinical commissioning groups on the potential merits of capturing ethnicity data as part of the national rollout of the covid-19 vaccination programme.

Catherine West:

[\[137267\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions his Department has had with representatives of clinical commissioning groups on the potential merits of capturing and publishing data by London boroughs as part of the national rollout of the covid-19 vaccination programme.

Nadhim Zahawi:

No specific discussions with clinical commissioning groups have taken place. However, Ministers and officials meet frequently to discuss all aspects of the COVID-19 vaccination programme, including data and reporting.

COVID-19 vaccination data is being shared at both a Middle Layer Super Output Area (MSOA) level and a lower tier local authority level. Additionally, NHS England and NHS Improvement's weekly publication on COVID-19 can be found on the NHS England website. This publication currently includes data on:

- All National Health Service COVID-19 vaccinations administered in the reporting period;
- Vaccinations by age band, defined as 80 years old and over, 75 to 79, 70 to 74 and under 70 years old;
- Vaccinations by dose;
- Vaccinations by NHS region;
- Vaccinations by integrated care systems and sustainability and transformation partnerships;
- Vaccinations by clinical commissioning groups;
- Vaccinations by ethnicity; and
- Vaccinations of residents and staff in older adult care homes.

Stephen Morgan:

[143891]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the potential merits of prioritising people with learning disabilities for the covid-19 vaccine.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) are the independent experts who advise the Government on which vaccines the United Kingdom should use and provide advice on prioritisation of a COVID-19 vaccine at a population level. For the first phase, the JCVI has advised that the vaccine be given to care home residents and staff, as well as frontline health and social care workers, then to the rest of the population aged 50 years old or over in order of age and clinical risk factors which includes people who are clinically extremely vulnerable and/or have underlying health conditions.

On 24 February the JCVI published a clarification of their advice on vaccinating people with a learning disability. They confirmed their view that priority should be given to those with a severe and profound learning disability, but recognised the issues regarding coding of learning disability on general practitioner (GP) systems and supported a practical approach of inviting everyone who is on the GP Learning Disability Register for vaccination in cohort six.

Andrew Rosindell:

[154831]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to tackle regional differences in the covid-19 vaccination rate.

Nadhim Zahawi:

In England, COVID-19 vaccine supply is allocated proportionately to National Health Service regions on the basis of the size of the local population for the priority cohorts, as defined by the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation, that are currently eligible to be called for a vaccination. The vaccine is available for free across the United Kingdom. We have procured vaccines on behalf of all parts of the country, and the Government is working with the devolved administrations to ensure it is deployed fairly across the UK.

Andrew Rosindell:

[154833]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what additional support he is providing to primary care providers to vaccinate housebound patients.

Nadhim Zahawi:

For patients living in the community who usually receive treatments at home and are generally classed as housebound, general practitioners will determine the best approach to vaccination alongside the community teams, based on their knowledge of the patient and circumstances. Some of these patients may be able to attend Primary Care Network (PCN) designated sites with assistance and discussion should be held with the family and /or carer to facilitate this process. However, we recognise

there will be a cohort of patients who are completely housebound and unable to travel to a PCN designated site for immunisation even with assistance.

PCNs have established roving vaccination teams aimed at those who cannot leave their homes. These teams have already been used for care homes and will also focus on people who are housebound, with additional funding of £10 per patient being provided to help them do this.

Dawn Butler:

[154846]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to support and offer the covid-19 vaccine to people with (a) blood cancer and (b) and other blood disorders such as sickle cell and thalassemia.

Nadhim Zahawi:

Priority group six includes all those who are defined as clinically vulnerable and at higher risk of serious illness from COVID-19. People with blood cancer and other blood disorders such as sickle cell and thalassemia are included in this definition. Many people with these disorders may be defined as clinically extremely vulnerable (CEV). Those who are CEV are included in priority group four. Those in priority group four should already have been offered the vaccine.

Ian Mearns:

[154985]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will publish the evidence from Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation that supports the change in guidance on covid-19 vaccination priority for people suffering with asthma.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation has not altered its advice on vaccination of those with asthma, which is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/priority-groups-for-coronavirus-covid-19-vaccination-advice-from-the-jcvi-30-december-2020>

Phase one includes an offer of vaccine in those 50 years of age and over and those 16 years of age and over who are considered clinically extremely vulnerable (CEV) or in a COVID-19 clinical risk group. Those with severe asthma and considered CEV should be offered vaccine in priority group four, those with asthma that requires continuous or repeated use of systemic steroids or with previous exacerbations requiring hospital admission and who are not considered CEV should be offered vaccine in priority group six.

Justin Madders:

[155124]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many and what proportion of vaccinators have been offered employment in the mile radius they specified as part of the recruitment process.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The data is not held centrally in the format requested.

Thangam Debbonaire:**[155150]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, which languages (a) written and (b) video materials promoting covid-19 vaccines have been translated into.

Nadhim Zahawi:

Our communications include targeted information and advice via TV, radio and social media. This has been translated into 19 languages including Bengali; Chinese; Filipino; Gujarati; Hindi; Mirpur; Punjabi; Urdu; Turkish; Tagalog; Spanish; Somali; Romanian; Polish; Nepali; Kurdish; Farsi; Arabic; and Albanian. Public Health England has also published British Sign Language, braille, and large print versions. Further information is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-vaccination-what-to-expect-after-vaccination>

Print and online material, including interviews and practical advice has appeared in over 600 national, regional, local and specialist titles including media for Asian, Bangladeshi, Bengali, Gujarati and Pakistani communities.

Thangam Debbonaire:**[155151]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has commissioned an assessment of the level of engagement with materials promoting the covid-19 vaccination campaign in languages other than English.

Nadhim Zahawi:

No such assessment has been commissioned.

Thangam Debbonaire:**[155152]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has commissioned an assessment of the effect on vaccine take-up of materials promoting covid-19 vaccines in languages other than English.

Nadhim Zahawi:

No such assessment has been commissioned.

Wera Hobhouse:**[155289]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of prioritising children in residential children's homes for the covid-19 vaccine in the next phase of the vaccine rollout.

Nadhim Zahawi:

At present, there is very limited data on vaccination in adolescents and no data on vaccination in younger children. The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation advises that only those children at very high risk of exposure and serious outcomes, such as older children with severe neuro-disabilities that require residential care, should be offered vaccination as part of phase one. Clinicians should discuss the risks and benefits of vaccination with a person with parental responsibility, who should be told about the paucity of safety data for the vaccine in children aged under 16 years. The Green Book also sets out that children under 16

year of age, even if they are clinically extremely vulnerable, are at low risk of serious morbidity and mortality and given the absence of safety and efficacy data on the vaccine, are not recommended for vaccination.

Daisy Cooper:

[\[155401\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will include asthma sufferers who are prescribed steroid inhalers in the first phase of the covid-19 vaccination roll-out.

Nadhim Zahawi:

An individual with a more severe case of asthma may have been included in the clinically extremely vulnerable (CEV) group, in which case they will be vaccinated in priority group four. For those with asthma not identified for inclusion in the CEV group, people with asthma that requires continuous or repeated use of systemic steroids or with previous exacerbations requiring hospital admission will be vaccinated in priority group six.

Munira Wilson:

[\[155410\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of prioritising people in close contact with the clinically extremely vulnerable for the covid-19 vaccine over people in the same age and health category who are not in close contact with clinically extremely vulnerable people.

Nadhim Zahawi:

Those who are clinically extremely vulnerable are in priority group four and should already have been offered their first vaccination dose, not through a strategy of vaccinating their close contacts. Adult carers will also be prioritised for a vaccination and are included in priority group six. This includes those who are eligible for Carer's Allowance, or those who are the sole or primary carer of an elderly or disabled person who is at increased risk of COVID-19 mortality and therefore clinically vulnerable.

Zarah Sultana:

[\[155415\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what tools his Department is using to keep track of those people who have received the covid-19 vaccination; and whether the NHS numbers of those people are being recorded as part of that tracking effort.

Nadhim Zahawi:

To record vaccinations, the National Health Service National Immunisation Management System (NIMS) is being used as the national register for COVID-19 vaccinations. At the point that someone receives their COVID-19 vaccine, the vaccinating team will record this information onto the NIMS system and onto a patient's general practitioner record, which will include capturing data such as a patient's NHS number.

Zarah Sultana:**[155416]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that people in the top four priority groups who have not yet received the covid-19 vaccine are provided with an appointment for that vaccine.

Nadhim Zahawi:

Individuals within the top four groups who have been offered an appointment but have not yet taken up the offer will be followed up on an individual basis. They can also book a vaccination appointment through the national booking system by calling 119 or through the booking service at the following link:

www.nhs.uk/covid-vaccination

Marco Longhi:**[155425]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department has taken to ensure that all unpaid carers will have access to the covid-19 vaccine, including those carers not in receipt of state benefits.

Nadhim Zahawi:

On 15 February, Primary Care Networks and the National Booking Service began issuing the first vaccination appointment invitations to those eligible within cohort six of the priority groups as set by the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation. This includes eligible unpaid carers who care for those vulnerable to COVID-19 and does not exclude on the basis of whether the carer is in receipt of state benefits.

We recognise the vital role that unpaid carers play in caring for vulnerable individuals and we are developing bespoke guidance for this group set out in a Standard Operating Protocol which has been developed in close cooperation with carers organisations and local authorities. This will be published shortly.

Sally-Ann Hart:**[155461]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure people with a learning disability are given priority for receiving a covid-19 vaccine in the next phase of the vaccination programme.

Nadhim Zahawi:

On 24 February the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation published a clarification of their advice on vaccinating people with a learning disability. They confirmed their view that priority should be given to those with a severe and profound learning disability, but recognised the issues around coding of learning disability on general practitioner (GP) systems and supported a practical approach of inviting everyone who is on the GP Learning Disability Register for vaccination in cohort six.

Claudia Webbe:**[155471]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what proportion of NHS staff in each ethnic group in Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland have been offered the covid-19 vaccine; and how many of those people have (a) refused and (b) not yet taken up the vaccine.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The information is not currently held in the format requested.

Sir Desmond Swayne:

[\[156989\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will prioritise foster carers for covid-19 vaccination.

Nadhim Zahawi:

Foster carers who are classified as adult carers will be prioritized in priority group six. This includes those who are eligible for a carer's allowance or those who are the sole or primary carer of an elderly or disabled person who is at increased risk of COVID-19 mortality and therefore clinically vulnerable.

Ed Davey:

[\[157000\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when the Government plans to publish guidance on vaccinating unpaid carers against covid-19.

Ed Davey:

[\[157001\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether the Government has consulted organisations representing unpaid carers in drawing up guidance on vaccinating them against the coronavirus.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 1 March 2021]: We are developing bespoke guidance for unpaid carers, set out in a Standard Operating Protocol, which has been co-produced with Carers UK, the Carers Trust, the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services and the Local Government Association. This will be published shortly.

Jane Stevenson:

[\[157297\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what progress he has made on providing a 24-hour vaccination service; and if he will make a statement.

Nadhim Zahawi:

University Hospitals Birmingham NHS Foundation Trust and Sherwood Forest Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust have been piloting a 24 hours a day, seven days a week vaccination service since 20 January 2021. An evaluation of the King's Mill Hospital pilot in Nottinghamshire has shown positive feedback on the service. Data from the Birmingham site is awaited. NHS England will consider the findings from both pilots before deciding on next steps.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[158161\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether international visitors to the UK who are (a) unable to return home, (b) clinically vulnerable and (c) elderly are able to receive a covid-19 vaccine in the UK.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 1 March 2021]: If they are not registered with a general practitioner, The General Practice COVID-19 vaccination programme 2020/21 Enhanced Service

Specification, the contract that general practices will deliver COVID-19 Vaccination under, enables practices working within their Primary Care Network (PCN) groupings from shared vaccination sites to vaccinate unregistered patients provided they are eligible for a vaccination. The PCN grouping will receive payment for this.

■ Depressive Illnesses

Sir Mark Hendrick:

[\[154785\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of trends in the level of (a) depression and (b) anxiety in (i) children, (ii) teenagers and (iii) adults during the covid-19 lockdown announced in January 2021.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

No such assessment yet been made. However, Public Health England continues to update its 'COVID-19: mental health and wellbeing surveillance report', which is a routinely updated report on mental health and wellbeing in England during the COVID-19 pandemic.

■ Eat Out to Help Out Scheme

Rachael Maskell:

[\[110178\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what effect the Eat Out to Help Out scheme had on levels of covid-19 infections.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 5 November 2020]: We have made no specific assessment.

■ Food and Drinks: Advertising

Nickie Aiken:

[\[155382\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the ability of SMEs in the hospitality and food and drink manufacturing industries who have regularly changing menus to determine what constitutes a product high in fat, sugar or salt for the purposes of the online advertising ban.

Jo Churchill:

The consultation on the proposal to introduce a total restriction of online advertising for products high in fat, salt and sugar asked a question on the impact of the proposals on small businesses and we have engaged with industry to understand these in more detail to factor in the final policy decision. We will publish the response to the consultation shortly.

■ Food: Advertising

Craig Whittaker:

[\[154630\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that new regulations proposed by his Department on the promotion of foods that

are high in fat, sugar or salt (HSFF) do not place different competitive advantages on (a) large and (b) SME manufacturers of those products.

Jo Churchill:

We carefully consider all views and potential impacts of our measures to reduce obesity. This includes feedback from a wide range of experts and stakeholders on specific policy proposals and in response to our public consultations.

The final impact assessments on the proposals to restrict the promotion of foods high in fat, salt and sugar by location and by volume is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/restricting-promotions-of-food-and-drink-that-is-high-in-fat-sugar-and-salt>

Christian Wakeford:

[155501]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 27 January 2021 to Question 141632, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of a ladder approach to the Nutrient Profile Model that looks more favourably on products that are closer to scoring as healthy.

Jo Churchill:

Public Health England was asked by the Department to review the United Kingdom Nutrient Profiling Model 2004/5 to bring it in line with current UK dietary recommendations. Full detail on the review will be available once published shortly.

John Stevenson:

[156330]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of plans to introduce (a) advertising and (b) promotional restrictions on foods high in fat, salt or sugar on technical barriers to trade for businesses entering the UK market.

John Stevenson:

[156331]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of the introduction of (a) advertising and (b) promotional restrictions on foods high in fat, salt or sugar on the UK's competitiveness in attracting inward investment.

Jo Churchill:

The final impact assessments on the proposals to restrict the promotion of foods high in fat, salt and sugar (HFSS) by location and by volume are available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/restricting-promotions-of-food-and-drink-that-is-high-in-fat-sugar-and-salt>

The developmental impact assessment on further advertising restrictions on TV and online was published alongside the 2019 consultation on this policy. This is available at the following link:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/786554/advertising-consultation-impact-assessment.pdf

An evidence note was published alongside the consultation on the proposal to introduce a total restriction of online advertising for HFSS products. This builds on the impact assessment that accompanied the 2019 consultation. This is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/total-restriction-of-online-advertising-for-products-high-in-fat-sugar-and-salt-hfss/evidence-note>

We will publish the final impact assessment on further advertising restrictions on TV and online alongside the full response to the consultation shortly.

■ **Gambling Act 2005**

Margaret Ferrier:

[155081]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to his Answer of 10 February 2021 to Question 147873 and with reference to his responsibility in addressing gambling related harms, what role his Department will have in the Review of the 2005 Gambling Act; and whether he has met with non-industry funded gambling treatment services.

Jo Churchill:

The Department for Health and Social Care will work closely with the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport on the review of the Gambling Act 2005, ensuring gambling-related harms remains a consideration throughout. The Department recognises the unique opportunity offered through the review to strengthen and enhance existing protections for those most vulnerable to gambling-related harms.

The Secretary of State for Health and Social Care has had no official discussions with non-industry funded gambling treatment services about the Gambling Act review.

■ **Health: Disadvantaged**

Jeff Smith:

[154668]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether there is a cross-governmental group with a focus on health inequalities.

Jo Churchill:

I refer the hon. Member to the answers I gave to the hon. Member for Twickenham (Munira Wilson MP) on 22 February 2021 to Questions [151866](#) and [151867](#).

■ **Healthy Start Scheme: Advertising**

Gareth Thomas:

[154689]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of creating a communications package for local public health teams, food poverty alliances and food partnerships to help increase the uptake of healthy start vouchers.

Jo Churchill:

From April 2021 the Healthy Start voucher value will increase from £3.10 to £4.25. We will work closely with Healthy Start beneficiaries, retailers, local authorities and healthcare professionals to prepare for this.

The Healthy Start scheme continues to be promoted through the Healthy Start and Start4Life websites. All eligible beneficiaries receive a letter inviting them to apply for Healthy Start, together with a pre-populated application form.

Robert Halfon:[\[154976\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has plans to promote the Healthy Start scheme via a new communications package to improve uptake when the value of the vouchers increases in April 2021; and if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of working with (a) food partnerships, (b) public health teams and (c) other local stakeholders to promote that scheme.

Jo Churchill:

From April 2021 the Healthy Start voucher value will increase from £3.10 to £4.25. We will work closely with Healthy Start beneficiaries, retailers, local authorities and healthcare professionals to prepare for this.

The Healthy Start scheme continues to be promoted through the Healthy Start and Start4Life websites. All eligible beneficiaries receive a letter inviting them to apply for Healthy Start, together with a pre-populated application form.

■ Healthy Start Scheme: Take-up**Robert Halfon:**[\[154975\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, for what reason there has been a reduction in uptake of the Healthy Start scheme since May 2020.

Jo Churchill:

The number of beneficiaries receiving Healthy Start Vouchers has remained stable over the past year, at around 300,000. All eligible beneficiaries receive a letter inviting them to apply for Healthy Start, together with a pre-populated application form.

On 8 November 2020, it was announced that the value of the Healthy Start voucher in England will rise from £3.10 to £4.25 per week from April 2021. This will provide additional support to pregnant women and families on lower incomes to make healthy food choices.

In addition, we are developing a digital approach to Healthy Start, to make it easier for families to apply for, receive and use Healthy Start benefits.

■ Hearing Impairment: Coronavirus**Justin Madders:**[\[155129\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 27 January 2021 to Question 109439 on Hearing Impairment: Coronavirus, when the pilot

referred to in relation to clear face coverings will be reviewed; and how many of the 250,000 clear face coverings procured have been provided to health and social care systems in Ellesmere Port and Neston constituency.

Jo Churchill:

Distribution of these masks was split between the seven regions. However, information at a constituency level is not currently available.

The ClearMask pilot is now complete and the feedback has been assessed. Based on the feedback, we will be running an assessment of a broader scope of products from a range of manufactures. This assessment will test different types of transparent masks currently at prototype stage, against a new technical specification being developed by the regulatory bodies. The assessment and engagement will also assess the appropriateness of different masks for each end-user and setting.

■ **Home Care Services: Coronavirus**

Thangam Debbonaire:

[154634]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the guidance published on 6 January 2021 on A testing service for homecare workers in England, when he plans to publish guidance on access to covid-19 testing for domiciliary care workers not registered with the Care Quality Commission and other personal assistants.

Helen Whately:

Access to regular testing for personal assistants in England began on 17 February 2021. Personal assistants are responsible for ordering test kits every 28 days or an employer can order test kits for them. Detailed guidance on testing for personal assistants is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-testing-for-personal-assistants>

■ **Inflammatory Bowel Disease: Diagnosis**

Bob Blackman:

[150768]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 5 February 2021 to Question 141964 on Inflammatory Bowel Disease: Diagnosis, for what reason information relating to the cost to the NHS for late diagnosis of Crohn's disease or ulcerative colitis due to covid-19 related delays over the last 12 months is not held centrally.

Edward Argar:

NHS England and NHS Improvement have advised that data relating to the cost to the NHS for late diagnosis of Crohn's disease or ulcerative colitis due to COVID-19 related delays is not collected.

■ Medicines and Medical Devices Safety Independent Review

Cat Smith:

[\[155160\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what criteria were used to determine the membership of the Independent Medicines and Medical Devices Safety Review team.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

Baroness Cumberlege was asked by the Secretary of State to chair the Independent Medicines and Medical Devices Safety Review. The review is independent and members were selected by Baroness Cumberlege.

Cat Smith:

[\[157204\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what criteria were used to award the contract for running the Patient Reference Group established following the publication of the Independent Medicines and Medical Devices Safety Review report First Do No Harm in July 2020.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

The Department awarded the contract through an open and competitive tender process. The criteria for award were as follows:

- Excellent communication skills, including a proven ability to work and communicate with a diverse range of stakeholders and maintain good working relationships;
- Excellent knowledge of the English healthcare system;
- Strong facilitation skills in order to empower the group to effectively feed in strategic views to Departmental stakeholders;
- Previous experience (minimum of five years) of working at the interface between patient engagement and high profile and high priority national policy relating to the health service;
- A clear understanding of the context surrounding the Review and the content of the report;
- Experience of working on highly sensitive issues, some of which are of a distressing and emotive in nature; and
- Awareness of any potential conflicts of interest that may arise in accepting a contract, and where necessary a plan for managing these.

The Most Economically Advantageous Tender criteria was also applied to award the contract with a quality/price weighting set at 80:20.

Andrew Gwynne:

[\[157976\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, for what reasons the Government has decided not to implement recommendation 3 of the Independent Medicines and Medical Devices Safety Review to create a new independent Redress Agency for people harmed by medicines and medical devices.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

The Government has no current plans to establish a redress agency as set out in recommendation three of the Independent Medicines and Medical Devices Safety Review. The Government is able to establish redress schemes on individual issues without the need for a new organisation and has done so several times.

We have prioritised a new safety regime for devices to reduce the risk of harm occurring.

Members: Correspondence**Mr John Baron:**[\[157019\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to respond to the correspondence from the hon. Member for Basildon and Billericay of 9 November 2020, 2 December 2020 and 10 February 2021 on a constituency case, reference JB29931 MC2020/19005.

Edward Argar:

We are working to provide all Members and external correspondents with accurate answers to their correspondence, as well as supporting the Government's response to the unprecedented challenge of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The hon. Member's letter will be answered as soon as possible.

Mental Health Services: Children and Young People**Andrew Rosindell:**[\[157024\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of developing a covid-19 mental health recovery strategy for children and young people; and if he will make a statement.

Mohammad Yasin:[\[157236\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what progress his Department has made on the preparation and roll-out of a covid-19 mental health recovery strategy for children and young people.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

On 23 November 2020, we published our Wellbeing and Mental Health Support Plan for COVID-19, which set out the support available for individuals, including children and young people. The Government will publish an action plan setting out further measures to respond to and mitigate the impacts on mental health of COVID-19 across the population, including children and young people, in due course.

We have announced that in 2021/22 the National Health Service will receive around an additional £500 million, to address waiting times for mental health services, give more people the mental health support they need and invest in the NHS workforce.

■ Mental Health Services: Equality

Dr Rosena Allin-Khan:

[\[157232\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when his Department plans to appoint a new Mental Health Equalities Champion; what the process is for that appointment; and what the remit is of that role.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

Our intention is to appoint a new Mental Health Equalities Champion. The process and remit of the role will be confirmed in due course.

■ Mental Health Services: Gloucestershire

Mr Laurence Robertson:

[\[154736\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the availability of mental health support for children and young people in Gloucestershire; and if he will make a statement.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

No such assessment has been made. Clinical commissioning groups are responsible for the planning and commissioning of healthcare services for their local population, including children and young people.

■ NHS: Procurement

Rachel Reeves:

[\[158021\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans the Government has to hold itself accountable for procurement practices under the terms of the new NHS White Paper.

Edward Argar:

The National Health Service is currently consulting on the proposal for a new provider selection regime. The central requirement of the proposed new regime is that arrangements for the delivery of healthcare services must be made in a transparent way, in the best interests of patients, taxpayers and the population. All other procurement will continue to be subject to Cabinet Office procurement processes.

■ Obesity: Children

Colleen Fletcher:

[\[157149\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of childhood obesity levels in (a) Coventry North East constituency and (b) Coventry in each of the last five years.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 1 March 2021]: Data on child obesity is available from the National Child Measurement Programme (NCMP) at local authority, regional and England level. Data is not published by Parliamentary constituency.

The following table shows the prevalence of obesity levels in children aged four to five years old in Coventry.

YEAR	NUMBER OF CHILDREN COUNTED	
	AS OBESE	OBESITY LEVEL
2019/20*	465	11.7%
2018/19	428	10.2%
2017/18	454	10.5%
2016/17	454	10.1%
2015/16	411	9.4%

Source: <https://fingertips.phe.org.uk/profile/national-child-measurement-programme>

Note:

*96% of records were submitted compared to an average of the number measured in the previous three years

The following table shows the prevalence of obesity levels in children aged 10 to 11 years old in Coventry.

YEAR	NUMBER OF CHILDREN COUNTED	
	AS OBESE	OBESITY LEVEL
2019/20	1015	25.3%
2018/19	967	22.6%
2017/18	956	23.5%
2016/17	928	24.2%
2015/16	848	23.1%

Source: <https://fingertips.phe.org.uk/profile/national-child-measurement-programme>

Note:

*99% of records were submitted compared to an average of the number measured in the previous three years.

■ Patient Safety Commissioner

Cat Smith:

[158108]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the Patient Safety Commissioner's responsibilities are planned to be.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

The Commissioner's core role will be to promote the safety of patients and the importance of the views of patients in relation to medicines and medical devices.

The Commissioner's statutory functions include the power to make reports or recommendations and the power to request and share information with relevant persons, either in the National Health Service or independent sector.

■ Pharmacy: Closures**Bob Seely:**[\[155378\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the finding by Ernst and Young in its September 2020 report, Impacts of current funding, policy and economic environment on independent pharmacy in England, that three-quarters of independent pharmacies are at risk of closure by 2024.

Jo Churchill:

The data referenced in the Ernst and Young report is not publicly available and we are unable to verify its forecast. On 31 March 2020, latest published data available from the NHS Business Services Authority, there were 11,421 community pharmacies in England. This is 280 fewer pharmacies than on 31 March 2016 but 470 more than on 31 March 2011. Maintaining access to pharmaceutical services is a key priority for the Government and the Department continues to closely monitor the market.

■ Primary Health Care: Prisons**Ms Lyn Brown:**[\[154910\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 17 February 2021 to Question 150736, if he will make an assessment of potential merits of publishing an evaluation of the benefits of wing-based primary care in prisons including (a) an identification of examples of excellence and (b) recommendations relating to the future model of healthcare after covid-19 restrictions are ended.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

There are currently no plans to make such an assessment.

■ Processed Food**Craig Whittaker:**[\[154623\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs on incentivising food and drink manufacturers to reduce the (a) fat, (b) salt and (c) sugar content of their products.

Jo Churchill:

My Rt hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care has regular discussions with the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs on improving the health and wellbeing of the nation including on measures set out in our healthy weight strategy and the Food Strategy White Paper.

■ Protective Clothing: Coronavirus**Rachel Reeves:****[157090]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will publish (a) a list of PPE orders agreed by the Government and subsequently cancelled since 1 March 2020 and (b) the reasons why those orders were cancelled.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 1 March 2021]: In line with the Public Contract Regulations 2015 the Department has published Contract Award Notices including those which were cancelled. In the period April to June 2020 fifteen contracts were either fully or partly cancelled and information on these can be found in the following links on Contracts Finder:

<https://www.contractsfinder.service.gov.uk/Notice/e691a0b2-234a-4f8c-ae5b-e6fa0a8317bc>

<https://www.contractsfinder.service.gov.uk/Notice/e467b115-7731-4769-a666-a762cb8aa461>

<https://www.contractsfinder.service.gov.uk/notice/39c2094c-54b1-434c-a513-c3add39b6bf6?origin=SearchResults&p=1>

<https://www.contractsfinder.service.gov.uk/Notice/e8c51efb-a070-4965-8cd0-61a58f324287>

<https://www.contractsfinder.service.gov.uk/Notice/0a9a85aa-d5e6-4885-b904-69bed464d6bc>

<https://www.contractsfinder.service.gov.uk/Notice/a9f380c5-878f-4652-8a61-128fe44be2e2>

<https://www.contractsfinder.service.gov.uk/Notice/4bd4c3ee-fde6-4a0a-a749-becae79615ac>

<https://www.contractsfinder.service.gov.uk/Notice/7a53e9bc-c9d2-4b15-a741-580d05797d08>

<https://www.contractsfinder.service.gov.uk/Notice/844bd97f-8a73-4160-8799-a7fcedfe0e1b>

<https://www.contractsfinder.service.gov.uk/Notice/382d720b-fe06-4718-8ff0-e8678bb11792>

<https://www.contractsfinder.service.gov.uk/Notice/934c6776-454e-497f-9b3f-bbdf38ac45f8>

<https://www.contractsfinder.service.gov.uk/Notice/7d45e537-9eac-4c1d-8d4c-9d846d8909f7>

<https://www.contractsfinder.service.gov.uk/Notice/7d45e537-9eac-4c1d-8d4c-9d846d8909f7>

<https://www.contractsfinder.service.gov.uk/Notice/f909783a-e57b-441a-85b2-6ee50e746354>

<https://www.contractsfinder.service.gov.uk/Notice/346fa88c-62f6-42e1-87da-e82b523a03e9>

Information on the reason individual contracts have been cancelled or part cancelled is not published as it is regarded as commercial in confidence.

Rachel Reeves:

[157092]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what his timetable is for the retrieval of the lost PPE that consultants are looking for.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 1 March 2021]: It is incorrect to say that personal protective equipment (PPE) has been lost. In any industry, it is common practice to undertake a stocktake to update records to reflect the amount and value of stock being held.

This stocktake exercise is being undertaken with support from consultants, to ensure that our accounting records are accurate and updated prior to the end of the financial year.

■ **Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies: Mental Health**

Dr Rosena Allin-Khan:

[157228]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the effect on public health of the lack of mental health expertise on the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE); and what plans he has to ensure that mental health expertise is included in that Group's advice.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

No such assessment has been made. The Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE) draws on a diverse range of leading scientific and medical experts from within Government, academia and industry, to formulate its advice. During this pandemic, SAGE has drawn on expertise from but not limited to environmental scientists, public health experts, behavioural and social scientists, epidemiologists, virologists, data scientists, modellers, genomic experts, anthropologists, psychologists, therapeutics and vaccine experts.

■ Surgery: Waiting Lists**Fleur Anderson:**[\[158225\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the number of people who were on the waiting list for NHS operations who have now received private operations.

Edward Argar:

Between March and December 2020, 562,620 patients across England were removed from the National Health Service waiting list following treatment by private providers.

■ Vaccination: Take-up**Sir Mark Hendrick:**[\[154784\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans his Department has to ensure people access annual annual vaccinations for (a) flu and (b) covid-19.

Jo Churchill:

Each year the Department put in plans to ensure those who are eligible get vaccinated for flu. These plans are set out in the annual flu letter published jointly by the Department, Public Health England, NHS England and NHS Improvement each spring.

It is too early to say if the COVID-19 vaccine will become an annual programme. Vaccine effectiveness will be monitored in different population groups to understand how the effectiveness varies by age, presence of other medical conditions and other factors. Our surveillance systems will remain in place for the long term to monitor how long protection lasts to inform the need for booster doses.

HOME OFFICE**■ Alcoholic Drinks: Minimum Prices****Derek Thomas:**[\[155282\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment the Government has made of the effectiveness of the minimum unit pricing for sales of alcohol in Scotland in reducing alcohol consumption; and what plans the Government has to introduce a similar policy in England.

Kit Malthouse:

There are no plans to introduce minimum unit pricing (MUP) in England at this time. MUP has been in place in Scotland for less than three years and the Scottish Parliament will not consider its extension until April 2024 when more will be known about its overall impact on consumption.

Public Health Scotland have commissioned a study to assess the impact of minimum unit pricing on areas of crime, public safety and public nuisance.

■ Asylum: Greek Islands

Dr Rupa Huq:

[\[155262\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department will take to relocate more asylum seekers and refugees from the Aegean Islands to the UK.

Chris Philp:

The responsibility for asylum seekers and refugees in EU Member States lies with the authorities of the safe EU country in which they are present in accordance with their international obligations. We regularly engage with Greek ministers and senior officials on the challenges presented by the migration situation in Greece.

The UK has a proud history of providing protection to those who need it. In 2019 the UK received more asylum claims from unaccompanied children than any country in the EU and accounted for approximately 20% of all claims from unaccompanied children made in the EU and UK.

Our existing Immigration Rules enable those with close family members in the UK to apply to join eligible sponsors such as those with refugee or humanitarian protection leave, or with British or settled status. Under the Immigration, Nationality and Asylum (EU Exit) Regulations 2019 we have committed to processing Dublin family reunion request made before the end of the Transition Period at 11pm on 31 December. Some of these requests have been received from Greece.

■ Asylum: Military Bases

Tim Farron:

[\[154917\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what process her Department uses to assess asylum seekers to determine whether they have particular vulnerabilities which mean they cannot be housed in either Penally or Napier Barracks.

Chris Philp:

The sites at Penally and Napier are being used to accommodate single, adult males. All asylum seekers are subject to an initial screening process by UK Visas and Immigration, which includes security and safeguarding checks and we are taking great care to ensure that those with identified vulnerabilities are moved to appropriate accommodation. We will also take swift action in relation to any new safeguarding issues that emerge (for example the identification of previously unknown vulnerabilities).

Further checks are made, to confirm suitability for transfer to the accommodation, before individuals are moved to sites and asylum seekers will be briefed by the accommodation provider in advance of their move.

■ Asylum: Penally Camp

Liz Saville Roberts:

[\[158149\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what plans her Department has to suspend the use of the Penally training camp as temporary accommodation for asylum

seekers between 21 March and mid-April 2021 as the camp will be under occupation but without the requisite planning consents in place during that period.

Liz Saville Roberts:

[\[158150\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many confirmed cases of covid-19 there have been at the temporary accommodation site for asylum seekers at Penally training camp since September 2020.

Chris Philp:

The Home Office secured use of the site for six months under emergency provisions within the Town and Country Planning regulations, Part 37 of which can be used for Crown emergency development. We are aware of the need for further planning consent for use of the site beyond March 2021.

Any further planning application will be made in line with the legal requirements and in consultation with the County Council local planning authority and other statutory bodies

There have been no confirmed cases of Covid at the Penally Training camp since September 2020.

■ Asylum: Wales

Jessica Morden:

[\[154876\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 16 February 2021 to Question 151645, what services are provided by her Department's service providers in (a) Newport and (b) Monmouthshire for people supported under Section 4 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 in Dispersed Accommodation who are shielding or self-isolating.

Chris Philp:

Our asylum accommodation providers have put in place a range of measures and additional support to enable households to comply with public measures on social distancing and self-isolation. This has included food parcels and other items for people who are unable to leave the house, provision of telephony for those who are isolating and do not have a telephone, as well as increased welfare contact for those who are isolating.

For those in dispersal accommodation, service user essential living needs -including for cleaning and sanitary items - are met through a weekly cash allowance.

All asylum seekers in our accommodation have access to our Advice, Issue Reporting and Eligibility (AIRE) service provider, Migrant Help. They can contact Migrant Help 24 hours a day if they need assistance or guidance on COVID-19 or other issues – including reporting any concerns with accommodation.

■ Biometric Residence Permits: Health Professions

Justin Madders:

[\[157186\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many and what proportion of health professionals requiring a Biometric Residence Permit (BRP) have been affected by technical faults in relation to the issuing of BRP cards since March 2020.

Justin Madders:

[\[157187\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what her timetable is for resolving the technical faults relating to the issuing of Biometric Residence Permit cards.

Kevin Foster:

UKVI does not hold data which would enable us to identify the number of health professionals requiring a Biometric Residence Permit (BRP) who have been affected by technical faults in relation to the issuing of BRP cards since March 2020.

Delays to customers receiving their Biometric Residence Permit (BRP) can be for various reasons, relating to their individual application. This could be as a result of the following:

- Biometrics not properly captured at the point of enrolment resulting in the BRP failing to progress to production after the decision to grant leave to remain or enter has been made.
- Delay in the verification of the National Insurance Number process between UKVI and DWP. Subject to testing, an Application Programme Interface (API) is being introduced at end of February 2021 to speed up and reduce risk of error in this process.
- A caseworker failing to request production of the BRP at point of decision.
- Variable address quality issues may result in our delivery partner FedEx failing to be able to deliver the BRP.
- Inability of FedEx to access property to deliver package securely.
- Customer failing to arrange re-delivery after first delivery attempt.
- Customer not present at address at time of delivery.
- Customers failing to keep UKVI informed in good time of change of address.
- Delays within UKVI Change of Address Team resulting in delays in updating UKVI systems with up to date addresses, plan in place to return to service level by end of May 2021.
- Customer failing to collect BRP within 90 days from a Post Office.

Action plans are in place to tackle the above issues both internally within UKVI and with our partners.

In December 2020 UKVI identified a failure relating to biometric enrolments through our overseas enrolment partner TLS, which was capturing oversized photographic images. This prevented 5,585 BRPs being produced between September 2020 and

December 2020. On 22 January 2021 we wrote to all those customers affected to inform them of the problem. A technical fix was introduced on 8 February 2021, with all affected BRPs successfully printed on 9 February 2021. Customers affected were written to on 10 February 2020 informing them when their BRP will be either ready to collect from their chosen Post Office or delivered by FedEx to the address they provided during the application process.

■ Catalytic Converters: Sales

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[154992\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of bringing forward legislative proposals to amend the Scrap Metal Dealers Act 2013 to make the sale of a second hand catalytic converter illegal, unless from an authorised dealer.

Kit Malthouse:

The Scrap Metal Dealers Act 2013 provides a regulatory regime for the scrap metal industry, including a requirement for scrap metal dealers to obtain a scrap metal licence from their local authority. The requirements of the Act apply to most types of metal and apply where someone is selling an item such as a catalytic converter to a scrap metal dealer.

To ensure the existing measures in place are effective in preventing this crime, we are working with the police to ensure the current legislation is consistently enforced.

■ Children: Exploitation

Peter Kyle:

[\[155246\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the efficacy of the National Referral Mechanism process in supporting victims of child criminal exploitation.

Victoria Atkins:

This Government is committed to tackling the heinous crime of modern slavery and ensuring that all victims, including children, are provided with the support they need.

Where children are found to be potential victims of human trafficking or modern slavery, including child criminal exploitation, their safety and welfare are addressed as a priority. Local authorities are responsible for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all children in their area, including child victims of modern slavery. Local children's services will work in close co-operation with the police and other statutory agencies to offer potentially trafficked children the protection and support they require.

In addition to this statutory support, the Government has rolled out Independent Child Trafficking Guardians (ICTGs) who provide an additional source of advice and support for all potentially trafficked children, irrespective of nationality, and somebody who can advocate on their behalf. The ICTG service is currently available in one third of local authorities in England and Wales. To ensure the correct ICTG model is rolled

out, a staggered approach has been adopted with built in evaluations along the way, the evaluation of the ICTG early adopter sites can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/an-evaluation-of-independent-child-trafficking-guardians-early-adopter-sites-final-report>

The Government is continuing the roll out of ICTGs as part of the NRM Transformation Programme, focused on the areas of highest need.

As part of the Government's efforts to strengthen the support provided to child victims, we will shortly begin piloting a devolved model of National Referral Mechanism (NRM) decision-making for children. These pilots will utilise established safeguarding procedures and the existing forums available to local authorities and their safeguarding partners to take decisions about whether children are victims of modern slavery. These pilots will test whether this model can bring decision making, the provision of support, and the law enforcement response into closer alignment. We are keen to understand whether this devolved approach to decision making will also improve local understanding of modern slavery and the needs of child victims to deliver a more holistic approach to identification and support. The pilots will be subject to a robust evaluation.

Finally, the Home Office continues to work with First Responders to ensure they understand the indicators of different exploitation types and can refer children into appropriate support. That is why, in July 2020, we released an E-Learning module available to all First Responders to improve their understanding of their responsibilities and the support available.

■ **Coronavirus: Fines**

Chris Grayling:

[154805]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what proportion of covid-related fines issued by the police have been collected.

Kit Malthouse:

The Home Office does not hold this data.

The **National Police Chiefs' Council** publishes monthly fixed penalty notice statistics and crime trends and the latest analysis can be found here:

<https://news.npcc.police.uk/releases/crime-trends-and-penalty-notices-issued-under-covid-regulations-update>

This shows in total, 42,675 fixed penalty notices were recorded as having been issued in England and Wales under coronavirus regulations between 27 March 2020 and 17 January 2021.

■ Crimes of Violence: Gender Recognition

Jackie Doyle-Price: [\[155017\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether guidance has been issued to police forces on recording data when a transwoman is arrested for a violent or sexual offence.

Kit Malthouse:

The Home Office does not issue guidance on the recording of sex or gender to police forces.

It is down to individual police forces and the National Police Chiefs' Council and the College for policing to make decisions on how this information is captured.

■ Dogs: Theft

Mr Laurence Robertson: [\[154737\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to tackle dog theft; and if she will make a statement.

Kit Malthouse:

I refer my Hon Friend to the answer I gave to a question from the Hon Member for Newport East (UIN 142846).

■ Emergency Services Network

Brendan O'Hara: [\[157147\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will set out a timetable for the activation of all Emergency Services Network sites.

Kit Malthouse:

The contract for connecting all 292 EAS masts to the network (backhaul link) has not yet been awarded to a supplier. We expect this contract to be awarded in Autumn 2021. Following the award of this contract the work to deliver the links can take several months before connecting the mast to the network and, separately, activating the mast. Although we cannot give firm dates for the final activation of masts at this stage, we expect this to commence in 2022 and complete towards the end 2024.

■ Emergency Services Network: Argyll and Bute

Brendan O'Hara: [\[157146\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 13 July 2020 to Question 71074, on Emergency Services Network: Strathconon, if she will take steps to allocate funding to extended area services sites across Argyll and Bute as soon as possible.

Kit Malthouse:

Funding has been allocated to sites across Argyll and Bute, we expect to commence works to activate these sites in 2022 and complete towards the end 2024.

■ Emergency Services Network: Scotland

Brendan O'Hara:

[\[157145\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, for what reason her Department has limited the scope of its partnership with the Scottish Government to deliver sites that were formerly part of the Extended Area Service programme under the Scottish 4G Infill Programme; and what plans her Department has to expand the scope of that partnership.

Kit Malthouse:

The EAS sites are principally built to support the emergency services, however where possible HO will collaborate with the Scottish 4G Infill Programme and other government initiatives such as the Shared Rural Network, the scope of this collaboration extends to all 292 EAS masts. There are currently 18 SFT sites where Home Office are utilising as part of a site share. These 18 sites meet the ESN coverage requirements and we continue to assess viability of other sites which meet both HO and Scottish 4G Infill Programme criteria.

■ Emergency Services Network: Strathconon

Brendan O'Hara:

[\[157144\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 13 July 2020 to Question 71074, on Emergency Services Network: Strathconon, what steps her Department has taken to look at cases where there may be a particular case for early activation due to community need, as well as potential funding sources to enable that.

Kit Malthouse:

We expect the contract for connecting all 292 EAS masts to the network to be awarded in Autumn 2021. Following the award of this contract the work to deliver the links can take several months before connecting the mast to the network and, separately, activating the mast. Although we cannot give firm dates for the final activation of masts at this stage, we expect this to commence in 2022 and complete towards the end 2024. Unfortunately we are unable to accelerate this.

■ Extradition (Provisional Arrest) Act 2020: Arrests

Yvette Cooper:

[\[157014\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many arrests have been made under the Extradition (Provisional Arrest) Act 2020 (a) since that Act was brought into force and (b) in January 2021.

Kevin Foster:

The Extradition (Provisional Arrest) Act 2020 came into force on 1 January 2021. Since that time, four arrests have taken place as a direct result of this legislation being passed, and three of those arrests were made in January.

All figures are taken from local management information and are not quality assured to the level of published National Statistics. As such they should always be treated as provisional and therefore subject to change as officials refresh and revise the

available data. The figures do not include Scotland, which deals with its own extradition cases.

■ **Extradition Act 2003: Arrests**

Yvette Cooper: [\[157011\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many arrests were made under Part 1 of the Extradition Act 2003 in (a) January 2021 and (b) in each month of 2020.

Yvette Cooper: [\[157012\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the effect of the UK ceasing to access the second generation Schengen Information System on the number of arrests made under Part 1 of the Extradition Act 2003.

Yvette Cooper: [\[157013\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many arrest warrants the UK has received from EU Member States since 11.00pm on 31 December 2020.

Kevin Foster:

The Home Office does not hold the information requested.

The National Crime Agency manages requests made under Part 1 of the Extradition Act 2003.

It is too early to provide any assessment of the loss of the second-generation Schengen Information System on the number of arrests made under Part 1 of the Extradition Act 2003.

■ **Firearms: Safety**

Karin Smyth: [\[158112\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when she plans to publish her Department's response to its Firearms Safety consultation.

Kit Malthouse:

The Firearms Safety Consultation was launched on the 24 November last year and concluded on the 16 February, receiving over 12,000 responses. The Government will consider these responses carefully and will publish its response to the consultation in due course.

■ **Greater Manchester Police: Recruitment**

James Grundy: [\[155462\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many of the 20,000 police officers recruited as part of the national campaign will be recruited to Greater Manchester Police.

Kit Malthouse:

The Government is committed to increasing the number of police officers by 20,000 by March 2023.

As at 31 December 2020, 6,620 additional officers had been recruited in England and Wales as a result of the Police Uplift Programme with Greater Manchester Police having recruited an additional 266 additional officers against the force's year one allocation of 347.

For year 2 of the Programme, Greater Manchester has an uplift allocation of 325 police officers to be recruited by March 2022.

■ Hassockfield Secure Training Centre**Holly Lynch:**[\[155201\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what plans her Department has to open a new immigration removal centre for women on the former site of the Hassockfield Secure Training Centre in County Durham.

Chris Philp:

The immigration removal estate is kept under ongoing review to ensure that the Home Office has sufficient capacity, in the right places and that it provides value for money.

The Home Office has acquired the former Hassockfield Secure Training Centre in County Durham and will open it as an immigration removal centre for women by the autumn. Initial discussions with the planning authority have taken place and work has commenced at the site. An Equality Impact Assessment will be completed as part of this programme of work.

In order to meet operational needs and demands we will continue to operate the immigration removal estate in a flexible manner.

■ Health Services and Social Services: Migrant Workers**Justin Madders:**[\[157183\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many families of (a) NHS workers and (b) independent health and social care workers who have died after contracting covid-19 have (i) applied for and (ii) been granted indefinite leave to remain in the UK since 29 April 2020.

Kevin Foster:

The Home Office is granting immediate indefinite leave to remain (ILR), free of any charges, to family members of NHS, health and care workers who unfortunately lose their lives as a result of contracting COVID-19.

The Home Office has received 49 applications for ILR for those held in this route, with 10 granted to date.

Justin Madders:

[157184]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many extensions UKVI has processed via the covid-19 auto-extension visa scheme for eligible health professionals (a) working in the NHS, (b) working in independent health and social care and (c) in total since March 2020.

Kevin Foster:

The information requested is not held in a published format and to gather it would attract a disproportionate cost.

The most recent published migration statistics can be viewed:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/migration-statistics>

The available published data shows the numbers of visas granted in each work route but does not provide any data on the specific numbers that have been granted on this scheme nor the number of Biometric Residence Permits received by UKVI.

■ Immigration Bail

Holly Lynch:

[155200]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether the pilot for reducing the time period of auto-bail hearings from four to two months has concluded.

Holly Lynch:

[155202]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether the pilot on reducing the time period for automatic referrals for immigration bail hearings from four to two months has concluded.

Chris Philp:

The pilot for making an automatic referral for consideration of immigration bail for non-FNOs at two months, as opposed to four months at present, has concluded and the department is in the process of evaluating the findings. Automatic bail referrals are an additional safeguard and do not affect the rights of detainees to apply for bail at any time, regardless of the timeframe for automatic referrals.

■ Immigration: EU Nationals

Alan Brown:

[155181]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many EU citizens have been awarded settled status (a) in total and (b) in each month since that scheme was launched.

Alan Brown:

[155182]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many EU citizens have had their settled status applications rejected.

Kevin Foster:

The latest published information on EU Settlement Scheme applications concluded by outcome type and nationality can be found on the Home Office's 'EU Settlement Scheme statistics' quarterly publication at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/eu-settlement-scheme-quarterly-statistics-december-2020>

Specifically, in table EUSS_03_UK available at:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/964547/eu-settlement-scheme-quarterly-statistics-tables-28-august-2018-to-31-december-2020.ods.

Total applications concluded by type and month of decision to 31 December 2020 can be found in table EUSS_MON also available at:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/964547/eu-settlement-scheme-quarterly-statistics-tables-28-august-2018-to-31-december-2020.ods.

EUSS statistics by nationality and outcome type to 31 March 2020 will be published in May 2021 in 'EU Settlement Scheme quarterly statistics, March 2021' which will be available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/eu-settlement-scheme-statistics>.

Monthly summary figures of total applications received by UK nation and conclusions by type to 31 January 2021 can be found at the link above. Data to 28 February 2021 will be published on 11 March 2021.

■ Licensing Laws: Coronavirus**Bambos Charalambous:****[155304]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the effectiveness of advertising licensing applications under Regulation 25 The Licensing Act 2003 (Premises licences and club premises certificates) Regulations 2005 during covid-19 lockdown.

Kit Malthouse:

The Licensing Act 2003 (Premises licences and club premises certificates) Regulations 2005 require the applicant to advertise in a notice issued on the premises and by publishing a notice in the local newspaper

The regulations provide for flexibility in cases where it is not possible to advertise in a local newsletter by permitting the application to be advertised a local newsletter, circular or similar document instead. Applicants are not bound only to advertise applications through the specified routes and can proactively choose to use alternative digital channels, alongside the places set out in the Regulations.

Members: Correspondence**Kate Hollern:****[155060]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how long on average her Department took to respond to casework from hon. Members in each month of (a) 2020 and (b) 2019; and when her Department plans to respond to CTS Reference: B4144/11.

Kevin Foster:

The Department works to a target of responding to 95% of MPs written correspondence within 20 working days. Performance has been impacted by a very significant increase in the volume of correspondence received, alongside the need for Ministers and officials to instigate a remote process for drafting and signing correspondence during the period of COVID-19 restrictions.

The latest published data on UKVI performance against the service standard which includes data up to and including the end of quarter 3-2020/21 is held at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/customer-service-operations-data-november-2020>

A response to CTS Reference B4144/11 was sent on 23 February 2021.

Justin Madders:**[155113]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when officials in her Department plan to respond to the correspondence of 7 October 2020 from the hon. Member for Ellesmere Port and Neston, case reference ZA34967.

Chris Philp:

I apologise for the delay. UK Visas and Immigration, MP Account Management team responded on 22 February 2021.

Migrant Workers: Au Pairs and Day Care**Nickie Aiken:****[155387]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how private individuals and households can register as an approved UK employer for the purposes of employing an au pair, child care assistant, child minder or nanny under the Skilled Worker visa scheme.

Kevin Foster:

The sponsorship system is designed to ensure employers fulfil specific duties to confirm those who apply for permission to enter or stay in the UK to work are eligible and will comply with the conditions of their visa.

Businesses are able to comply with these duties and demonstrate a verifiable track record of operating lawfully in the UK, both within the immigration system and the wider employer regulatory regime, in a way individuals or households cannot. Individuals cannot therefore be licensed to sponsor workers. This approach ensures the integrity of the immigration system from abuse and safeguards migrants from exploitative practices.

■ Migrant Workers: Health Professions

Justin Madders:

[157185]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what estimate she has made of the (a) average and (b) longest time it has taken to (i) process a visa extension via the covid-19 auto-extension visa scheme and (ii) issue Biometric Residence Permit cards for eligible health professionals since March 2020.

Kevin Foster:

The information requested is not held in a publishable format and to gather it would attract a disproportionate cost.

The latest published migration statistics can be found at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/immigration-statistics-year-ending-september-2020>

The available published data shows the numbers of visas granted in each work route but does not provide any data on the specific numbers that have been granted on this scheme nor the number of Biometric Residence Permits issued by UKVI.

We are keeping all measures under review and we will continue to work closely with the DHSC to ensure individuals working in the health and care sector are fully supported.

■ Migrant Workers: Social Services

Dr Luke Evans:

[155414]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to promote the Settled Status scheme to EU workers in the social care sector.

Kevin Foster:

As of 11 February 2021, over five million applications had been received to the EU Settlement Scheme (EUSS), and 4.5 million grants of status have been made, delivering on the government's promise to secure the rights of millions of Europeans in UK law for years to come

A comprehensive range of communications activity has been delivered to date to increase awareness of the EUSS across sectors and audience demographics including EEA and Swiss national key workers including those working in the social care sector.

Communications activity includes extensive engagement with a wide range of stakeholders, a refresh of EUSS promotional materials, and an extensive new wave of targeted UK advertising on social media, website banners, catch up TV and radio, launched earlier this month, to ensure EEA and Swiss citizens are aware of the scheme and supported to apply.

The Home Office has also provided up to £17million in grant funding to a current network of 72 organisations that provide bespoke support to vulnerable and hard to reach EU citizens and their family members eligible to apply to EUSS. The Home

Office recently announced a further £4.5 million of funding to the 72 organisations to continue these support services well beyond the 30 June 2021 deadline.

Communications to reach eligible workers via their employer have been ongoing since the scheme's launch with hundreds of engagement events delivered alongside the provision of an employer toolkit, equipping organisations with the information required to support their staff.

This has included a bespoke event for NHS employers, and with several regional strategic migration and enterprise partnerships. NHS employers, Scottish Social services and Wales Social care also sit on EUSS advisory groups.

Workers in the social care sector were given early access under the pilot phases of the scheme and we have provided extensive outreach and support to the sector. We continue to work closely with the Department for Health and Social Care, and Local Authorities to provide support and materials to eligible individuals in the sector.

■ Migrants: Coronavirus

Thangam Debbonaire:

[155156]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 10 February 2021 to Question 148830, on Immigrants: Coronavirus, how many and what proportion of the reporting population in Bristol are required to report at Patchway Police Centre in Bristol.

Chris Philp:

Initially, there was a temporary suspension on in-person reporting for those who would otherwise be required to report, which was applied from 17 March 2020. Following the introduction of large-scale testing and a reduction in the rates of transmission, and in light of the scientific advice as to the measures that could be implemented to enhance public safety, reporting centres then re-opened, initially through two pilot schemes commencing on 20 July 2020, and then through other centres. COVID-19 risk assessments and safe systems of working were introduced, together with other safety measures, including, where appropriate, an adjustment of the time slots for reporting.

Following the introduction of further national restrictions in November 2020 and January 2021, the Home Office's approach was reviewed and revised again, as reflected in the latest COVID-19 interim guidance, "Reporting and offender management – interim guidance" (Version 2.0, 25 January 2021).

Significant changes have been made to bail conditions, and in particular to reporting requirements, in light of the evolution of the current pandemic. We do not routinely publish the information you have requested, however, based on recent data only a very small percentage of the reporting population are currently required to report in-person as a condition of bail at this time.

Currently only individuals within four priority cohorts are expected to report in-person at reporting centres, or in some locations Police stations, these groups are categorised as:

- foreign national offenders (FNOs)/High Harm/Special Immigration Appeals Commission (SIAC) or other security cases. Persons who are on Restricted Leave.
- those who have shown a willingness to return home voluntarily and where reporting will aid the process of return.
- those who have not returned home and who have not engaged with our Voluntary Return programme – including delivery of a Detention on Reporting (DOR).
- those identified for removal.

The position is kept under on-going review, having regard to public health considerations as well as the public interest in the maintenance of immigration control.

■ Migrants: Employment

Martyn Day:

[\[155216\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the timescale is for the review of the adjusted right to work checking process adopted during the covid-19 outbreak; and what representations her Department has received from UK-based employers on the effect of that adjusted process on their operations during the covid-19 outbreak as part of that review.

Chris Philp:

The review of the adjusted checks will be completed in the next few weeks.

An important part of the review has been the consultation with employers groups and their views have been considered.

We will update the adjusted checks guidance on GOV.UK following the completion of the review, allowing sufficient time for employers to comply with any updates or changes.

■ NHS: Migrant Workers

Sir Mark Hendrick:

[\[154782\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of giving Indefinite Leave to Remain to all migrant NHS workers and their families.

Kevin Foster:

Workers from overseas in the NHS and wider health and care sector have made a huge contribution in tackling COVID-19 and the Government has taken unprecedented measures to ensure the sector is supported fully, including free 12-month visa extensions for those working in eligible occupations in health and social care.

Individuals working in healthcare, on a route which leads to settlement, will be able to apply for Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR) for themselves and their family, providing they meet the requirements, including a period of lawful residence in the UK without excess absences, sufficient knowledge of the English language and life in the UK. In sponsored work routes, settlement relies on applicants having worked in their sponsored job for five years. Given the wider requirements for a grant of ILR we will not be making a general grant of it to those working in the NHS.

We will though grant immediate indefinite leave to remain (ILR), free of any charges, to family dependants of NHS, health and care workers who unfortunately lose their lives as a result of contracting COVID-19. We hope this number will be limited.

■ **Offensive Weapons**

Philip Davies: [\[154889\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when she plans to bring into force the offence of threatening with an offensive weapon etc in a private place as provided for by section 52 of the Offensive Weapons Act 2019.

Kit Malthouse:

We intend to commence this measure, along with other measures provided for by the Offensive Weapons Act 2019 relating to knives and corrosive products and substances, later this year. We paused commencement of the Act temporarily because of the Covid-19 pandemic, but we are working now to bring the Act fully in to force as soon as we can.

■ **Pets: Theft**

Alexander Stafford: [\[155494\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what guidance her Department has issued to police forces to help tackle pet thefts.

Kit Malthouse:

It is for individual police forces to ensure that their officers receive appropriate training and development to enable them to deal with all types of criminal activity. The Home Office has not issued guidance to police forces specifically on tackling pet theft.

■ **Police: Cameras**

Wera Hobhouse: [\[155290\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many police officers are equipped to wear body worn cameras for each police force in England and Wales.

Kit Malthouse:

According to the National Police Chief's Council, all forces are deploying Body Worn Video. Its deployment is an operational matter for each police force and decisions will be made based on local priorities.

Wera Hobhouse:

[\[155291\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many body worn cameras each police force has in England and Wales.

Kit Malthouse:

According to the National Police Chief's Council, all forces are deploying Body Worn Video. Its deployment is an operational matter for each police force and decisions will be made based on local priorities.

Wera Hobhouse:

[\[155292\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what plans she has for the further roll out of body worn video cameras to police forces.

Kit Malthouse:

The NPCC report all forces deploy Body Worn Video. Its deployment is an operational matter for each police force and decisions will be made based on local priorities.

Wera Hobhouse:

[\[155293\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many complaints have been received about the lack of recording by body worn video cameras in frontline policing, per police force.

Kit Malthouse:

Data is not available on how many complaints have been received about the lack of recording by body worn video cameras in frontline policing.

Wera Hobhouse:

[\[155294\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she plans to standardise policies on body worn cameras on a national, rather than force-by-force, basis.

Kit Malthouse:

The use of imagery captured by Body Worn Video is subject to a number of national standards through the Data Protection Act 2018, the Protection of Freedoms Act 2012, College of Policing Authorised Professional Practice (Management of Police Information) and the Surveillance Camera Code.

■ Protection: British Overseas Territories

Alicia Kearns:

[\[155440\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of the participation of Overseas Territories in the Protected Person's Scheme.

Kit Malthouse:

The UKPPS provides protection to those judged to be at risk of serious harm where the protection arrangements required are not available to the local police or referring Agency.

UKPPS works with international partners as appropriate and as required, within the UKs judicial framework.

■ Protest**Bell Ribeiro-Addy:**[\[158217\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what equalities and human rights impact assessments she plans to undertake ahead of bringing forward legislative proposals on the right to protest.

Kit Malthouse:

As part of our work to ensure that the police have the powers they need to manage highly disruptive protests, the Home Office has paid due regard to the European Convention on Human Rights and the impact any policies may have on those with protected characteristics.

Bell Ribeiro-Addy:[\[158218\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she has consulted protest groups on any forthcoming legislative proposals related to protest.

Kit Malthouse:

As part of our work to ensure that the police have the powers they need to manage highly disruptive protests, the Home Office has paid due regard to the European Convention on Human Rights and the impact any policies may have on those with protected characteristics.

■ Security: Qualifications**Emma Hardy:**[\[158184\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the potential effect of the increased (a) costs, (b) course length and (c) written examination content in the proposed new Security Industry qualifications on (i) access for the unemployed and (ii) take-up by training providers.

Kevin Foster:

The Security Industry Authority (SIA) is making some changes to the training applicants need to undertake before they can obtain a front-line SIA licence. These changes will happen in April and October 2021.

These proportionate and reasoned changes are being made to ensure people working in the private security sector can: keep the public safe; follow new working practices; understand recent changes to the law; and make the best use of new technology. In addition, from 1 April 2021 applicants for a door supervisor or security

guard licence will be expected to complete a first aid qualification before taking their licence-linked training.

Applicants will have choices that will affect how much they will pay. They have choices about which training provider to use, and what method of learning to use (for example, the proportion of self-study, remote and in-person learning), which affects the length of time required to complete it.

The private security industry, awarding organisations and training providers played a fundamental role in developing the new qualifications. The SIA conducted robust research within the industry on skills, ensured that front line industry experts drafted the specifications, and carried out two rounds of public consultation on all of the draft qualification specifications. These resulted in over 6,000 responses which were mostly from licence holders.

The SIA as the regulator of the private security industry, does not deliver training. It is for the different training providers to determine the costs for the courses they offer.

■ Travellers: Camping Sites

Dawn Butler:

[\[154636\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether the Government plans to publish its response to the Strengthening police powers to tackle unauthorised encampments consultation, before bringing forward legislative proposals on new police powers to tackle unauthorised encampments.

Kit Malthouse:

It remains our firm intention to bring forward legislation this session as we set out in the briefing which accompanied the Queen's Speech in December 2019. We will publish our response to the consultation before that.

Caroline Lucas:

[\[154938\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to her Department's consultation on unauthorised encampments, what steps she plans to take to protect the (a) rights of Gypsies and Travellers and (b) nomadic way of life as part of that review.

Kit Malthouse:

The Government recognises the rights of Gypsy, Roma and Travellers, including the right to a nomadic way of life. We also recognise the rights of settled communities and we are clear that we will not tolerate law-breaking. Any measures introduced to tackle unauthorised encampments will be undertaken with due regard to equality and human rights.

■ Visas: Overseas Visitors

Alison Thewliss:

[\[157194\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many visitor visas are not taken up because of a death of (a) the applicant or (b) the sponsor.

Alison Thewliss: [157195]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many visitor visas have been granted but not used within the time limit in each month of each of the last 10 years.

Alison Thewliss: [157196]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many spousal visas have been issued, but not taken up, in each month in each of the last 10 years.

Alison Thewliss: [157197]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many family visas have been issued but not taken up in each month of each of the last 10 years.

Alison Thewliss: [157198]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many temporary worker and equivalent visas have been issued but not taken up in each month of each of the last 10 years.

Kevin Foster:

Home Office Migration Statistics do not capture the number of visas not taken up or used within the time limit as to capture these numbers would require a manual trawl of data, incurring disproportionate cost.

The Home Office does though publish data on the total number of decisions made on visitor visas, spousal visas, family visas and temporary worker visas. These can be found in our published statistics:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/immigration-statistics-year-ending-september-2020/how-many-people-come-to-the-uk-each-year-including-visitors>

■ **Yarl's Wood Immigration Removal Centre**

Richard Fuller: [154921]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what costs have been incurred to date to provide temporary accommodation for asylum seekers at Yarl's Wood.

Chris Philp:

The Home Office have stood down plans to use Yarl's Wood as a temporary accommodation site for asylum seekers.

Accommodation costs are considered to be commercially sensitive and we would not provide this information for that reason.

HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT**■ Antisemitism****Dr Matthew Offord:**[\[155005\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment has made of the implications for his Department's policies of the Community Security Trust's Antisemitic Incidents Report 2020.

Luke Hall:

Antisemitism has absolutely no place in our society, which is why we've taken a strong lead in tackling it in all its forms. Whilst the most recent figures from the Community Security Trust's antisemitic incident report have shown an 8 per cent decrease, this government will not be complacent. Lord Mann has been asked to provide independent advice to the government on the most effective methods to tackle antisemitism, the Secretary of State has urged all local authorities to adopt the IHRA definition of antisemitism, and we are providing £14 million this year, and provided over £65 million to date, for the Protective Security Grant to protect Jewish schools and community buildings.

■ Antisemitism: Local Government**Steve Reed:**[\[147865\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what information he holds on which local authorities in England have adopted the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance definition of antisemitism and examples.

Luke Hall:

[Holding answer 8 February 2021]: Adopting the IHRA definition of anti-Semitism sends a clear signal that local authorities are serious about tackling antisemitism in their local communities. The definition is already used in guidance for the Police and Crown Prosecution Service, the Premier League, and a number of political parties, providing examples of the kinds of behaviours which, depending on the circumstances, could constitute antisemitism.

The Secretary of State wrote to all local councils in early 2020 to further encourage those who had not taken this important step to combatting antisemitism in their communities. We are currently compiling the information from local authorities and will encourage those who have not adopted the definition to do as at the earliest opportunity.

■ Building Safety Fund**Neil Coyle:**[\[155064\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether the additional £3.5 billion announced for the Building Safety Fund will cover residential buildings that are mixed-use developments.

Christopher Pincher:

We will be publishing more details on how the additional funding for the removal of unsafe cladding announced on 10 February will work alongside existing funds.

Kim Johnson:[\[155451\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to the press release of 10 February 2021, Government to bring an end to unsafe cladding with multi-billion pound intervention, whether buildings with flammable cladding of six or seven storeys but lower than 18m will be eligible for that funding.

Christopher Pincher:

We will be publishing more details on how the additional funding for the removal of unsafe cladding announced on 10 February will work alongside existing funds.

■ Building Safety Fund: Leeds**Hilary Benn:**[\[157008\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, for what reason the Building Safety Fund is declining to fund the replacement of the main access timber walkways at Cypress Point, Leylands Road in Leeds.

Christopher Pincher:

The Building Safety Fund prospectus sets out eligibility criteria as well as what costs will be covered by the Fund. It notes that the fund will not cover works, including other structural works, which are not directly related to the remediation of unsafe non-ACM cladding systems even where these may be planned to be undertaken at the same time. If registrants feel that the decision reached is not in line with the published criteria, an appeal form is available on the Building Safety Fund page.

■ Buildings: Insulation**Andrew Rosindell:**[\[154838\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps his Department is taking to crack down on developers found to have improperly installed cladding in breach of building regulations at the time of construction.

Christopher Pincher:

The powers to enforce contraventions of the building regulations lie with local authorities. Under Sections 35, 35A and 36 of the Building Act the local authority has the power to take enforcement action and can take action against the building owner and those carrying out the works (for example the builder, installer or main contractor).

The Government is providing £5 billion of funding to protect leaseholders living in residential buildings over 18 metres with unsafe cladding from the costs of remediation, but this does not absolve building owners or developers of their responsibilities. Building owners should meet the remediation costs without passing them on to leaseholders wherever possible, through their own resources or by

recovering costs from applicable warranty schemes or from the developers or contractors who were responsible for the installation of unsafe cladding, as is happening with more than half of the private sector buildings with ACM cladding. Applicants to the Building Safety Fund and the Private Sector ACM Remediation Fund are also required to demonstrate that they have taken all reasonable steps to recover the costs of replacing the unsafe cladding from those responsible.

Furthermore, as announced on 10 February 2021, we are going to introduce a developer levy through the Building Safety Bill to be targeted and applied when developers seek permission to develop certain high-rise buildings in England. In addition, we will introduce a new tax for the UK residential property development sector in 2022. The levy and tax will ensure that the largest property developers make a fair contribution to the remediation programme. The Government will consult on the policy design of the tax.

■ Buildings: Safety

Anne Marie Morris:

[\[157121\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to the draft Building Safety Bill, whether the Golden Thread provision will apply to all buildings.

Christopher Pincher:

The golden thread will apply to buildings in scope of the new building safety regime. The Government encourages the sector to go further embedding golden thread best practice throughout the industry, ensuring people are responsible and accountable for delivering and maintaining safe buildings, including keeping information.

■ Business Premises: Codes of Practice

Bambos Charalambous:

[\[155302\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what plans he has to make the Code of Practice for the commercial property sector compulsory.

Eddie Hughes:

On 19 June 2020, the Government published the Code of Practice, which was developed in close collaboration between the Government and leaders from commercial landlord and tenant groups.

The Code is relevant for all commercial leases held by businesses in any sector which has been impacted by the coronavirus pandemic. It is designed to provide clarity for businesses when discussing rental payments and to encourage best practice so that every part of the chain is supported during the pandemic.

It encourages fair and transparent discussions between landlords and tenants over rental payments and provides guidance on payment of rent arrears. Tenants are encouraged to pay their rent in full if they are in a position to do so, otherwise they

should pay what they can. Landlords should provide support to businesses if they too are able to do so.

The code is voluntary in nature and is relevant for all commercial leases held by businesses in any sector which has been impacted by the coronavirus pandemic.

We are monitoring the impact of the voluntary Code of Practice carefully and will publish further guidance to support negotiations between landlords and tenants in due course.

■ **Coronavirus: Vaccination**

Marsha De Cordova:

[\[156554\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps he is taking to ensure that the most diverse local authority areas receive additional funding for community champions to increase vaccine uptake in Black, Asian and ethnic minority communities.

Luke Hall:

On 25 January we confirmed £23.75 million funding - allocated to 60 councils and further voluntary groups across England - to expand work to support those most at risk from COVID-19 and improve the reach of public health guidance and to boost vaccine take up through the Community Champions scheme. This is part of over £7.9 billion government funding provided to councils to help them support their communities during the pandemic.

The Community Champion scheme is specifically targeted at areas where challenges may be greatest due to the local combination of disproportionately impacted groups – including people with disabilities and Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities.

■ **Derelict Land: Property Development**

James Grundy:

[\[155463\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that local authorities prioritise the development of brown field sites over green belt and green field sites.

Christopher Pincher:

The National Planning Policy Framework expects local authorities to prioritise brownfield land for development wherever possible. Local authorities are best placed to assess the potential of individual sites, and each authority is required to publish a register of its developable brownfield suitable for new homes.

Brownfield redevelopment is supported by funding including the £4.1 billion Housing Infrastructure Fund, the £400 million Brownfield Fund, and the Home Building Fund, which had a £450 million funding boost last year taking the total to £4.95 billion. In addition, details of the new Brownfield Land Release Fund, which will unlock

brownfield sites and release serviced plots on local authority owned land, will be announced shortly.

Consultation on the White Paper *Planning for the Future* closed on 29 October 2020. My Department is undertaking further detailed policy development on individual elements of the reform proposals. However, we have made clear that local authorities would still have responsibility for protecting the Green Belt and other valued greenfield land.

■ **Electric Vehicles: Charging Points**

Derek Twigg:

[\[157016\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 22 February 2021 to Question 151623 on Electric Vehicles: Charging Points, when his Department plans to publish its response to the Government's consultation on options to amend building regulations to require electric vehicle charge points to be installed in residential and non-residential buildings.

Christopher Pincher:

The Government will publish the response to the consultation 'Electric Vehicle Charging in Residential and Non-Residential Buildings' by the summer. The amended building regulations will come into effect by the end of the year.

■ **European Social Fund: Northern Ireland**

Jim Shannon:

[\[154557\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what plans the Government has for a successor programme to the European Social Fund Programme in Northern Ireland.

Luke Hall:

The UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) will help to level up and create opportunity across the UK for places most in need, such as ex-industrial areas, deprived towns and rural and coastal communities, and for people who face labour market barriers.

The UK Internal Market Act 2020 will enable the UK Government to invest in our communities across the UK.

In addition, to help local areas prepare over 2021/22 for the introduction of the UKSPF, we will provide additional UK funding to support our communities to pilot programmes and new approaches. Further details on the operation of the additional funding in 2021/22 will be published soon.

■ **First Time Buyers: Coventry**

Colleen Fletcher:

[\[158078\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps his Department is taking to support first-time homebuyers in (a) Coventry North East constituency and (b) Coventry.

Colleen Fletcher:

[158080]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps his Department is taking to support homeownership in (a) Coventry North East constituency and (b) Coventry.

Christopher Pincher:

First Homes, our new home ownership scheme, will be prioritised for first-time buyers and will allow them to buy a new home with a discount of at least 30 per cent under market value. In some areas, the discounts could be as high as 50 per cent. This will significantly reduce both deposit and mortgage requirements and open up the dream of home ownership to even more people. Our new Help to Buy Equity Loan scheme from April 2021 to March 2023 will be targeted at helping first-time buyers to get a foot on the property ladder. In Coventry local authority area, 2,032 households have purchased through Help to Buy: Equity Loan, of which 1,821 have been first-time buyers

As set out in the Conservative manifesto of December 2019, the Government will encourage a market in long-term fixed rate mortgages with low deposits to promote home ownership. We stand ready to work with the sector to explore the possible options to bring these products to market.

The Government is committed to supporting the supply of new homes, delivering around 244,000 last year, the highest in over 30 years.

We are bringing forward an ambitious nearly £20 billion investment, including over £12 billion in Affordable Housing over 5 years, and over £7 billion to both unlock new land through the provision of infrastructure and also diversify the market through our National Home Building Fund. Alongside our reforms to the planning system, this will deliver the new homes the country needs.

■ Floods: Grants

Jane Hunt:

[154651]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment his Department has made of whether the eligibility criteria of 25 or more flooded households for the Community Recovery Grant could be extended to 25 or more flooded households or businesses, in line with the eligibility criteria for the Property Flood Resilience Scheme.

Luke Hall:

MHCLG is currently conducting a cross-government review of the Flood Recovery Framework, the mechanism by which the government provides support to people, communities and businesses, helping them to recovery from serious flooding incidents. As part of the review, the Government will consider the eligibility criteria used for activating the Community Recovery Grant scheme.

■ Help to Buy Scheme

Dan Jarvis:

[\[158052\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment his Department has made of the effectiveness of support available for customers using the Help to Buy Scheme when seeking to apply for a (a) deed of postponement and (b) deed of release.

Christopher Pincher:

The Equity Loan Administrator supports the customer through the application process, and the customer's conveyancer also explains the legal nature of the transaction and supports the customer through the legal process. Homes England measures the effectiveness of the administrator via the contract management process, which includes performance packs, key performance indicators and meetings. In addition, customer satisfaction is assessed through the customer complaints data, to examine the cause of any problems, and information is collected by an external agency which gathers real time customer feedback about their experiences.

■ High Rise Flats: Sales

Neil Coyle:

[\[155065\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what estimate his Department has made of the level of revenue lost by (a) tenants and (b) leaseholders due to home sales not progressing as a result of cladding-related issues in the latest period for which figures are available.

Christopher Pincher:

The information requested is not held

The Government has announced over £5 billion in grant towards the removal of unsafe cladding on buildings over 18 metres in height. This unprecedented investment in building safety will help hundreds of thousands of leaseholders, who will be protected from the cost of replacing unsafe cladding on their homes

Alongside this a generous finance scheme will also provide for remediation of unsafe cladding on buildings of 11-18 metres in height. Leaseholders will pay no more than £50 a month towards this scheme. We will publish more details on how these schemes will work as soon as we are in a position to do so

Instead of facing sudden cladding bills of tens of thousands of pounds, leaseholders will need to pay either nothing, or up to £50 per month towards fixing the problem. This helps gives lenders certainty both that the cladding will be remediated, and of the total potential financial impact on a leaseholder and their property. This announcement is therefore an important step towards restoring confidence in the housing market. It provides certainty for lenders where unsafe cladding is present and complements the wider work we have underway to continue to develop a proportionate risk-based regulatory environment on fire safety

We continue to work with industry to ensure risk assessment is proportionate, which we hope will enable mortgage and lending markets to re-stabilise.

■ **Holiday Accommodation: Non-domestic Rates**

James Wild:

[\[156595\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of applying the letting requirements set out in HMRC guidance note HS253 on furnished holiday lets to the business rates criteria for self-catering accommodation.

Luke Hall:

The Government has consulted on possible changes to the rules under which holiday lets are assessed for business rates, including the possible addition of a letting criterion. We have been considering responses to that consultation, taking into account factors such as the impact of the pandemic on the tourism industry and consideration of owners of holiday properties in less frequently visited parts of the country. The Government intends to provide an update on the consultation shortly.

James Wild:

[\[156596\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what estimate he has made of the number of properties classed as self-catering accommodation for non-domestic rates that have had that eligibility removed due to a failure to meet the requirements for commercial letting.

Luke Hall:

The Valuation Office Agency is responsible for assessing properties for local tax purposes and maintaining accurate ratings lists. The Department does not collect data on properties that are moved from the business rates valuation list to the council tax list.

James Wild:

[\[156597\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what guidance his Department has issued to local authorities in respect of ensuring compliance with the commercial letting requirements for self-catering accommodation registers for non-domestic rates.

Luke Hall:

Holiday lets are currently assessed for business rates if the owner intends to let the property commercially for short periods totalling 140 days or more per year. The Valuation Office Agency is responsible for assessing properties for local tax purposes and maintaining accurate ratings lists. Local billing authorities have a duty to inform the Valuation Office Agency if they become aware of any information which would assist the agency in carrying out its valuation duties.

■ Homelessness: Coronavirus

Thangam Debbonaire:

[\[155148\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many people who were housed under the Everyone In initiative in 2020 have received a covid-19 vaccination.

Eddie Hughes:

We have taken unprecedented steps to protect rough sleepers during the pandemic. This work has not stopped, and through Everyone In, by November we had supported around 37,000 people with nearly 10,000 in emergency accommodation and over 23,000 already moved on into longer-term accommodation.

On 8 January we asked all local authorities to ensure that even more rough sleepers are safely accommodated, and that this opportunity is actively used to make sure that all rough sleepers are registered with a GP and are factored into local area vaccination plans, in line with the prioritisation approach set out by the Joint Committee on Vaccinations and Immunisation.

As set out in its Surveillance strategy, published on 11 January, Public Health England will monitor vaccine effectiveness, safety, uptake, population immunity and more, with consideration of impact on inequalities and inclusion health groups including those experiencing homelessness.

Thangam Debbonaire:

[\[155149\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 1 February 2021 to Question 144715 on Homelessness: Coronavirus, if he will publish the correspondence between his Department and (a) Public Health England, and (b) NHS England on meeting the (i) care and (ii) covid-19 vaccination needs of vulnerable people experiencing homelessness during the covid-19 outbreak.

Eddie Hughes:

The Department regularly engages with the Department of Health and Social Care, Public Health England and NHS England on a range of issues including meeting the care and COVID-19 vaccination needs of vulnerable people experiencing homelessness during the COVID-19 outbreak.

■ Homelessness: Migrants

Peter Dowd:

[\[156430\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if he will bring forward emergency legislative proposals to ensure people who have no recourse to public funds and who require homelessness assistance can access emergency accommodation for the next 12 months.

Eddie Hughes:

The rules as to eligibility relating to immigration status, including for those with NRPF, have not changed.

Local authorities must use their judgement in assessing what support they may lawfully give to each person on an individual basis, considering that person's specific circumstances and support needs.

Local authorities already regularly make such judgements on accommodating individuals who might otherwise be ineligible, during extreme weather for example.

We want to ensure that local areas have the tools they need to support as many people as possible off the street as possible. That is why we have established programmes such as the Next Steps Accommodation Programme and the Home Office's Rough Sleeping Support Service.

More information on the support available to migrants during the pandemic, including those with NRPF, can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-get-support-if-youre-a-migrant-living-in-the-uk>

■ Housing Market: Coronavirus

Thangam Debbonaire:

[155146]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps he is taking to enforce guidance on house viewings during the covid-19 lockdown announced in January 2021.

Christopher Pincher:

We have worked with industry and Public Health England to develop guidance which provides advice around how to move home safely. We have been clear that all initial viewings should be done virtually and any in person viewings should only take place with serious purchasers by appointment only. Industry has reinforced this message with its own guidance and anyone who has concerns should raise them with their agent in the first instance.

■ Housing: Insulation

Andrew Rosindell:

[154666]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what financial support is available to leaseholders in buildings over 18 metres whose buildings failed the External Wall System but are ineligible for the Building Safety Fund.

Christopher Pincher:

A key eligibility criterion for the Building Safety Fund is the presence of the unsafe non-ACM cladding, as set out in the prospectus for the Fund at:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/remediation-of-non-acm-buildings>. This is because unsafe cladding acts as an accelerant to fire spread, and funding will remove the biggest obstacle to remediation proceeding. Government guidance is clear that building safety is the responsibility of building owners and we have given expert advice on a range of safety issues to provide clarity.

The EWS1 process is an industry led approach to assess financial risk to inform valuation for mortgage purposes. The EWS1 process is not a safety certificate and a building cannot 'fail' an EWS1 assessment.

Andrew Rosindell:

[154837]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of engaging specialist inspectors to undertake further checks during the cladding removal process to ensure that correct building regulations were followed during the period of construction.

Christopher Pincher:

The removal and remediation of unsafe cladding will require building regulations approval and should comply with current building regulations. Primary responsibility for compliance with the requirements in the regulations lies with the person carrying out the building work. However, building regulations approval can only come from a building control body, such as the local authority or registered approved inspector, who will inspect the work on site at the appropriate stages of the building work.

Stephen Doughty:

[157124]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what proportion of the £3.5 billion he announced on 10 February 2021 will be funded from (a) from the Gateway 2 developer Levy, (b) existing revenues and (c) revenue from the new tax scheduled for the residential property development sector from 2022.

Christopher Pincher:

We will set out further details of the levy and tax.

■ **Housing: North West**

Mark Menzies:

[154978]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what estimate he has made of the number of properties completed by Homes England in the North West in each of the last three years.

Christopher Pincher:

The total number of homes that have been completed with support from Homes England in the North West over the last three years is 22,337. The specific breakdown over each of the three years is as follows; 6,365 between 1 April 2017 – 31 March 2018, 8,127 between 1 April 2018 – 31 March 2019, and 7,845 between 1 April 2019 – 31 March 2020. Further details of Homes England's starts on site and completions data can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/housing-statistics-1-april-2019-to-31-march-2020> .

■ Housing: Remote Working

Bob Blackman:

[\[154990\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment he has made of trends in the level of (a) remote working and (b) housing demand outside of towns and cities; and what plans he has to (i) alleviate pressure for new homes on green spaces and (ii) help ensure new developments are affordable.

Christopher Pincher:

The Government recognises the importance of understanding trends and shifts in the way people live and the implications for housing demand, as well as the importance of ensuring access to green spaces and increasing the supply of affordable housing. The Department will continue to analyse trends in housing demand, including increasing demand outside of towns and cities, to gauge the nature, size and permanence of any shift in housing preferences. The National Planning Policy Framework expects local authorities to recognise the character and beauty of the countryside and to protect and enhance Green Belt, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and other designated rural land. To further support regeneration of brownfield sites, in December, we announced changes to the standard method for assessing local housing need to increase greater need in urban areas to maximise the use of existing infrastructure, such as public transport, schools, medical facilities and shops, as well as to encourage development that reduces the need for high-carbon travel. We are committed to increasing the supply of affordable housing nationally. At budget we announced our new £11.5 billion Affordable Homes Programme, the largest investment in affordable housing in a decade. Our Planning for the Future White Paper sets out proposals to create a new Infrastructure Levy, which will be designed to deliver at least as much onsite affordable housing as at present and will continue to be collected and spent at the local level.

■ Leasehold: National Trust

Tulip Siddiq:

[\[155272\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps he is taking to implement the Law Commission's recommendations on leasehold reform of National Trust properties.

Eddie Hughes:

The Government is committed to promoting fairness and transparency for homeowners and ensuring that consumers are protected from abuse and poor service. We are taking forward a comprehensive programme of reform to end unfair practices in the leasehold market, and in January we announced reforms to the valuation process and length of lease extensions, in response to Law Commission recommendations.

The Law Commission's report on enfranchisement includes recommendations relating to the qualifying criteria for enfranchisement and lease extensions, including the applicability of these to leaseholders of the National Trust. We will bring forward a

response to these and the other remaining Law Commission recommendations in due course.

■ **Local Government Association: Finance**

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[154996\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what recent assessment his Department has made of the financial sustainability of the Local Government Association under its current funding model.

Luke Hall:

The Local Government Association (LGA) is a member led organisation and independent of the Government. It is therefore not for MHCLG to make an assessment of the financial sustainability of the LGA.

■ **Local Government: Cybercrime**

Mr Jonathan Djanogly:

[\[154806\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what recent estimate he has made of (a) the number of local authorities which were subject to cyber attack, (b) the (i) largest and (ii) lowest single financial loss incurred by a local authority as a consequence of such an attack and (c) the average financial loss incurred by local authorities subject to such attacks in each of the last three calendar years.

Mr Jonathan Djanogly:

[\[154807\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what (a) financial and (b) non-financial support his Department offered to local authorities to help protect them from cyber attacks in (i) 2018, (ii) 2019 and (iii) 2020.

Luke Hall:

The wider public sector, of which local authorities form a part, is reporting more incidents so it is imperative that councils remain vigilant of the cyber risks they face. In terms of financial impacts or financial support, the Government does not place information in the public domain that may be of value to cyber attackers. The Department is providing support to councils to strengthen their resilience against cyber-attacks. The Department is also working with the National Cyber Security Centre, who provide advice and guidance to local authorities in support of their work to secure their networks, as well as the development of their cyber security strategies. This includes encouraging registration for their Active Cyber Defence tools and services.

■ **Local Government: Ethics**

Mike Amesbury:

[\[155366\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, when his Department plans to respond to the recommendations of The Committee on Standards in

Public Life's Report on Ethical standards in local government; and if he will make a statement.

Luke Hall:

The Committee on Standards in Public Life report on local government ethical standards makes a number of recommendations to strengthen the local government standards and conduct system, many of which require legislative change. We have considered the Committee's recommendations carefully and we intend to publish a response in due course.

■ **Members: Correspondence**

Matthew Pennycook:

[\[155275\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, when he plans to respond to the letter from the hon. Member for Greenwich and Woolwich of 15 January 2021 on his constituent's application to the Building Safety Fund.

Christopher Pincher:

The response was emailed to the Hon Member on Wednesday 24 February 2021.

■ **Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government: Crime and Justice Task Force**

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[154902\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what targets the Crime and Justice Task Force has set for his Department.

Eddie Hughes:

It is a long-established precedent that information about the discussions that have taken place in Cabinet and its Committees, and how often they have met, is not normally shared publicly.

■ **Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government: Staff**

Steve Reed:

[\[157142\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many FTE staff in his Department (a) were responsible for the Local Growth Fund in (i) 2019-20 and (ii) 2020-21 and (b) will be responsible for the Levelling Up Fund once the Local Growth Fund funding comes to an end.

Steve Reed:

[\[157143\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what the cost to the public purse has been of the team responsible for administering the Local Growth Fund in each of the last three years; and what the cost will be of the team responsible for administering the Levelling-up Fund.

Luke Hall:

The Local Growth Fund (LGF) supports capital projects designed to deliver local economic growth through Mayoral Combined Authorities and Local Enterprise

Partnerships. The Cities and Local Growth Unit (CLGU), is a joint BEIS and MHCLG civil service team, overseeing LGF alongside other local growth programmes examples of these are the Towns Fund, Coastal Communities Fund and Devolution Deals . It is not therefore possible to provide a breakdown of exact FTE or costs for this programme.

The Levelling Up Fund will invest in local infrastructure that has a visible impact on people and their communities and will support economic recovery. The Fund will be jointly managed by the Treasury, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, and the Department for Transport.

■ **Parish Councils: Meetings**

Grahame Morris:

[158018]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if he will extend The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 to allow town and parish councils to meet online until at least 21 June 2021 when all covid-19 restrictions are due to be lifted.

Luke Hall:

The Government keeps all policy under review. To extend the facility for all local authorities to continue to meet remotely or in hybrid form after 7 May 2021 would require primary legislation. We have received representations from local authorities and sector representative organisations making the case for the continuation of remote meetings beyond 7 May 2021 and we are carefully considering next steps in this area.

■ **Planning Permission: Local Press**

Fay Jones:

[154596]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment he has made of the importance of advertising planning notices in local newspapers to (a) the elderly and vulnerable, (b) other local residents and (b) local media organisations.

Christopher Pincher:

The use of digital tools is important to be able to standardise and improve the user interface where local people seek to engage in the planning system. It is not a replacement for engagement but is a tool to make this engagement more transparent and more accessible to all parts of communities across England. This is particularly the case for publicity of planning applications where we want to see greater digital coverage, and we will be exploring the best way of doing that as we develop our proposals to reform the planning system. In doing so, we recognise the importance of local newspapers to communities and that there will continue to be a need to reach out to people without digital access to information.

■ Planning: Public Consultation**Bob Blackman:** [\[154991\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to the proposed changes to community input in planning at the local plan stage set out in the Planning for the future White Paper published in August 2020, what plans he has to maintain (a) local determinism and (b) the right of community voice in the future planning system.

Christopher Pincher:

Our proposal for a reformed planning system will make it simpler, quicker and more accessible for local people to engage with. We believe that the best way to bring forward new, significant development is by improving community engagement and input at an earlier stage in the process. Local councillors will have full involvement in deciding on the allocation of sites in Local Plans and on setting supporting design codes, and there will still be the opportunity for people to comment on planning applications where these are still required. We are currently reviewing and analysing responses to the Planning for the Future White Paper and will publish a response in the Spring setting out our decisions on the proposed way forward.

■ Population: Coventry**Zarah Sultana:** [\[156593\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of Office of National Statistics population growth estimates for Coventry.

Luke Hall:

The Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR) is currently independently reviewing the Office for National Statistics' population projections and population estimates following a request from the Warwickshire Campaign for the Protection of Rural England, and we will reflect on any review findings. It is therefore not appropriate to comment further on this issue, but population statistics, which inform the standard method for assessing local housing need, remain the most up-to-date and robust national statistics for this purpose.

■ Private Rented Housing: Coronavirus**Kirsten Oswald:** [\[158084\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what plans he has to tackle increases in the level of rent arrears in the private rented sector as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Kirsten Oswald: [\[158087\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if he will create a covid rent debt fund to support people dealing with rent arrears built up during the pandemic.

Christopher Pincher:

This Government has provided an unprecedented package of financial support to protect renters whose income has been affected throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

Notably, to help prevent people getting into financial hardship, we have increased the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rate in 2020/21 to the 30th percentile of local market rents in each area. The increased LHA rates will be maintained at the current levels in cash terms in 2021/22, even in areas where the 30th percentile of local rents has gone down. We have boosted the welfare system by billions of pounds, including increasing Universal Credit and Working Tax Credit by up to £1,040 for the year. In addition, the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme has offered support for businesses to pay staff salaries, enabling people to continue to pay their rent and has been extended until the end of April 2021.

For those who require additional support, Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) are available. As announced at the spending round for 2020/21, there is already £180 million in DHPs for local authorities to distribute for supporting renters with housing costs in the private and social rented sectors. For 2021-22 the Government will make available £140 million in DHP funding, which takes account of the increased LHA rates.

The recently published English Housing Survey Household Resilience Study found that 93 per cent of private renters are up to date on their rent. This indicates our package of support is working, and has prevented widespread arrears.

We continue to closely monitor the ongoing effects of the pandemic on renters.

■ Property Development: Taxation**Stephen Doughty:**[\[157125\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, under which legislation he plans to introduce the Gateway 2 developer levy he announced on 10 February 2021.

Christopher Pincher:

The levy will be implemented through the forthcoming Building Safety Bill.

■ Regional Planning and Development: Telford**Mark Pritchard:**[\[154893\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, when he plans to announce his decision on the Telford Town Deal Board Investment Plan submission to his Department.

Luke Hall:

I can confirm the Department has received Telford's Town Investment Plan. My officials are conducting the assessment process for the proposals, and I look forward to making an announcement in due course.

■ Rented Housing

Thangam Debbonaire:

[\[155147\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of prohibiting in-person viewing of properties for rent during the covid-19 lockdown announced in January 2021.

Christopher Pincher:

We have worked with industry and public health authorities to ensure home moves can take place as safely as possible during this period. It is important that people who need to move can do so and home viewings are an essential part of the home moving process. Where viewings are taking place in rented properties, tenants' safety should be the priority of letting agents and landlords.

Our published guidance advises that initial viewings should take place remotely where possible, and only those seriously interested in the property should view in person. Where in-person viewings occur, we advise that the current occupiers vacate the property in order to minimise unnecessary contact. Property agents and landlords should make sure viewers and occupants of the home understand how they should conduct themselves to protect their health and the health of others.

■ Rents: Coronavirus

Zarah Sultana:

[\[157315\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of introducing a covid-19 rent debt fund for renters in financial difficulties as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Christopher Pincher:

This Government has provided an unprecedented package of financial support to protect renters whose income has been affected throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

Notably, to help prevent people getting into financial hardship, we have increased the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rate to the 30th percentile of local market rents in each area. The increased LHA rates will be maintained at the current levels in cash terms in 2021/22, even in areas where the 30th percentile of local rents has gone down. We have boosted the welfare system by billions of pounds, including increasing Universal Credit and Working Tax Credit by up to £1,040 for the year. In addition, the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme has offered support for businesses to pay staff salaries, enabling people to continue to pay their rent and has been extended until April 2021.

For those who require additional support, Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) are available. As announced at the spending round for 2020/21, there is already £180 million in DHPs for local authorities to distribute for supporting renters with housing costs in the private and social rented sectors. For 2021-22 the Government will make available £140 million in DHP funding, which takes account of the increased LHA rates.

We continue to closely monitor the ongoing effects of the pandemic on renters.

■ Service Charges

Fiona Bruce:

[\[157081\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what progress has been made on bringing forward legislation to give freeholders the right to challenge the reasonableness of estate maintenance charges and management fees.

Eddie Hughes:

The Government is committed to promoting fairness and transparency for homeowners and ensuring that consumers are protected from abuse and poor service. We intend to legislate to ensure that freehold homeowners who pay estate rentcharges have the right to challenge their reasonableness and to go to the tribunal to appoint a new management company if necessary. This is part of a comprehensive programme of reform to end unfair practices in the leasehold market and on managed estates. We will bring forward legislation in the upcoming session to set future ground rents to zero. This will be the first part of seminal two-part legislation to implement reforms in this Parliament.

■ Sheltered Housing

Alexander Stafford:

[\[155496\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps the Government is taking to help ensure the provision of retirement and extra care housing across all tenures as the covid-19 lockdown restrictions are eased.

Alexander Stafford:

[\[155497\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps his Department is taking to increase the availability of (a) retirement housing and (b) extra care housing across all tenures to alleviate pressure on the care home sector.

Christopher Pincher:

I agree that the growth of this sector is important for meeting the needs of the aging population and supporting our housing supply objectives. We are investing over £12 billion in affordable housing over 5 years, the largest investment in affordable housing in a decade. This includes the new £11.5 billion Affordable Homes Programme, where 10 per cent of delivery will be used to increase the supply of much needed specialist or supported housing.

In our revised National Planning Policy Framework, published in July 2018, we set out that authorities should assess the types of specialist housing needed for older and disabled people in their areas and reflect this in their planning policies. We followed this up by publishing Planning Practice Guidance in June 2019, which assists councils in putting policies in the National Planning Policy Framework in place.

We are continuing to work closely with the sector to look at how we can further support its growth.

■ **Sheltered Housing: Coronavirus**

Alexander Stafford:

[155498]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment his Department has made of the effect of the covid-19 outbreak on the (a) retirement and (b) extra care housing sector across all tenures.

Christopher Pincher:

My officials have been having weekly meetings with sector representatives. Whilst Covid-19 has been very challenging, the sector has not reported major problems with the management of infection or business continuity. I would like to pay tribute to the commitment shown by the sector and its front line staff and managers, across all tenures, to ensure delivery of high quality services to vulnerable older residents, in trying circumstances.

I have asked my officials to continue to engage responsively with the sector, as we progress along the road map that the Prime Minister has set out on the route to normality.

■ **Small Businesses: Rents**

Bambos Charalambous:

[155301]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to the expiry of the moratorium on the landlord's right of forfeiture for non-payment of rent expires on 31 March 2021, what plans the Government has to provide longer term support to small businesses which remain closed due to covid-19 restrictions and have been unable to (a) generate income and (b) pay commercial rents during the covid-19 outbreak.

Eddie Hughes:

The Government recognises that this is a very challenging time for everyone, and COVID-19 is having a significant impact on our businesses. That is why we have introduced temporary measures to further safeguard businesses, the high street and millions of jobs.

During the pandemic, the Government has implemented a range of measures to support commercial property tenants and landlords, including the moratorium on forfeiture. The objective of these measures was to preserve tenants' businesses through the COVID-19 pandemic and to give time and space to landlords and tenants to agree reasonable adjustments to rent and lease terms, including terms for the payment of accumulated rent arrears.

We have put in place one of the world's most comprehensive economic responses – backed by over £280 billion – to protect jobs, businesses and public services throughout and beyond this pandemic. The measures introduced – including four Government-backed loan schemes, local authority grant funding, tax deferrals and

the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) – have been designed to be accessible to businesses in most sectors and across the UK.

We have also extended the application deadline for the Bounce Back Loan Scheme (BBLs), the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CBILS), and the Coronavirus Large Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CLBILS) ensuring there is further support in place for firms who need it during this ongoing period of difficulty.

We have already announced a successor loan scheme, which will launch immediately after the closure of the current schemes so there will be no gap in support for businesses.

■ Towns Fund

Steve Reed:

[\[158066\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if he will publish documents of each bid submitted for a Town Deal.

Luke Hall:

As we have set out in the Towns Fund Further Guidance, the final Town Investment Plan should be published on the Lead Council's website (or a Town Deal specific website). Once towns have accepted their Town Deal offers, Heads of Terms are signed and then also published on local authority websites.

■ Towns Fund: Public Appointments

Steve Reed:

[\[158065\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if he will publish the names of all Town Deal Board Chairs.

Luke Hall:

Town Deal Boards are central to the success of the Towns Fund. They bring together local businesses, community and public sector organisations to develop a joint vision and strategy for the Town. The majority of Town Deal Boards are chaired by business people and details are published on the relevant local authority websites.

■ Vagrancy Act 1824

John McDonnell:

[\[154695\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what plans the Government has to bring forward legislative proposals to repeal the Vagrancy Act 1824.

Eddie Hughes:

This is a complex issue and that is why a review is the right course of action and we are looking at all options.

Work is ongoing and the Government will update on its findings in due course.

■ Wigan Council: Coronavirus**James Grundy:** [\[154622\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what the cumulative total is of Government funding in response to covid-19 that has been provided to Wigan Council.

Luke Hall:

I refer the Hon. Gentleman to the answer I gave on 26 February 2021 to question 153417.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE**■ Bicycles: Antidumping Duties****Emily Thornberry:** [\[156299\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, for what reason anti-dumping duty exemptions on certain bike and e-bike lines have not been maintained after the end of the transition period.

Emily Thornberry: [\[156300\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what consultation HMRC undertook with industry before removing anti-dumping duty exemptions for certain bike and e-bike lines after the transition period.

Emily Thornberry: [\[156301\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what plans he has to (a) implement new exemptions or (b) rollover existing EU exemptions to anti-dumping duties on certain bike and e-bike lines.

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

The Department for International Trade issued a Call for Evidence to assess whether the EU trade remedy measures on bicycles and electric bicycles should continue to apply after the transition period. Initial evidence provided by producers of bicycles and electric bicycles in the United Kingdom indicated there were not sufficient domestic sales to transition this measure.

However, new evidence provided in December 2020 showed that the criteria for transition had been met. Accordingly, we transitioned definitive EU trade remedy measures on bicycles, electric bicycles, and bicycle parts from China. As part of this, we transitioned any definitive EU business exemptions that were in operation already under the bicycle parts measures. Pending or provisional EU decisions on business exemptions from the bicycle parts measures were not transitioned into our system and ceased to apply from 1st January 2021. We are exploring the possibility of introducing a scheme in the United Kingdom to allow for some further exemptions for parts for the bicycle industry.

HM Government intends to review the trade remedy measures on bicycles, electric bicycles and certain bicycle parts originating in China, as with all transitioned measures. The transition reviews will be initiated by the Trade Remedies Investigations Directorate (or its successor, the Trade Remedies Authority) before expiry of the current measures.

■ Food: Advertising

John Stevenson:

[\[156332\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what discussions she has had with (a) the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care and (b) Public Health England on the introduction of (a) advertising and (b) promotional restrictions on foods high in fat, salt or sugar.

Graham Stuart:

The Secretary of State for International Trade has not held discussions with either Secretary of State for Health & Social Care or Public Health England (PHE) on these restrictions. Through the Department for International Trade's work with our key Food and Drink stakeholders, we will continue to gather intelligence on how this policy will be implemented by industry. Sharing insight with colleagues in the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs who lead on food and drink domestic policy & the Department for Health and Social Care who lead on the Obesity Strategy.

■ Fossil Fuels: Overseas Trade

Preet Kaur Gill:

[\[157241\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what recent discussions she has had with the President of COP26 on the continued use of public money to fund fossil fuel projects overseas.

Graham Stuart:

The Secretary of State has not had any meetings with the President of COP26 since his appointment.

On 12 December 2020, the Prime Minister announced that the British government will no longer provide any new direct financial or promotional support for the fossil fuel energy sector overseas, apart from a small number of tightly-bound exceptions that are still to be determined. The date of implementation of the new policy will be confirmed shortly.

■ TRIPS Agreement: Coronavirus

Clive Lewis:

[\[155238\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, how many meetings the Government has had with pharmaceutical industry representatives on the TRIPS Waiver proposal; and what the feedback was from industry on the TRIPS Waiver proposal at those meetings.

Greg Hands:

The Government meets regularly with representatives of the pharmaceutical industry to discuss a wide range of topics.

Clive Lewis:[\[155239\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what assessment the Government has made of the potential effect of its policy on the World Trade Organisation's TRIPS Waiver proposal on the effectiveness of the UK's Presidency of the G7 and its ability to meet the objective of supporting future pandemic preparedness.

Greg Hands:

The UK works closely with its G7 partners on all aspects of future pandemic preparedness, including work at the World Trade Organisation.

■ UK Trade with EU**Ben Lake:**[\[155325\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what assessment she has made of the adequacy of (a) support and (b) advice for businesses exporting to the EU.

Graham Stuart:

The Department supports exporters across the UK, including through overseas posts, great.gov.uk, international events and missions. A Europe Trade Hub provides in-market support to British businesses exporting to European markets, and businesses can also access sector-specific expertise. The Department conducts an independent annual Export Client Survey with c.6000 businesses to assess services: for example, of those using Posts in 2018/19, 73% were satisfied / very satisfied. Additionally, Government is conducting roundtables and webinars to understand UK business needs better. Companies in Wales also receive support from the Welsh Government, in line with devolved responsibilities.

JUSTICE**■ Cemeteries: Complaints****Mr David Lammy:**[\[154712\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many complaints he has received in relation to the management of private cemeteries in each of the last ten years.

Alex Chalk:

Numbers of complaints received in relation to the management of private cemeteries are not collated but the department may receive communications from time to time. While private burial grounds are not covered by the same regulations and guidance that govern local authority burial grounds, MoJ anticipates that private cemeteries will adhere to those standards.

■ Courts and Tribunals: Drug Seizures

Mr David Lammy:

[154719]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many times illegal drugs were confiscated on the HM Courts & Tribunals Service estate in the last five years.

Chris Philp:

The safety and security of court and tribunal users is paramount. HM Courts and Tribunals Service (HMCTS) has embedded a series of measures designed to keep its buildings, and the people within them (including staff, judiciary, contractors, jurors, and users) safe and secure. Among other things, security search on entry procedures are in place to ensure risks to personal safety are minimised. Details of the policy, including information on items not allowed into court and tribunal buildings are available online.

All illegal drugs discovered on court or tribunal users are confiscated and reported to the police. The data below includes that provided by HMCTS previous security contractors G4S and Mitie. G4S began recording numbers of drug confiscations in April 2017. Mitie began recording this in November 2018. Since April 2020 OCS has been HMCTS' security provider. The numbers shown below relate specifically to the confiscation of drugs from persons on entry to court or tribunal buildings during ordinary security search procedures. Increased search procedures can take place when defendants enter into custody areas based on risk assessment and these can include a body search.

FINANCIAL YEAR	DRUG CONFISCATIONS
2017/18 (G4S only)	364
2018/19 (G4S and Mitie-November onwards)	937
2019/20 (G4S and Mitie)	2988
April 2020 – January 2021 (OCS)	460

■ Courts: Closures

Mr David Lammy:

[154715]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many courts in England and Wales his Department plans to close in the next five years.

Chris Philp:

There are currently no plans to close any courts or tribunals beyond those already announced.

Recovering from the impacts of Covid-19 and keeping our courts and tribunals safe and open is our priority. Measures have been put in place so that court and tribunal rooms are Covid secure and cases have moved to virtual hearings where possible.

We have opened Nightingale Courts providing more than 40 additional courtrooms and we are on track to provide a total of 60 courtrooms across the estate by the end of March.

■ Courts: Fines

John Spellar:

[154744]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many fines were (a) imposed by the courts and (b) paid in 2019.

Chris Philp:

Data on the number of fines issued at all courts (on a principal offence basis) is published in the Outcomes by Offence data tool available here. It shows that a total of 926,993 fines were issued by all courts in 2019:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/938568/outcomes-by-offence-tool-2019.xlsx

Data on the value of fines issued in 2019, the amount paid relating to the fines issued in 2019 and the amount paid that relates to fines issued in prior years, can be viewed in this table:

VALUE OF IMPOSITIONS MADE IN THE PERIOD JAN TO DEC 2019	COLLECTIONS RECEIVED IN 2019 RELATING TO IMPOSITIONS MADE IN THE PERIOD JAN TO DEC 2019	COLLECTIONS RECEIVED IN 2019 RELATING TO IMPOSITIONS MADE PRIOR TO DECEMBER 2018	
£000	£000	£000	
Compensation	29,224	8,236	19,046
Victim Surcharge	45,216	19,316	14,030
Crown Prosecution Costs	29,281	11,362	17,364
Prosecutor Costs	95,663	34,010	41,536
Fines	327,004	102,503	136,345
Total	526,388	175,427	228,321

Notes:

1. This data has been published in the 2018/19 and 2019/20 HMCTS Trust Statements.
2. The data excludes fines that are subsequently written off following a judicial cancellation
3. The whole data set has been included because a fine is only one element of an overall imposition that is made against a defendant. An imposition will usually

consist of a number of elements including compensation, victim surcharge, costs and a fine. The total imposition is then enforced as a whole and there is a very strict legal hierarchy that is applied to any receipts that are received, such that any compensation that is owed by the defendant is paid first, then victim surcharge, then costs and finally the fine.

The data provided is all for the 2019 calendar year.

■ Crown Court: Coronavirus

Mr David Lammy:

[154714]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what estimate his Department has made of the proportion of Crown Court cases where victims have dropped out due to delays caused by the case backlog.

Chris Philp:

This Government is acutely aware of the risk of victims withdrawing their support from prosecutions because of delays in the Crown Court. It is not possible to provide an estimate of the number of cases where victims have dropped out due to delays caused by the case backlog. However, the Ministry of Justice can provide some data on the number of prosecutions which ended because of the withdrawal of the support of a victim or witness. This can include victims and witnesses dropping out for a variety of reasons, including the impact of delays.

Between January to September 2020, 124 Crown Court case were ended by the prosecution because a witness was absent or withdrew from a trial. This represented 6% of all cracked trials in that 9-month period. By comparison, in 2019 456 Crown Court cases ended due to witness absence or withdrawal – 5.5% of all cracked trials in that year. In 2010, 943 Crown Court cases ended to witness absence or withdrawal – 5.1% of all cracked trials in that year.

Victims deserve to have their cases investigated seriously and pursued rigorously through the courts and we are investing millions to deliver swifter justice and support victims. In 2021-22, we will provide just under £140m for victim and witness support services. Criminal courts continue to recover from the pandemic – magistrates' backlogs have fallen by 50,000 since last summer, cases dealt with in crown courts reached pre-Covid levels in December, and more rooms are now open for jury trials than before the pandemic.

■ Crown Court: Opening Hours

Rachael Maskell:

[155198]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many Crown Court sitting days there have been in each month of the last three years.

Chris Philp:

Data showing the number of sitting days in 2018 and 2019 can be found at the following link:

<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachm>

[ent_data/file/940703/Judge_Sitting_Days.xlsx](#). Data for 2020 will be published in June. This data is not disaggregated by month. The reduction in sitting days in 2019 reflected the reduction in the number of cases reaching court. The Lord Chancellor had agreed to increase sitting days in 2020/21 prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Rachael Maskell:

[\[155199\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many Crown Court sitting days have been lost in each month since January 2020.

Chris Philp:

National Statistics on judge sitting days for 2020 are due to be released in June 2021. Access to statistics before their publication is strictly controlled, with rules and principles on pre-release access set out in the Pre-release Access to Official Statistics Order 2008.

■ Funerals: Costs

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[154602\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what recent estimate his Department has made of the average cost of a funeral.

Alex Chalk:

The Competition and Market Authority's recently published funeral sector report noted that the average cost of funeral directors' professional fees is £2,501, with burial disbursements (e.g. floral tributes, catering, minister of religion or celebrant fees and newspaper announcements) costing £2,268 and cremation disbursements (e.g. local authority fees and doctors fees) costing £1,170.

■ Mentally Disordered Offenders

Mr Barry Sheerman:

[\[154757\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment he made of the implications for his policies of the 2013 Law Commission report entitled, Criminal Liability: Insanity and Automatism.

Alex Chalk:

The Government has considered the proposals in the Law Commission's 2013 discussion paper.

Whilst we note the Law Commission's proposals on the potential to update the law in this area, we have no current plans to bring forward legislative proposals in relation to this rarely-used defence. However, we continue to keep this, and the wider and related law on unfitness to plead, under review.

■ Ministry of Justice: Contracts

Mr David Lammy:

[\[154716\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what his Department's five largest outsourcing contracts are by (a) name and (b) cost of each to the exchequer.

Chris Philp:

The information requested is provided in the attached annex

The information provided is for the five largest contracts by total value over the lifetime of the contract.

Attachments:

1. Annex [PQ 154716 - Annex 1.xlsx]

■ Ministry of Justice: Crime and Justice Taskforce**Ms Lyn Brown:**[\[154894\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what targets the Crime and Justice Task Force has set for (a) his Department and (b) HM Prison and Probation Service.

Lucy Frazer:

The Ministry of Justice is committed to achieving eight main objectives, as set out in its Single Departmental Plan 2019-2022:

1. Ensure access to justice in a way that best meets people's needs.
2. Support a flourishing legal services sector.
3. Provide a transparent and efficient court system.
4. Ensure that prisons are decent, safe and productive places to live and work.
5. Protect the public from harm caused by offenders.
6. Reduce rates of reoffending and improve life chances for offenders.
7. Provide excellent functional services.
8. Support delivery of Brexit

It is a long-established precedent that information about the discussions that have taken place in Cabinet and its Committees, and how often they have met, is not normally shared publicly.

■ Offenders: Rehabilitation**Ms Lyn Brown:**[\[154895\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what his timescale is for meeting the target set by the Crime and Justice Task Force to get 75 per cent of prison leavers with an assessed substance misuse need to engage in treatment within three weeks of leaving prison.

Ms Lyn Brown:[\[154896\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what recent discussions he has had with the (a) Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, (b) Minister for Housing, Communities and Local Government and (c) Chancellor of the Exchequer on the steps he plans to take to meet the target set by the Crime and Justice Task Force to get 75 per cent of prison

leavers with an assessed substance misuse need to engage in treatment within three weeks of leaving prison.

Ms Lyn Brown: [\[154898\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what recent discussions he has had with (a) the Home Secretary, (b) the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners, (c) National Police Chiefs' Council and (d) other stakeholders on improving opportunities for diversion for people whose offending is linked to substance misuse.

Lucy Frazer:

The Prime Minister's Crime and Justice Taskforce (CJTF) was established last year to consider matters relating to the prevention of crime and the effectiveness of the Criminal Justice System including combating drug misuse.

It is a long-established precedent that information about the discussions that have taken place in Cabinet and its Committees, and how often they have met, is not normally shared publicly.

In response to diverting people away from offending, the Ministry of Justice is strengthening out of court disposals by putting into legislation the framework for a nationally consistent two-tier system, based on that developed by the National Police Chief Council (NPCC). This involves close working with the Home Office, the NPCC and the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners who are involved routinely at both a strategic and working level.

Additionally, DHSC have received £80m to tackle drug misuse in 2021-22. The bulk of the funding (£65m circa) will be given to for local authorities via a specific grant allocation to support delivery of services specifically for the offender cohort. This funding will be used to introduce specialist criminal justice drug and alcohol workers who will be based in police stations, courts or prisons with a remit to identify and screen individuals in order to divert them into treatment.

Ms Lyn Brown: [\[154897\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, when the updated HMPPS Drug and Alcohol Strategy will be published.

Lucy Frazer:

I wrote, on the 16th February 2021, to inform you that HMPPS Drug Strategy and Delivery Team is developing the current Prison Drug Strategy to ensure that it represents the whole offender journey. It is my intention that the strategy will be published in September 2021.

■ **Pets: Theft**

Alberto Costa: [\[155162\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment her Department has made of the potential merits of increasing sentences for people convicted of pet theft.

Chris Philp:

The government recognises the deep distress which the theft of a much-loved pet can cause. All reported crimes should be investigated and, where appropriate, taken through the courts and met with tough sentences.

The theft of a pet is a criminal offence under the Theft Act 1968 and the maximum penalty is seven years' imprisonment. The sentencing guidelines for theft, acknowledge that theft which causes emotional distress, or where the items stolen were of substantial value to the loser, regardless of monetary worth, will indicate a higher level of seriousness and the offender should be sentenced accordingly.

Alexander Stafford:[\[155489\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what recent assessment he has made of the potential merits of increasing the maximum prison sentence for pet theft.

Alexander Stafford:[\[155490\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what recent assessment his Department has made of the (a) deterrent effect of sentences and (b) length of average sentence for people convicted of stealing pets.

Chris Philp:

The government recognises the deep distress which the theft of a much-loved pet can cause. All reported crimes should be investigated and, where appropriate, taken through the courts and met with tough sentences. The theft of a pet is a criminal offence under the Theft Act 1968 and the maximum penalty is seven years' imprisonment. The sentencing guidelines for theft, acknowledge that theft which causes emotional distress, or where the items stolen were of substantial value to the loser, regardless of monetary worth, will indicate a higher level of seriousness and the offender should be sentenced accordingly.

There has been no specific research into the deterrent effect of longer sentencing in relation to pet theft. However, in the Criminal Justice System overall, the deterrent effect of sentence severity has received a high level of attention in wider research literature. The evidence is mixed, although harsher sentencing tends to be associated with limited or no general deterrent effect. Increases in the certainty of apprehension and punishment have consistently been found to have a deterrent effect.

There are a range of theft offences under the Theft Act 1968 which could relate to the theft of a pet depending on the individual circumstances of the case. Centrally held information on theft offences does not identify if a pet specifically was stolen. The information may be held on court records, but to access these records in order to identify the cases in which pets were stolen and to determine the average custodial sentence for these convictions would be of disproportionate cost.

■ Powers of Attorney

Sir Roger Gale:

[\[154682\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what recent estimate his Department has made of the average length of time taken to process an application for a Power of Attorney.

Alex Chalk:

As of 23/2/2021 the average time taken to process and dispatch a lasting power of attorney (LPA) was 57 days against the target of 40 days. The target includes a statutory four week waiting period. As a comparison, the October average came in at 61 days. The 40-day target was achieved in 2019/20.

The Office of the Public Guardian (OPG) has seen an increase in the time taken to process an LPA since COVID-19 began impacting the workplace.

LPAs are paper documents that require a physical staff presence in an office to process and register. The number of staff available to attend the office to carry out the physical activities is significantly reduced due to COVID-19 and the need to maintain a COVID secure office through social distancing. Measures were introduced to focus on enabling as much remote working as possible and increasing the number of staff hours available in the office through overtime payments and weekend working.

■ Prisoner Escapes

Mr David Lammy:

[\[154717\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many escapes there were from (a) prisons and (b) young offender institutions in 2020; and from which prison or institution those escapes took place.

Lucy Frazer:

Escapes from prisons and young offender institutions (YOI) are rare. On the rare occasions that they do occur, the prisoner, once returned to custody, is held in tougher conditions and faces further punishment.

Please see data below for the number of prisoner escapes in England and Wales in 2020 and the prison or institution from which the escape took place.

The data recorded is from April 2019 – March 2020.

Escapes 2019-2020:

From establishments – 1

From HMPPS Escorts – 1

In 2019, there was one escape from a prison establishment in the adult male estate HMP Channings Wood, a male Category C. The prisoner was later caught, returned to custody and received an additional sentence for absconding lawful custody. There were no escapes from YOIs in 2020.

Mr David Lammy:

[\[154718\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many prisoners escaped from prisons in England and Wales in each of the last 10 years.

Lucy Frazer:

Escapes from prison are rare. Each and every escape is fully investigated and as part of this, any learning from the incident is analysed centrally to offer support to establishments. To ensure public protection prisoners who escape are held in stricter conditions when they are returned to custody. Please see data below for the number of prisoner escapes in England and Wales in each of the last 10 years. The data is recorded every year from April – March, for example, April 2019 – March 2020.

	2010- 11	2011- 12	2012- 13	2013- 14	2014- 15	2015- 16	2016- 17	2017- 28	2018- 19	2019- 20
Prison	1	2	1	2	0	2	4	1	1	1
HMMPS		2	0	2	1	3	3	3	2	1
Escort										
TOTAL	2	4	1	4	1	5	7	4	3	2

■ Prisoners' Release: Females

Ellie Reeves:

[\[154652\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether new dedicated staff set to act as brokers for prisoners to secure quicker access to accommodation and services on release in eleven prisons will receive training on gender specific accommodation challenges for women prison leavers.

Lucy Frazer:

We are introducing and testing the Housing Specialist role across a number of prisons, including HMP Newhall in the female estate. The specific challenges women prison leavers face accessing accommodation and services on release have been considered as part of the design of the role and project as a whole. Candidates who do not already have an understanding of these challenges will be given support to develop this, working alongside colleagues who understand the challenges, in order to maximise the opportunities on release.

■ Prisoners' Release: Greater London

Ellie Reeves:

[\[154654\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment he has made of whether additional funding is required to support prison leavers at risk of homelessness in the region of London compared with (a) East of England, (b) Yorkshire and the Humber, (c)

Greater Manchester, (d) Kent Surrey and Sussex and (e) the North West as part of the selection of areas for the new pilot of temporary accommodation for prison leavers.

Lucy Frazer:

We recognise the significant problem of homelessness faced by a number of our service users in London and are working to prevent homelessness amongst prison leavers, by continuing the successful probation Homelessness Prevention Team in the region, which has supported many homeless prison leavers during the COVID emergency period, and by working in partnership with other organisations to develop new initiatives.

HMP Wandsworth has been selected as a prison to introduce and test a new accommodation role. The Housing Specialist will work to strengthen links between prisons, through the gate teams and local authorities to improve accommodation outcomes for those at risk of homelessness. The post holder will also work to drive forward our Homelessness Reduction Act and Duty to Refer pilot with several key London local authorities.

London was not chosen as one of the probation regions for the delivery of the Tier 3 – Community Accommodation Service for the next financial year, due to the need to prioritise the work on the transition of probation services in the capital.

It is our intention to roll out the Tier 3 accommodation provision nationally, pending the Spending Review later this year.

■ **Prisoners: Coronavirus**

Mr David Lammy:

[\[154707\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, as of 12 February 2021, which (a) prisons and (b) Youth Offender Institutions have more than 10 suspected or confirmed cases of covid-19 among the prisoner population.

Mr David Lammy:

[\[154708\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, as of 12 February 2021, which (a) prisons or (b) Youth Offender Institutions have more than 50 suspected or confirmed cases of covid-19 among the prisoner population.

Mr David Lammy:

[\[154709\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, as of 12 February 2021, which (a) prisons or (b) Youth Offender Institutions have more than 100 suspected or confirmed cases of covid-19 among the prisoner population.

Lucy Frazer:

We have well-developed policies and procedures in place to manage outbreaks and infectious diseases. This means prisons and probation services are well prepared to take immediate action whenever cases or suspected cases are identified. Our measures so far have included restricting regimes, minimising inter-prison transfers and compartmentalising our prisons into different units to isolate the sick, shield the vulnerable and quarantine new arrivals.

Recognising the unique environment in prisons, we routinely test staff and offenders to bolster our defences against the virus, and conduct mass testing in outbreak sites – meaning we can identify more cases, isolate them earlier and move quickly to contain outbreaks and protect the NHS.

The below table shows the establishments which had more than 10 and 50 open positive cases as of 15 February 2021. Open positive cases are individuals who have tested positive and are either still in their isolation period or are still showing symptoms. Establishments that had more than 50 cases are not listed in the more than ten group, and no prisons or YOIs have more than 100 such cases.

	ALTCOURSE, BEDFORD, BERWYN, BIRMINGHAM, BRINSFORD, BUCKLEY HALL, CARDIFF, CHELMSFORD, DRAKE HALL, ERLESTOKE, GARTREE, GUYS MARSH, HIGH DOWN, HINDLEY, LEWES, MANCHESTER, MOORLAND, PENTONVILLE, PETERBOROUGH (MALE), RANBY, RISLEY, RYE HILL, STAFFORD, STOCKEN, STOKE HEATH, THORN CROSS, WAKEFIELD, WANDSWORTH, WHATTON AND WORMWOOD SCRUBS.
MORE THAN 10 OPEN CASES	
More than 50 open cases	Durham, Humber, Isle of Wight, Lindholme, New Hall, Oakwood, Verne, Wayland and Winchester

It should be noted that although care is taken when processing and analysing the returns, the detail collected is subject to the inaccuracies inherent in any large-scale recording system. Much of the data collected during the COVID-19 pandemic has been done at pace, with recording practices evolving as we understand more about the requirements and conditions we are facing. In order to present the timeliest information, the data presented in this table have not been subjected to the usual standard of quality assurance associated with official statistics.

■ Prisoners: Females

Jackie Doyle-Price:

[\[155018\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many prisoners serving sentences in the women's prison estate are (a) women and (b) transwomen.

Jackie Doyle-Price:

[\[155019\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many prisoners serving sentences for sex offences are (a) women and (b) transwomen; and if he will make a statement.

Lucy Frazer:

The information regarding the number of prisoners serving sentences in the women's prison estate who are women is published as part of the Offender Management Statistics quarterly and can be found in Table 1.1 ([here](#)).

We are not able to release the requested information in respect of the number of transwomen across the women's prison estate. This is because the number is five or fewer. Low numbers are suppressed to prevent disclosure in accordance with the Data Protection Act, 1998. This applies to values of five or fewer or other values which would allow values of five or fewer to be derived by subtraction. This is to prevent the identification of individuals. The Ministry of Justice is fully mindful of the need to balance the rights of individuals within the women's estate with risk management.

The information regarding the number of prisoners serving sentences for sex offences who are women is also published as part of the Offender Management Statistics quarterly and can be found in Table 1.2b ([here](#)). An ad hoc data collection exercise in 2019 revealed that there were 54 legally male prisoners who identified as female (transwomen), whose principal offence for which they were serving an immediate custodial sentence was a sexual offence, across all establishments in England and Wales.

Details of transgender individuals were provided by men's and women's public and private prisons in England and Wales in March-April 2019 following an exercise to gather information from transgender individuals in custody. Individuals are not obliged to share data on their identity, so we consider the figures to provide an estimate of the number of transgender individuals in prison. We are committed to mitigating some of the challenges around data collection, and ultimately improving the process to ensure data is reliable.

We are committed to ensuring that transgender individuals are treated fairly, lawfully and decently, with their rights and safety properly respected. Regardless of where a transgender individual is being held, we expect that they will be respected and that their needs will be addressed in accordance with the gender with which they identify.

■ Prisons and Young Offender Institutions: Sick Leave**Mr David Lammy:****[154710]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, as of 12 February 2021, how many and which (a) prisons or (b) Youth Offender Institutions have reported staffing sicknesses levels of over 10 per cent.

Mr David Lammy:**[154711]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, as of 12 February 2021, how many and which (a) prisons or (b) Youth Offender Institutions have reported staffing sicknesses levels of over 20 per cent.

Lucy Frazer:

The data covering 12 February 2021 has not yet been published and will be included as part of the workforce statistics up to 31 March 2021; which is due to be published in the HMPPS Quarterly Workforce Statistics Bulletin on 20 May 2021.

The latest published data has been used to answer these questions and covers the period to 31 December 2020.

For staff who had reported sick on 31 December 2020, the following prisons showed sickness absence of over 10% of all staff: HMP Norwich, HMP Dartmoor, HMP Elmley, HMP Pentonville, HMP Holme House, and HMP Cookham Wood. They are all adult prisons apart from Cookham Wood which is a Young Offenders Institution (YOI).

There were no prisons or YOIs which had a sickness absence of over 20% on 31 December 2020.

■ Prisons: Crimes of Violence**Alicia Kearns:**[\[155441\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many attacks on prison officers occurred in the last five years by (a) year and (b) type of offence.

Lucy Frazer:

Please see the attached table showing the number of prisoner assaults on staff, by offence of prisoner, 2016 to 2019 and January to September 2020 and the number of assaults on staff for 2015.

Violence against our hard-working prison officers is unacceptable and will never be tolerated, and we work closely with the police and Crown Prosecution Service to bring the perpetrators to justice. Additionally, as outlined in our Sentencing White Paper, we will double the maximum sentence for assaulting an emergency worker from 12 months to two years.

We are also giving officers tools like PAVA pepper spray and body-worn cameras to make their jobs safer, as well as access to post incident care teams, occupational health support and counselling for those who need it. More widely, we are spending £100 million to bolster prison security, clamping down on the weapons, drugs and mobile phones that fuel violence and crime behind bars. This is funding tough measures including X-ray body scanners, drug dogs and phone-blocking technology.

Attachments:

1. Table [PQ 155441 data table v1.xlsx]

Alicia Kearns:[\[155442\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, of the total convictions recorded in the last five years involving a crime committed by a prisoner against a prison officer or another employee of Her Majesty's Prison Service, how many and what proportion of those convictions resulted in an additional (non-concurrent) sentence for the perpetrator.

Lucy Frazer:

Violence against our hardworking staff will not be tolerated and any prisoner who commits an act of violence will be held to account.

Currently, data is not held centrally on the number of convictions for crimes committed by a prisoner against prison employees. This is being reviewed with the aim to collate data from all establishments for all crimes committed in prison, whilst also creating guidance on how to appropriately refer crimes committed in prison to the police.

The 'Crime in Prison Referral Agreement' was created in May 2019 and sets out the agreement between Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS), National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) and the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS). The aim is to ensure that acts of criminality that occur in prison are appropriately addressed within the Criminal Justice System.

In line with the Crime in Prison Referral Agreement, assaults against members of staff will be referred to the police for investigation and consideration for prosecution. Less serious assaults, where there is little or no injury, are more appropriately dealt with by the prison disciplinary system.

The courts retain the discretion to decide whether sentences should be served concurrently or consecutively, based on the facts of the case. The Sentencing Council's Totality guideline provides courts with guidance on whether sentences should be served concurrently or consecutively. Where the individual is serving a determinate sentence and commits another offence after the original sentence was imposed, the new sentence will generally be consecutive to the original sentence.

Our Assaults on Emergency Workers Act increased the maximum penalty for to 12 months and we recently announced we will double the penalty further to two years.

■ Remand in Custody: Young People**Peter Kyle:**[\[155241\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many times a young person has been remanded to custody due to a lack of suitable local authority accommodation in each of the last five calendar years.

Lucy Frazer:

Courts apply the provisions of the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012 which sets out the basis for deciding whether a child is remanded into custody or Local Authority accommodation. The reasons for the court's decision on remand are not recorded and so the information requested is not held.

■ Women's Prisons**Ellie Reeves:**[\[155311\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if he will publish the Departmental modelling that led to the announcement of up to 500 new prison cells in women's prisons; and what

assessment his Department has made of the effect of those new cells on (a) women's health and (b) child dependants.

Lucy Frazer:

Our prison population projections, published in November last year, show that the female prison population is projected to rise by around two-fifths by 2026 (1,300 women), with most of that rise coming in the next two years. Our projections took in to consideration the impact of the planned recruitment of a further 23,400 police officers.

Our projections further assumed the future gender composition of the prison population will be broadly consistent with the pre-COVID composition; however, there is a fair degree of uncertainty in this respect, not least because of the additional police recruitment. As such we modelled a total of four scenarios which included a 20% higher/lower throughput from the police and a fast court recovery scenario.

Table 2.1 and 4.1 taken from our prison population projections, illustrate this below:

Table 2.1 below shows the two extra scenarios of a lower and a higher impact police scenario for both men and women.

	CENTRAL	LOWER POLICE SCENARIO	HIGHER POLICE SCENARIO	FAST COURT RECOVERY
September 2020	79,235	79,235	79,235	79,235
September 2021	83,200	83,000	83,500	85,900
September 2022	88,100	87,200	89,100	88,600
September 2023	93,000	91,300	94,700	91,900
September 2024	96,000	93,800	98,300	94,900
September 2025	97,700	95,000	100,300	97,000
September 2026	98,700	95,900	101,600	98,400

All figures are rounded to the nearest hundred. Components may not sum due to rounding.

Table 4.1 below shows the projections separately for children, females over 18 years and males over 18.

	TOTAL	CHILDREN	FEMALE 18+	MALE 18+
September 2020	79,235	395	3,217	75,623
September 2021	83,200	600	3,800	78,900
September 2022	88,100	600	4,100	83,500

	TOTAL	CHILDREN	FEMALE 18+	MALE 18+
September 2023	93,000	700	4,300	88,100
September 2024	96,000	700	4,400	90,900
September 2025	97,700	700	4,500	92,500
September 2026	98,700	700	4,500	93,500

All figures are rounded to the nearest hundred. Components may not sum due to rounding.

Both tables are available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/prison-population-projections-2020-to-2026>

Custody should remain the last resort for women. However, it would be wrong to not build these places in response to the projected population forecast as outlined above and would further not align with the requirements of our Female Offender Strategy. The expansion of the women's estate will provide better conditions for those women who do require custody. It is our responsibility to ensure that those women in our custody are held in appropriate, decent and safe accommodation. The expansion of the female estate will be developed alongside parallel investment in community provision and services for women.

The changes in the Women's Estate will increase the resettlement opportunities for women by providing greater access to open conditions and also provide valuable modern, purpose-built accommodation within the closed estate which will improve the custodial experience for women who are not assessed as suitable for open conditions. This will provide improved rehabilitation and better outcomes for women.

At the heart of our project is a gender-informed and trauma aware evidence base which recognises that family ties are particularly important for women in custody who are more likely to be primary carers. We intend to reduce the distance from home for some women, making it easier for family visits and access work opportunities relevant to the area in which they may be released/eventually reside. Both of these opportunities are proven to assist in reducing recidivism rates. Our design principles include requirements around ensuring suitable visiting spaces are provided in both open and closed developments, such as the potential inclusion of rooms to support overnight visits for mothers and their children.

Bambos Charalambous:

[158155]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to his Department's press release, Extra funding for organisations that steer women away from crime, published on 23 January 2021, if will publish the Programme business case for the 500 new prison places to be built in existing women's prisons.

Bambos Charalambous:**[158156]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the announcement on the 23 January 2021 that up to 500 new prison places will be built in existing women's prisons, if his Department will publish the modelling used in the programme's Strategic Case that the recruitment of an extra 20,000 police officers is expected to cause a temporary increase in the female prison population.

Lucy Frazer:

Our prison population projections published in November last year, show that the female prison population is projected to rise by around two-fifths by 2026 (1,300 women) with most of that rise coming in the next two years. Our projections took in to consideration the impact of the planned recruitment of a further 23,400 police officers – which is likely to increase charge volumes and future prison populations.

Our projections further assumed the future gender composition of the prison population will be broadly consistent with the pre-COVID 19 composition, although there is a fair degree of uncertainty here however particularly due to the additional police recruitment. As such we modelled a total of four scenarios which included a 20% higher/lower throughput from the Police and a fast court recovery scenario. Table 2.1 and 4.1 taken from our prison population projections, illustrate this below:

Table 2.1 below shows the two extra scenarios of a lower and a higher impact police scenario for both men and women.

	CENTRAL SCENARIO	LOWER POLICE SCENARIO	HIGHER POLICE SCENARIO	FAST COURT RECOVERY SCENARIO
September 2020	79,235	79,235	79,235	79,235
September 2021	83,200	83,000	83,500	85,900
September 2022	88,100	87,200	89,100	88,600
September 2023	93,000	91,300	94,700	91,900
September 2024	96,000	93,800	98,300	94,900
September 2025	97,700	95,000	100,300	97,000
September 2026	98,700	95,900	101,600	98,400

All figures are rounded to the nearest hundred. Components may not sum due to rounding.

Table 4.1 below shows the projections separately for children, females over 18 years and males over 18 specifically for the central scenario.

	TOTAL	CHILDREN	FEMALE 18+	MALE 18+
September 2020	79,235	395	3,217	75,623
September 2021	83,200	600	3,800	78,900
September 2022	88,100	600	4,100	83,500
September 2023	93,000	700	4,300	88,100
September 2024	96,000	700	4,400	90,900
September 2025	97,700	700	4,500	92,500
September 2026	98,700	700	4,500	93,500

All figures are rounded to the nearest hundred. Components may not sum due to rounding.

Both tables are available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/prison-population-projections-2020-to-2026>

The business case has not yet reached a position where it could be published. We intend to continue dialogue with stakeholders as to how best to meet the needs of those women sentenced to a custodial sentence

■ Young Offenders

Peter Kyle:

[155249]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps he is taking to improve the transition of individuals turning 18 years old from the youth justice system to the adult justice system.

Lucy Frazer:

We recognise that transitioning from youth justice services to the adult justice system can be a particularly challenging time for young people and we are taking steps to ensure that this transition is as effective as possible.

The Youth Custody Service is working in partnership with adult prison service to develop a national transitions pathway that will ensure effective and thorough planning and support for all young people being transitioned to the adult or young adult estate. This includes the development of a transitions policy framework, bringing consistency and alignment across the children and young people secure estate.

The [Youth Justice Board's transition guidance in Wales](#) for children transitioning from youth offending teams to probation services has recently been updated with a focus on trauma informed practice. The Youth Justice Board is working with the National Probation Service to revise the transitions guidance in England and are aiming that this refreshed guidance will be in place shortly.

We are also working in partnership with the Mayor for London's Office for Policing and Crime and other relevant Government Departments and agencies to run a 3 year pilot (2020-23) to meet the needs of young adults (18-25 year olds) and 17-year olds due to transition from youth offending services into adult probation services in London.

By co-locating probation staff and commissioned wraparound services such as, mental health, speech and language therapy and substance misuse, distinct to the needs of young adults, the pilot aims to create smoother transitions, encourage compliance, promote desistance and reduce reoffending through the hub. To measure if the aims of the hub have been achieved a full evaluation will be externally commissioned and it will incorporate both process (daily operations of the hub) and longitudinal data (reoffending data). Key findings from this pilot will help inform policy for this cohort.

■ Young Offenders: Females

Peter Kyle:

[\[155247\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment he has made of the (a) needs and (b) characteristics of girls in the youth justice system.

Peter Kyle:

[\[155248\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps he is taking to improve the evidence base on the experience of girls in the youth justice system.

Lucy Frazer:

The number of girls entering the youth justice system for the first time has fallen by 92% between 2009-10 and 2019-20 (from around 22,400 to around 1,900). The national standards for youth justice guide local authorities' youth offending teams to personalise the approach to each child under their supervision and assess children's individual needs, which will include those relating to gender.

Girls in secure settings form a small but vulnerable cohort, often with complex needs. To develop the evidence base to better support girls in custody, the Youth Custody Service and NHS England and NHS Improvement have commissioned the Centre for Mental Health to review the needs of, and pathways for, girls in the secure estate.

NORTHERN IRELAND

■ Border Communities against Brexit

Stephen Farry:

[\[157335\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, for what reason his Department has not engaged with Border Communities against Brexit.

Mr Robin Walker:

Both the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and I have had and will continue to have regular engagement with a range of individuals, businesses and groups in civic

society across Northern Ireland, including those in border regions, to discuss the impact and opportunities of the UK's exit from the European Union. We have engaged recently with a number of civic society representatives, which includes representatives from rural and border community organisations, to discuss their views and concerns around the Northern Ireland Protocol.

■ Ethnic Groups: Northern Ireland

Carla Lockhart:

[\[153426\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, pursuant to his Answer of 3 September 2020 to Question 78928, on Ethnic Groups: Northern Ireland, what progress has been made on providing funding to (a) establish the Castlereagh Foundation and (b) support academic research through universities and other partners to explore identity and the shifting patterns of social identity in Northern Ireland.

Mr Robin Walker:

The UK Government has provided £2 billion of funding to support the implementation of the New Decade, New Approach deal. £561 million of this has already been allocated. The £2 billion includes a £1bn Barnett-based investment guarantee from the UK Government, which will include significant new funding to turbocharge infrastructure investment.

The UK Government and the Northern Ireland Executive recently agreed the allocation of £40 million of 'unique circumstances' funding as part of our commitment under the New Decade, New Approach agreement.

We are currently working to finalise details of the funding for the Castlereagh Foundation which we will announce in due course. The aim of the Foundation will be to support academic research through universities and other partners to explore identity and the shifting patterns of social identity in Northern Ireland.

PRIME MINISTER

■ Prime Minister: Correspondence

Barbara Keeley:

[\[157989\]](#)

To ask the Prime Minister, when he plans to respond to the the letter dated 3 September 2020 entitled Overdue Social Care Reform Must Start With Parity of Respect for the Workforce, from signatories including former Ministers at the then Department of Health; and if he will make a statement.

Boris Johnson:

My Office has no record of receiving this letter. I have asked my Office to contact the signatories to see if they can re-send the correspondence.

TRANSPORT**■ Air Routes: Coronavirus****Mr Ben Bradshaw:****[154731]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what stimulus package he plans to implement to incentivise new air routes being set up by airlines after strict travel restrictions are eased after the covid-19 outbreak.

Robert Courts:

The Department recognises the severe impact the COVID-19 pandemic has had on travel, and work continues to understand how best the industry can be supported at this time. The Government is working on a strategic framework for the recovery of the sector. It will explore the return to growth of the aviation sector, and will include consideration of workforce and skills, regional connectivity, noise, innovation and regulation, and consumer issues.

Aviation businesses have access to the unprecedented economic support package that the Chancellor has put in place to help businesses to manage the challenges they are facing as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Firms can continue to draw upon the package of measures announced by the Chancellor, including a Bank of England scheme for firms to raise capital, the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme, Time to Pay flexibilities with tax bills, financial support for employees including the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme and VAT deferrals.

In addition to this, the Airport and Ground Operations Support Scheme (AGOSS) opened for applications on 29 January to provide support for eligible commercial airports and ground handlers in England. It will provide support up to the equivalent of their business rates liabilities or COVID-19 losses – whichever is lower – in the 2020/21 financial year, subject to certain conditions and a cap per claimant of £8m.

Margaret Ferrier:**[155091]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he plans to introduce a stimulus package to incentivise new air routes after covid-19 travel restrictions are eased.

Robert Courts:

The Department recognises the severe impact the COVID-19 pandemic has had on travel, and work continues to understand how best the industry can be supported at this time. The Government is working on a strategic framework for the recovery of the sector. It will explore the return to growth of the aviation sector, and will include consideration of workforce and skills, regional connectivity, noise, innovation and regulation, and consumer issues.

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Scheme, Time to Pay flexibilities with tax bills, financial support for employees including the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme and VAT deferrals.

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Gavin Newlands:

[155138]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what plans he has to introduce an economic stimulus package to incentivise new air travel routes to be established after covid-19 travel restrictions are eased.

Robert Courts:

The Department recognises the severe impact the COVID-19 pandemic has had on travel, and work continues to understand how best the industry can be supported at this time. The Government is working on a strategic framework for the recovery of the sector. It will explore the return to growth of the aviation sector, and will include consideration of workforce and skills, regional connectivity, noise, innovation and regulation, and consumer issues.

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■ Aviation

Margaret Ferrier:

[155083]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent assessment his Department has made of the adequacy of the UK's existing regional aviation network.

Robert Courts:

The Government recognises the challenges faced by the aviation sector at this time. It remains committed to supporting regional connectivity across all transport modes, including the importance of maintaining a thriving and competitive aviation sector in UK to deliver connectivity. Through policies like Public Service Obligations the Department for Transport subsidises routes into London.

The Government is working on a strategic framework for the recovery of the sector. It will explore the return to growth of the aviation sector, and will include consideration of workforce and skills, regional connectivity, noise, innovation and regulation, and consumer issues.

In addition, the Union Connectivity Review will make recommendations on how the UK government can level up transport infrastructure and improve connectivity between the four nations, looking at road, rail, air and sea links.

■ Aviation: Coronavirus

Mr Ben Bradshaw:

[\[154720\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many meetings he has had with representatives of the aviation industry to discuss the planned aviation recovery package.

Robert Courts:

Since the onset of the pandemic, the Department for Transport has engaged very regularly with the industry, including through both Ministerial meetings and official led sessions.

As announced on 22nd February as part of the roadmap for the phased lifting of restrictions in England, the Secretary of State for Transport will also now lead a successor to the Global Travel Taskforce to develop a framework that can facilitate greater international travel when the time is right, while still managing the risk from imported cases and variants.

The government is also developing a forward looking strategic framework on the recovery of the sector, which we engage with the industry on and will publish later this year.

Mr Ben Bradshaw:

[\[154724\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment his Department has made of the economic effect of the downturn in the aviation industry as a result of the covid-19 pandemic.

Robert Courts:

Before Covid-19, aviation directly contributed at least £22 billion to GDP to the UK economy and supported around half a million jobs. This included the air transport and aerospace sectors, as well as the wider supply chain. Since the outbreak of Covid-19, the aviation sector has been one of the worst affected sectors in the UK. Passenger numbers at UK airports fell by 99% at the height of the pandemic. Overall volumes of flight traffic in the UK is currently around 80% below equivalent 2019 levels. The air transport sector's contribution to the UK economy dropped by 74% in 2020 compared to 2019 and tens of thousands of redundancy notifications have been made. In addition to the direct impact to the UK air transport sector, the wider supply-chain and economy has also been adversely impacted by the severe reduction in air passenger demand, jobs and air connectivity, with impacts on consumer spending and investment across the rest of the economy.

The Department recognises the severe impact the COVID-19 pandemic has had on travel, and work continues to understand how best the industry can be supported at this time. The Government is working on a strategic framework for the recovery of the sector. It will explore the return to growth of the aviation sector, and will include consideration of workforce and skills, regional connectivity, noise, innovation and regulation, and consumer issues.

Aviation businesses have access to the unprecedented economic support package that the Chancellor has put in place to help businesses to manage the challenges they are facing as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In addition to this, the Airport and Ground Operations Support Scheme (AGOSS) opened for applications on 29 January to provide support for eligible commercial airports and ground handlers in England.

Through the Global Travel Taskforce, the Government will work closely with the industry to find ways to safely and gradually ease restrictions on international travel. We will set out more detail on this soon.

Mr Ben Bradshaw:

[154730]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the Office for National Statistics release, Coronavirus and the impact on output in the UK economy: December 2020, published on 12 February 2021, what assessment his Department has made of the benefits to economic recovery of an aviation recovery package.

Robert Courts:

Before Covid-19, aviation directly contributed at least £22 billion GDP to the UK economy and supported around half a million jobs. This included the air transport and aerospace sectors, as well as the wider supply chain. Since the outbreak of Covid-19, the aviation sector has been one of the worst affected sectors in the UK. Passenger numbers at UK airports fell by 99% at the height of the pandemic. Overall volumes of flight traffic in the UK is currently around 80% below equivalent 2019 levels. The air transport sector's contribution to the UK economy dropped by 75% in 2020 compared to 2019.

The Department recognises the severe impact the Covid-19 pandemic has had on travel, and work continues to understand how best the industry can be supported at this time. The Government is working on a strategic framework for the recovery of the sector. It will explore the return to growth of the aviation sector, and will include consideration of workforce and skills, regional connectivity, noise, innovation and regulation, and consumer issues.

In addition, through the Global Travel Taskforce, the Government will work closely with the industry to find ways to safely and gradually ease restrictions on international travel. We will set out more detail on this soon.

Margaret Ferrier:

[155086]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment his Department has made on the effect of the severe downturn in the aviation industry due to the covid-19 outbreak on the wider economy.

Robert Courts:

Before Covid-19, aviation directly contributed at least £22 billion to GDP to the UK economy and supported around half a million jobs. This included the air transport and aerospace sectors, as well as the wider supply chain. Since the outbreak of Covid-19, the aviation sector has been one of the worst affected sectors in the UK. Passenger numbers at UK airports fell by 99% at the height of the pandemic. Overall volumes of flight traffic in the UK is currently around 80% below equivalent 2019 levels. The air transport sector's contribution to the UK economy dropped by 74% in 2020 compared to 2019 and tens of thousands of redundancy notifications have been made. In addition to the direct impact to the UK air transport sector, the wider supply-chain and economy has also been adversely impacted by the severe reduction in air passenger demand, jobs and air connectivity, with impacts on consumer spending and investment across the rest of the economy.

The Department recognises the severe impact the COVID-19 pandemic has had on travel, and work continues to understand how best the industry can be supported at this time. The Government is working on a strategic framework for the recovery of the sector. It will explore the return to growth of the aviation sector, and will include consideration of workforce and skills, regional connectivity, noise, innovation and regulation, and consumer issues.

Aviation businesses have access to the unprecedented economic support package that the Chancellor has put in place to help businesses to manage the challenges they are facing as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In addition to this, the Airport and Ground Operations Support Scheme (AGOSS) opened for applications on 29 January to provide support for eligible commercial airports and ground handlers in England.

Through the Global Travel Taskforce, the Government will work closely with the industry to find ways to safely and gradually ease restrictions on international travel. We will set out more detail on this soon.

Gavin Newlands:

[155134]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment his Department has made of the effect of the severe downturn in the aviation industry due to the covid-19 outbreak on the wider economy.

Robert Courts:

Before Covid-19, aviation directly contributed at least £22 billion to GDP to the UK economy and supported around half a million jobs. This included the air transport and aerospace sectors, as well as the wider supply chain. Since the outbreak of Covid-19, the aviation sector has been one of the worst affected sectors in the UK. Passenger

numbers at UK airports fell by 99% at the height of the pandemic. Overall volumes of flight traffic in the UK is currently around 80% below equivalent 2019 levels. The air transport sector's contribution to the UK economy dropped by 74% in 2020 compared to 2019 and tens of thousands of redundancy notifications have been made. In addition to the direct impact to the UK air transport sector, the wider supply-chain and economy has also been adversely impacted by the severe reduction in air passenger demand, jobs and air connectivity, with impacts on consumer spending and investment across the rest of the economy.

The Department recognises the severe impact the COVID-19 pandemic has had on travel, and work continues to understand how best the industry can be supported at this time. The Government is working on a strategic framework for the recovery of the sector. It will explore the return to growth of the aviation sector, and will include consideration of workforce and skills, regional connectivity, noise, innovation and regulation, and consumer issues.

Aviation businesses have access to the unprecedented economic support package that the Chancellor has put in place to help businesses to manage the challenges they are facing as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In addition to this, the Airport and Ground Operations Support Scheme (AGOSS) opened for applications on 29 January to provide support for eligible commercial airports and ground handlers in England.

In addition, through the Global Travel Taskforce, the Government will work closely with the industry to find ways to safely and gradually ease restrictions on international travel. We will set out more detail on this soon.

Mr Ben Bradshaw:

[156248]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to ACI Europe's 2020 Airport Industry Connectivity Report published in December 2020, what assessment his Department has made of the effect of the collapse of the UK's regional aviation network on the number of (a) air routes lost between the UK and Europe and (b) redundancies among aviation companies in the UK.

Robert Courts:

The Government recognises the challenges faced by the aviation sector at this time. The Government is committed to maintaining critical connectivity and through policies like Public Service Obligations the Department for Transport subsidises routes into London.

The Government is keen to find ways to work closely with the industry to ease restrictions on international travel gradually and sustainably. The Secretary of State for Transport will lead a successor to the Global Travel Taskforce to develop a framework that can facilitate greater travel when the time is right, while still managing the risk from imported cases and variants.

The Government is working on a strategic framework for the recovery of the sector. It will explore the return to growth of the aviation sector, and will include consideration

of workforce and skills, regional connectivity, noise, innovation and regulation, and consumer issues.

Rachel Hopkins:

[\[156659\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many meetings he has had with representatives of the aviation industry to discuss the planned Aviation Recovery Package.

Robert Courts:

Since the onset of the pandemic, the Department for Transport has engaged very regularly with the industry, including through both Ministerial meetings and official led sessions.

As announced on 22nd February as part of the roadmap for the phased lifting of restrictions in England, the Secretary of State for Transport will also now lead a successor to the Global Travel Taskforce to develop a framework that can facilitate greater international travel when the time is right, while still managing the risk from imported cases and variants.

The government is also developing a forward looking strategic framework on the recovery of the sector, which we will engage with the industry on and will publish later this year.

Rachel Hopkins:

[\[156660\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the effect on the wider economy of the downturn in the aviation industry as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Robert Courts:

Before Covid-19, aviation directly contributed at least £22 billion to GDP to the UK economy and supported around half a million jobs. This included the air transport and aerospace sectors, as well as the wider supply chain. Since the outbreak of Covid-19, the aviation sector has been one of the worst affected sectors in the UK. Passenger numbers at UK airports fell by 99% at the height of the pandemic. Overall volumes of flight traffic in the UK is currently around 80% below equivalent 2019 levels. The air transport sector's contribution to the UK economy dropped by 74% in 2020 compared to 2019 and tens of thousands of redundancy notifications have been made. In addition to the direct impact to the UK air transport sector, the wider supply-chain and economy has also been adversely impacted by the severe reduction in air passenger demand, jobs and air connectivity, with impacts on consumer spending and investment across the rest of the economy.

The Department recognises the severe impact the COVID-19 pandemic has had on travel, and work continues to understand how best the industry can be supported at this time. The Government is working on a strategic framework for the recovery of the sector. It will explore the return to growth of the aviation sector, and will include consideration of workforce and skills, regional connectivity, noise, innovation and regulation, and consumer issues.

Aviation businesses have access to the unprecedented economic support package that the Chancellor has put in place to help businesses to manage the challenges they are facing as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In addition to this, the Airport and Ground Operations Support Scheme (AGOSS) opened for applications on 29 January to provide support for eligible commercial airports and ground handlers in England.

Sarah Owen:

[157310]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he plans to publish an aviation recovery plan alongside the Global Taskforce's report on 12 April.

Robert Courts:

As announced on 22nd February as part of the roadmap for the phased lifting of restrictions in England, the Secretary of State for Transport will also now lead a successor to the Global Travel Taskforce to develop a framework that can facilitate greater international travel when the time is right, while still managing the risk from imported cases and variants.

The government is also developing a forward looking strategic framework on the recovery of the sector, which will explore the return to growth of the aviation sector, which will include consideration of workforce and skills, regional connectivity, noise, innovation and regulation, and consumer issues. We will also consider climate change and decarbonisation. We aim to publish this framework later this year.

■ Aviation: Taxation

Patrick Grady:

[155143]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of introducing a frequent flyer levy.

Robert Courts:

The Government has committed to consult on aviation tax reform. Due to the impact of Covid-19, we have delayed the publication of this consultation. Aviation must play its part in delivering the UK's net zero commitment and we will be publishing a separate consultation on a net zero aviation strategy in the coming months. We have no plans to bring forward a frequent flyer levy.

■ Bus Services: Concessions

Julian Sturdy:

[156373]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of expanding the English national concessionary travel scheme to enable eligible people to travel on bus services prior to 9:30am.

Rachel Maclean:

Under the terms of The English National Concessionary Travel Scheme a holder of a concessionary bus pass is able to travel between 09.30am and 11.00pm on weekdays and all day at weekends and on Bank Holidays

Local authorities in England have the power to offer additional local concessions, such as extending the hours of the concession, and three quarters of authorities already do so.

This area is kept under review. The English National Concessionary Travel Scheme costs around £1 billion annually so any changes, such as extending the concession to include morning peak time travel, would need to be carefully considered for their impact on the scheme's financial sustainability.

■ **Bus Services: Local Restrictions Support Grant**

Grahame Morris:

[\[158014\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will hold discussions with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on the potential merits of including the coach industry within the Additional Restrictions Support Grant.

Rachel Maclean:

Additional Restrictions Grant funding is intended to support businesses that are not legally required to close, but which are nonetheless experiencing a severe impact on their business due to the national lockdown. Some local authorities have provided coach operators with Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG) funding. However, allocation of ARG funding is at local authorities' discretion.

■ **Commuters: Railways**

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[158175\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he has any plans to incentivise commuters to travel by train once covid-19 lockdown restrictions are lifted.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The Department will continue to work closely with industry on initiatives to support demand and revenue recovery when the time is right, including actively working with train operators to develop a solution that offers better value and convenience for those who commute flexibly.

In line with the roadmap to recovery outlined by the Prime Minister on 22 February the advice until the second phase of the recovery will be to 'minimise travel'. These are unprecedented times and our immediate focus must be on ensuring that we keep the railway available and safe for those who need to rely upon it.

■ **Department for Transport: Lost Working Days**

Grahame Morris:

[\[157082\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what the Average Working Days Lost was for (a) female and (b) male civil servants in his Department in the calendar year (i) 2019 and (ii) 2020.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The table below shows the average working days lost split as requested above.

2019

	MCA	VCA	DVSA	DVLA	DfTc
Male	6.77	2.96	8.74	7.76	2.9
Female	9.44	5.55	12.45	11.02	3.9

2020

	MCA	VCA	DVSA	DVLA	DfTc
Male	4.77	2.58	5.24	6.22	2.4
Female	6.46	5.66	7.42	9.93	3.9

Grahame Morris:**[157083]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what the Average Working Days Lost was for civil servants in his Department (a) from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic backgrounds and (b) recording themselves as White in the calendar year (i) 2019 and (ii) 2020.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The table below shows the average working days lost split as requested above.

2019

	MCA	VCA	DVSA	DVLA	DfTc
BAME	4.46	Not Available	9.08	7.45	3.5
White	7.92	Not Available	9.78	9.78	2.8
Not Declared	8.37	Not Available	9.98	Not available	4.2

2020

	MCA	VCA	DVSA	DVLA	DfTc
BAME	4	Not Available	6.47	9.33	3.3
White	5.51	Not Available	6.04	8.09	2.2
Not Declared	5.69	Not Available	5.33	Not available	4.7

Grahame Morris:

[\[157084\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what the Average Working Days Lost was for civil servants in his Department aged (a) 30 and younger, (b) 30 to 50, (c) 50 to 60 and (d) over 60 in the calendar year (i) 2019 and (ii) 2020.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The table below shows the average working days lost split as requested above.

2019

	MCA	VCA	DVSA	DVLA	DfT	c
30 and Younger	8.71	3.54	8.34	10.13	1.5	
30-50	6.66	4.6	8.05	9.4	3.1	
50-60	7.39	1.44	9.47	8.95	4.1	
Over 60	13.2	4.35	15.13	12.24	10.7	

2020

	MCA	VCA	DVSA	DVLA	DfT	c
30 and Younger	3.64	1.47	5.96	9.42	2.1	
30-50	5.58	4.39	4.98	7.75	2.8	
50-60	5.56	2.8	5.1	7.55	3.9	
Over 60	7.03	4.33	9.5	12.34	6.7	

Grahame Morris:

[\[157085\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what the Average Working Days Lost was for civil servants in his Department (a) who have declared themselves as having a disability and (b) who have not declared themselves to have a disability in the calendar year (i) 2019 and (ii) 2020.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The table below shows the average working days lost split as requested above.

2019

	MCA	VCA	DVSA	DVLA	DfT	c
Declared Disabled	16.8	Not Available	19.37	18.3	11.9	
Not Declared Disabled	7.14	Not Available	8.56	8.28	2.9	

2019

2020

	MCA	VCA	DVSA	DVLA	DfT	c
Declared Disabled	11.24	Not Available	11.92	12.95	7.5	
Not Declared Disabled	5.04	Not Available	5.16	7.14	2.8	

■ Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency: Remote Working

Grahame Morris:

[\[158241\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will publish the Deloitte report on options for DVLA staff to work from home.

Rachel Maclean:

The Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) has thoroughly reviewed its processes and systems, using both internal and external expertise, and understands the limitations and opportunities for where there is scope for enabling more operational staff to work from home. Any reports which contain information relating to the DVLA's IT systems are not routinely placed in the public domain due to security requirements.

■ Driving Licences: Internet

Peter Grant:

[\[157213\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to resolve the interface issues between the DVLA and Her Majesty's Passport Office which is preventing driving licences being renewed online for applicants without a digital passport signature, as detailed in the DVLA's letter to the hon. member for Glenrothes of 17 February 2021.

Rachel Maclean:

Since 2017, Her Majesty's Passport Office (HMPO) changed its processes so that the passport holder's signature is no longer collected when a passport application is made. Where digital signatures are already held by HMPO, the customer will be able to continue with the online driving licence application process.

The Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency is currently developing a new system which will allow customers to upload their own signatures. This is due to be launched later this year.

■ East-West Rail Link

Richard Fuller:

[\[154920\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what the latest cost estimates are for each phase of the East West Rail project; and how those costs compare with the cost estimates first submitted for each phase of the project to the Treasury.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

Connection Stage One of East West Rail, enabling services from Oxford to Milton Keynes, was originally part of the 'Western Section Phase 2' of the programme before it was configured into Connection Stages. In the Phase 2 Outline Business Case submitted HM Treasury in 2019, the Anticipated Final Costs for Phase 2 were estimated at £1.1bn.

The current Anticipated Final Cost of Connection Stage One outlined in its Full Business Case is £1.3bn.

Plans, including costs for the other connection stages are at an early stage of maturity and still in development. We will release further details in due course.

■ Eurostar

Paul Maynard:

[\[157062\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to ensure support for cross-Channel Eurostar services.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

Ministers and officials, working with other Government Departments, have engaged extensively with Eurostar since March 2020 in relation to their financial situation and to help the company access Government support schemes where it is eligible and appropriate. We will continue to engage, at both official and Ministerial level, with Eurostar and the French government regarding Eurostar's financial situation and any potential support proposals.

We will also work with the international travel industry, including Eurostar, through the relaunch of the Global Travel Taskforce and as we look to support the restart of wider international travel when it is safe to do so.

Patrick Grady:

[\[158107\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the role of the Eurostar service in reducing the climate impact of travel between the UK and mainland Europe.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The Government recognises that high-speed international rail services provide major benefits for UK and European citizens and businesses, including associated environmental benefits.

The overwhelming majority of passengers travelling between London and Paris or Brussels now choose to do so by rail, as opposed to by air, given the significant

journey time and environmental benefits rail offers. Industry figures indicate emissions by international rail are significantly lower than the equivalent short-haul flight.

The Government fully supports the continued growth and expansion of our international rail links, such as the launch of a direct return service between London and Amsterdam last year, with the associated environmental benefits this will provide.

■ **Eurostar: Coronavirus**

Patrick Grady: [\[158106\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions he has had with Eurostar International Limited on the effect of the covid-19 pandemic on the future of the service.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

Ministers and officials, working with other Government Departments, have engaged extensively with Eurostar since March 2020 in relation to their financial situation to help the company access Government support schemes where it is eligible and appropriate. We will continue to engage, at both official and Ministerial level, with Eurostar and the French government regarding the continuing impact of COVID-19 on Eurostar and on any potential financial support proposals.

We will also work with the international travel industry, including Eurostar, through the relaunch of the Global Travel Taskforce and as we look to support the restart of wider international travel when it is safe to do so.

■ **Freight: Offices**

Kerry McCarthy: [\[157026\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on providing financial support to UK haulage firms to set up bases in the EU in response to the introduction of haulage movement restrictions under the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement.

Rachel Maclean:

The Department for Transport has regular discussions with colleagues across Whitehall on this issue, as well as direct engagement with the road haulage sector to help them adapt to the new rules under the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA). It is not, however, a matter for the Department for Transport to provide assistance or guidance to businesses to establish offices outside the UK.

■ **Large Goods Vehicles: Kent**

Kerry McCarthy: [\[157970\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what estimate he has made of the number of penalties issued to Heavy Goods Vehicle drivers who have not secured a valid Kent Access Permit since the 1 January 2021.

Rachel Maclean:

There have been 1701 penalties issued to Heavy Goods Vehicle drivers who have not secured a valid Kent Access Permit since the 1 January 2021, up to and including the 24 February 2021.

■ Motor Vehicles: Insurance**Mr Gregory Campbell:**[\[157023\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he plans to exempt the UK from the implications of the EU Motor Insurance Directive apply in Northern Ireland.

Rachel Maclean:

Prior to the end of the transition period, the UK as a whole was obliged to comply with the 2009 EU Motor Insurance Directive. Now that the transition period has ended the UK is free to create its own laws and Ministers are currently collectively considering how motor insurance might be improved in GB – that is England, Wales and Scotland. Motor insurance is transferred to Northern Ireland, meaning that Northern Ireland has full legislative powers over this matter.

■ Motor Vehicles: Technology**Kerry McCarthy:**[\[157973\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the Law Commission's consultation on automated vehicles, which closes on 18 March 2021, whether his Department plans to wait for the conclusions of that consultation before listing Automated Lane Keeping Systems as a form of self-driving.

Rachel Maclean:

Until the Automated & Electric Vehicles Act 2018 has been commenced in April 2021, it is not possible to list any vehicle as automated. The Department for Transport sought views on the approach for listing in its August 2020 Call for Evidence. The Department will announce next steps and an approach for making decisions on listing in the Spring. However, the Department is not aware of any vehicle currently available that could be listed under the Act in the UK.

Kerry McCarthy:[\[157974\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he made of the consumer education requirements that will be required to ensure that drivers using Automated Lane Keeping System technology (ALKS) (a) understand the limitations of that technology and (b) are aware of their responsibilities when using ALKS vehicles.

Rachel Maclean:

The Government is clear that drivers must be properly educated so they understand their responsibilities as well as the limitations of ALKS technology in their vehicle to ensure its safe use. The Department for Transport carried out a Call for Evidence last summer seeking views on rules to ensure safe use of ALKS. The Department will be working closely with the Driver & Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) to communicate

these rules using the Highway Code, and with manufacturers to ensure there are clear messages about system capability and materials to understand how to use it.

■ **Motorcycles: Driving Instruction**

Lloyd Russell-Moyle: [158158]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what equality impact assessment his Department has undertaken on the effect on people whose two-year deadline for Compulsory Basic Training has expired during the covid-19 outbreak.

Rachel Maclean:

No assessment has been made. The two-year validity period of a Compulsory Basic Training (CBT) certificate, which is set out in legislation, is in place to ensure learner moped and motorcycle riders can ride safely on their own, with L-plates, while they practise for a full moped or motorcycle test.

Mobile emergency workers who hold a valid CBT certificate are able to take a motorcycle test during the current restrictions if put forward by their employer.

■ **Public Health Act 1925 and Towns Improvement Clauses Act 1847**

Tracy Brabin: [157233]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the implementation of (a) Sections 64 and 65 of the Towns Improvement Clauses Act 1847 and (b) Sections 17-19 of the Public Health Act 1925.

Tracy Brabin: [157234]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the regulation of (a) street names and (b) house numbering to allow (i) delivery drivers and (ii) emergency workers to find properties, and if he will make a statement.

Rachel Maclean:

The Department has made no such assessment. The design and location of street name signs and property numbering are matters for local authorities. The Department has published guidance for local authorities in Circular Roads 3/93 'Street Name Plates and the Numbering of Premises'.

Circular 3/93 is available at:

www.gov.uk/government/publications/roads-circulars

■ **Railways and Roads: Carbon Emissions**

Kerry McCarthy: [157972]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of reviewing the 2014 national policy statement on national networks in the context of the Government's 2050 net zero target.

Rachel Maclean:

Any need for changes to the National Policy Statement for National Networks (NNNPS) in relation to developments in policy and future transport demand are kept under consideration by the Department. The Secretary of State is content that the NNNPS is compliant with the Government's 2050 net zero target.

Railways: Concessions**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**[\[158174\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he plans to extend the validity of railcards purchased before or during the covid-19 pandemic to take into account potential journey savings lost for cardholders.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The Department recognises that Railcard holders have been unable to use their cards whilst travel restrictions are in place in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and Railcard holders have not been able to benefit to the fullest extent over recent months.

However, many passengers are able to recover the cost of their Railcard in a single trip over the period of validity of their Railcard. Having carefully considered the situation, we are not discussing the prospects of offering refunds or extensions for Railcard users.

Railways: Repairs and Maintenance**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**[\[158164\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department has taken with rail operators to inform key workers travelling by rail of forthcoming engineering works to avoid disruption.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

In line with the roadmap to recovery outlined by the Prime Minister on 22 February the advice over the Easter weekend will be to 'minimise travel'. Nonetheless, Network Rail have already taken extensive steps to keep disruption to a minimum whilst carrying out essential maintenance and upgrade work. Passengers that do need to travel should check their journeys in advance. Details of how work will affect passengers' journeys are already available on the National Rail and operators' websites.

River Thames: Shipping**Mr Barry Sheerman:**[\[154758\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions he has had with the (a) Mayor of London, (b) Transport for London and (c) the Port of London Authority on encouraging the use of 100 per cent renewable diesel by scheduled Thames passenger services and other commercial river traffic.

Rachel Maclean:

The responsibility for transport in London is devolved to the Mayor of London and Transport for London, and the Thames in London is managed by the Port of London Authority.

Officials have regular discussions with the Port of London Authority on environmental issues, these have focused on advanced fuels such as hydrogen and ammonia, as well as the use of battery electric vessels to address both air pollution and decarbonisation.

■ **Road Traffic Control****Fay Jones:****[154589]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the importance of advertising Traffic Regulation Orders in local newspapers to (a) the elderly and vulnerable, (b) other local residents and (c) local media organisations.

Rachel Maclean:

The most recent assessments we have made about Traffic Regulation Orders are in two reports. The first discovery research report was published in 2019 and laid the foundations for the second report available here:

www.gov.uk/government/publications/traffic-regulation-orders-identifying-improvements-to-the-legislative-process-in-england.

Each of these reports considered the impacts on different groups of potential improvements to the legislative process.

The Department plans to consult on proposed reforms to Traffic Regulation Orders more generally later in 2021. An Impact Assessment will accompany this consultation.

■ **Roads: Construction****Kerry McCarthy:****[157971]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent assessment his Department has made of the environmental effect of the planned expansion of England's road network.

Rachel Maclean:

The Government is investing record amounts in our road network. This is essential to supporting the journeys made by all road users and to keeping the economy moving. This investment is about keeping our roads in good condition through proper maintenance and renewals so that they remain safe and efficient. Any new enhancements to the network have to be rigorously assessed and go through the full statutory procedures, including necessary consultations and environmental assessments.

■ Shipping: Biofuels

Mr Barry Sheerman:

[\[154759\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to his Department's Clean Air Strategy, what discussions he has had with the (a) Mayor of London, (b) Transport for London and (c) the Port of London Authority on encouraging the use of 100 per cent renewable diesel by scheduled Thames passenger services and other commercial river traffic.

Rachel Maclean:

The responsibility for transport in London is devolved to the Mayor of London and Transport for London, and the Thames in London is managed by the Port of London Authority.

Officials have regular discussions with the Port of London Authority on environmental issues, these have focused on advanced fuels such as hydrogen and ammonia, as well as the use of battery electric vessels to address both air pollution and decarbonisation.

■ Shipping: Pollution

Mr Barry Sheerman:

[\[154760\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what progress has been made on granting the Mayor of London new powers to tackle non-road pollution sources including those on the Thames from scheduled passenger boats and commercial river traffic which still predominantly rely on fossil-based diesel.

Rachel Maclean:

The responsibility for transport in London and environmental planning is devolved to the Mayor of London and Transport for London. Officials have regular discussions with TfL on environmental issues.

■ Traffic Lights: Artificial Intelligence

John Spellar:

[\[154741\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to integrate artificial intelligence into traffic light systems.

Rachel Maclean:

The operation of traffic signal systems and the employment of new technologies is a matter for individual highway authorities and the traffic equipment supplier community. However, the Department is working with the Cabinet Office GovTech Challenge programme to fund public / private consortia to undertake trials of the use of artificial intelligence in the management of congestion, and these trials are developing various forms of artificial intelligence to enhance existing urban traffic control services.

■ Travel Restrictions: Coronavirus**Stephen Farry:** [\[156639\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what criteria his Department uses for assessing which countries should be placed on the red list travel ban during the covid-19 pandemic.

Robert Courts:

The decision to introduce travel bans for countries on the red list is in direct response to scientific and medical data, which represents an increased risk to UK public health and an increased risk of community transmission of the new COVID-19 variants identified in other countries. These are intended to be temporary measures and the government keeps data for countries and territories under constant review.

The government has made it consistently clear that it will take decisive action to contain the virus, including adding further countries to the red list if the public health risk of people returning from a particular country without self-isolating becomes too high.

Sarah Owen: [\[157309\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what criteria the Global Taskforce plans to use to make its decision on the plans to open up international travel during the covid-19 pandemic.

Robert Courts:

As announced by the Prime Minister on 22 February, The Global Travel Taskforce is an important step in exploring how we can safely reopen international travel. It will develop a framework that can facilitate greater travel when the time is right, while managing the risk from imported cases and variants.

It will look to take a risk-based approach, making use of the suite of measures the Government already has in place such as testing (pre-departure testing and Test to Release) and self-isolation, as well as the recommendations from the first Global Travel Taskforce last year.

The Government will engage with stakeholders across the international travel sector to develop this work, in a similar way to the first Global Travel Taskforce last November, and will work at pace to report to the Prime Minister by 12 April. Further detail on the Taskforce and its plans will be shared shortly.

■ Travel: Coronavirus**Bell Ribeiro-Addy:** [\[156566\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will (a) set a timescale for the reopening of UK borders specifically for people separated from their partners and families and (b) immediately allow British Citizens in relationships regardless of marital status and family members regardless of age or marital status an exemption to the current covid-19 pandemic international travel restrictions.

Robert Courts:

The decision to introduce enhanced border measures is in direct response to scientific and medical data, which represents an increased risk to UK public health and an increased risk of community transmission of the new COVID-19 variants identified in other countries. These are intended to be temporary measures and the government keeps data for countries and territories under constant review.

The government has made it consistently clear that it will take decisive action to contain the virus, including adding further countries to the red list if the public health risk of people returning from a particular country without self-isolating becomes too high.

There are an extremely limited number of exemptions from enhanced border measures, and only introduced where absolutely necessary for reasons of national importance. Exemptions from enhanced border measures are set out on Gov.uk and are kept under regular review.

Rachel Hopkins:[\[156661\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what forecasts his Department has made for recovery and growth in the air transport and travel sector.

Robert Courts:

DfT has not produced economic forecasts of recovery and growth in the air transport or travel sectors. DfT maintain a capability to produce a range of passenger demand *scenarios*, reflecting the uncertainty surrounding the potential shape of recovery, for internal use.

The Department recognises the severe impact the COVID-19 pandemic has had on travel, and work continues to understand how best the industry can be supported at this time. The Government is working on a strategic framework for the recovery of the sector. It will explore the return to growth of the aviation sector, and will include consideration of workforce and skills, regional connectivity, noise, innovation and regulation, and consumer issues.

Aviation businesses have access to the unprecedented economic support package that the Chancellor has put in place to help businesses to manage the challenges they are facing as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In addition to this, the Airport and Ground Operations Support Scheme (AGOSS) opened for applications on 29 January to provide support for eligible commercial airports and ground handlers in England.

Through the Global Travel Taskforce, the Government will work closely with the industry to find ways to safely and gradually ease restrictions on international travel. We will set out more detail on this soon.

TREASURY■ **Alcoholic Drinks: VAT****Alberto Costa:**[\[155161\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of reducing VAT on sales of alcohol to support the pub industry.

Jesse Norman:

The temporary reduced rate of VAT was introduced on 15 July to support the cash flow and viability of over 150,000 businesses and protect 2.4 million jobs in the hospitality and tourism sectors, and is due to run until 31 March 2021.

The Government has also announced a significant support package to help businesses from a whole range of sectors through the winter months, which includes an extension of the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, an extension of the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme grant, and an extension of the application window for the Government-backed loan schemes. Alcohol duty was frozen at Budget 2020 to help pubs and the alcoholic drinks sector.

The Government keeps all taxes under review, and any future tax decisions will be made at Budget.

■ **Aviation: Coronavirus****Gavin Newlands:**[\[155136\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on the potential merits of introducing an aviation recovery package.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Chancellor regularly discusses a wide range of matters related to economic recovery with Cabinet colleagues.

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. In addition to economy-wide measures such as the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, the aerospace sector and its aviation customers are being supported with almost £11 billion made available through loan guarantees, support for exporters, the Bank of England's Covid Corporate Financing Facility and grants for research and development. This includes £8bn of guarantees provided by UK Export Finance.

In addition, the Airport and Ground Operations Support Scheme launched on 29 January 2021 will provide support for eligible businesses, up to the equivalent of their business rates liabilities in the 2020/21 financial year, subject to certain conditions and a cap per claimant of £8m. This will help companies with their fixed costs and could unlock shareholder and lender support.

■ Bank Services: Fees and Charges

Fleur Anderson:

[\[158226\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of reducing the bank overdraft penalty rate for the remainder of the covid-19 outbreak.

John Glen:

The pricing of financial products, including the interest rates charged on overdrafts, remains a commercial decision for firms and the Government does not seek to intervene in such decisions.

In April 2020, in response to the Covid-19 pandemic, the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) announced a series of temporary proposals to provide emergency support for consumer credit customers who were facing short-term cash flow problems as a result of the Covid-19 outbreak. On overdrafts, firms were expected to provide up to £500 interest free buffer for customers, if requested, and make sure that customers did not see increased overdraft fees.

In September 2020, the FCA announced updated guidance to ensure that firms continued to provide tailored support for users of consumer credit and overdraft products who continue to face payment difficulties due to Covid-19. Where a customer needs further support, firms are expected to use measures such as reducing or waiving interest, agreeing a programme of staged reductions in the overdraft limit, or supporting customers to reduce their overdraft usage by transferring the debt.

■ Banks and Building Societies: Closures

Alex Davies-Jones:

[\[158231\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent assessment he has made of the effect of the Access to Banking Protocol on preventing bank and building society branch closures.

Alex Davies-Jones:

[\[158232\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make an estimate of the number of high street bank branches that have closed in (a) England and (b) Wales in each year since 2015.

Alex Davies-Jones:

[\[158233\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on the potential merits of introducing legislative proposals to help protect access for consumers to local banking services.

John Glen:

The Treasury does not make assessments of the bank and building society branch network. In 2018, the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) undertook an analysis of

branch closures as part of its Strategic Review of Retail Banking Business Models. This analysis can be found in Annex 1 of the final report.

The decision to close a branch is a commercial issue for banks and building societies and the Government does not intervene in these decisions. However, the Government does believe it is important the impact on communities is understood, considered and mitigated where possible. That is why the Government continues to be very supportive of the Access to Banking Standard (formerly the Access to Banking Protocol) which commits firms to ensure customers are well informed about branch closures, the bank's reasons for closure and options for continued access to banking services. These include the Post Office, which allows 95% of business and 99% of personal banking customers to carry out their everyday banking at 11,500 Post Office branches across the UK.

In September 2020, the FCA published guidance setting out its expectation of firms when they are deciding to reduce their physical branches or the number of free-to-use ATMs. Firms are expected to carefully consider the impact of a planned closure on their customers' everyday banking and cash access needs, and other relevant branch services and consider possible alternative access arrangements.

■ Beer: Excise Duties

Sarah Olney: [158151]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if his Department will make an assessment of the (a) effect of the small brewers relief scheme on the survival and growth of the UK's small independent breweries and (b) potential merits of extending the scheme.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Government is currently reviewing the Small Brewers Relief scheme. A technical consultation was published in January as the latest stage of this review, seeking feedback from brewers on changes to the scheme. Further announcements will be made after the technical consultation closes on 4 April 2021.

■ Beer: Small Businesses

Andrew Rosindell: [154836]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent assessment he has made of the number of jobs created by the brewing sector compared with the (a) wine and (b) spirits sectors.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) publishes its yearly Business Register and Employment Survey (BRES) which provides annual employee and employment estimates for Great Britain and UK split by sectors. You can see the latest published data from November 2020 at:

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/datasets/industry235digitsicbusinessregisterandemploymentsurveybrestable2>.

It estimates that in 2019 in Great Britain there were 45,900 employees that were employed in the manufacturing of beverages. There were an estimated 16,600 employees that were employed in the manufacturing of beer. This compares to 1,300 in the manufacturing of wine, and 10,800 in distilling, rectifying and blending spirits.

■ **British Private Equity and Venture Capital Association**

Daisy Cooper:

[156576]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many meetings he has had with (a) The British Private Equity and (b) Venture Capital Association, since 1 March 2020.

John Glen:

Treasury Ministers and officials have meetings with a wide variety of organisations in the public and private sectors as part of the process of policy development and delivery.

Details of ministerial and permanent secretary meetings with external organisations on departmental business are published on a quarterly basis and are available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/hmt-ministers-meetings-hospitality-giftsand-overseas-travel>

■ **Buildings: VAT Zero Rating**

Neil Coyle:

[155066]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of introducing a zero-rating of VAT on remedial fire safety works to buildings.

Jesse Norman:

Under qualifying circumstances, the supply of fire safety equipment is already eligible for VAT relief when provided alongside the construction and renovation of residential or charitable buildings.

VAT plays an important part in funding public services such as the NHS and education. Extending the zero-rate could carry a significant cost to the Exchequer and must be viewed in the context of about £50 billion of requests for relief from VAT since the EU referendum. The Government keeps all taxes under review.

■ **Business: Coventry**

Colleen Fletcher:

[158076]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent assessment he has made of the adequacy of financial support schemes for businesses in (a) Coventry North East constituency and (b) Coventry during the covid-19 outbreak.

Kemi Badenoch:

Throughout this crisis, the government has sought to protect people's jobs and livelihoods while also supporting businesses and public services across the UK, including in Coventry. To do this, the government has put in place an economic

package of support which will provide businesses and individuals with certainty over the coming months, even as measures to prevent further spread of the virus change. The government has spent over £280 billion this year to provide this support. Despite this, we must recognise that it will not be possible to preserve every job or business indefinitely, or stand in the way of the economy adapting and people finding new jobs or starting new businesses.

Businesses in Coventry which are forced to close can claim grants of up to £3,000 per month, based on their rateable value, through the Local Restrictions Support Grant (Closed). They can also claim a one-off grant of up to £9,000, in addition to the monthly grant. Businesses in Coventry which are not able to receive these grants for closed businesses may be able to benefit from the Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG). We recently increased the funding available under this scheme to £1.6 billion across England. It is up to each local authority to determine eligibility for this scheme based on their assessment of local economic need; however, we encourage local authorities to support businesses which have been impacted by COVID-19 restrictions, but which are ineligible for the other grant schemes.

Businesses are also able to access the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS), which was introduced to help employers whose operations have been affected by COVID-19 retain their employees and protect the UK economy. All businesses across the UK can access the scheme, which will run until the end of April 2021, with employees receiving 80% of their usual salary for hours not worked, up to £2,500 per month. As at 31 January, provisional statistics show that there were about 7,300 employments furloughed in the Coventry North East constituency, representing a roughly 12% take up rate among eligible employments.

Businesses across the UK have also received billions in loans, tax deferrals, Business Rates relief, and general and sector-specific grants. Individuals and families have benefited from increased welfare payments, enhanced Statutory Sick Pay, a stay on repossession proceedings and mortgage holidays.

Throughout the pandemic, HM Treasury has recognised the importance of engaging with businesses and their representative organisations. The discussions that have resulted have been of immense value to our efforts to respond effectively, at pace, to these challenges. HM Treasury continues to engage with businesses and business groups on a regular basis in order to better understand the impact the pandemic is having and to develop approaches that deliver the best outcomes for the country.

■ Business: VAT

Fay Jones:

[155391]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of deferring the VAT payments due by 31 March 2021 for businesses worst affected by the covid-19 lockdown restrictions.

Jesse Norman:

Approximately 600,000 payments were deferred to the value of £34 billion through the VAT payments deferral scheme, which ended on 30 June 2020. As part of the Winter Economy Plan, the Government announced further support for those with deferred VAT. Instead of paying the full deferred VAT outstanding by 31 March 2021, businesses can spread what they owe over up to 11 smaller monthly payments. More information is available at www.gov.uk/hmrc/vat-deferral.

■ Capital Gains Tax**Sarah Olney:****[158152]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of taxing income from capital by abolishing the separate Capital Gains Tax-free allowance and taxing capital gains and salaries through a single allowance.

Jesse Norman:

The Government keeps all taxes under review, and any changes are made at fiscal events within the context of wider public finances. The Government's priority is supporting jobs and the economic recovery from COVID-19, and further details will be set out at the forthcoming Budget.

Last year, the Chancellor commissioned the Office of Tax Simplification (OTS) to carry out a review of Capital Gains Tax (CGT), including its boundary with Income Tax. The Government will respond to the OTS report in due course.

Any changes to the tax system will balance the need to raise revenue with the principles of fairness and market efficiency.

■ Child Benefit**Martyn Day:****[155212]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of raising the threshold of the high income child benefit charge from the financial year 2021-22 in line with the increase in the higher rate income tax threshold for basic rate taxpayers.

Jesse Norman:

As with all elements of tax policy, the Government keeps the High Income Child Benefit Charge (HICBC) threshold under review. At present, the adjusted net income threshold of £50,000 only affects a small minority of those with comparatively high incomes. The Government therefore believes that the current threshold for HICBC remains the best option.

■ Companies: Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme**Daisy Cooper:** [\[156577\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what conditions he attached to coronavirus business interruption loan scheme loans to private equity owned companies.

Daisy Cooper: [\[156578\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what the basis was on which he extended coronavirus business interruption loan scheme loans to private equity-owned companies.

Daisy Cooper: [\[156579\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what value-for-money assessment he undertook before offering coronavirus business interruption loan scheme loans to private equity-owned companies

John Glen:

On 23 March 2020, the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CBILS) was launched to support businesses' access to lending, making external finance more available and affordable at this difficult time.

Under the scheme, viable businesses with a turnover of less than £45m are eligible to apply for loans of up to £5m and the Government will provide lenders with a guarantee of 80% on each loan. As of 24 January, lenders have approved more than 87,000 facilities worth almost £21bn through CBILS.

Businesses with a private equity investor, including where that investor holds a majority or controlling stake, can still be eligible for CBILS, provided that they satisfy the other eligibility criteria of the scheme. When assessing the £45 million turnover eligibility threshold and the maximum loan amount available, the business will be considered separately to the private equity investor, and its other investments.

■ Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme**Nickie Aiken:** [\[155386\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of (a) extending the application date for the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme and bounce back loans for 12 months and (b) delaying the repayment start date for people who have already received this support for an additional 12 months.

John Glen:

The end date for new applications under Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CBILS) and Bounce Back Loan Scheme (BBLs) has already been extended several times, ensuring businesses have more time to make loan applications, supporting them through the pandemic. The Government is continuing to work to introduce a new, successor loan guarantee scheme, set to begin in early April, following the closure of the existing schemes to new applicants on 31 March 2021.

In order to give the smallest businesses further support and flexibility in making their repayments for BBLS, the Chancellor has announced “Pay as You Grow” (PAYG) options. PAYG will give businesses the option to repay their BBLS facility over ten years. This will reduce businesses’ average monthly repayments on the loan by almost half. Businesses will also have the option to move temporarily to interest-only payments for periods of up to six months (an option which they can use up to three times), or to pause their repayments entirely for up to six months. Given the continued challenges businesses are facing, the Government has opted to make the full repayment holiday available to borrowers from the first repayment meaning a borrower would be able to make no repayments for 18 months from taking out their loan. If borrowers want to take advantage of this option, they should notify their lender when they are contacted about their repayments.

Furthermore, the Government has amended the CBILS rules to allow lenders to extend loan terms from six to a maximum of ten years at lenders’ discretion and where they judge that this will help borrowers repay their loan, helping them to reduce their monthly repayments.

■ Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme

Justin Madders:

[155128]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 18 January 2021 to Question 134488, on Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, when time may be available to provide a breakdown of applications to the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme by employment type.

Jesse Norman:

HM Revenue and Customs have published statistics on the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS); the latest release was published on 25 February 2021. These statistics include information on the number of employments supported since the scheme started in March 2020. The statistics can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/hmrc-coronavirus-covid-19-statistics>.

Rachael Maskell:

[157215]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what his policy is on employers taking furlough payments from employees as loans to support their business.

Rachael Maskell:

[157216]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps HMRC is able to take when a business makes staff return some of their furlough payment to them as a loan.

Rachael Maskell:

[157217]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps an employee is able to take when their employer has asked them to loan the business part of their furlough payment.

Rachael Maskell:

[\[157218\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether it is his policy that employers may ask furloughed staff to loan the business a proportion of their furlough payment.

Jesse Norman:

Employers are required to pay staff all the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) grant they receive from HMRC to cover 80% of wages up to £2,500 per month. The employer is still required to meet the employer's National Insurance and pension contributions.

Employers cannot enter into any transaction with the worker which reduces the wages below the amount claimed. This includes any administration charge, fees or other costs in connection with the employment. Where an employee had authorised their employer to make deductions from their salary, these deductions can continue while the employee is furloughed provided that these deductions are not administration charges, fees or other costs in connection with the employment.

Whether to furlough an employee and claim CJRS support is a matter for the employer, and they will need to discuss and make any changes to their employee's contract by agreement.

HMRC stand ready to support taxpayers in financial distress as a result of COVID-19, and urge any employers that may be struggling to pay their outstanding tax liabilities to contact HMRC as soon as possible.

HMRC will check claims. Payments may be withheld or need to be paid back if a claim is found to be fraudulent or based on incorrect information, or if payments are not being used as required by the scheme. Employees can report suspected fraud in relation to the CJRS on GOV.UK.

■ Corporation Tax: Coronavirus

Lucy Powell:

[\[157123\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 22 February 2021 to Question 151725, on Business: Coronavirus, what estimate he has made of the amount of interest that businesses will accrue in deferred corporation tax payments.

Jesse Norman:

I refer the Honourable Member to the response to UIN 151725 on 22 February 2021.

■ Cost Benefit Analysis

Richard Fuller:

[\[154919\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he has recommended changes to the social discount rates that his Department applies; and whether those changes will be applied retrospectively to projects in the Government's Major Projects Portfolio.

Steve Barclay:

The Green Book Social Time Preference Rate (STPR) or discount rate is applied by all government departments in the formulation of policy appraisal and has been 3.5% since 2003 following regular independent expert reviews. There are no forthcoming changes to the headline discount rate, which is regularly reviewed in line with the evolution of appropriate evidence in consultation with academic experts.

As set out in the Green Book Review 2020, HMT will however, be conducting an expert review into the application of the discount rate for environmental impacts. This review will scrutinise the current guidance on environmental valuation and discounting and investigate whether there is a case for using the same discount rate as currently applied to the valuation of life and health effects.

■ Cultural Heritage: Tax Allowances**Ben Lake:**[\[155322\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment HMRC has made of the effectiveness of tax relief to national heritage assets to ensure continued Public Rights of Way access.

Jesse Norman:

The tax exemption scheme for heritage assets preserves and protects national heritage, which may otherwise have been sold or taken out of the UK, for the benefit of the public. It also ensures that the public have access to heritage assets in private ownership which they would otherwise not see.

Although public rights of way are not exclusive to land within the exemption scheme and are not regulated by HMRC, where they exist, they are, together with bridleways, byways and permissive paths, likely to form a part of the public access requirement. If so, the agreement with HMRC will normally include measures to keep the rights of way open.

■ Customs: ICT**Ben Lake:**[\[155323\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps he is taking to improve the performance of the Customs Handling of Import and Export Freight (CHIEF) system for small and medium-sized enterprises.

Jesse Norman:

HMRC test the performance of CHIEF continuously in order to maintain resilience for all users. The CHIEF computer system continues to work well and is already used successfully by hundreds of thousands of international traders to make customs declarations to HMRC.

HMRC are supporting businesses to comply with the new border processes following the end of the transition period.

Ben Lake:[\[155324\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what plans he has to replace the Customs Handling of Import and Export Freight system.

Jesse Norman:

In order to support the end of the transition period, the CHIEF system has been prioritised for GB goods movements and the Customs Declaration Service (CDS) for NI goods movements. The longer-term strategic aim is to move to a single customs declaration platform and to work with external delivery partners to agree a plan that meets HMG's and businesses' requirements.

Ben Lake:[\[155326\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what additional resources he will make available to improve the Customs Handling of Import and Export Freight (CHIEF) system.

Jesse Norman:

HMRC test the performance of CHIEF continuously and have already invested heavily to ensure the system continues to meet the needs of UK trade. Additional resources are assigned to further increase system capacity by the end of staged customs controls in July and to support sustainment of the system for as long as it is required.

■ Debts: Developing Countries

Sarah Champion:[\[157136\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the (a) adequacy of the Common Framework for debt relief in preventing private creditors using UK law to sue for unpaid debts and (b) implications for his policy on debt relief of 90 per cent of African debt being held under UK law.

Sarah Champion:[\[157137\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what discussions he has had with private creditors on bringing them to the negotiating table to ensure that the Common Framework delivers adequate debt restructuring for countries such as Zambia with high levels of private debt.

John Glen:

In November 2020, the UK and other G20 Finance Ministers and the Paris Club agreed a new Common Framework for Future Debt Treatments. This applies to 73 of the poorest countries in the world and, for the first time, brings together Paris Club and major non-Paris Club creditors to provide joined up debt treatments where required.

The Common framework is an internationally agreed initiative and does not impact the rights of private creditors under UK law. However, under the Framework, debtors will be required to secure a debt treatment from their private creditors on at least as favourable terms as from their official sector creditors.

As G7 president, the UK will push to ensure the full implementation of the Common Framework. I strongly expect all private creditors to provide the debt relief needed to ensure debt sustainability for those countries who request a debt treatment, and we will engage regularly with the private sector to ensure their appropriate participation in restructurings.

■ Directors: Coronavirus

Caroline Lucas:

[\[154945\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what the reasons for the differences in self-certification requirements for limited company directors for accessing (a) income support, (b) the self employed income support scheme, (c) submitting a tax return and (d) other aspects of the tax system.

Jesse Norman:

The tax system relies in part on self-certification through Self-Assessment as it is not possible to corroborate all information received from taxpayers. HMRC have various controls in place to mitigate the fraud risks associated with Self-Assessment. The risks associated with this depend on the type of scheme. For example, the risk is higher when HMRC are paying money out than when they are taking money in. Controls in place in the Self-Assessment system to mitigate fraud risk associated with self-certification have been built up and tested over many years and have proven to be very effective at preventing fraud.

In relation to wider income support, self-employed Universal Credit (UC) claimants must report their earnings each month in order for their payment to be calculated and released to them. If a Work Coach suspects that a claimant is misreporting their earnings to inflate their award, they can refer the claim to be investigated for fraud.

UC presents a different type of risk compared to COVID-19 support schemes. The Government has been clear that due to the generosity and speed of delivering the COVID-19 support schemes, they could be subject to opportunistic fraud and perhaps even criminal activity. On the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme, its purpose is to support the incomes of people who have lost earnings due to the pandemic. The scheme relies on verified HMRC data to identify and target support to those in need. Unlike the SEISS grants that use information HMRC already hold, targeting additional support at limited company directors would require them to make a claim and submit information that HMRC could not manageably or consistently verify in order to ensure that payments were made to eligible companies and for eligible activity. Relying on self-certification to identify directors or determine income sources could open the scheme up to unacceptable levels of fraud and error.

Caroline Lucas:

[\[154946\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of not requiring dividends to be taken into account when calculating levels of covid-19 income support for directors of small limited companies; and if he will make a statement.

Jesse Norman:

Dividends are not covered by the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme or the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme. Income from dividends is a return on investment in the company, rather than wages. Under current reporting mechanisms it is not possible for HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC) to distinguish between dividends derived from an individual's own company and dividends from other sources, and between dividends in lieu of employment income and as returns from other corporate activity.

The purpose of the CJRS and SEISS schemes is to support the incomes of people who have lost earnings due to the pandemic. These schemes have relied on verified HMRC data to identify and target support to those in need. Information that would enable HMRC to do the same for company directors is not collected by HMRC, because it is not needed for administering the tax system. Information held by other bodies such as Companies House cannot be used for this purpose as it is self-declared, unverified and does not provide data on income. Relying on self-certification to identify directors or determine income sources could open any scheme up to unacceptable levels of fraud and error.

Those who pay themselves a salary through their own company's PAYE scheme may be eligible for the CJRS. Directors may have access to the wide range of support provided by the Government since the start of the pandemic including loans, direct cash grants, and Universal Credit. More information about the full range of support measures is available on GOV.UK.

■ Duty Free Allowances: Shops**Richard Thomson:**[\[156611\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment his Department has made of how duty free in arrival stores will benefit the UK's travel industry.

Kemi Badenoch:

Duty-free on arrival did not form part of the Government's consultation on the potential approach to duty-free and tax-free goods arising from the UK's new relationship with the EU, which took place in the Spring of 2020. The Government nonetheless acknowledged in the summary of responses to the consultation that some stakeholders had requested the introduction of duty-free on arrival. This set out that duty-free on arrival was not a scheme that the Government previously offered and was therefore not considering implementing the scheme at that time.

■ Economic Situation: Brexit**Charlotte Nichols:**[\[155439\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will publish information on the net financial benefit to the (a) Exchequer and (b) UK economy as a result of the UK leaving the EU after one year; and if he will make a statement.

John Glen:

The Treasury does not prepare forecasts for the UK economy and public finances, these are the responsibility of the independent Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR). The latest forecasts from the OBR will be published alongside the Budget on Wednesday 3 March 2021.

The UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement is the first free trade agreement that the EU has ever reached based on zero tariffs and zero quotas. The deal protects high quality jobs and investment right across the UK. Our economy will thrive as we take back control of our money, borders, laws, trade and our fishing waters with a great deal with the EU. We are no longer contributing to the EU budget as a Member State. Taking into account the financial settlement with the EU, the Government has determined how an additional £14.6 billion of spending by 2024-25 can be allocated to its domestic priorities. This additional spending was included in the government's plans set out at the Spending Review in November 2020. These prioritised funding to support the government's response to Covid-19, invest in the UK's recovery for all nations and regions and deliver on promises to the British people.

■ Environment Protection: Economic Situation**Caroline Lucas:**[\[157079\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, in reference to the Dasgupta Review on the Economics of Biodiversity published on 2 February 2021, what assessment he has made of the potential implications for the Spring Budget of that report's recommendations on (a) managing the risk of exceeding the limits of what nature can sustainably provide to meet human demand; (b) the need to develop measures of economic success to account for depreciation of assets like the natural environment; and (c) changes required to financial systems and institutions in order to preserve nature; and if he will make a statement.

Kemi Badenoch:

At the start of an important year for global action to tackle biodiversity loss and climate change, the Government thanks Professor Sir Partha Dasgupta for his independent *Review* and welcomes its recent publication as a strong example of UK thought leadership on an important environmental issue with clear – but often overlooked – economic consequences. The Government will examine the *Review's* findings closely, call on international partners to do the same, and respond formally in due course.

The Chancellor's upcoming Budget will set out the next phase of the plan to tackle the virus and protect jobs.

■ European Investment Bank: Repayments**Julian Sturdy:**[\[155022\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, (a) how much of the UK's share of the European Investment Bank's paid-in subscribed capital has been repaid under the terms of the Withdrawal Agreement, (b) what the current schedule for repayments to the UK from the

EU is, and (c) what discussions he has had with the EU on any request to revise the terms of the repayment of the UK's stake in the Bank as agreed in the Withdrawal Agreement.

John Glen:

The European Investment Bank (EIB) has repaid a total of EUR 300 million of the UK's share of paid-in subscribed capital in a single payment made on 15 October 2020.

The current schedule for repayments to the UK is set out in Article 150(4) of the Withdrawal Agreement. Repayments to the UK will be made over 12 years in 11 equal instalments of EUR 300 million, with the final balance to be paid on 15 October 2031. The repayment schedule dates were amended by decision number 1/2020 of the Joint Committee, dated 10 June 2020, as a result of the entry into force of the Withdrawal Agreement on 31 January 2020 instead of March 2019.

The Government has had no other discussions with the EU on revising the terms of the repayment of the UK's paid-in subscribed capital in the Bank as agreed in the Withdrawal Agreement.

■ **Fire and Rescue Services: Finance**

Yasmin Qureshi:

[\[157996\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will announce a long term funding settlement for fire and rescue services in Budget 2021.

Steve Barclay:

The 2020 Spending Review increased funding for fire services across local authorities in line with inflation, building on the 2019 Spending Round where standalone Fire and Rescue Services (FRAs) received an increase in their core spending power of 3.2 per cent in cash terms. We will consider long-term funding for fire and rescue services at the next Spending Review.

■ **Football Association Premier League: Broadcasting**

Dan Jarvis:

[\[157118\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport on the viability of introducing a levy on the Premier League's broadcasting rights to fund grassroots football.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Chancellor of the Exchequer has had no discussions on the viability of introducing a levy on the Premier League's broadcasting rights. However, the Government is committed to supporting grassroots football. The Football Foundation was established in 2000 by the Government, the FA and the Premier League, to deliver investment in community football facilities and is the largest sports charity in the country. This three-way partnership sees a combined £70 million go to new facilities each year. Through Sport England, the Government invests £18m into grassroots sports facilities each year.

■ Former Ministers: Correspondence

Barbara Keeley:

[\[157990\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, when he plans to respond to the letter dated 29 October 2020, entitled Time for a Fair Deal, and signed by former Ministers at the then Department of Health; and if he will make a statement.

Steve Barclay:

The Chief Secretary to the Treasury issued a response to this letter on 26 February 2021. No further statement will be made.

■ Freezing of Assets: Libya

Ian Paisley:

[\[156398\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate the Office of Financial Sanctions has made of the aggregate value of Libyan frozen funds held by UK institutions in the past 10 years.

John Glen:

Since its establishment in 2016, the Office of Financial Sanctions Implementation (OFSI) has undertaken an annual frozen asset review, requiring all persons or institutions that hold or control frozen assets in the UK to report to OFSI, from which the following figures are taken.

The figures are each an approximate total value of frozen Libyan assets in the UK. The figures for the 2020 Frozen Asset Review are still being finalised, and will be published in OFSI's Annual Review later this year.

September 2017 £12.061 billion

September 2018 £11.222 billion

September 2019 £11.809 billion

■ Gyms: Coronavirus

Dr Dan Poulter:

[\[154955\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what support he plans to make available to gyms in respect of (a) VAT and (b) the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme to enable those businesses to re-open after the covid-19 lockdown.

Jesse Norman:

The temporary reduced rate of VAT was introduced on 15 July to support the cash flow and viability of over 150,000 businesses and protect 2.4 million jobs in the hospitality and tourism sectors, and is due to run until 31 March 2021. This policy will cost over £2 billion.

The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) was set to close on 31 October 2020. However, in light of the path of the virus and to provide certainty to businesses and employees, the CJRS has been extended until the end of April 2021 for all parts of the UK.

The Chancellor has always been clear that the Government would keep the situation under review, adapting its approach as the context evolved. The Government will set out the next phase of the plan to tackle the virus and support jobs at Budget.

■ Hospitality Industry: Tax Allowances

Darren Henry:

[\[155431\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent assessment he has made of the potential merits of extending (a) business rates relief and (b) the temporary VAT reduction for businesses in the hospitality industry; and what his Department's long-term strategy is on support for people who work in that sector.

Jesse Norman:

This year, due to the direct adverse effects of COVID-19, the Government has provided an unprecedented business rates holiday for eligible retail, hospitality and leisure properties worth over £10 billion. The Government has also frozen the business rates multiplier for all businesses for 2021-22.

The temporary VAT reduced rate came into effect on 15 July 2020 and was initially scheduled to end on 12 January 2021. The Government extended the reduced rate of VAT (5 per cent) until 31 March 2021.

The Budget will set out the next phase of the Government's plans to tackle the virus, protect jobs and support business.

■ Housing: Insulation

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[154830\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of removing VAT charges on building work to remove dangerous cladding for leaseholders that are not eligible for the Building Safety Fund.

Jesse Norman:

In most cases, the standard rate of VAT will be applied to the removal and replacement of cladding. However, the cost of replacing cladding can be zero rated if it is tied to the initial construction of the building and the cladding is shown to be defective.

The Government announced on 10 February 2021 that it would fully fund the cost of replacing unsafe cladding for all leaseholders in residential buildings 18 metres and over in England. It was also announced that for low rise buildings between 11 metres and 18 metres, with a lower risk to safety, there will be new protection from the costs of cladding removal. This would be made through a long-term, low interest, Government-backed financing arrangement to pay for cladding removal, where it is needed.

VAT plays an important part in funding public services such as the NHS and education. Extending the zero-rate could carry a significant cost to the Exchequer,

and this must be viewed in the context of about £50 billion of requests for relief from VAT since the EU referendum. The Government keeps all taxes under review.

■ **Money Laundering: Scotland**

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[157088\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the use of Scottish Limited Partnerships to illegally launder money.

John Glen:

The Government has already acted to reduce the risk of Scottish Limited Partnerships (SLPs) being used to illegally launder money, introducing a requirement for SLPs to register Persons of Significant Control in 2017. Since then, there has been a drastic reduction in the incorporation of SLPs, which have fallen from 4,932 in 2016-17 to 657 in 2019-20.

Further to this, as part of our Economic Crime Plan, the Government issued, on 10 December 2018, its response to the consultation on the reform of limited partnership law. The reforms seek to tackle the misuse of limited partnerships, especially SLPs, while modernising the law governing them. The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy will bring forward legislation when parliamentary time allows.

■ **Museums and Galleries: Tax Allowances**

Thangam Debbonaire:

[\[154556\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of retaining the Museums and Galleries Exhibitions Tax Relief sunset clause beyond its current expiration date of April 2022.

Jesse Norman:

Since the Museums and Galleries Exhibitions Tax Relief (MGETR) was introduced in 2017, the Government has provided a total of £20 million of support to 1,345 exhibitions.

The Government has committed to reviewing MGETR before its expiry in 2022. Further information will be provided in due course.

■ **National Infrastructure Bank: Durham**

Mr Richard Holden:

[\[155447\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the (a) potential merits of and (b) implications for his policy on levelling up of siting the National Infrastructure Bank in North West Durham.

Jesse Norman:

The Government is considering a range of factors and locations, in order to ensure that it chooses a location in the North of England that meets the Bank's needs, as well as supporting the Government's wider levelling up agenda. At Budget, the

Chancellor will set out details regarding the operations, mandate and scale of the bank.

■ **National Savings and Investments**

Stephen Morgan: [\[155356\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent estimate he has made of the backlog of National Savings & Investment customers seeking to withdraw their funds.

John Glen:

NS&I processes significant numbers of repayments with a seasonal peak of maturing bonds in January and February, and it has been prioritising payment processing. As of 22 February 2021, circa 12,800 payments to customers were still being processed.

■ **National Savings and Investments: Complaints**

Stephen Morgan: [\[155358\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what plans his Department has to reduce the number of customer complaints made against National Savings & Investments.

John Glen:

NS&I has seen exceptionally high customer demand since the Covid-19 outbreak, and this was amplified by a requirement for NS&I to raise additional funding from savers to support the Government's response to the pandemic.

HMT has provided additional funding of £9 million in 2020-21 to NS&I to help improve its operational performance and mitigate the impact of Covid-19 on its customer service. With this, NS&I has put a number of significant measures in place to improve its operational performance. This includes expanding its UK contact centres by opening additional sites and recruiting additional staff to process customer enquiries. NS&I are working hard to return to delivering its high standard customer service.

■ **National Savings and Investments: Staff**

Stephen Morgan: [\[155357\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many customer service staff National Savings & Investments employs.

John Glen:

NS&I's operational services and staffing arrangements are outsourced to Atos. As of February 2021, there were circa 1,100 staff employed by Atos working across NS&I's customer service and back office operations. This compares with circa 900 staff working across NS&I's customer service and back office operations in February 2020.

■ Off-payroll Working: Research

Caroline Lucas:

[\[154948\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to HC Deb 19 May 2020, cc543, if he will publish the outcomes of the research into the long-term effects of the 2017 IR35 reform on the public sector; and what parameters of the monitoring and research will be undertaken on the effect of the IR35 changes due to take effect in the private and voluntary sectors from April 2021.

Jesse Norman:

The Government will publish two research reports on the long-term effects of the 2017 off-payroll (IR35) reform this spring. One will set out findings from education sector client organisations and the other, findings from employment agencies.

The report into findings from client organisations will focus on the education sector only because the pressures created by the pandemic have meant that the research agency has not been able to contact a sufficient number of public health and other public sector organisations to produce robust findings ahead of April 2021.

The Government intends to resume this research later in the spring, with a view to publishing full findings from all public sector organisations later this year.

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury has recently written to the House of Lords Economic Affairs Committee and the Treasury Select Committee, and HMRC have updated all MPs via their MP digest, on the status of this research.

The Government intends to commission external research into the short-term effects of the 2021 reform on the private and voluntary sectors later this year. HMRC are currently scoping the parameters for this research and intend to publish the findings next year.

■ Pensions: Up-rating

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[156279\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he has made an assessment of the potential effect on defined benefit pension schemes of interest rate reforms to move from RPI to CPIH.

John Glen:

On 25 November 2020, the Government and UK Statistics Authority (UKSA) published their response to the consultation on the timing of reform to the Retail Prices Index (RPI). Owing to shortcomings in its calculation, UKSA intends to bring the methods and data sources of the Consumer Prices Index including owner occupiers' housing costs (CPIH) into RPI.

The Government and UKSA are mindful of the widespread use of RPI in the economy, and, as such, sought views in the consultation on the broader impacts of reform. The Government and UKSA received approximately 550 responses from members of defined benefit (DB) pension schemes whose benefits are linked to RPI.

It is apparent that some DB pension schemes members will be affected by UKSA's reform. The effect of reform on the members of such schemes will depend on whether their benefits are linked to RPI under the trust deed and rules of the scheme.

The announcement in the response by the Chancellor and UKSA Chair means that reform will not be implemented before 2030. The Government keeps the occupational pensions system under review and will continue to do so.

For further information please see the consultation response at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/a-consultation-on-the-reform-to-retail-prices-index-rpi-methodology>.

■ Personal Care Services: VAT

Justin Madders: [155116]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what discussions his Department has had with representatives of the hair and beauty industry on the potential merits of reducing VAT to five per cent for that industry in response to the covid-19 outbreak.

Jesse Norman:

The Government keeps all taxes under review, and all stakeholder views are carefully considered. Any future decisions on tax policy will be made at Budget.

The Government has announced a significant support package to help businesses from a whole range of sectors through the winter months, which includes an extension of the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, an extension of the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme grant, and an extension of the application window for the Government-backed loan schemes.

■ Regional Planning and Development: North of England

Dan Jarvis: [R] [157119]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of including a budget for the north of England as part of the levelling up policy.

Kemi Badenoch:

The government is committed to levelling up opportunity across the UK, and we will deliver this pledge by boosting jobs, wages and prospects for all communities so that everybody gets the same access to opportunities in life. To ensure that government investment flows to the places most in need, including in the North of England, the Government is changing the way it delivers for local areas to ensure national policy-making is sensitive to the needs of places. This includes setting up a new infrastructure bank headquartered in the North, through refreshing the Green Book and the Places for Growth programme which will relocate 22,000 civil service roles out of London and the South East by 2030.

■ Retirement: Coronavirus

Sir Mark Hendrick:

[\[154780\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential economic effect of older workers taking early retirement as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Sir Mark Hendrick:

[\[154783\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential effect on the economy in the event that the covid-19 outbreak causes a long-term decline in the annual birth-rate.

John Glen:

The Treasury monitors closely the impact of Covid-19 on the economy on an ongoing basis, although it does not prepare forecasts, which is the responsibility of the independent OBR. The OBR bases its forecasts on many factors and data, including labour market and population data, which will account for the impact of birth and retirement rates, among other factors.

The Treasury remains committed to ensuring we take the right action at the right time to support individuals and businesses in every region and nation of the United Kingdom. We have already announced considerable and unprecedented support for businesses and individuals through the pandemic.

The Government recognises the importance of supporting older workers to remain active in the labour market and is committed to supporting older workers to find and retain employment. The Government has recently refreshed its Fuller Working Lives strategy to include 50 PLUS: Choices, recognising the different situations and challenges currently faced by the over 50s. We are continuing to work closely with employers, while ensuring early and targeted employment and skills support is available to help over 50s stay in or return back to work. The Plan for Jobs package provides new funding to ensure more people, including those aged 50 and over, get tailored Jobcentre Plus support to help them find work and to build the skills they need to get into work.

We continue to take a flexible approach and keep all impacts and policies under review.

■ Revenue and Customs: Lost Working Days

John McDonnell:

[\[154696\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what information his Department holds on the Average Working Days Lost for civil servants working in the Customer Service Group of HMRC in (a) 2018, (b) 2019 and (c) 2020.

Jesse Norman:

This report is based on the most recent organisational structure. Customer Service Group (CSG) is a collective of individual directorates.

CUSTOMER SERVICE GROUP

Benefits & Credits Delivery

Business Tax & Customs

CS Director General

CSG Transformation

Debt Management

Finance Planning & Performance

Operational Excellence & Output Mgmt

PT Operations

Surge & ODP

The average working days lost for civil servants working in CSG was as follows:

April 2019 – March 2020 = 8.90 days average

April 2018 – March 2019 = 8.68 days average

April 2017 – March 2018 = 8.13 days average

John McDonnell:

[\[154697\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what information his Department holds on the Average Working Days Lost for civil servants working in the Personal Tax Operations directorate of HMRC in (a) 2018, (b) 2019 and (c) 2020.

Jesse Norman:

This directorate report is based on the most recent organisational structure. The average working days lost for civil servants working in Personal Tax Operations was as follows:

April 2019 – March 2020 = 8.90 days average

April 2018 – March 2019 = 8.68 days average

April 2017 – March 2018 = 8.13 days average

John McDonnell:

[\[154698\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what information his Department holds on the Average Working Days Lost for civil servants working in the Benefits and Credits directorate of HMRC in (a) 2018, (b) 2019 and (c) 2020.

Jesse Norman:

This directorate report is based on the most recent organisational structure. The average working days lost for civil servants working in Benefits and Credits was as follows:

April 2019 – March 2020 = 10.62 days average

April 2018 – March 2019 = 8.15 days average

April 2017 – March 2018 = 8.19 days average

John McDonnell:

[154699]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what information his Department holds on the Average Working Days Lost for civil servants working in the Business Tax and Customs directorate of HMRC in (a) 2018, (b) 2019 and (c) 2020.

Jesse Norman:

This directorate report is based on the most recent organisational structure. The average working days lost for civil servants working in Business Tax and Customs was as follows:

April 2019 – March 2020 = 9.84 days average

April 2018 – March 2019 = 8.30 days average

April 2017 – March 2018 = 8.17 days average

John McDonnell:

[154700]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what information his Department holds on the Average Working Days Lost for civil servants working in the Debt Management directorate of HMRC in (a) 2018, (b) 2019 and (c) 2020.

Jesse Norman:

This directorate report is based on the most recent organisational structure. The average working days lost for civil servants working in Debt Management was as follows:

April 2019 – March 2020 = 8.77 days average

April 2018 – March 2019 = 8.69 days average

April 2017 – March 2018 = 7.58 days average

John McDonnell:

[154701]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what information his Department holds on the Average Working Days Lost for civil servants working in the Campaigns and Projects directorate of HMRC in (a) 2018, (b) 2019 and (c) 2020.

Jesse Norman:

Campaigns and Projects is a sub-directorate within Individuals and Small Business Compliance (ISBC) directorate; HMRC are unable to break down data further than directorate level. This directorate report is based on the most recent organisational structure for ISBC. The average working days lost for civil servants working in ISBC was as follows:

April 2019 – March 2020 = 7.34 days average

April 2018 – March 2019 = 6.53 days average

April 2017 – March 2018 = 7.11 days average

Chris Stephens:

[157210]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what the Average Working Days Lost was in HMRC for (a) female and (b) male civil servants in the calendar year (i) 2019 and (ii) 2020.

Jesse Norman:

The average working days lost for civil servants working in HMRC was as follows:

Female

January 2019 – December 2019 = 8.31 days average

January 2020 – December 2020 = 7.24 days average

Male

January 2019 – December 2019 = 5.80 days average

January 2020 – December 2020 = 5.32 days average

Chris Stephens:

[157211]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what the Average Working Days Lost was in HMRC for civil servants (a) aged 30 and younger, (b) 30 to 50, (c) 50 to 60 and (d) over 60 in the calendar year (i) 2019 and (ii) 2020.

Jesse Norman:

The average working days lost for civil servants working in HMRC was as follows:

Age 30 and Under

January 2019 – December 2019 = 6.75 days average

January 2020 – December 2020 = 6.54 days average

Age 31 to 50

January 2019 – December 2019 = 6.88 days average

January 2020 – December 2020 = 5.88 days average

Age 51 to 60

January 2019 – December 2019 = 7.41 days average

January 2020 – December 2020 = 6.58 days average

Age over 60

January 2019 – December 2019 = 8.08 days average

January 2020 – December 2020 = 7.19 days average

■ Revenue and Customs: Telephone Services

Drew Hendry:

[158114]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent assessment he has made of trends in the level of telephony waiting times customers experience when calling HMRC.

Jesse Norman:

Like other service organisations, HMRC have been affected by the pandemic and are doing all they can to offer the best possible service to their customers, whether supporting them with their taxes or delivering the Government's support schemes.

Waiting times on some helplines are longer than HMRC would like, and they are sorry for the inconvenience this causes at busy times. HMRC's digital services are available 24 hours a day, and customer satisfaction for those services is very high. HMRC encourage customers to go online where they can, and have increased webchat availability.

HMRC publish monthly reports on how they have performed against their customer service targets, on GOV.UK: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/hmrc-monthly-performance-reports>.

■ Self-employment Income Support Scheme

Mark Menzies:

[154980]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps he has taken to extend the Self-Employed Income Support Scheme to (a) people who previously did not qualify and (b) people who have become self-employed within the last two years.

Jesse Norman:

Throughout the crisis, the Government's priority has been to protect lives and livelihoods. The Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS) was designed to target support at those who most need it, while protecting the Exchequer against error, fraud, and abuse.

The Government has sought to improve and extend the scheme where possible, for example by amending eligibility conditions to enable self-employed parents who did not submit a tax return for 2018-19, or whose trading profits in 2018-19 were less than their other income because they were pregnant or taking time out of their trade to care for their new-born child, to claim for a grant.

The Government does recognise that some of the rules, criteria and conditions that were vital to ensuring that the SEISS worked for the vast majority, meant that some people did not qualify. However, as the National Audit Office report acknowledged, the Government was right to introduce the SEISS, which has been successful in helping to support millions of self-employed individuals and is just one element of a wider £280 billion package of support.

Those ineligible for the SEISS may still be eligible for other elements of the support available, including increased levels of Universal Credit, Bounce Back loans, tax

deferrals, rental support, mortgage holidays, self-isolation support payments and other business support grants.

Alan Brown: [155187]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of extending the eligibility criteria for the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme to include the financial year 2019-20; and if he will make a statement.

Alan Brown: [155188]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate he has made of the number of people classed as newly self employed that do not qualify for support under the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Jesse Norman:

In delivering the SEISS, the Government has had to balance reaching as many people as possible, while protecting the public purse from the substantial risk of fraud by organised criminals and others who would seek to exploit these schemes. This has meant using data that HMRC already hold, in the form of Self-Assessment tax returns for the years up to and including 2018-19.

The SEISS continues to be just one element of a substantial package of support for the self-employed. The Universal Credit standard allowance has been temporarily increased for 2020-21 and the Minimum Income Floor relaxed for the duration of the crisis, so that where self-employed claimants' earnings have fallen significantly, their Universal Credit award will have increased to reflect their lower earnings. In addition to this, they may also have access to other elements of the package, including Bounce Back loans, tax deferrals, rental support, mortgage holidays, self-isolation support payments and other business support grants.

The Government publishes statistics on SEISS on a regular basis, including the number and value of claims. The latest round of statistics is available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/hmrc-coronavirus-covid-19-statistics>.

Sarah Olney: [158153]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will increase the support available via the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS) grant to include new entrants with a 2019/20 tax return.

Jesse Norman:

I refer the Honourable Member to the answer given to UIN 137979 on 19 January 2021.

■ Self-employment Income Support Scheme: Complaints

Sam Tarry: [155457]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, for what reason his Department does not hold complaints in respect of the Self-Employed Income Support Scheme centrally.

Jesse Norman:

HM Treasury operates a complaints procedure to review and respond to expressions of dissatisfaction with the services provided by the department. The complaints procedure is available on GOV.UK.

Separate procedures exist for questions or complaints about Government policy. If someone submitted an issue under the Treasury's complaints procedure that concerned Government policy, the complaints team would pass this issue on to the relevant policy team.

While the Treasury records a total figure for the amount of correspondence received regarding the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS), this represents a wide range of suggestions, thoughts and concerns. It would not be reasonable for the Treasury to determine whether each individual piece of correspondence could informally constitute a "complaint" about the SEISS. Given this, this information is not recorded centrally.

■ Self-Employment Income Support Scheme: Mortgages**Stephen Morgan:**[\[155354\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that self-employed people in receipt of Self Employment Income Support Scheme grants are not disadvantaged by mortgage lenders.

John Glen:

Decisions concerning the pricing and availability of mortgage loans remain commercial decisions for lenders, and the Government does not seek to intervene in these decisions. Although the Treasury sets the legal framework for the regulation of financial services, it does not have investigative or prosecuting powers of its own and is not able to intervene in individual cases.

For individuals applying for new credit, it remains important that lenders are able to carry out the proper checks to ensure that these individuals are not lent to in an unaffordable way, especially if for example a borrower's income has changed as a result of Coronavirus.

Together the three Self Employed Income Support Scheme (SEISS) grants combined provided up to £21,570 of support for each individual and places the SEISS among the most generous schemes for the self-employed in the world. And, as of 31 December, around 2.7 million individuals have made claims totalling over £18.9 billion so far across all three grants. Details about the fourth grant will be announced on 3 March.

■ Social Enterprises: Tax Allowances**Simon Fell:**[\[155389\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential effect on social enterprises of the end of Social Investment Tax Relief once the sunset clause is reached in April 2021.

Alexander Stafford:

[\[155495\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment his Department has made of the effectiveness of self investment tax relief as an incentive to people investing in social enterprise.

Jesse Norman:

The Social Investment Tax Relief (SITR) was introduced in 2014 to encourage risk finance investments in qualifying social enterprises and charities. HMRC statistics show that up to 2018-19, about 110 enterprises have used the scheme to raise £11.2 million.

The Government keeps all taxes and reliefs under review in order to ensure they continue to meet policy objectives in a way that is fair and effective. The Government previously published a Call for Evidence on SITR's use to date. A response to the consultation will be published in due course and a decision on SITR's future will be announced at the Budget ahead of its sunset clause in April 2021.

■ Social Security Benefits: Disqualification

Ian Lavery:

[\[157113\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will use Budget 2021 to end the sanctions system under universal credit, jobseeker's allowance and employment and support allowance.

Steve Barclay:

The Chancellor will provide an update on the Budget on 3 March.

Sanctions are a core element of the conditionality approach to helping people back into work, and DWP work coaches will ensure that they are only ever used in a proportionate, reasonable way. In universal credit, jobseeker's allowance and new style employment and support allowance, sanctions are only considered where a claimant has not undertaken a work-related requirement as agreed in their Claimant Commitment without good reason. A personalised, tailored Claimant Commitment is agreed between the work coach and the claimant. They will only set reasonable requirements, based on the claimant's circumstances and the local/national health guidelines – and no claimant can or will be sanctioned without a Claimant Commitment in place.

■ Stamp Duty Land Tax

Claire Hanna:

[\[157326\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will extend the current nil rate band up to £500,000 on stamp duty land tax for a further 12 months.

Jesse Norman:

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 COVID-19 lockdown in March.

As the relief was designed to provide an immediate stimulus to the property market, the Government does not plan to extend this relief.

■ **Taxation: Self-assessment**

Jessica Morden:

[\[154875\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many accounts have been placed on Time to Pay Arrangements; and how many accounts on Time to Pay Arrangements have been sent to debt collection agencies since the start of the covid-19 outbreak.

Jesse Norman:

In January 2021, there were 664,000 taxpayers paying £4 billion of tax debts to HMRC through Time to Pay (TTP) arrangements. If a taxpayer agrees a TTP arrangement, HMRC do not take further action on the debt (unless the taxpayer defaults) so none of these debts have been passed to debt collection agencies.

■ **Towns Fund: Overseas Aid**

Steve Reed:

[\[158069\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether funding from the proposed 0.2 per cent reduction in the Official Development Assistance budget will be used to fund Town Deals.

Steve Barclay:

As the Chancellor said at the 2020 Spending Review, sticking to the target to spend 0.7% of GNI as Official Development Assistance (ODA) is not an appropriate prioritisation of resources at a time of emergency.

The reduction in planned ODA expenditure was included in the overall spending plans that the government set out at the 2020 Spending Review, which prioritised funding to support the government's response to Covid-19, invest in the UK's recovery for all nations and regions and deliver on promises to the British people. This includes the provision of £621 million in 2021-22 towards the continuation of investment from the Towns Fund to regenerate high streets, town centres and communities.

■ **Universal Credit**

Ian Lavery:

[\[157112\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will allocate adequate funding in Budget 2021 to end the five week wait for universal credit.

Steve Barclay:

No one has to wait five weeks for financial support when they make a claim for Universal Credit. Advance payments are available within days of making a new claim to ensure that families have money to support them through the period until their first full monthly payment.

Claimants moving from DWP legacy benefit and Housing Benefit are also eligible for a 'run-on' payment of up to two weeks of extra support when they move to Universal Credit.

■ Universal Credit: Coronavirus

Ruth Jones: [\[157277\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will allocate funding to the Department for Work and Pensions to extend the £20 uplift to universal credit beyond 2021.

Ruth Jones: [\[157341\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will allocate funding to the Department for Work and Pensions to extend the £20 uplift to universal credit beyond 2021.

Steve Barclay:

The temporary £20 per week increase to Universal Credit and Working Tax Credits was introduced specifically to support those who have seen their income fall as a result of the pandemic. This is just one part of a wide-ranging package of support the Government has provided to protect people's jobs and incomes, including income support schemes, mortgage holidays, support for renters, a local authority hardship fund and help with utilities.

As the Government has done throughout this crisis, it will continue to consider how best to support people as the economic and health situation develops.

■ Wholesale Trade: Coronavirus

Alexander Stafford: [\[154624\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the effect of the levels of financial support available to wholesalers on the financial viability of that sector during the covid-19 outbreak.

Alexander Stafford: [\[154625\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the effect of closures among wholesale distributors during the covid-19 outbreak on the Government's levelling up agenda.

Alexander Stafford: [\[155487\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will extend bespoke financial support packages to foodservice wholesalers in response to the covid-19 outbreak.

Alexander Stafford: [\[155488\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps he is taking to support wholesalers facing financial loss as a result of the covid-19 pandemic.

Kemi Badenoch:

Throughout the Covid-19 crisis, the Government has protected people's jobs and livelihoods while also supporting businesses and public services across the UK. Food

and drink wholesalers have been eligible for a number of economic support schemes, including:

- The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, which has been extended until the end of April 2021 for all parts of the UK;
- The opportunity to defer VAT payments due between 20 March and 30 June 2020; and
- The Bounce Back Loan Scheme for small businesses to borrow between £2,000 and £50,000, with no interest payments or fees for the first 12 months.

Wholesalers in England may also receive further support with their fixed costs from local authorities through the £1.6 billion in funding made available for discretionary Additional Restrictions Grants to support local businesses.

Businesses may also be eligible for other elements of the Government's support package including government-backed loans, tax deferrals, and general and sector-specific grants. The Government urges businesses to visit the online Coronavirus Business Support Finder Tool for tailored information on how to access support available to them.

■ **Wholesale Trade: Non-domestic Rates**

Andrew Gwynne:

[\[157029\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of extending the business rates relief available for retail, hospitality or leisure businesses to wholesalers in the retail, hospitality or leisure supply chain.

Jesse Norman:

This year, due to the direct adverse effects of COVID-19, the Government has provided an unprecedented business rates holiday for eligible retail, hospitality and leisure properties worth over £10 billion. The Government has also frozen the business rates multiplier for all businesses for 2021-22.

The Budget will set out the next phase of the Government's plans to tackle the virus, protect jobs and support business.

WORK AND PENSIONS

■ **Access to Work Programme: Coronavirus**

Ruth Jones:

[\[157280\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she is taking to ensure that the Access to Work fast track assessment process is available to all disabled workers to enable them to work during the covid-19 outbreak.

Justin Tomlinson:

Access to Work continues to provide support for disabled people to move into and retain employment. To enable support to be put in place at the earliest opportunity,

Access to Work has adapted the way holistic assessments are undertaken and enabled disabled people to choose how their assessments are carried out, including virtually or face-to-face. This has very often enabled a quicker service to be provided.

The assessment providers have reported that the virtual assessments can be arranged and delivered more rapidly than the face to face assessments and that the freed up time enables them to spend more time in consultation with the customer.

Access to Work prioritises applications from disabled people who have a job to start within 4 weeks of their application. Recognising the impact Covid has had on disabled people, Access to Work has expanded the prioritisation to include those in the Clinically Extremely Vulnerable group and keyworkers.

■ **Autism: Motor Vehicles**

Mr Barry Sheerman:

[157006]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether she has made an assessment of the potential merits of introducing a vehicle access scheme specifically for people who have been diagnosed with severe autism.

Justin Tomlinson:

The Government provides support to individuals faced with disabilities or long-term health conditions by way of the provision of Disability Benefits. The over-arching objective with mobility allowances is to enable individuals to overcome their personal barriers to mobility and independence that they face as a result of their disability. The current system allows eligible individuals to spend their allowance in whichever way they choose that best supports their individual needs. For some people this means accessing the Motability Scheme, administered by Motability Operations under contract to Motability the charity, and for others it could mean funding taxis, purchasing a vehicle or funding other support to enable them to make a journey.

■ **Bereavement Benefits**

Wendy Chamberlain:

[158219]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 2 February 2021 to Question 145157 on bereavement benefits, whether the remedial order will be fully retrospective to ensure that those who have already lost their partner will receive the entitlement for themselves and their children that they would have been able to obtain had they been married to their partner at the time of his or her death.

Guy Opperman:

Whilst it is possible for Remedial Orders to make retrospective changes, Orders are subject to detailed consultation and Parliamentary Scrutiny before they become law. The detail of the proposed changes will be set out in the Remedial Order when it is laid before the House.

■ Carer's Allowance: Wales

Hywel Williams:

[\[157960\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of implementing a £20 a week supplement to people receiving the Carers Allowance in Wales.

Justin Tomlinson:

I refer the Hon Member to the answer I gave on the 24th February 2021 to questions number [155395](#).

■ Child Support Agency: ICT

Peter Grant:

[\[157212\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she is taking to resolve as soon as possible the problems with the computer system which writes off CSA debt.

Guy Opperman:

Whilst some Child Support Agency (CSA) debt was automatically written-off in the main, once representation has taken place, where write off is appropriate, this is a manual process.

The majority of the CSA debt write off has been completed and CSA systems (CSCS and CS2) have now been decommissioned.

The write off process for CSA debt held on Child Maintenance System is ongoing and we are not aware of any issues with this process.

■ Conditions of Employment

Seema Malhotra:

[\[158058\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department is taking to support in-work progression.

Mims Davies:

While our current focus is on supporting people back into work, our longer-term ambition remains to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to progress. Alongside an existing programme of research and tests, the In-Work Progression Commission was launched in March 2020 and will report in the coming months with recommendations on what more the Department, wider Government and employers can do to support individuals to progress in work.

■ Department for Work and Pensions: Lost Working Days

Chris Stephens:

[\[157207\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what the Average Working Days Lost was for civil servants in her Department (a) from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic backgrounds and (b) recording themselves as White in the calendar year (a) 2019 and (b) 2020.

Guy Opperman:

The Department only holds information relating to its own staff. Average working days lost figures are calculated on rolling year to date basis, therefore the following data relate to the year to 31 December. Due to the way that data is structured in our systems we do not hold this data in the format requested and it could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

Declaration of ethnicity is not mandatory, however as at December 2020, 87.8 per cent of staff have declared their ethnicity.

	DEC-20
Ethnic Minority	5.35
White	5.57
Unknown	6.13

Chris Stephens:[\[157208\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what the Average Working Days Lost was for civil servants in her Department (a) aged 30 and younger, (b) 30 to 50, (c) 50 to 60 and (d) over 60 in the calendar year (i) 2019 and (ii) 2020.

Guy Opperman:

The Department only holds information relating to its own staff. Average working days lost figures are calculated on rolling year to date basis, therefore the following data relates to the rolling year to 31 December.

	DEC-19	DEC-20
29 and Younger	8.08	4.85
30 to 49	7.80	5.36
50 to 59	8.11	5.87
60 and Over	9.83	7.17
Other	0.00	0.00

Chris Stephens:[\[157209\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what the Average Working Days Lost was for civil servants in her Department who have (a) declared themselves as having a disability and (b) not declared themselves to have a disability in the calendar year (i) 2019 and (ii) 2020.

Guy Opperman:

The Department only holds information relating to its own staff. Average working days lost figures are calculated on rolling year to date basis, therefore the following data relate to the year to 31 December. Due to the way that data is structured in our systems we do not hold this data in the format requested and it could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

	DEC-20
Disabled	9.16
Non Disabled	5.07
Unknown	5.72

■ Employment and Support Allowance**Paul Blomfield:**[\[158025\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what support she is putting in place for people (a) awaiting a face-to-face assessment for employment and support allowance, (b) whose contributory employment and support allowance is due to expire and (c) who earn above the threshold eligible for universal credit.

Justin Tomlinson:

The health and safety of our claimants and staff is our key priority. We suspended all face-to-face assessments for sickness and disability benefits in March 2020. This temporary suspension, brought in to protect people from unnecessary risk of coronavirus at the outset of the pandemic, remains in place, and is being kept under review in line with the latest public health guidance. Any re-introduction of face-to-face assessments would involve stringent Covid-19 related safety measures, supported by guidance for claimants and assessment providers to ensure compliance with the relevant public health guidance.

However, throughout the pandemic we have continued to assess people on paper evidence, using this route whenever possible. We also introduced telephone assessments, providing limited outcomes, in June 2020. We have continued building our capacity and capability since June enabling us to provide the full range of outcomes at volume from this February. This action will ensure that claimants receive their correct benefit entitlement as quickly as possible and reduce the time claimants who may be entitled to a higher award are waiting for their assessment.

Where an individual's contributory ESA ends if they require further financial support they may be eligible for Universal Credit, depending on their personal circumstances.

For people who are ineligible for Universal Credit they may be eligible for other assistance such as Discretionary Housing Payments provided by their Local

Authority, which helps the most vulnerable and supports renters with housing costs in the private and social rented sectors.

In addition, the Government has introduced a raft of temporary measures to support those hardest hit:

- Extension of the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme to support individuals and businesses who are impacted by disruption caused by coronavirus (COVID-19) this winter. The CJRS (also known as the furlough scheme) will remain open until 31 March 2021
- The Self-Employment Income Support Scheme grant extension provides critical support to the self-employed in the form of 2 further grants, each available for 3-month periods covering November 2020 to January 2021 and February 2021 to April 2021.
- Affected self-employed claimants will also not have a Minimum Income Floor (an assumed level of income) applied for a period of time within UC.
- Working people on low incomes who are required to remain at home by NHS Test and Trace to help stop the spread of the virus and cannot work from home can now receive £500 to financially support them while self-isolating.
- Local housing allowance rates have been increased to cover the lowest 30th percent of local rents. This £1bn investment will benefit over 1 million households with an average increase of £600 this year, and help alleviate the pressure on Discretionary Housing Payments.
- People in England can also apply to their Local Authority for support from the £170 million Covid Winter Grant Scheme that we have introduced to help with food and essential utility bills to the end of March. Devolved Administrations have received equivalent funding.

In addition, there is a Flexible Support Fund, which has been increased by £150 million, to support customers facing redundancy.

■ Immigration: EU Nationals

Marsha De Cordova:

[156555]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether EU nationals who moved to the UK after March 2020 and prior to 31 December 2020 are eligible to apply for a National Insurance number.

Guy Opperman:

EU Nationals who moved to the UK after March 2020 and prior to December 2020 are eligible to apply for a National Insurance number.

Prior to allocating a National Insurance Number, the applicant's identity must be confirmed. For those who have already had their identity verified through another government department, primarily the Home Office, they are able to apply for a

National Insurance Number. This includes EU/EEA nationals who have been granted settled or pre-settled status through the EU Settlement Scheme

■ Independent Case Examiner: Standards

Drew Hendry:

[\[158115\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department is taking to help reduce wait times for the Independent Case Examiner to assess a complaint.

Guy Opperman:

In 2020/21, the Department provided additional funding to the Independent Case Examiner's Office, to allow it to increase its headcount from 89 to 112. The recruitment and rigorous training of additional Investigation Case Managers, to reduce the time complaints wait to be brought into investigation, is underway.

■ Industrial Health and Safety: Coronavirus

David Linden:

[\[155336\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many prosecutions have been pursued by the Health and Safety Executive relating to outbreaks of covid-19 in occupational settings; and if she will make a statement.

Mims Davies:

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) takes COVID-19 safety at work very seriously and is playing a critical role in the national response to the pandemic. The Government has provided additional funding of £14 million to HSE to strengthen its capacity to tackle COVID-19.

Since the start of the pandemic, HSE has carried out over 127,000 Covid-19 spot checks, responded to over 19,000 workplace COVID-19 concerns and 569 outbreaks. Spot checks have been specifically targeted in those industries where workers are most likely to be vulnerable to transmission risks. HSE's experience is that more than 90% of businesses checked have either the correct precautions in place or are willing to make necessary changes promptly and without the need for formal enforcement action.

No prosecutions have yet been initiated for COVID-19 related breaches, though HSE will not hesitate to take such action, in accordance with our published Enforcement Policy Statement and the Code for Crown Prosecutors, where this is warranted.

Note: Figures extracted from HSE's live operational database on 23rd February 2021 and are liable to change, e.g. as it may take up to ten working days for data to be uploaded onto the system.

■ Jobcentres: Staff**Seema Malhotra:** [\[158054\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many full-time equivalent work coaches her Department employs; and what the average caseload is for each full-time equivalent work coach as at 24 February 2021.

Mims Davies:

The department employs 20217 Work Coaches and their average workload for IWS (Intensive Work Search) cases is 180. These figures were correct at the date of the last reporting period which was 31 January 2021 for the number of Work Coaches employed and 21 February 2021 for the average caseload. We are currently recruiting an additional 13,500 Work Coaches which we are on track to achieve by the end of the financial year.

■ Kickstart Scheme**Fay Jones:** [\[154579\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether businesses that operate under a partnership structure are eligible to take part in the Kickstart scheme.

Mims Davies:

We welcome applications from all employers regardless of structure. Small businesses and organisations which are not registered on Companies House or do not have PAYE systems can now apply to the Kickstart Scheme through an organisation offering a 'Gateway Plus' model. This model enables Kickstart young people to be placed on the gateway's PAYE system for the duration of their placement.

Andrea Jenkyns: [\[154607\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department has taken to make businesses aware that they can join the Kickstart Scheme, without the threshold of a minimum 30 jobs.

Mims Davies:

The removal of the 30 minimum jobs threshold was announced by the Secretary of State on 25 January. The announcement was featured in the national press and we engaged with key stakeholders to disseminate the message throughout their employer networks.

The Department for Work and Pensions continues to actively engage with employers of all sizes to promote applications and interest in the Kickstart Scheme. Ministers are personally engaging with employers to encourage new applications.

Peter Kyle: [\[155243\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many and what proportion of Kickstart placements have been offered to young people with a criminal record.

Mims Davies:

I refer the honourable member to the answer given for PQ [110187](#)

Anne Marie Morris:[\[158053\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of extending the Kickstart scheme to candidates who were aged 16-24 at the time that the business applied for the creation of the placement.

Mims Davies:

Once an employer has had their Kickstart application approved by the Department of Work and Pensions and the grant agreement is in place it is advertised via Jobcentre Plus for referrals of eligible young people aged 16-24 at this point.

A Kickstart job does not necessarily start right away, it can commence at any point within the lifetime of the scheme. There are a number of reasons why jobs may commence later, such as, for example, public health restrictions currently in place. We are pleased that despite Covid-19 restrictions, young people have continued to start in Kickstart jobs since November.

■ Kickstart Scheme: Blaenau Gwent**Nick Smith:**[\[157063\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many young people living in Blaenau Gwent constituency were registered with the Kickstart scheme as of 23 February 2021.

Mims Davies:

Data regarding the number of young people registered for the Kickstart scheme by constituency is not currently available.

■ Kickstart Scheme: West Yorkshire**Andrea Jenkyns:**[\[155219\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what further steps her Department plans to take to promote the Kickstart scheme throughout West Yorkshire.

Mims Davies:

The Department for Work and Pensions continues to actively engage with employers of all sizes to promote applications and interest in the Kickstart Scheme. Ministers are personally engaging with employers to encourage new applications.

We continue to work with key stakeholders to ensure that Kickstart is offered across Great Britain and in a wide range of sectors. Through our Engagement Strategy we are focussing on targeted promotional activities working through a mix of place-based partners (such as local authorities and mayoral combined authorities) as well as trade bodies representing specific sectors.

■ Manufacturing Industries: Leicester**Claudia Webbe:****[155468]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many garment factories in Leicester have failed a covid-19 inspection conducted by the Health and Safety Executive.

Mims Davies:

HSE have carried out 296 Covid19 specific interventions in respect of textile factories, in Leicester, since April 2020. Premises do not pass and fail, as such, however we can confirm that enforcement action has been taken in respect of 54 premises. Action taken includes a mixture of enforcement notices and letters, in addition to written advice, which were follow up to ensure compliance.

Claudia Webbe:**[155469]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what powers the Health and Safety Executive has to investigate factories in Leicester where the failure to implement covid-19 safety measures is a serious risk to public health.

Mims Davies:

Under Section 20 of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974, HSE Inspectors have a range of powers that they can use to investigate reported incidents and concerns, including those relating to implementation of Covid 19 safety measures in factories in Leicester.

Inspectors have the right to enter premises to carry out their functions at any reasonable time. They have the right to ask questions, to examine documents and to take copies. They also have the right to talk to employees and safety representatives, as required.

Inspectors have the power to issue Improvement Notices where they identify a breach of health and safety legislation or to issue Prohibition Notices where they identify a risk of serious personal injury. They also have powers to institute proceedings in Court where there has been a serious breach of health and safety legislation.

Throughout the pandemic, HSE has actively engaged with businesses, through site visits and phone calls, investigating reports from those raising concerns, assessing compliance with health and safety law, and using guidance such as that published about social distancing from the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19>) to ensure businesses are adhering to requirements. HSE has also provided support to local public health bodies who lead on dealing with outbreaks.

HSE continues to regulate in areas of highest risk and industries where concerns of Covid-19 transmission are greatest.

■ Motability Operations

Mr Barry Sheerman:

[\[157005\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent discussions her Department has had with Motability Operations Ltd on reviewing the eligibility for the Motability scheme.

Justin Tomlinson:

Motability and Motability Operations are independent from Government. Motability Operations is responsible for the operational delivery of the Motability Scheme, and is accountable to Motability the charity. Whilst the Department is responsible for the disability benefits that provide a passport to the Motability scheme, and works closely with Motability, responsibility for the terms and administration of the Scheme sits with Motability and its Board of Governors.

■ National Insurance Contributions

Zarah Sultana:

[\[157313\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she has taken to (a) mitigate the effects of the pause in face-to-face interviews and issuing of National Insurance numbers and (b) bring in alternative plans in the interim.

Guy Opperman:

The Department is aware of the effect that not having a National Insurance Number (NINo) may be having on some individuals. However, Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs' [employer checklist](#) makes it clear that a NINo is not required to start work.

Individuals seeking work in the UK can start work before they receive a NINo as long as they are able to prove they have the [Right to Work](#) in the UK.

The Department started testing a partial digital solution, on a small scale, in mid-October, to support the allocation of National Insurance Numbers. This solution enables the collection of an applicant's data, but not the online verification of their identity. Alternative identity verification solutions to reduce the need for a face to face identity check for some customer groups, including EU nationals with Settled or Pre-Settled status, was part of that test.

In January, we gained Government Digital Service approval as a result we were no longer required to limit the number of applicants we can serve, although we do not have an identity solution for all potential applicants yet. Our current plan is that by the end of March 2021 we will be able to offer a service to all applicants who do not require their identity to be verified face to face.

This means that we have moved from a position in March 2020 of only offering a NINo service to the most vulnerable, to a place where we are able to provide a service to the majority.

■ National Insurance Contributions: ICT

Zarah Sultana:

[\[157312\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, when the digital service for issuing National Insurance Numbers will be ready for public use.

Guy Opperman:

The digital application service is currently available to applicants, who have already had their identity verified through another government department, primarily the Home Office.

The digital service enables Non EU/EEA nationals who have been granted a visa with the right to work, EU/EEA nationals who have been granted settled or pre-settled status, through the EU Settlement Scheme, and UK passport holders to make application using this service.

■ Personal Independence Payment

Marion Fellows:

[\[155164\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, for what reason reassessments for personal independence payments (PIP) are treated as a new claim following a tribunal award; and what assessment she has made of the potential effect of the length of time taken to complete a PIP reassessment on a claimant's ability to access (a) mobility vehicles, (b) educational support and (c) carer's allowance.

Justin Tomlinson:

A tribunal considering an appeal against a Personal Independence Payment (PIP) decision also considers the length of any award it may make. The length of award will be based on the individual's needs and the likelihood of those changing. If it gives a short, fixed-term award then it is indicating that the claimant's limitations are likely to improve to the point they would not be entitled at the end of their award. Accordingly, the Secretary of State implements the Tribunal's decision on the award end date and does not schedule a review.

We aim to ensure that the process is as responsive as possible and claimants given a fixed-term award without review are prompted to make an advance claim to PIP, if needed, before an existing award ends. Once an advance claim has been received, which can be at any point prior to the existing award ending, we will progress that claim as quickly as possible to ensure we avoid or minimise any disruption to the payment of PIP and any DWP benefits or schemes which PIP passports to, such as Carer's Allowance or the Motability scheme. Where entitlement to PIP is used as an administrative easement for assessing entitlement to a non-DWP scheme, any consideration of a delay in payment would lie with the lead Department or organisation

■ Post Office Card Account

David Linden:

[155337]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many benefits claimants receive their payments into a Post Office card account.

Guy Opperman:

This is a question more appropriately directed to the Post Office.

■ Social Security Benefits

Vicky Foxcroft:

[155227]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what progress her Department has made on securing new contracts for (a) personal independence payment and (b) work capability assessments from 1 August 2021.

Justin Tomlinson:

We had previously announced that we would be undertaking a procurement exercise to establish contracts for conducting Work and Capability Assessments (WCA) and Personal Independence Payments (PIP) from 1 August 2021. The impact of Covid-19 meant that it was not possible to launch that procurement.

WCA contract

We recognized that it is vital for our claimants to have a safe and stable service. Consequently, in July last year, the department announced via a VEAT Notice (link attached below) its intention to extend the current contracts for up to two years, which will ensure continuity of services when the current contract ends on 31 July 2021.

<https://ted.europa.eu/udl?uri=TED:NOTICE:333758-2020:TEXT:EN:HTML>

The Commercial arrangements for the extension period are subject to ongoing negotiations, which are on plan to complete in the required timeframe.

PIP contract

The PIP Assessment Service Contracts are split into three Lots. An extension has been agreed with Independent Assessment Services for Lots 1 and 3, details of which can be viewed in the VEAT notices that were published in December (links attached below)

<https://ted.europa.eu/udl?uri=TED:NOTICE:622817-2020:TEXT:EN:HTML>

<https://ted.europa.eu/udl?uri=TED:NOTICE:622816-2020:TEXT:EN:HTML>

Commercial negotiations for the extension of the Lot 2 Contract with Capita are ongoing; our intention to extend these Contracts was issued in July 2020 (link attached below)

<https://ted.europa.eu/udl?uri=TED:NOTICE:333754-2020:TEXT:EN:HTML>

The department intends to re-procure Health Assessment Services contracts during this extension period anticipates that these will commence in August 2023.

■ Social Security Benefits: Post Office

Dr Matthew Offord:

[154994]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, for what reason his Department was not able to renew its contract with the Post Office to accept welfare payments through Post Office accounts.

Guy Opperman:

The Department's method of payment policy is to pay customers into standard accounts and is currently transforming its payment exception services to deliver efficiencies. This promotes financial inclusion, and ensures customers have greater flexibility in managing their money.

This transformation will replace the existing two contracts, the Post Office card account and HM Payment Exception Service contracts, with one single payment exception service for customers who the Department are unable to pay into a standard account. The replacement service is being procured in line with public procurement regulations to ensure open and fair commercial competition.

■ Social security benefits: Terminal illnesses

Richard Fuller:

[154918]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what plans she has to (a) publish and (b) implement the recommendations from the Department's review of the benefits system for terminally ill people and the Special Rules for Terminal Illness scheme announced in July 2019.

Justin Tomlinson:

The Department is committed to delivering an improved benefit system for claimants that are nearing the end of their lives and is working across Government to bring forward proposals following the evaluation. I remain committed to implementing the key areas identified in the evaluation; a consensus to change the six-month rule; improving consistency with other services used by people nearing the end of their lives; and raising awareness of the support that is available.

■ Support for Mortgage Interest

Jonathan Reynolds:

[158040]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many claims were made for Support for Mortgage Interest in each of the last 12 months (a) in total and (b) by (i) disability, (ii) ethnicity and (iii) family type.

Guy Opperman:

The figures below show the number of Support for Mortgage Interest (SMI) claimants in Great Britain each month that received their first SMI loan. Breakdowns by disability, ethnicity and family type are not available.

MONTH	ON-FLOWS
Dec-19	170
Jan-20	150
Feb-20	160
Mar-20	140
Apr-20	80
May-20	90
Jun-20	100
Jul-20	90
Aug-20	80
Sep-20	90
Oct-20	100
Nov-20	100

■ Tradeshow Access Programme

Seema Malhotra:

[\[158057\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the oral evidence of the Minister for Employment to the Work and Pensions Committee of 11 February 2021, when her Department's TAP programme started; and if she will make a statement.

Mims Davies:

DWP Train and Progress is an internal campaign designed to reinforce the importance of Work Coach engagement to identify and help address claimants' skills needs as part of the overall support offered to help claimants meet their work and career goals.

The initial phase of this campaign to better align the DWP employment and skills offer was launched on 8 February 2021.

■ Unemployment: Coronavirus

Andrew Gwynne:

[\[157028\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what support the Government is providing to people aged over 55 who have lost their jobs as a result of the covid-19 pandemic to retrain and re-enter employment.

Mims Davies:

The department is supporting people of all ages back in to work. The Government's Plan for Jobs provides new funding to ensure more people, including those aged 50 and over, get tailored Jobcentre Plus support to help them find work and to build the skills they need to get into work. This includes £895m to recruit an additional 13,500 Work Coaches which DWP is on track to achieve by Quarter 1 of 2021/22; a £150m increase in the Flexible Support Fund which will also boost the capacity of the Rapid Response Service to help those facing redundancy move into other jobs; and £10m for a new online support through the Job Finding Support Service which will provide tailored one-to-one job finding support to the recently unemployed.

The Government aims to increase the number of Sector based Work Academy programme placements, supporting unemployed claimants of all ages through training, work experience and a guaranteed interview for a real job. We are also investing £238m into Job Entry: Targeted Support (JETS) to offer new support to those who have been made unemployed for three months.

To support the long term unemployed, £2.9 billion is being invested in the Restart Programme, which is due to go live from summer 2021. The Restart Programme will support individuals who have been unemployed for 12 months plus and through regular, personalised support providers will work with participants to identify the best way to support them into sustained employment.

The Department also has a network of 50 PLUS Champions (formerly Older Claimants Champions) throughout all of the 34 Jobcentre Plus districts. These Jobcentre Plus staff work collaboratively with Work Coaches to raise the profile of over 50s claimants, highlighting the benefits of employing them and sharing best practice.

Further, Government recognises the importance of planning effectively for the future and in encouraging productive workplace conversations. We therefore launched a webpage in 2019 to promote the mid-life MOT, which offers support from the National Careers Service, Public Health England and Money and Pensions Service to those considering a change in career by encouraging them to take stock across the key areas of skills, health and financial planning.

The Department for Education continues to invest in education and skills training for adults through the Adult Education Budget (AEB) (£1.34bn in 2019/20 and 2020/21). The principal purpose of the AEB is to engage adults and provide the skills and learning they need to equip them for work, an apprenticeship or further learning. It enables more tailored programmes of learning to be made available, which do not need to include a qualification, to help those furthest from learning and in the workplace.

Government is providing £2.5 billion (£3 billion when including Barnett funding for devolved administrations) for the National Skills Fund to help adults learn valuable skills and prepare for the economy of the future, which will start in financial year 2021/22. The National Skills Fund will support adults to learn and reach their potential

in the labour market. It will complement other provision available for adults, such as through the Adult Education Budget and other recent reforms to adult skills provision and funding.

The Skills Bootcamps, which are free, flexible courses of up to 16 weeks, giving adults aged 19 and over the opportunity to build up sector-specific skills and fast-track to an interview with a local employer. Skills Bootcamps have the potential to transform the skills landscape for adults and employers.

These were launched in West Midlands, Greater Manchester and Lancashire, and Liverpool City Region in September 2020, initially focusing on digital skills such as software development, digital marketing, and data analytics. Registrations opened in December 2020 for the Skills Bootcamps in the Leeds City Region, Heart of South West (Devon and Somerset) and Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire, with delivery set to begin in early 2021.

■ Universal Credit

Alan Brown:

[\[155189\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 16 February 2021 to Question 151764, on Universal Credit, whether that new process covers claimants that are paid every four weeks, in the event that they receive two sets of four weekly payments within a single calendar month.

Will Quince:

No, automated identification will only be for affected claimants receiving monthly earnings in the same assessment period.

Mike Amesbury:

[\[155368\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment her Department has made of the potential effect of including discretionary and hardship payments as income for the purposes of universal credit on people in receipt of that payment.

Will Quince:

No assessment has been made.

David Linden:

[\[158179\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, (what recent assessment her Department has made of the adequacy of universal credit payment rates; and whether her Department undertakes regular analysis to help ensure universal credit payment rates are set at levels that meet the basic needs of recipients.

David Linden:

[\[158180\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment her Department has made of the implications of her policies of the findings of Citizens Advice Scotland, published in February 2021, that the value of standard allowance of universal credit without the £20 uplift is less in real terms than in 2013.

Will Quince:

No such assessment has been carried out.

There is no objective way of deciding what an adequate level of benefit should be as everyone has different requirements. Income related benefit rates are not made up of separate amounts for specific items of expenditure such as food or fuel charges.

The Government is committed to helping people with the cost of living and providing a safety net for those that need it. We have injected billions into the welfare system for those most in need, including increases to the Universal Credit and Working Tax Credit standard allowances of up to £1040 this financial year, and uplifts to the Local Housing Allowance rates to cover the lowest 30% of market rents. The Covid Winter Grant Scheme builds on that support with an additional £170m for local authorities in England, to support families with children and other vulnerable people, with the cost of food and essential utilities this winter.

MINISTERIAL CORRECTIONS

BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

■ Printing Machinery

Mr David Davis:

[154747]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to prevent printer manufacturers from locking devices to only being able to use approved printer cartridges.

An error has been identified in the written answer given on 24 February 2021. The correct answer should have been:

Paul Scully:

~~The Government is committed to tackling consumer rip-offs and bad business practices, including profiteering. Under competition law, responsibility for investigating individual and market-wide competition issues falls to the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA), the UK's competition authority.~~

~~The Government has ensured that the CMA has significant powers and expertise to investigate anti-competitive practices. Consumers and businesses can report concerns regarding competition issues to the CMA.~~

~~The Government continues to work with the CMA and other consumer and retail organisations to monitor the extent of profiteering, and will update the law if it is proportionate to do so.~~

The Government is committed to tackling consumer rip-offs and bad business practices. The Government has ensured that the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) has significant powers and expertise to investigate such issues.

Under the Consumer Protection from Unfair Trading Regulations 2008, it is a criminal offence to provide consumers with misleading information or omit important details about a product they are purchasing.

Under competition law, the CMA is responsible for investigating individual and market-wide competition issues. Consumers and businesses should report concerns about competition issues to the CMA.

HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT**■ Members: Correspondence****Matthew Pennycook:****[\[126087\]](#)**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, when he plans to respond to the letter from the hon. Member for Greenwich and Woolwich of 12 October 2020 on the approach of property insurers to mature trees in close proximity to homes that require underpinning to prevent or correct subsidence.

An error has been identified in the written answer given on 15 December 2020. The correct answer should have been:

Christopher Pincher:

This correspondence has been transferred, **as Her Majesty's Treasury is best placed to respond.** ~~as the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs is best placed to respond.~~

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

■ **Independent Review of Destination Management Organisations in England**
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Sport and Tourism (Nigel Huddleston):
[\[HCWS811\]](#)

On 1st March 2021 the Government launched an independent review of Destination Management Organisations (DMOs) in England. The review aims to examine and assess how such organisations are funded and structured, and how they perform their roles. The review will seek to establish whether there may be a more efficient and effective model for supporting English tourism at the regional level, and if so what that model may be.

Destination Management Organisations (DMOs) are a common feature of local and regional tourism landscapes worldwide, and play an important role in the English tourism ecosystem. There is an estimated 150 DMOs in England, although these vary substantially in terms of activity, size, geographical area covered, funding models, structure, impact and the degree to which they work with both the central Government and the British Tourist Authority (BTA, trading as VisitBritain and VisitEngland).

The Government recognises that the tourism sector has been among the worst-hit industries by COVID-19 and that DMOs have been particularly hard hit, especially those reliant on commercial income. Many DMOs have been at risk of closure at a time when their business support role has become more important. Simultaneously, the pandemic has highlighted strong examples of standardisation, collaboration and more agile working among DMOs, and the Government is aware that DMOs will have an important role to play in supporting the English tourism sector recover in the medium and long term, in line with Government priorities around economic recovery and Levelling Up.

Against such a background, this independent review will seek to produce a detailed examination of the DMO landscape in England, focussing on a) current funding models; b) organisational structures and c) performance levels (both in respect to before the Covid-19 pandemic and since the start of 2020).

It will then try and establish whether the status quo is the most efficient, economically justifiable way of organising local and regional English tourism sectors. It will also look at whether these structures maximise opportunities for supporting policy priorities on a local, regional and national scale, and, where relevant, internationally. These priorities include sector recovery, Levelling Up and economic growth, as well as various local and regional priorities that are likely to differ from area to area.

The review will be led by Nick de Bois, the current Chair of the VisitEngland Advisory Board. He will be acting in an independent capacity, supported by a DCMS Secretariat, and will aim to deliver a report with recommendations to the Government in Summer 2021. It will then be for the Government to respond to the report in due course. The

Review marks an initial step in the Government's development of a Tourism Recovery Plan.

Attachments:

1. DMO review - terms of reference [DMO review - terms of reference 20210301.pdf]

EDUCATION

■ Contingencies Fund Advance

The Secretary of State for Education (Gavin Williamson): [\[HCWS812\]](#)

The Department for Education has sought a repayable cash advance from the Contingencies Fund of £1,550,000,000.

The requirement has arisen due to increased costs relating to essential expenditure, including that relating to the Covid -19 response. The funds associated with this Estimate will not be released until the Supply and Appropriation Bill achieves Royal Assent in early March 2021.

Parliamentary approval for additional resources of £852,500,000 and capital of £697,500,000 has been sought in a Supplementary Estimate. Pending that approval, expenditure estimated at £1,550,000,000 will be met by repayable cash advances from the Contingencies Fund.

The cash advance will be repaid upon receiving Royal Assent on the Supply and Appropriation Bill.

HOME OFFICE

■ Consultation seeking views on the Protect Duty

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Priti Patel): [\[HCWS809\]](#)

The first duty of the Government is to protect the public, and we are committed to improving the security of public venues, as outlined in our 2019 manifesto. The Government is proposing the Protect Duty whereby certain venues and organisations would be required to consider terrorist threats and reasonable mitigations to these.

Whilst there is much good work being done by many organisations to improve security, in the absence of a legislative requirement, there is no certainty that considerations of security are undertaken by those operating the wide variety of sites and places open to the public, or, where they are undertaken, what outcomes are achieved. This consultation considers how we could improve this position, through reasonable and not overly burdensome considerations of security and corresponding mitigating measures.

A consultation document was published on Friday 26 February, which seeks the views of those organisations and venues potentially within the scope of the Protect Duty, as to how we can work together to develop appropriate security measures to improve public security. It puts forward criteria and thresholds for inclusion, and considers how those

responsible for public places could consider threat and appropriate proportionate mitigating action. It also considers what support would be required for venues and organisations to fulfil the requirements of the Duty, and what oversight and sanctions would be appropriate were there to be non-compliance.

The consultation is for an extended 18 week period, in recognition that many of those potentially within scope continue to be impacted by Covid-19. Extending the consultation period in to the summer, will allow those organisations more time to respond to proposals as businesses return to more usual operation. The Government will carefully consider next steps and their timing in light of consultation responses and the ongoing situation with regards to combatting Covid-19.

I would like to pay tribute to the families of those who have died in the recent attacks we have seen in the UK, many of whom have called for a legislative requirement to consider security to be implemented, in particular Figen Murray and the Martyn's Law Campaign Team.

A copy of the consultation document was placed in the Libraries of both Houses on Friday 26 February.

■ **Publication of the Government's Review into the offence of Controlling or Coercive Behaviour**

The Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Safeguarding (Victoria Atkins):
[\[HCWS810\]](#)

Today, I am pleased to announce the publication of the Government's Review into the offence of Controlling or Coercive Behaviour (CCB) in an intimate or family relationship (as provided for in section 76 of the Serious Crime Act 2015). The Review follows a commitment made in response to the 2018 consultation on domestic abuse.

The Review considered the available data and research to understand how the CCB offence has been working since its introduction in 2015. It found that since the offence came into force in December 2015, police recorded CCB offences, as well as CCB prosecutions, have increased year on year. These increases demonstrate that the CCB offence is being used across the criminal justice system (CJS), indicating that the legislation has provided an improved legal framework to tackle CCB. However, the Review recognises that there is still room for improvement, particularly with regard to raising awareness of what constitutes CCB among the public and across the CJS, and improving the ability of the CJS to record, evidence and prosecute these crimes. The Review also considered views from a number of stakeholders who expressed concern that the cohabitation requirement within the offence is preventing some victims of this abuse from seeking justice, and poses challenges for police and prosecutors to evidence and charge abusive behaviours that are not captured by other legislation.

The Review made a number of recommendations, including:

- Building on the work of the Office of National Statistics in 2017, to develop robust estimates of the prevalence and characteristics of CCB;

- In consultation with victims and support services, to develop suitable measures for victim outcomes;
- Further work to assess the levels of awareness and understanding of the offence across the criminal justice system.

The Review also recognised calls for legislative change, highlighting in particular the removal of the cohabitation requirement as well as some calls to extend the maximum sentence length and to remove the requirement to evidence a “serious effect” on the victim. As such, the Review made the following research recommendations:

- If legislative changes are implemented, the operation of the legislation should be monitored and reviewed closely to assess the impact and identify any unintended consequences;
- If legislative changes are not made at this time, further research should be undertaken to ascertain the need for, and impact of, such changes to the legislation.

CCB is an insidious form of domestic abuse and this Government is committed to ensuring all victims are protected. We recognise that coercive or controlling behaviours may escalate following separation, and that members of a victim’s extended family may be involved in control or coercion. We have heard the calls from experts on this matter, and I am very pleased to say that the Government will be removing the co-habitation requirement contained within the offence through an amendment to the Domestic Abuse Bill at Report stage in the House of Lords. This amendment will bring the controlling or coercive behaviour offence into line with the statutory definition of domestic abuse in clause 1 of the Bill and send a clear message to both victims and perpetrators that controlling or coercive behaviours, irrespective of living status, are a form of domestic abuse.

We recognise that the Review also raised questions around the need for other legislative change, including reference to increasing the maximum penalty for the CCB offence in line with the current maximum penalty for stalking, and removing the evidence requirement to prove that the behaviour had a serious effect on the victim. Given the Review acknowledged that evidence for these changes is currently limited, we will continue to monitor the offence and keep these other proposals for legislative change under review.

This summer we will be publishing a Domestic Abuse strategy which will build on work to date to help transform the response to domestic abuse, tackling perpetrators and placing the needs of victims at the heart of our response. We will consider the wider policy and data recommendations made in the Review throughout the development and implementation of this strategy, and will of course continue to engage with domestic abuse organisations throughout this process. We will also update the statutory guidance for the controlling or coercive behaviour offence to reflect both the findings of the Review and change to the legislation.

Domestic abuse is an abhorrent crime and this Government is committed to doing all that we can support victims and tackle offenders. I am delighted that, in removing the cohabitation requirement within the CCB offence, we are able to take another step in ensuring every victim has access to the protection that they need.

A copy of the Review will be placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

TREASURY

■ **Contingent Liability Notification and Disclosure of Asset Sale**

The Economic Secretary to the Treasury (John Glen):

[\[HCWS813\]](#)

I can confirm today that I have laid a Treasury Minute informing the House of certain liabilities that HM Treasury has taken on in authorising the sale of the remaining loan assets and share capital of Bradford & Bingley plc (B&B) and NRAM Limited.

This sale generates proceeds of £5.0 billion for the Exchequer, and will see NRAM, B&B and their subsidiary companies, including Mortgage Express (MX), together with their remaining mortgages and loan portfolios, sold to a consortium comprising Davidson Kempner Capital Management LP (Davidson Kempner) and Citibank (Citi). The majority of the financing for the transaction is being provided by funds managed by Pacific Investment Management Company LLC (PIMCO).

The transaction has been agreed and will complete in two stages. The first stage is the sale of the loans to Citi which is expected to complete within the next few weeks. The second stage is completion of the sale of the companies, and will see the sale of the legal entities of B&B and NRAM to Davidson Kempner. This stage is subject to the receipt of regulatory approvals from the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) and is expected to take place in the summer.

This sale constitutes a significant milestone in the work to achieve the government's aim of returning the institutions brought into public ownership as a result of the 2007-2008 financial crisis to private ownership.

Rationale

It is government policy that where a government asset no longer serves a public purpose, or that purpose can be more efficiently realised with the asset in private ownership, the government may choose to sell that asset, subject to value for money and market conditions being supportive.

The government intervened in the financial sector to preserve financial stability. As this policy objective has now been met, those assets which came into public ownership should be returned to the private sector.

Format and Timing

The government, UK Asset Resolution (UKAR) and UK Government Investments (UKGI) concluded that this sale achieves value for money having:

1. conducted a rigorous analysis of whether market conditions were conducive for the sale of this portfolio;
2. considered whether the transaction had generated sufficient competitive tension to lead to a properly competitive process; and
3. conducted an assessment of the fair market value for the assets, including the legal entities of B&B and NRAM.

The sale made use of a structured bidding process, which has been shown to create competitive tension and has been used for previous government asset sales.

Customer protections:

A key element in selecting the successful bidder was the treatment of customers. As in previous UKAR asset sales, bidders were required to agree to a robust package of customer protections before their bids were considered on other factors.

Customers do not need to take any action and can be assured that there will be no changes to the terms and conditions of any loans as a result of this transaction. They will continue to receive the same protections for the lifetime of their mortgage as they do today, and their right to remortgage will be unaffected.

The structure of this transaction also means that the legal title holder and administrator of customers' loans will not change at the point of sale. B&B, NRAM and MX will remain the legal title holders of the loans. Computershare will continue to service the loans.

Only the beneficial owner will change as a result of this sale, and the beneficial owner does not have an active role in the management of customers' loans.

B&B, NRAM, MX and Computershare are all regulated by the FCA. This means that customers will continue to enjoy the protections of the FCA's Treating Customers Fairly (TCF) principles and its Mortgages and Home Finance: Conduct of Business (MCOB) rules, as well as recourse to the Financial Ombudsman Service.

As the customer protections require that the administrator and legal title holder of these loans will always be an FCA-regulated entity, customers will continue to enjoy the protection of the FCA's rules if the legal title holder of their loans changes again at some point in the future.

Contingent Liability

On this occasion, due to the sensitivities surrounding the commercial negotiation of this transaction, it was not possible to notify Parliament of the particulars of the contingent liabilities in advance of the sale announcement.

The contingent liabilities HM Treasury is taking on include those which relate to certain warranties and indemnities that were given to the purchasers and which confirm regulatory, legislative and contractual compliance relating to the loans, assets and the share capital of the companies. The maximum contingent liability arising from the warranties and indemnities to the loan assets is approximately £4.9 billion.

The maximum contingent liability arising from the warranties and indemnities relating to the share capital of the companies is c.£290 million (100% of the purchase price of the shares). More information on these contingent liabilities has been set out in a Departmental Minute that has been laid before the House alongside this statement.

Fiscal Impacts

The impacts on the fiscal aggregates, in line with fiscal forecasting convention, are not discounted to present value. The net impacts of the sale on a selection of fiscal metrics are summarised as follows:

METRIC	IMPACT
Sale proceeds	c.£5.0 billion
Hold valuation Net present value of the assets if held to maturity using Green Book assumptions	The price achieved is above the hold value range.
Public Sector Net Investment	Nil
Current Budget	Decreased by: £350m in 2024-25.
Public Sector Net Borrowing	Increased by: £350m in 2024-25.
Public Sector Net Debt	Reduced by £5.0bn (£4.4bn in 2020-21 and £0.6bn in 2021-22)
Public Sector Net Liabilities	Increased by £100 million in 2020-21
Public Sector Net Financial Liabilities	Increased by £100 million in 2020-21